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Intersections and conflicts between adolescent boys' musical possible selves, university study, and parent values

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Abstract

Adolescents require meaningful and achievable musical possible selves to imagine a future that includes music. Previous research has investigated how to support tertiary music students in their career identity development, however, adolescents make consequential decisions regarding future music study and career intentions in secondary school. This article reports on the intersections and conflicts between adolescent boys' musical possible selves, university study intentions, and parent values. Research was conducted at an Australian independent K–12 boys' school using one-on-one semi-structured interviews incorporating a "draw and tell" artefact elicitation technique with Year 12 students and their parents. Two resonating narratives of adolescent boys studying class music are presented as a means of examining their developing musical identities. Findings reveal the vulnerability of students' musical possible selves at the end of secondary school as they re-evaluate the role of music in their lives. The mothers of these two students did not highly value music university study and careers and actively intervened to disrupt their sons' developing musical possible selves. This article proposes the development of specialised school music pathway education, enabling adolescents and parents to make more informed decisions on prospective university music study, careers, and the role of music in their futures.

Keywords

identity, possible selves, careers, parent values, music education, adolescence, narrative

Introduction

Careers in music are often complex and misunderstood (Bartleet et al., 2019; Bennett & Freer, 2012). The path towards becoming a professional musician generally involves university education at a tertiary music school or conservatoire; a significant Australian study found that 90% of the surveyed professional musicians had completed post-secondary education and 70% held tertiary music qualifications (Bartleet et al., 2020). While tertiary music institutions recognise the need to support their students to craft sustainable portfolio careers, aspiring musicians begin imagining their futures while attending school. Parents and teachers also contribute significantly to the formation of adolescents' future study and career intentions.

This article draws on two rich narrative vignettes and reports on the intersections and conflicts of adolescent boys' musical possible selves, university study, and parent values. These stories highlight the power of parents to amend and redirect their children's developing musical identities and futures, primarily due to concerns surrounding perceived bleak career prospects. I propose that there is a need for teachers and schools to provide specialist music pathway and career programs to better support school students and families to make informed decisions regarding musical futures.

Theoretical Framework

Possible Selves

The theory of possible selves offers a framework for examining the adolescent's future study and career aspirations. Possible selves are a significant and motivating cognitive resource in identity development interdependent with other components of the broader self-concept (Erikson, 2007). Markus and Nurius (1986) originally defined *possible selves* as a "type of self-knowledge [that] pertains to how individuals think about their potential and about their future" (p. 954). An individual's future self-concept "can be viewed as the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears and threats" (p. 954). Imagined selves express a view of future agency and are a story we tell ourselves through a narrative plot (Erikson, 2007) constructed by a sequence of actions and experiences with a concluding goal (Bruner, 1990). The very nature of a

narrative plot means that possible selves are nested within past, present, and projected future experiences (Strahan & Wilson, 2006) and may be measured by their "salience" and "elaboration" (King & Hicks, 2007). Possible selves are characterised by being domain specific (Smith & Freund, 2002), located in socially and culturally specific contexts (Creech et al., 2020; Oyserman et al., 2015), and developed through experienced meaning often formed through others (Marshall et al., 2006) who may also serve as role models (Ibarra, 1999). They are also dynamic; individuals may re-evaluate their goals based on positive and/or negative experiences or life transitions constructing "lost" and/or "found" future selves (King & Hicks, 2007).

Musical Possible Selves

Possible selves in music share the characteristics of possible selves previously described though situated in social and cultural contexts of music learning and practices (Creech et al., 2020). Musical possible selves are the collective and interactive self-stories of our past, present, and future musical identities (Freer, 2010; Powell, 2017). Musical identities are performative and social in everyday life, taking the form of social and culture roles (e.g., professional musician, music enthusiastic) or the way we use music to form other aspects of our self-image (MacDonald et al., 2017).

Freer (2009) was first to apply the theory of possible selves to a music setting and proposed a "Possible Selves Program in Music" framework based on one developed by Hock et al. (2006) to increase student academic motivation. The model consisted of six sequential stages shared between two phases: the conceptualisation phase consisted of (1) discovering, (2) thinking, and (3) imagining stages, and the following realisation phase consisted of (4) reflecting, (5) growing, and (6) performing stages. Based on the cyclic model of manifold learning by Heron (1999, 2009), Creech et al. (2020) proposed that the framework of musical possible selves presented by Freer (2009) is significantly shaped by the intersections of formal, nonformal, and informal music learning contexts and approaches across the lifespan. Creech et al. (2020) suggested that at any stage of development, manifold musical possible selves may be influenced by three modes of facilitation (hierarchical, cooperative, and autonomous) and six dimensions of teaching and learning engagement (planning, structuring, meaning, confronting, feeling, and valuing). They

argued that possible selves are not reached through one linear progression and the many available pathways emerge as a "musical roadmap" (Oyserman et al., 2004).

Despite the development of these frameworks, few significant studies have specifically examined possible selves in music contexts. In a review of two decades of research on possible selves in search of "missing males" (Koza, 1993) in choral music, Freer (2010) proposed that adolescent boys may be more motivated to continue with choral singing when they are able to elaborate on their musical futures in more detail and identify realistic strategies on how to achieve these goals. A strategy to use older successful male peer models was strongly advocated. In the instrumental music context, Schnare et al. (2012) explored the motivation of the possible musical self in people aged between 18 and 69 years who played at least one instrument. The authors proposed the musical self is a negotiated balance between positive hopes and negative fears. The dynamic nature between hopes and fears causes tension within the musical self, and in moderation the feared self can serve as a motivator for action. Varvarigou et al. (2014) reported the positive development of various possible musical selves as a result of an education partnership program involving London primary school students, their music teachers, conservatoire students, and professional orchestral musicians. School students reported raised aspirations, enthusiasm, and confidence for music in their future, while their teachers felt more confident as music educators. Conservatoire music performance students realised a greater value for music education and the professional musicians discovered new opportunities for their professional portfolio. Not all music education experiences are positive, and Ruddock and Leong (2005) reminded us that negative formal music education experiences can result in individuals self-identifying as "unmusical" and withdrawing from future musical participation.

Academic Motivation and Career Identity Development

A significant body of research has been devoted to investigating possible selves and their development in order to benefit student academic motivation and future careers. There is a clear correlation between school-focused possible selves and academic achievement in adolescence (Horowitz et al., 2020). Students of colour, low socio-economic status, and/or rural areas have been found to imagine fewer positive possible selves, affecting their academic and career aspirations (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Vosylis et al., 2020). Numerous identity-based

motivation frameworks for use with secondary school students have been developed, such as the Possible Selves Program (Hock et al., 2006) and the School-to-Jobs intervention (Oyserman, 2015). Plimmer and Schmidt (2007) argued that such approaches are holistic and encourage intrinsic values and beliefs. They focus on "who a person wants to be rather than what they want to do" (p. 65).

Students who are able to imagine a long-term future musical identity have found to be motivated to continue learning musical instruments (Evans & McPherson, 2015, 2017). Music career motivation and development (e.g., Bartleet et al., 2019; Bartleet et al., 2020; Miksza et al., 2019) and the relationship between musical possible selves and developing career identities (Bennett, 2012; Bennett & Freer, 2012; Freer & Bennett, 2012) has only been previously investigated with university music students. At the time of writing, there exists no known research examining the relationship between secondary school students' musical possible selves and future university study, or specialised music university study and career pathway programs for school students.

Parent Music Values

A child's developing musical identity is significantly shaped by the music values and behaviours of their parents (McPherson, 2009; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson et al., 2012). Practical and socio-emotional parental support together have been found to assist adolescents in achieving their imagined possible selves (Zhu et al., 2014). Through the perspective of "family script" theory (Byng-Hall, 1985, 1998) it was observed that parent music values and behaviours contribute to a plot of shared family expectations passed from parents to children, potentially for generations (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002). McPherson (2009) proposed a dynamic framework where the goals parents hold for their child's music education (including values) inform the parenting styles and practices they adopt, mediated by a feedback loop of child characteristics and sociocultural factors. Previous research has reported parents perceiving class music as a subject having high intrinsic task values but limited utility value for future education and career opportunities; a significant factor when parents and students selected elective subjects (McEwan, 2013; McPherson, 2006). No known research has specifically investigated the relationship between parent values and their children's choice to study music at university.

Methodology

Design

The data discussed in this article are drawn from my doctoral thesis (Goopy, 2020) that investigated adolescent boys' music values, uses, and identity work in a single-sex independent school. This qualitative study adopted a social constructivist view (Creswell, 2013) and sought to "understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it" (Hatch, 2002, p. 7). A single case study research design (Yin, 2014) was constructed employing narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and teacher-researcher reflexivity (Lincoln et al., 2011). Ethical clearance for human research related to this project was granted by The University of Queensland School of Music Ethical Review Panel (Project number: SoMAETH14A03/JG).

Narrative is reported as one of the most common methodologies for investigating possible selves and was appropriate for this investigation (Packard & Conway, 2006). Narrative inquiry is defined as "stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20) and narratives are used as method, as data, and as report (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Barrett & Stauffer, 2012). Narrative research aims to "prick the consciences of readers by inviting a re-examination of the values and interests undergirding certain discourses, practices, and institutional arrangements" (Barone, 2000, p. 193). Further, Barrett and Stauffer (2012) advocated that "story is also a means by which we might trouble certainty, and raise questions concerning the 'taken-for-granted'" (p. 1). In narrative inquiry, the lifeworlds and experiences of the participants and the researcher intersect and interweave resulting in a conjoining of storied accounts (Cleaver, 2009). Such an approach privileges subjectivity and the position of the researcher (Riessman, 2003, p. 332).

The perspectives and experiences of adolescent boys were the focus of this investigation. Two narrative vignettes are presented which restory and intertwine the accounts of the student, their parent, and the researcher. Student data were triangulated with parent interpretations providing further elaborations including influences from the family and outside school environment, and teacher-researcher reflexivity. This article reports on significant findings that emerged beyond the scope of the study's research questions relating to the intersections and conflicts of adolescent boys' possible selves, future university study, and parent values.

Research Setting

This investigation was conducted at an Australian independent combined primary and secondary boys' school that was my place of employment at the time. Students were typically from families of a high socio-economic status though the school also offered merit-based scholarships to disadvantaged students. The music curriculum and co-curriculum programs were known for their tradition of musical excellence, highly valued by the school community, well resourced, and taught by highly specialised music teachers. Several graduating students each year would pursue tertiary music study. The curriculum class music (also known as classroom or general music) program was informed by social constructivism (Wiggins, 2015), praxial music education (Elliott, 1995; Elliott & Silverman, 2015), and the lifework and philosophy of Zoltán Kodály (Kodály, 1974, 2019). An example of pedagogy and curriculum used in this context can be found in the unit textbook by Goopy (2008).

Participants

The larger doctoral study involved 21 participants: 10 Year 12 students and their parents(s). The students were all male, aged between 17 and 18 years, and had demonstrated a continued and dedicated interest in studying music through the curriculum and co-curriculum programs. It was a research criterion that a parent of each student also participated in the study. All participants were provided with an information letter and gave both written and verbal consent before participating in data generation.

This article presents the narratives of two Year 12 music students, Conor and Elijah (pseudonyms). The narratives of these two boys were selected to draw attention to the intersections and conflict of adolescents' possible selves, future university study intentions, and parent values. I had taught Conor continuously since Year 10 and Elijah continuously since Year 9. In their final year of schooling, both boys studied and achieved very highly in curriculum music and music extension, and participated in the school's leading concert band, big band, and non-auditioned and auditioned choirs. They also had a long history of individual tuition and high-level external music exam achievement on multiple instruments. In addition to their education in the tradition of Western European music, both students were enrolled in contemporary studio production lessons, teaching themselves skills on new instruments, and

composing original music. Their music education experiences to date had prepared both boys to continue with university music study if they chose. Their mothers had also received and valued school music education.

Data Generation

Data were generated using one-on-one semi-structured interviews incorporating artefact elicitation. Each participant completed a 45–60-minute individual interview conducted on the school campus in the final term of the year after all assessment results and feedback had been returned. The purpose of the interview was to investigate adolescent boys' identity work and the role of music and music education. I structured the interview according to four themes: personal background and music life history; perspectives of music; perspectives of class music; and projections of music in their future. All participants were asked the same questions, and parents were then asked to discuss their observations and perspectives of their son. The pre-existing relationship with both students and parents allowed for an immediate sense of trust between interviewer and interviewee, and enabled me to pursue lines of inquiry perhaps not possible with an unfamiliar researcher.

I chose to further stimulate interview conversations by incorporating a "draw and tell" artefact elicitation process. Participants were presented with three question templates on A4 paper in the second, third, and fourth sections of the interview: 1. What do you enjoy about music?; 2. What do you enjoy about class music?; and, 3. What will you do with music in your future? For each question, participants had a couple of minutes to draw a response followed by a series of questions to interrogate their ideas and meaning. This technique was inspired by Barrett et al. (2012) who used a similar process with young children in arts settings. Drawings have been used before in the tertiary music student setting examining possible selves (Bennett, 2012). Previous research has also reported difficulties generating data from young men who were hesitant to share their perspectives (Monaghan & Goodman, 2007; Simpson & Lewis, 2007) and it was hoped that eliciting drawings from participants would help to overcome such issues. It should be noted that no participants were hesitant to respond to questions, and conversations elicited from the drawings provided the richest responses in the interview transcripts. Interview transcripts also underwent a member checking process where participants were invited to amend or add to

their collected data. The combined research design of student and parent interviews incorporating artefact elicitation and teacher-researcher reflexivity provided numerous avenues for the triangulation of data.

Data Analysis

Data were interpreted and findings presented using a two-fold approach to narrative inquiry: *narrative analysis* and *analysis of narratives* (Polkinghorne, 1995). In narrative analysis, "researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). This process of reorganising the stories into a general framework is also known as "restorying" and ideas in the plot are connected by links provided by the researcher (Creswell, 2013, p. 74). For this article, two narrative vignettes (or scenes) have been selected to provide insight into the intersections and conflicts between adolescent boys' developing musical identities and possible selves. The voices of participants are italicised. The title of each narrative is the name of the student followed by a subtitle that is an influencing parent quote. Following the feature vignettes is the paradigmatic analysis of the two narratives which examines common themes that emerged in the stories as data. The findings of the inquiry are interrogated against existing relevant literature.

Narrative Vignette Analysis

Conor: *"This is his gap degree while he decides what he wants to do"*

Music has a strong presence and multiple roles in Conor's projection of his possible self. He responds in two parts to the drawing question, "What will you do with music in your future?" (see Figure 1). The top right drawing in the figure represents a recording studio mixing desk and the lower left reveals a microphone on stage ready for a headline performance.
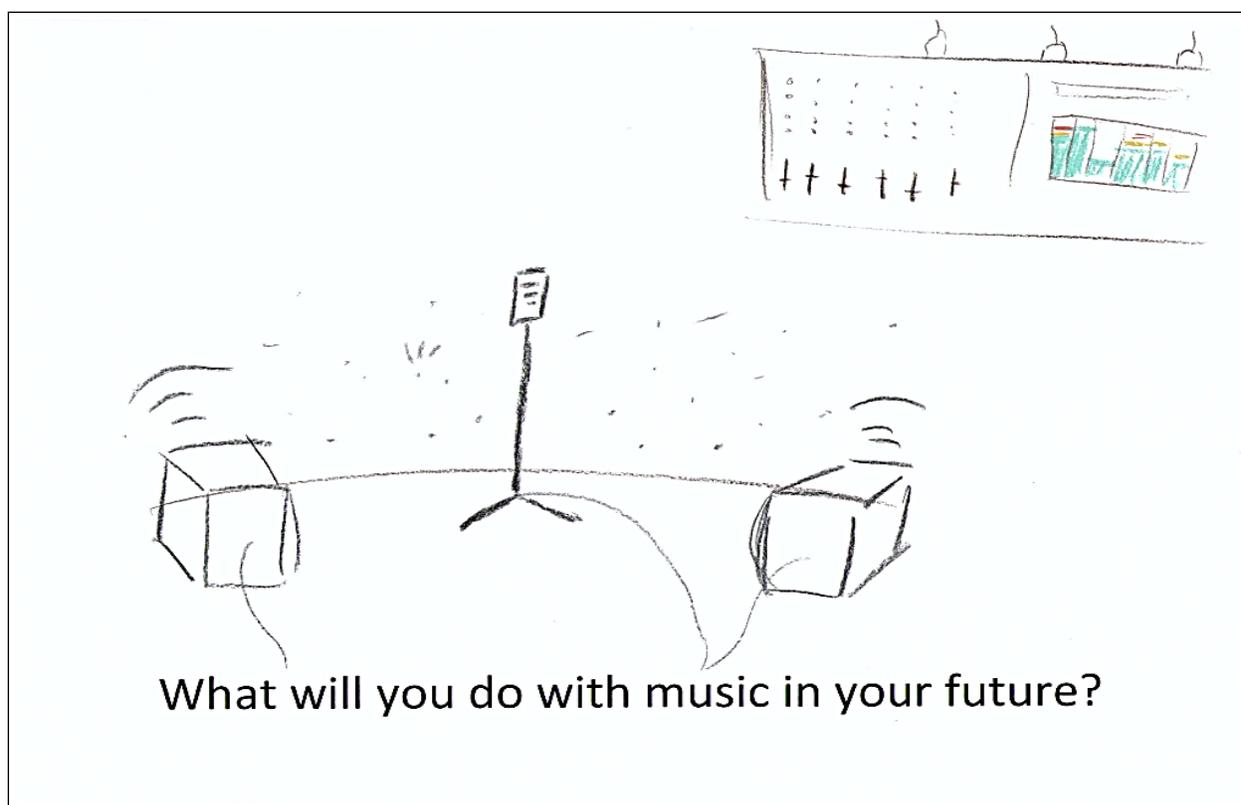
Figure 1. Conor's drawing in response to the question, "What will you do with music in your future?"

Conor describes the top right mixing desk with excitement. *"I'd really love to go and run my own studio. Knowing what I've experienced and how much fun I've had, it's just exciting being in the studio and making music. I'd really love to do that as a career."*

While music has featured throughout Conor's life, his goal for a career in music is rather recent. *"It's only really manifested in the past 3, 4 months or so…. Before then I was really 'What if I do this? What if I do that?'"* In discussing his post-school options, he says, *"I didn't really have any clear pathways to what I wanted to do. Medicine's been the main thing, like going into surgery…. I find it really fascinating that you can hack someone's bones apart with a grinder and call it a job."* I asked Conor where his interest in medicine had come from. *"There's a lot of family in the medical practice…. and they said to me, 'You could go into medicine if you want, you've got potential to do it'…. The one thing I've said going into Year 12, was as long as I'm doing music, I'll be fine."*

Studying class music has supported Conor's musical possible self by exposing him to a range of music careers. He says, *"It's given me a broader perspective on everything you can do. Originally, I thought you're a musician you're standing on front of a stage…. whereas you've got the lead singer, but he can't do anything without the guitarist. The guitarist can't do anything without the drummer. The drummer can't do anything without the audio engineers, and they can't do anything without the technicians…. They're not all secure… but there's a lot more jobs than I thought."*

Conor's imagined future features tension between his *"love"* for music and perceived financial instability. Medicine is typically regarded as a high-income professional position in society, whereas the music industry is viewed as having questionable financial security. Conor remembers too well living through financial hardship. *"I grew up under financial difficulty. There was a point when we were living week to week just on pay cheques. I'd want to be able to provide for my family really, and just not have to be stressed all the time about money…. I'd still love to be having financial security, so medicine is still a viable option at this point in time, but I want to go into the music industry because I love it…. It's hard, I'd have to enjoy what I'm doing, or the money wouldn't be worth it."*

Conor's mother, Anna, is a school music teacher and has been a significant model and source of musical support. She supported Conor electing class music because "*A, I'm a musician. B, it's because it's what he wanted to do."* While studying music at school is highly valued by Anna, a career pathway dedicated to music is not. The past difficult financial experiences of the family overshadow Anna's enthusiasm for Conor to study music at university. She says, *"This is his gap degree while he decides what he wants to do."* I knew that a "gap year" referred to a year-long break from study between school and university, however, I was unfamiliar with the expression *"gap degree"* and I ask her to explain what she means. *"Well, you have a gap year, he's filling it in with three years of a degree because he wants to study and this time in his life when he's got no other commitments, no girlfriend, no money commitments, no nothing…. Because let's face it, if he's going to be a backstage person, a roadie or whatever, night gigs are not conducive to family relationships."*

Despite Anna's support for music to play a role in Conor's life, dedicated music tertiary study and a career are viewed as being incompatible with adulthood and its responsibilities. Anna's views of music university study and careers work in direct opposition to her value of school music education which has supported Conor's musical identity construction. There now exists a conflict between Conor's imagined possible musical self and his mother's values. A compromise has been reached to delay adult responsibilities with music filling this *"gap"*.

Elijah: *"If I didn't have an input, probably he would be a different person"*

Elijah's narrative presents another perspective. While he does not identify as a "musician", music has a significant and evolving role in his identity construction. Ella (Elijah's mother) describes her son's use of music at home where *"music is everything"* and entrenched in his everyday behaviours. In speaking about his future beyond school, Elijah believes, *"the ultimate goal of school is to set you up for your life, your future and career".* He had previously expressed a desire in pursuing tertiary music study, though now describes a recent refocus in his aspirations from music being his *"passion"* to a *"side interest."*

After school, Elijah now intends to pursue a career in medicine. Despite freely engaging with the other two drawing questions, he spoke directly to the question, "What you will do with music in your future?" and did not draw. Out of all students and drawing questions in the study, Elijah's response to this question was the only one left blank. *"My future with music isn't getting famous, well actually don't hold me to that, but I don't think I'd ever transfer my entire life from medicine to music. I think it's always going to be medicine-focused, and music is always going to be a side interest. What I'm going to do with music is just keep composing, keep experimenting, keep discovering myself and what I enjoy with the whole concept of music. I plan to release my music online, to find my niche audience, and to compose for them…. Music is a hobby of mine, it's probably my biggest hobby, and it's important because it's how I have fun…. But what I want to do with my life won't change too much, because, as I said, I do enjoy medicine more than music now."* Elijah's response reveals that he does not plan to change his musical behaviours, but rather he has renegotiated the value and role that music will have in his possible self.

I asked Elijah what influenced his decision to turn from pursuing music at university to medicine. *"I think the real turning point for me doing medicine happened in Year 11. I had a massive year where I was just unsure whether I should follow what my most passionate thing was, which was music, or to do something that was more secure."* He says that his pathway beyond school was clarified in Year 12 as a result of greater exposure to adults' lives. *"I don't feel the same way in Year 12, this year. Being exposed to real life and to a lot of adults has showed me that a lot of my* mum's friends [emphasis added] *are actual doctors. You could say if they were all musicians maybe I'd be more into music and maybe, but they've all been doctors and they have showed me the world of medicine, and I really like that world. In Year 11, if I was more passionate about music, which I was, that's changed. I'm more passionate about what a GP does than what a musician would do."* Despite Elijah's substantial music education and success and no experience with medicine, it is the influence of his mother's values and her endorsed role models that has caused a renegotiation of Elijah's possible musical self.

Ella's account exposes an active approach to intervene and alter Elijah's musical future towards a career that is perceived to be more stable and sensible. *" I had a lot of input to why I want him to have a degree in something else… and music as a hobby."* Ella's influence has been deliberately life altering. She says, *"Elijah always wanted to be a film composer. I always advised him, 'How are you going to be popular?…. Or, how do you know that people are going to hire you?' He always wanted to be a rich man. I said, 'Probably, then, you need to look at what avenue you work for your children.'…. If I didn't have an input, probably he would be a different person."*

Ella is aware of her manipulation of the situation, though her influence was founded on loving intentions. Parental persuasion underpinned by a perceived possible bleak financial future instead of financial stability was a convincing argument for Elijah to refocus his musical and life ambitions from music being a *"passion"* to a *"hobby"*. To persuade Elijah into what Ella perceives as a more secure pathway, he has been convinced that music study beyond school is not to be pursued. Elijah's response highlights the malleable nature of future musical identities from a boy where *"music is everything"* to a young man for whom music is a *"side interest."* This considerable amendment of Elijah's possible musical self is a direct result of parent influence fuelled by parent values.

Analysis of Narratives

The narratives reveal the vulnerability of adolescent boys' developing musical possible selves at the end of secondary school. It is clear from Conor and Elijah's stories that their parents do not value their sons studying music at university because of its perceived insecure career and life outcomes. The feature vignettes draw attention to how parent values can inform parents' interactions with their sons and may support or disrupt their sons' developing music possible selves.

The Vulnerability of Adolescent Boys' Musical Possible Selves

Despite Conor and Elijah's longstanding musical experience and success, their narratives demonstrate the fragility of developing adolescent musical identities which interact and compete with other components of their self-image. The end of secondary school forces students to make decisions about their future and is a time when young people re-evaluate the role of music in their lives. Such a time can support the continuation or disruption of a developing musical possible self. Adolescents' identity development may conflict with their and others' expectations of adult life and may cause an amendment of their musical identities or ongoing tension until resolved. This critical stage in their identity development can reshape their musical possible selves and have life-changing consequences.

In the featured narratives, fears of risky future employment overshadowed a long-term future in music. In the case of Conor, a conflict existed between his future musical and financial aspirations. This economic fear was fuelled by personal experience growing up and inherited from his mother's and possibly society's values towards music careers. Conor's compromise to this tension was to pursue music as what his mother calls his *"gap degree."* In this case, the reference by Anna implied that university music study is merely a temporary phase while valid study options are realised. For Elijah, his mother Ella took much more drastic action in disrupting and reshaping her son's musical identity through active campaigning and the recruitment of others to act as convincing role models. She even admits that without her intervention, Elijah probably would have pursued university music study beyond school. Even though both boys provided resistance to their mothers' influence to varying degrees, these

narratives demonstrate the responsiveness of adolescent boys' musical possible selves at the end of secondary school.

These findings support the tension between positive hopes and negative fears previously reported by Schnare et al. (2012) in adult instrumentalists. In the stories of these two adolescent boys, they hoped for opportunities to continue their passion for music through a dedicated career though fearful of risky employment prospects. Musical possible selves have been previously investigated in choral (Freer, 2009, 2010), instrumental (Schnare et al., 2012; Varvarigou et al., 2014), and tertiary settings (Bennett & Freer, 2012; Freer & Bennett, 2012), whereas the stories of Conor and Elijah provide initial insight into how adolescent boys negotiate their developing musical possible selves at the end of secondary school when considering university study.

Parent Values Towards University Music Study

While both Anna and Ella valued school music education, they did not highly value their sons studying music at university. Tertiary music study was regarded as incompatible with the perceived goal of a university education leading to secure employment. A future career in music was regarded by parents to be a risky pursuit: low paying, insecure, overly competitive, and not compatible with family life. The possible careers described in music represented a narrow view of the music industry and were labelled as singular roles, such as a performer, producer, composer, music teacher, rather than a portfolio of music activities. Strategies on how to achieve a career in music were not clearly articulated. A discussion of the value of tertiary music study to improve one's quality of life was absent.

These findings support previously reported parent values of school music being an enjoyable subject but not useful for future careers (McEwan, 2013; McPherson, 2006; McPherson & O'Neill, 2010). They confirm the findings of Yun Dai and Schader (2002) who reported on the evolving nature of parents' music learning beliefs and values in correlation to their child's age and musical development. It is important to note that higher education institutions are working to prepare their graduates for the challenges of musicians' work (Bartleet et al., 2019), however, this support needs to extend to secondary school students, parents, and teachers. Further research is also required to interrogate the value and purpose of tertiary music education more broadly.

Parent Values Can Shape Developing Adolescent Musical Possible Selves

The findings reveal that while school music education has the potential to positively shape and support adolescents' musical possible selves, the values parents hold towards music careers can hold greater influence and even act as a barrier. Decisions regarding future study and careers at the end of secondary school represent a critical juncture in adolescents' developing musical possible selves, and parents yield great influence in supporting or disrupting their children's musical aspirations.

Both Anna and Ella attempted to reshape their son's aspirations towards a music career and music more broadly. Parents also recruited others to promote their values to serve as irresistible models of successful adult life. Ella's intervention reshaped Elijah's values from *"music is everything"* to *"side interest."* The impact of Anna's efforts to reshape Conor's music values resulted in his pursuit of tertiary music being labelled his *"gap degree"* before studying medicine. While the interventions of different families played out in different ways, the influence of both was deliberate and significant. These actions were in no way intended as malicious, but rather protective and motivated by genuine care.

While previous research has noted the influence of parent values on developing musical identities (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; McPherson, 2009), these narratives shed light on the consequential impact of this guidance. The stories also highlight the importance of teachers including parents in music tertiary study preparation. This is previously unreported in known music and music education research.

Recommendations

Salient and Elaborate Musical Possible Selves

The transition between secondary school and university study can cause significant re-evaluation of adolescent boys' musical identities and possible selves. Progression to university music study requires the development of salient and elaborate musical possible selves (King & Hicks, 2007), such as an understanding, commitment, and plan for music employment. In order for school students to pursue a career in music, they need to be able to confidently imagine a positive

musical future and, importantly, be equipped with realistic and achievable strategies on how to achieve. Research demonstrates fears can be healthy motivators in possible selves, and a balance needs to exist between the tension of rewards and challenges that a music career can provide (Schnare et al., 2012). This article offers the story of two students in one setting, and further research is needed to understand the developing musical identities of adolescents across a broad range of contexts and populations.

I suggest practical support and resources are also needed for adolescents, parents, and teachers to help demystify music and related non-traditional careers. Curriculum could be modified to reflect the portfolio nature of music careers and to develop skills found to be important in musicians' work such as entrepreneurship, business management, digitalisation, market understanding, and resilience (Bartleet et al., 2019). Partnerships with tertiary music students have also proven to provide effective role models for adolescents' development of possible musical selves (Varvarigou et al., 2014). It is also recommended that a specialist music pathway program is offered to students.

Parent Values Towards Music University Study and Careers

Parents are powerful influencers and can reshape their children's developing musical possible selves to align with their own values and aspirations. Further examination of parent values towards music university study and careers would allow families and schools to better support students in their career identity development. Investigations into specific factors that influence positive and negative parent music values are warranted, such as their prior music experiences, socio-economic status, geographic location, gender, music genre preferences, and the role of other competing parent values.

Music Pathway and Career Education

While recent research has examined how to prepare tertiary music students for sustainable careers (Bartleet et al., 2019; Bartleet et al., 2020; Tolmie, 2020), young people begin imagining and planning their careers in secondary school. Secondary schools invest significant energy in assisting students and families to plan study and work pathways. Despite this support, the recent Australian government review of senior secondary pathway education, *Looking into the Future*

(Shergold et al., 2020), reported school career education as "inadequate" and as presenting a narrow view of the workforce. Families in this study did not articulate an understanding of the complexity of music careers (Bartleet et al., 2019) and pathway possibilities. Further research is needed to understand how teachers and schools can more effectively prepare students for music careers and life beyond school.

I suggest that students and their advisers (careers councillors and parents) would benefit from a music pathway and career education program. Such an education program would act as a "musical roadmap" (Oyserman et al., 2004) and primarily aim to support adolescents in imagining and achieving a multitude of meaningful positive musical possible selves beyond school, including but not limited to music study and careers. This program could be an expansion of the frameworks proposed by Freer (2009), Creech et al. (2020), and Oyserman (2015). Such a program has the potential to amend imagined musical identities from being unattainable to achievable.

Conclusion

This article draws attention to the intersections and conflicts between adolescents' musical possible selves, university study, and parent values. There has been much debate devoted to the place and value of music education in schools, including accessibility, inclusion, neuroscientific benefits, aesthetic appreciation, and lifelong participation, but recently little consideration has been given to musicians' work and those school students who may aspire to dedicate their lives to a career in music. All students should have opportunities to have music in their lives and be informed when making consequential life decisions regarding their musical futures. There currently exists an untapped opportunity to support students, parents, and teachers through music pathway education programs in schools.

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