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Children's identity work in daily singing-based music classes: A case study of an Australian boys' school

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Abstract

Music can be a powerful activity and resource in a child's ongoing identity construction. Rather than something that people have, musical identities are understood to be something people enact and continually work on. The correlation between musical identities and developing music skills raises serious questions regarding the possibilities and responsibilities for school music education and music teachers to positively contribute to children's emerging identities. This study investigates how daily singing-based music classes at an Australian boys' school shape and support children's identity work. Research was conducted using one-on-one semi-structured interviews incorporating a "draw and tell" artefact elicitation technique with seven students in Year 3. All students were engaged in their fourth year of Kodály-inspired music education as part of the school curriculum. Findings indicate that singing, singing games, playing the recorder, writing activities, musician models, and thinking musically positively contributed to boys' identity work. These daily school music practices: provided a resource for their identity work; fostered a high value for learning in, about, and through music; developed musical proficiency; ignited interest in learning musical instruments; and facilitated the entanglement of children's musical worlds. Boys' future identity work was supported by assisting the construction of musical possible selves and encouraging the continuation of music learning. This case study exemplifies music as a process and resource for children's ongoing identity construction, the contributions of school music education to identity development, and the potential of singing-based music education to positively shape and support children's musical identity work.

Keywords

Music can have a substantial influence on identity construction. Musical identities are understood to be something that people do, rather than something they have (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2017; Hargreaves et al., 2016, 2017), and further research is needed to understand how school-aged children perform their emerging musical identities. Research has documented the reciprocal relationship between developing music skills and musical identities (Hargreaves et al., 2018), and the potential for school music education and music teachers to contribute to children's musical identity work (Lamont, 2002). A daily music program presents a unique opportunity to capture the contributions of school music to children's identity development. This article investigates how primary school children's identity work is shaped and supported by daily singing-based school music classes at an Australian boys' school.

Theoretical Framework

Foundations for identity development theory were provided in the seminal works of Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966). The concept of identity work examines the underlying processes of identity construction (Brown, 2015). The initial definition of identity work is often credited to Snow and Anderson (1987) and numerous researchers have since built upon and advanced its theory (e.g., Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008, 2016). For this study, I have adopted the definition proposed by Caza et al. (2018) where identity work "consists of the cognitive, discursive, physical, and behavioural activities that individuals undertake with the goal of forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, revising, or rejecting collective, role, and personal selfmeanings within the boundaries of their social contexts" (Caza et al., 2018, p. 895).

The theory of identity work reflects the nature of musical identities as reported in the literature. The first significant text on musical identities was published by MacDonald et al. in 2002, and the field has significantly expanded since that time (cf. MacDonald et al., 2017). Scholars acknowledge that individuals embody and enact multiple musical identities situated within social and cultural contexts that constantly develop and evolve across the lifespan.

Musical identities are a collection of past, present, and projected future and possible musical self-stories (Goopy, in press). They can be categorised by social and cultural roles (identities in music), and the ways music may form part of other aspects of the self-image (music in identities) (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2017; Hargreaves et al., 2016, 2017; Hargreaves et al., 2002). Music can be a central component of an individual's identity work even though the role of "musician" is not adopted (Hallam, 2017).

Musical identities are understood to be "social" and "performative" (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2017; Hargreaves et al., 2016, 2017). Rather than being simply a product, music is an activity that people do (Elliott, 1995; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Small, 1998). Similarly, musical identities are something that people perform, rather than something they have; they can be a powerful activity and resource in identity construction (Barrett, 2011, Barrett, 2017). DeNora (1999, 2000) argued music is a technology of the self used in everyday life to "elaborate, to fill out and fill in" (DeNora, 2000, p. 74) the "continuous tale of who one is" (p. 65) to themselves and others. Elliott and Silverman (2015, 2017) advocated that musical identity work is a component of personhood and can offer lifelong experiences of human flourishing.

The study of musical identities is relevant to education settings because of the reciprocal relationship between developing musical identities and musical skills (Hargreaves et al., 2018; Lamont, 2017). Lamont (2002) reported that teachers and schools could shape musical identities. Negative music education experiences can cause individuals to identify as "unmusical" as adults (Ruddock & Leong, 2005), reflecting the importance of schools to provide positive music education experiences. Recent studies investigating identity in music education have focussed on teachers (e.g., Chua & Welch, 2021; Huovinen & Frostenson, 2021; Kastner et al., 2019; Pellegrino, 2015; Yang, 2021), whereas specific research on primary school children's developing musical identities is limited and has generally been situated within the United Kingdom.

It is important to consider the learning context when examining children's musical development (Lamont, 2016). Lamont (2002) found that extra-curricular musical activities were more influential in developing positive musical identities than the curriculum music program. Most children associated being a musician with musical skills, such as instrumental performance skills and technical knowledge, and the ability to perform a variety of musical roles such as teaching, singing, and playing (Lamont et al., 2003). Children with higher

musical skills were able to name the multiple roles of being a musician, affirming the relationship between the development of musical skills and musical identities. Furthermore, inclusive, rather than exclusive, music programs promote more positive musical identities (Lamont, 2017). Lamont (2011) argued for a perspective of music education that aims to develop musical identities by teaching skills adults find valuable for lifelong music making, including the technical aspects of music making, staff notation literacy, strategies for practising, and information on musical pathways beyond school.

Singer identity is relevant to this investigation as the research setting employed a daily singing-based music pedagogy. Welch (2017) reported that singing confidence and ability are laid in the primary school years, and are foundational to adult singer identity. Drawing on specific data from Sing Up, the National Singing Program in England, it was found that participants aged between 7 and 10 years were more likely to have advanced singing skills and a positive singer identity than those not involved (Welch et al., 2010).

The earliest records of daily singing-based education in schools originate from the Catholic Church. Under Pope Sylvester I (314–336), the *Schola Cantorum* (Song School) was established in Rome for the training of adult and boy singers (Mould, 2007). The most well-known song schools today are arguably the English Cathedral Choir Schools. Barrett (2010) provided a cultural psychology perspective of being and becoming a cathedral chorister and identified that expertise was developed in this setting by focused goals, expert tuition, frequent and deliberate practice, multiple models of expertise, and a structured and supportive community of practice. The modern introduction of girl choristers in the 1990s has amended the long-established identity work of English cathedral choirs, including tradition, sound, and pedagogy (Owens & Welch, 2017).

This research setting is inspired by the Hungarian singing primary schools underpinned by the music education principles of Zoltán Kodály. In the mid-twentieth century, Kodály envisioned the rebirth of Hungarian musical culture and the shaping of individuals and communities through choral music education (Nemes, 2017). Kodály (1974) wrote, "If one were to attempt to express the essence of this education in one word, it could only be—*singing*" (p. 206). The success of daily singing lessons at a Kecskemét primary school beginning in 1950, particularly the non-musical benefits (Goopy, 2013), saw the rise of hundreds of singing primary schools across Hungary (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015; Ittzés, 2006).

Adaptations of Hungarian music education have been developed worldwide, including in Australia (Pascoe et al., 2005). Contemporary literature regarding intensive singing-based general music education in schools delivered by a specialist music teacher is lacking.

The setting of this study warrants consideration of boys' musical identities. Boys' musical identities in the past have been identified as "at risk" (Lamont, 2002, p. 56), and significant research has been devoted to the "missing males" (Koza, 1993) in music and singing (Freer, 2007, 2010; Harrison, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Harrison et al., 2012; Watson et al., 2017). Research has also reported on the differences in music participation more broadly between genders during adolescence (Kelley, 2020; McPherson et al., 2015). Other studies (e.g., Barrett, 2012; Freer, 2015; Harrison & Young, 2017; Tafuri, 2008; Welch et al., 1996) have found that boys begin school with the same musical and singing competency as girls. Rather than gender or sex, it is the learning environment and others' values towards boys' musical engagement which is an important factor in musical development. Welch et al. (2012) reported that, generally, boys are slower than girls in their singing development during school, however, they can become significantly skilled if provided with ongoing and appropriate music education.

Research Questions

This article examines primary school children's identity work in daily singing-based music classes at an Australian boys' school and addresses the following research questions.

1. What daily school music activities shape and support students' identity work at an Australian boys' school?
2. How does daily school music shape and support these boys' identity work?
3. How does daily school music shape and support these boys' future identity work?

Methodology

Research Design

This article draws from a larger research study (Goopy, 2020) that investigated boys' music values, uses, and identity work in a single-sex independent school. Adopting a social constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2013), the study co-constructed perspectives on the

phenomenon through the intersecting worlds of the participants and my role as teacher-researcher. Hatch (2002) reminded us that it is undesirable for researchers and participants to be distant when co-constructing subjective realities and new knowledge. The research setting represented a single-case (holistic) study design (Yin, 2014) and "a unique example of real people in real situations" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). 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).

Research Setting

This investigation took place at my place of employment at the time; a non-selective Australian independent boys' school for day and boarding students from Kindergarten to Year 12. At the time of data collection, the school consisted of approximately 1,500 students, mostly from families with high socioeconomic status. Students were encouraged to pursue a balanced involvement in academic, spiritual, sporting, and cultural activities. Music was highly valued by the school community and had a well-resourced curriculum, ensemble, and tuition programs.

Daily Music Lessons

All students in Kindergarten to Year 3 engaged in 30-minute daily music lessons. Over the week, students received four class music lessons (also known as classroom or general music) with me and one complementary choral lesson with a specialist singing teacher. The program aimed to facilitate music being a valued everyday activity in boys' lives now and into the future. Classes were informed by Australian Kodály-inspired aural and singing-based pedagogy. Kodály (2019) exclaimed, "a man without music is incomplete. …. You cannot nourish a child well if you give him something to eat only once a week. So also must music be taken every day" (p. 203).

Students completed various activities in each lesson where they listened, moved, performed (sang and played instruments), read and wrote notation, and created music. Over the course of the program, students had learned hundreds of songs from various cultures (including rhymes, fingerplays, folksongs, song tales, canons, action songs, games, and dances), choral works, and experienced more complex Western European art music. Emphasis was placed on developing the child as the singing and thinking musician, and instruments as resources for

further artistic expression. At the time of data collection in Term 2, Year 3 students were preparing songs focused on la pentatonic tonality and syncopated rhythms. By Term 4, these students were working with diatonic (major and minor) repertoire. Students began learning the recorder at the beginning of Year 2 and were motivated by an achievement belt system. After encouragement through the daily music program, many students had enrolled in further individual music tuition, and there were regular opportunities for showcase performances during lessons.

Participants

The Year 3 generalist classroom teachers provided participant information and consent forms to all students in their classes who had attended the school since Kindergarten. These boys were in their fourth year of experiencing daily school music with me as their teacher and were the pilot cohort of the program. Students were advised by their classroom teacher that the study was voluntary, and it was made clear that participation would not advantage or disadvantage their schoolwork. Being a part of the study required both student and parent consent. Seven Year 3 male students (8 years of age) and their nominated parent returned consent forms and all seven students participated in the study.

Methods and Techniques

Students completed individual semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) with me as the teacher-researcher. Boys were interviewed "to give voice to their own interpretations and thoughts rather than rely solely on adult interpretations of their lives" (Eder & Fingerson, 2003, p. 33). Three overarching artefact elicitation "Draw and Tell" questions (Barrett et al., 2012) were used to stimulate and guide discussion on participants' perspectives on music (1. What do you enjoy about music?), daily class music (2. What do you enjoy about class music?), and music in their future (3. What will you do with music in your future?). Boys were presented with the relevant A4 drawing template for each question and provided a couple of minutes to draw their response using supplied colour pencils, felt pens, and twist-up crayons. Some boys chose to speak while drawing, while others finished their drawing before speaking. Following their initial response, students were then asked follow-up questions that were used to discover the deeper meanings behind their drawings. Having taught the participants for the previous four years, I was able to draw upon these experiences in my follow-up questions. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were

spread across Term 2. Recordings of the interviews were professionally transcribed, and participants completed a member checking process with the option to amend their transcript and drawings.

Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed to understand the phenomenon and identify emergent themes. An inductive analysis approach was used and framed by the three research questions (Hatch, 2002). Each interview transcript was read and carefully coded. The transcripts were continually revisited as the coding was refined and collapsed into themes. No more than six themes were developed for each research question. Each theme is described using a narrative discussion with interweaving quotes from student interview transcripts and some supporting drawings. The voices of all student participants are included in the findings. A discussion follows with an overview of the study's significant findings and how these findings support and challenge existing literature (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021).

Findings

This study found a range of daily school music activities that shaped and supported students forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising their musical identities. The findings for the first research question describe these activities from the perspectives of the students, and the findings for the second and third research questions describe how these activities contribute to boys' identity work.

RQ1: What Daily School Music Activities Shape and Support Students' Identity Work at an Australian Boys' School?

Students reported that singing, singing games, playing the recorder, writing activities, musician models, and thinking musically were the most significant daily school music activities that contributed to their ongoing identity construction.

Singing

Singing was overwhelmingly the most significant aspect of the program that students used to perform their identities. Christian even described classes as simply "singing." All boys positively commented on the role of singing as an individual and shared experience in and

beyond class. Jack drew himself sitting at his desk "singing," "smiling," and having "fun" for the question, "What do you enjoy about class music?" (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Jack "singing," "smiling," and having "fun" in class music.


What do you enjoy about class music?
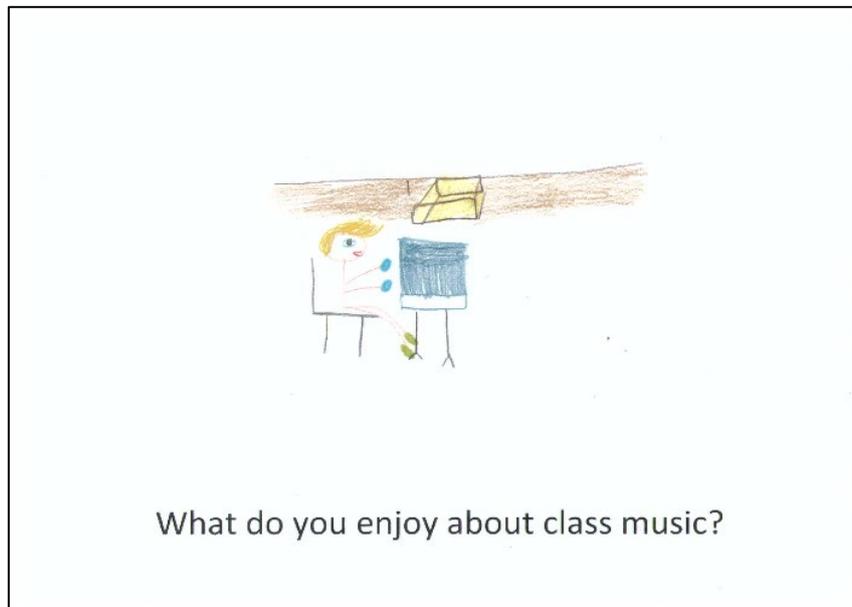
Singing seeped into daily school life as an activity itself and an accompanying role to other musical and everyday activities. Charlie exclaimed that singing in class music "wakens our voice up," and he sings songs from class at "the end of craft, morning tea, lunch, and end of school …. I sometimes talk to boys with songs." He is not allowed to sing in class except "in my mind" and during "free play." Sometimes Charlie is even able to get away with "whisper singing." Boys also reported singing songs beyond class repertoire, including from school ensembles, instrumental lessons, radio, TV shows such as The Voice and X-Factor, movies, their parents' music, and their own creations.

"Songs from school" also were also sung in the home environment. Singing was used as a musical resource for constructing the self-to-self and self-to-others, especially in the car, with friends and family doing everyday activities, and individual performances to the family. Jack said, "I sing quite a lot" at home and described singing as "creative" as "you can sing whatever you want." With his brother at home, Owen said, "we really have nothing to do so sometimes we sing songs."

Singing Games

The children consistently mentioned games as a positive aspect of music class. Games were an opportunity for shared musical "fun" and often healthy "competition" between classmates. At the time of interviewing, the game of Apple Tree featured during lessons. Christian exclaimed that he was "excited" to play the game which involved "passing the ball on the beat and basically not having the ball land on you when it's the last beat." Singing featured as a common reason for students' enjoyment of the games in class; it was a normalised activity. Julian said he enjoyed "that we can sing and we can see who is the winner." Another featured game during the interview period was Obwisana, a Ghanan stone passing game. Logan described the process of passing and "then what happens is you start singing" (See Figure 2). Owen said games are important "because it's like soccer, you're working as a team and you get to know each other more .... If you don't know anyone you will have no friends and no one to play with." Games in the music classroom provided an opportunity for building community and understanding the world in and through singing.

Figure 2: Logan's drawing of the class playing the Ghanan stone passing game, Obwisana.



What do you enjoy about class music?
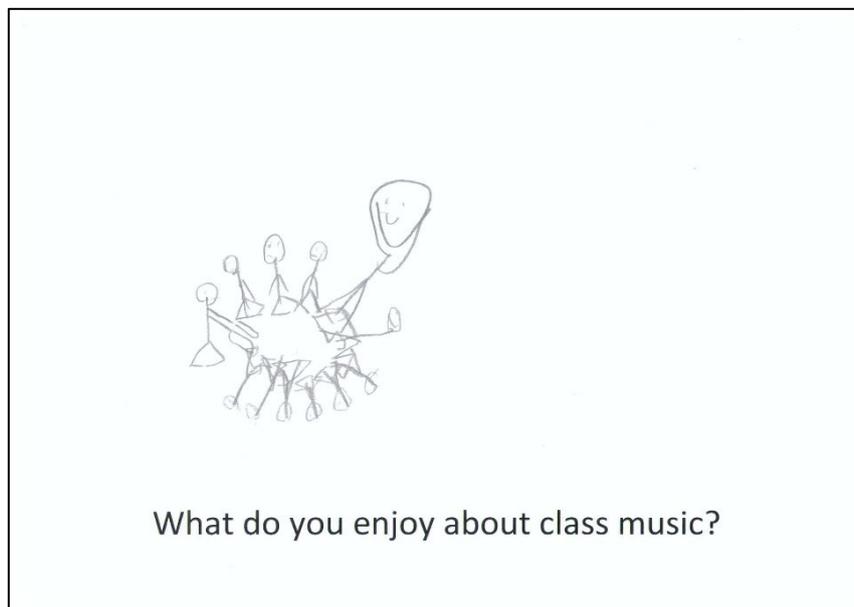
Playing Recorder

All students, except for Logan, spoke enthusiastically about their experiences playing recorder. "When I do the one that we just did now, it sounds really perfect" (Levi). They were extrinsically motivated by an achievement belt system. Once students were able to perform songs of a certain level, they were rewarded with a patterned ribbon that displayed at the

bottom of their recorder. Students often noted that the teacher recorder had all of the possible belts and was a constant reminder to students of potential achievement. Boys were so excited about learning, practising, and performing on recorder, and many had at least one additional recorder at home. Jack said that he had three recorders at home "because my friend gave me one and now my sister bought me one!" Christian drew achieving three belts on recorder as his response to what he enjoys about class music (See Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Christian's three recorder belts indicating his performance achievement.*
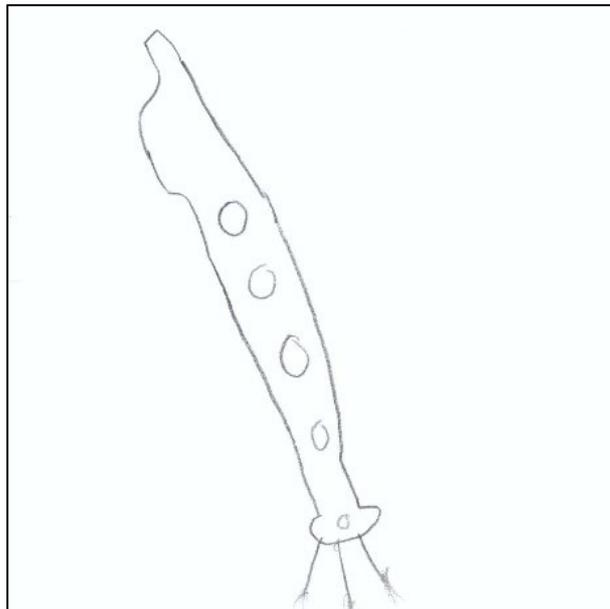
Playing the recorder was also seen as assisting students to learn general music performance skills. Not only did boys perform on the recorder songs that were sung in class, but also other songs from instrumental lessons. Julian reported that he enjoyed "learning songs that I know on the piano too …. The piano is the same as the recorder because we've got forte, piano double forte, mezzo forte, mezzo piano, double piano." Owen could also see that skills were transferrable from playing the recorder: "If I'm older and have another instrument like the saxophone or the flute I might be able to try the same thing."

Writing Activities

Alongside performing music, students also reported enjoying music writing activities in their workbooks, or "red books." These activities included rhythmic and melodic dictations, notating songs in stick and staff notation, and notating their own rhythmic patterns and melodies (See Figure 4). Charlie described enjoying the success of completing an 8-beat

rhythmic dictation and getting it "right." Jack also spoke about enjoying notating songs from class: "If you don't write the notes, you won't know the song." Jack also discussed how he makes up solfa melodies and lyrics and records that on paper for himself. Notation was seen a means to record and communicate music that boys enjoyed.

Figure 4: Charlie recounted writing rhythms and melodies in his "red book."
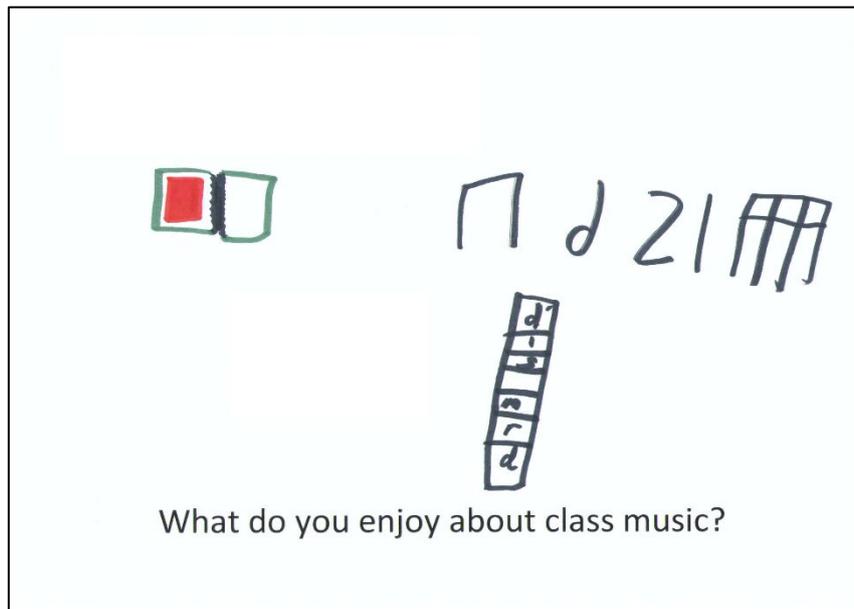
Musician Models

The daily music program also provided access to a range of musician models. These models included other students, the class music teacher (myself), the vocal teacher, and their instrumental teachers. Levi said, "when Julian started to sing, I wanted to be as good as him. Then I was thinking of getting singing lessons like Julian." Some boys also had brothers in other year levels, such as Charlie, and who reported playing and making music with his brother at home. Jack described me as a "good singer" and liked how I "pronounce the words and don't make any mistakes." Logan said I have a "good voice and you like to play that recorder." Owen said:

> I have a friend called Mr Goopy. He's very musical. He's really good at music. There's something called recorder and he's the master of it and he knows lots of songs. He can play really tricky things on recorder. He sings lots of hard songs. He's good at explaining things to us in music. He's also good at making friends.

Thinking Musically

Music classes also supported students' developing musical thinking skills. Singing and music making did not just occur out loud, but also "inside" their heads. Jack reported that he "sometimes hears … music and the words … in my head." When referring to pieces in his piano lessons, Levi said, "I sort of sing it in my head" and described it as "like hearing someone speak but I sang." He said that this even occurred during the interview: "When I drew that picture then I started in my head." The ability to memorise music and think in sound was actively encouraged in class through specific challenges and games including "inner hearing" songs while handsigning solfa or clapping rhythms. Gordon (1999, 2003) called this process of thinking in sound, audiation. The ability to audiate enabled students to relive and create music independently when they desired.

RQ2: How Does Daily School Music Shape and Support These Boys' Identity Work?

Findings indicate that students in this study use their learning experiences from daily school music to shape and support their identity construction. While no student articulated having an identity in music, all students described daily musical behaviours and experiences as part of their broader self-image. Music was an aspect of their identity work that they performed, rather than something they had. Responses from boys indicated that music and learning activities in different settings entangle and fuse together, including singing, playing instruments, and listening to music. While daily school music was one of many music learning settings in their lives, it is possible to pinpoint specific contributions from student responses. Daily singing-based music classes assisted boys' identity work in this setting by: (a) providing a resource for musical identity work; (b) fostering a high value for learning in, about, and through music; (c) developing proficiency in the discipline of music; (d) igniting interest in learning musical instruments; and, (e) facilitating the entanglement of music learning and activities beyond classes.

Providing a Resource for Identity Work

Singing served numerous functions in the identity work of these children. Singing was used for learning and self-improvement, self-regulation, aesthetic appreciation, an accompanying activity, a sharing activity, peer recognition, and imagining musical possible selves. Owen said that singing "can calm you down if you're angry … or worried." Levi was also "excited" and "happy" to sing to others in class because his peers "clap" and applaud his efforts which

"doesn't usually happen anywhere else" (See Figure 5). This was similar for Logan, though in the home environment where he was applauded by his mother. Julian, who also receives individual singing lessons, discussed singing opera at the Sydney Opera House as a goal in his musical future (discussed in response to Research Question 3).

Figure 5: Levi was "excited" and "happy" to sing to others in class.

What do you enjoy about music?
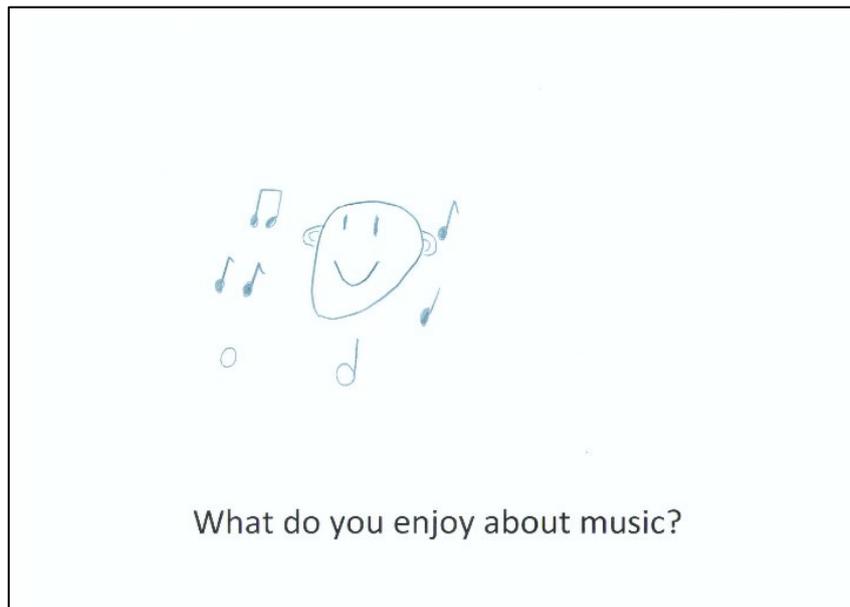
Fostering a High Value for Learning In, About, and Through Music

Daily school music fostered a high value for learning in, about, and through music. Every student interviewed described their music lessons as "fun" and as making them "happy." Logan said he benefited from daily music classes as they encouraged him to "keep learning" and this was important because "that's how you make me a better person, by learning." Julian said that he enjoys embracing musical problems and challenges as they allow him to "know more." Owen said, "I like testing myself without the paper or looking [at the music notation] to see if I know something, to see if I'm good at it or to see if I need to improve." Owen also said he would like daily music lessons to continue beyond Year 3 "because you get to learn new things."

Developing Proficiency in the Discipline of Music

Boys' high value for music learning was fuelled by a genuine desire to develop proficiency in the discipline of music. The school daily music program deliberately aimed to develop explicit music knowledge, skills, and understanding, and students supported this aim. Jack

said, "I want to get better at singing." Levi listened to other boys in the class sing—particularly he admired Julian—and used them as a model to improve his own singing. "I get to listen to people sing and [they] hear me sing and I can improve." Levi also spoke to his goals playing recorder, and said, "I want to achieve a goal by unlocking a good thing but first I need to get everything to the highest level I can."

Igniting Interest Learning Musical Instruments

Daily school music acted as a catalyst to ignite interest in learning musical instruments. The general music program was framed as a foundation for deeper and more specialised music learning. Upon demonstrated interest and success in daily music classes, students at different times were invited to consider additional singing, piano, or violin lessons. All interviewed students expressed great enthusiasm for additional vocal and/or instrumental learning opportunities. At the time of interviewing, Logan (piano) and Julian (voice and piano) were enrolled in individual music tuition at the school. Owen, Levi, and Christian had previously received piano lessons in younger grades though had to stop because "my mum couldn't afford it anymore" (Owen), "we were low on money," and lack of "time" (Levi). Christian explained that a previous classroom teacher encouraged him to stop lessons "because it was getting in the way of schoolwork." All three students discussed their desire to return to learning instruments in the future. Jack spoke passionately about starting to learn singing, guitar, and dancing, and these lessons commenced shortly after the interview. Charlie spoke about the numerous instruments he has at home and the informal learning that occurs within the family environment.

Facilitating the Entanglement of Music Learning and Activities Beyond Classes

The significant and positive music education experiences in daily school music facilitated the entanglement of music learning and activities in boys' lives. All students recounted stories of their different music making and listening colliding with each other. Boys described practices from class (singing songs, playing recorder, writing notation) being performed in other classes and around the school, and at home alone, with friends, and family. They all also listened to music from school in conjunction with music from home. Likewise, the children would also bring music from home and music tuition into class to perform to their peers. Boys did not perceive music in their lives as confined to their originating settings, and they mixed and matched music making and listening throughout their day. For these Year 3 boys,

music was a valued and normalised component of their identity work that existed beyond the curriculum.

RQ3: How Does Daily School Music Shape and Support These Boys' Future Identity Work?

Assisting the Construction of Musical Possible Selves

Daily school music in conjunction with other musical influences shaped and supported young boys' projected future identity work by assisting students to imagine musical possible selves. All students in this study reported music as having a role in their future identity work, though the significance and elaboration of possible musical selves differed between individuals. Julian was the only student to articulate a future occupational music identity saying that he would "like being an opera singer" at the Sydney "Opera House." Throughout his interview, the combination of singing-based daily music, individual vocal tuition, and visiting the Sydney Opera House with family contributed to the construction of this musical future. For all other boys, future musical identity work co-existed alongside other professional occupation and activity goals. Levi imagined that a "happy life" involved conducting experiments as a scientist while listening to music. He said, "music and science are not the same, but I like listening to music, I like doing science, so combine them together" (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Levi imagined a "happy life" with music and science co-existing together.

What will you do with music in your future?
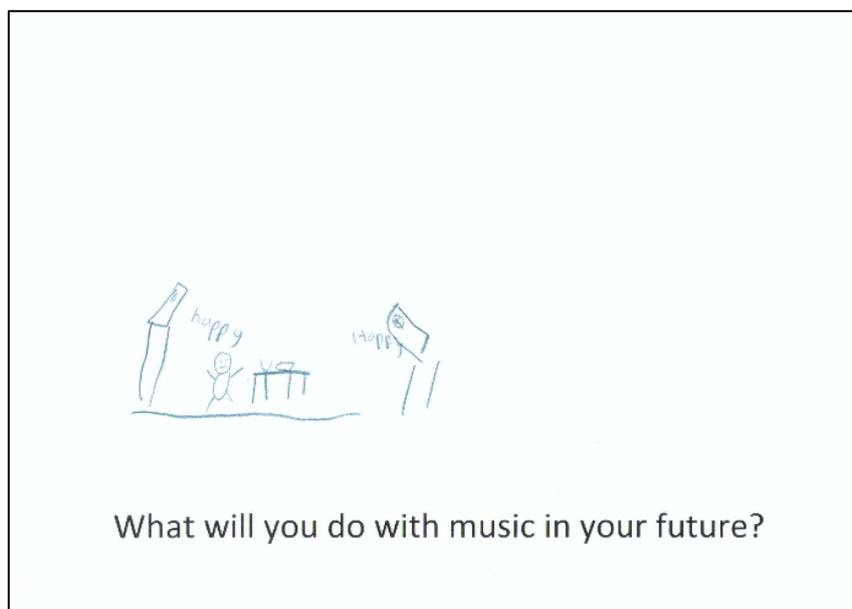
Charlie imagined being a medical doctor as he "likes to save people" and being "in a band … playing the guitar" with "my friends … in a stadium." Jack also imagined singing and playing guitar while enjoying football and being a doctor. In his drawing, he drew himself performing on "X-Factor": "I'm up on the stage and there are flames going up" (See Figure 7).

Figure 7: Jack performing on a music performance reality TV show in his musical future.
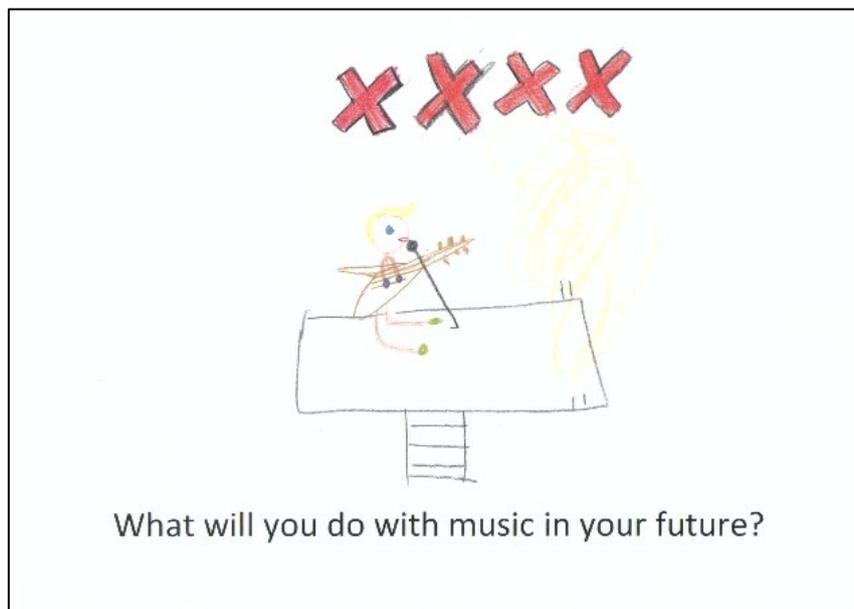

Owen said that he imagined in the future he would "sing and play and sometimes I will perform … on stage." He said that he would like to play drums: "I like how you have lots of things to do and it's not just doing strings. You can use your foot and it's like pushing down the accelerating thing on a car."

Encourages Continued Music Learning

Some boys identified continued learning in music as a useful strategy for achieving their future musical goals. Jack indicated that developing his singing and guitar skills were a goal in his musical future. He said, "I want to get better at singing" and "quite good" at playing guitar. He said that he wants to start learning "now" and will improve through "practice." Christian previously had learned piano through individual tuition though was advised by his classroom teacher to cease lessons due to interference in his school work. Despite this, he said in his future he would "probably go back to piano" (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Christian wishes to resume piano lessons in the future.

What will you do with music in your future?
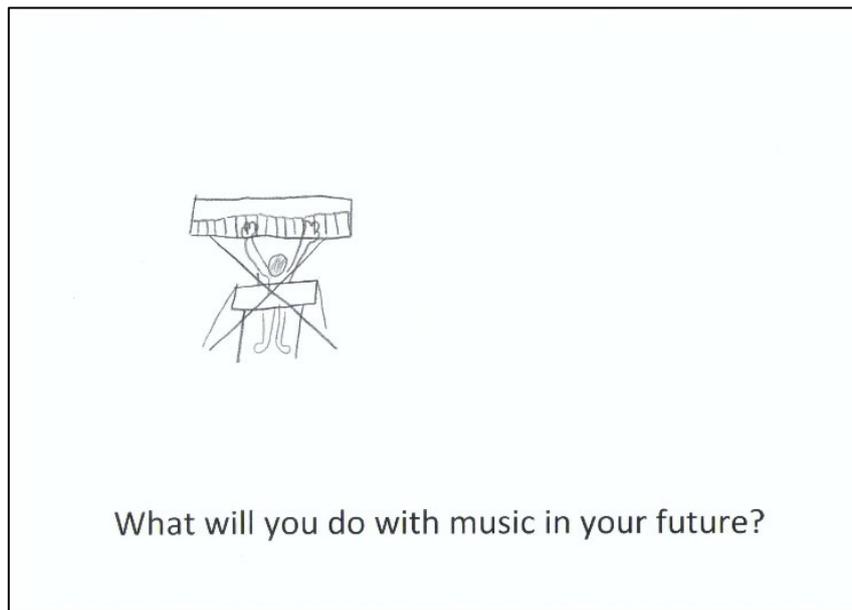
Discussion

Music as a Process and Resource for Children's Identity Work

Children in this study used music as a process and resource to construct their identities and share their identities to self and others (Barrett, 2017). For these boys, musical identities were not something they had but rather something they did (Hargreaves et al., 2017). This study captures the various musical doings of these children, including singing, playing instruments, playing singing games, writing and thinking musically, and musical development aspirations. Their perspectives and drawings demonstrate music having a role in their thoughts, speech, symbolic representation, and behaviours as they construct their collective, role, and personal identities (Caza et al., 2018).

The musical identities of children in this study could be described as works in progress. Students adopted the view that they would continue to learn and grow in and through music, and music held an important role in their ongoing identity construction. While no student self-identified as a "musician," music was clearly a significant component of their identity work (Hallam, 2017), and they were able to articulate elaborate future musical identities they aspire to hold. This study starts to fill the gap in research on children's identity work between early childhood (Barrett, 2011) and adolescence (Goopy, 2020) and augments the field of musical identity work.

The Contribution of School Music Education to Children's Musical Identity Work

This study calls attention to the early years of primary school as providing a ripe opportunity to positively contribute to children's ongoing identity construction and lay the foundations for adult musical participation. Daily music classes in this setting nurtured positive musical identities by providing a resource for identity work, promoting a high value for learning music, developing musical proficiency, igniting interest in learning musical instruments, and entangling children's musical worlds. Practices from class provided models and templates for musical activities and behaviours, including singing and playing instruments individually and with others, writing and creating music, and thinking musically. Learning activities in music also provided students with experiences and resources to help them understand themselves, others, and the world they were growing into. The potential of primary school music education to mediate positive musical identities has been previously reported (Hargreaves et al., 2018; Lamont, 2002), particularly within the UK (e.g., Lamont, 2017; Lamont et al., 2003; Welch, 2017; Welch et al., 2010), though this study is the first to examine the contributions of daily school music in an Australian primary school setting. Lamont (2002) previously argued that extra-curricular musical activities were the most influential on children's developing identities, whereas this study demonstrates the potential of intensive music curriculum classes for all students. Issues previously identified in the literature concerning music and boys' gender identity were not found in this study.

All the children in this study could elaborate on the role and feasibility of music in their futures. In this study, children's musical identity work laid the foundations for future adult musical identities. Boys recognised and valued continuing to learn music as a strategy towards achieving their imagined musical possible selves (Creech et al., 2020). Children's musical possible selves in this setting consisted of future music learning, behaviours, activities, and careers. Music hobbies often existed alongside other occupations, such as science and health-related professions. Their responses demonstrated that students are aware that their self-image consists of multiple identities, and intensive school music education allowed students to imagine musical futures that were achievable amongst their other life goals. These findings support Lamont (2011), who argued that music education should aim to develop musical identities by teaching skills students will find valuable in their adult life. An investment in music education now is an investment in society's musical future.

The Potential of Singing-Based School Music Education

Singing was a significant contributor to children's identity work in this study. Singing infiltrated daily school and home life as an individual and shared activity. All music teaching and learning experiences in this setting were singing-based and were viewed as a positive musical activity and behaviour by all students. These findings support previous research (Welch, 2017; Welch et al., 2010) in which a focus on collective singing development for all resulted in positive singing identities. Importantly, singing was led by an expert and was integrated into the daily curriculum with the support of the school community (Lamont et al., 2012). Singing is characteristic of the human experience and often is overshadowed by instruments and emerging digital technologies in contemporary practice and research. This study reminds us that singing is still a profound and meaningful experience for children despite musical innovation and novel ideas. Furthermore, singing-based music education is effective, inclusive, accessible, and economical. Numerous studies document the potential of singing to transform lives in choral classroom and community settings (e.g., Welch, 2017; Welch et al., 2010), but further research is needed in order to understand singing in school general music education and its contribution to children's identity work. There is potential for school music education to foster positive singer identities for every child (Welch, 2017).

Conclusion

This study calls attention to the significance of daily singing-based school music and its contributions to a holistic and humanistic education. Intensive singing-based music education in this setting positively shaped and supported children's identity work and projected musical possible selves. While no student identified as a "musician", all were clearly musical children with music playing a role in who they were and projected to become. Arguably, two key factors contributing towards the significance of this program were its daily time allocation and specialist singing-based pedagogy. Two decades of state and national reviews document the precarious provision and access to Australian primary school music education (Collins et al., 2020; Government of South Australia, 2018; Parliament of Victoria, 2013; Pascoe et al., 2005), and there is an urgent need to re-examine the provision of specialist music education to ensure all children have opportunities to reach their musical and personal potential. Music

should and can co-exist alongside other educational priorities, and a substantial investment is required.

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