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# Identity development among adolescent males enrolled in a middle school general music program

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

**IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG ADOLESCENT MALES  
ENROLLED IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL GENERAL MUSIC PROGRAM**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

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**IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG ADOLESCENT MALES  
ENROLLED IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL GENERAL MUSIC PROGRAM:**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class in order to learn what factors of the environment adolescent males perceive as impactful in the development of their musical identities (cf. MacDonald, Marshall, & Miell, 2002). Secondly, because researchers have posited that informal music contexts are pivotal in the development of adolescent identity and that connections can be drawn between formal and informal settings (cf. Green, 2008; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003), I wanted to learn what role, if any, in-class connections to students' informal musical contexts might play in the engagement of their musical identities.

The following research questions were explored: In what ways, if any, are adolescent males' musical identities engaged in the general music classroom? What role, if any, do in-class connections to informal contexts play in this engagement? Musical identities were understood through a social psychological perspective encompassing identities in music and music in identities: the socio-cultural musical roles individuals fill and the ways in which music serves other, non-musical aspects

of an individual's identity.

An all-male school in the Midwest United States served as the research site. Participants were adolescent males, ages 11 through 14, enrolled in a compulsory general music program. I collected data via questionnaire, focus group interview, individual interviews, video reflections, researcher memos, and artifacts.

Four factors emerged as key in the engagement of participants' musical identities in the music classroom: 1) freedom in decision-making, 2) belonging to the classroom community, 3) distinction among peers, and 4) exposure to the other. Participants reported they could more fully engage their musical identities when each of these factors were present in the classroom, with the exception of distinction, which at times helped and at times hindered the expression of particular self-concepts. In-class connections to informal contexts were revealed in the roles of both freedom and exposure to the other in students' engagement of musical identities. I concluded by discussing the implications of these findings as they relate to teaching, program advocacy, and recommendations for future research.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background

*There is the woman  
Who will not listen  
To music. There is the man  
Who dreams of kissing the lips  
Attached to the voice.  
There is the singer  
Who reinvents the world  
In musical notation.  
There is the young couple  
Who dance slowly on the sidewalk,  
As if the rest of the street  
Didn't exist.  
There is the school boy  
Whose one possession is an electric box  
That scrambles the neighborhood.  
There is the young girl  
Who locks her bedroom door,  
And lip-syncs in the mirror.  
There is the young beau  
Who believes in the songs so much,  
He hears them  
Even when  
He isn't kissing someone.  
There is the mother  
Who absent-mindedly sways to the beat  
But fears the implications  
For her daughter.  
There is the man  
Who carries one in his  
Breast pocket  
And pretends it's a Luger.  
There are the two young punks  
Who lug one into our car  
On the stalled D train,  
Who, as we tense for the assault,  
Tune in a classical music station,  
As if this were Saturday night  
On another world.*

- Cornelius Eady (1985), "Radio"

Jorgensen (2011) suggested that representing a construct through metaphors and models can help one gain a deeper understanding of it. In reflecting

upon the idea of identity—my own, my students', and my research interest—I have found it useful to access the abstraction of identity via the model of a symphony. A symphony, by definition, is a singular work yet is multi-faceted. Its individual movements differ from one another, yet each is essential to understanding the whole. Below, I conceptualize different periods in my life as movements within my symphony. Just as one's identity or self-system contains a number of area-specific identities (e.g., gender identity, ethnic identity, etc.)—a concept addressed in depth later in this chapter—so does my symphony contain a number of motifs that reappear throughout. Each movement develops each motif in ways altogether unique yet altogether bound to its appearance in each of the other movements. One such motif, all too fittingly, is music; my musical identity is one of the area-specific identities that contribute to my overall identity or self-system.

In Movement 1, childhood, the motif was introduced. The notation looked like this: silly songs in the car with Mom, Disney musicals, clapping games on the playground, and a teach-yourself-piano book. Movement 2, adolescence, presented the same motif but developed it differently: quitting the clarinet, slow dancing to Bryan Adams, applying to college music programs, crushes on guys who played guitar, that first experience of performance anxiety, and so much Dave Matthews Band. Movement 3, early adulthood, saw the most marked evolution of the motif: taking gigs, struggling in music history classes, meeting kindred spirits in a music education program, student teaching, that first job and the students who bore with me as I pretended to know what I was doing, realizing maybe I did know what I was

doing, learning to love what I was doing, students lingering to play me a favorite song, the realization that I was witnessing the composition of another Movement 1 in each teenager that walked through my door, and so much more Dave Matthews Band.

How will the motif sound as it continues to develop in Movement 4, and how many movements will my finished symphony contain? The beauty of my symphony is that it—like Schubert’s Symphony No. 8—is “unfinished.” Every day, the symphony further develops its motifs, and every day, the development of those motifs changes the nature of the symphony. The nature of the composition is in the act of composition.

This interplay between one’s moment-to-moment experiences and one’s more stable nature, and the pivotal nature of each in the development of one’s identity, is so effectively articulated in the work of Charmaz (2006, 2009, 2011). Charmaz has focused primarily on the experiences of individuals with chronic illnesses, finding that their illness-related experiences impacted broadly on their self-concepts. In a 2011 study, Charmaz confirmed that musical experiences and musical self-concepts are not exempt from this phenomenon. The researcher explored the experiences of Teresa, who was studying in college to become an opera singer when she received a thyroid cancer diagnosis and underwent surgery. Post-surgery, Teresa could no longer sing as she once had, dissolving her self-concept as a singer, changing her career path, and altering the nature of her relationships with others in the music community.

Teresa had lost a valued self: “My voice was gone, so I was gone, and I’d never been anything but my voice” (in Charmaz, 2011, p. 175). Charmaz described the fundamental shift that occurred in Teresa’s self-concept as the result of her experience with cancer. Over time, the wording “my voice” changed to “the voice,” signaling Teresa’s separation of her operatic voice from her identity. Teresa found new venues through which to exercise her musical self-concepts, including singing as a member of a chorus rather than as a soloist. When Teresa was later diagnosed with cancer of the pituitary gland, she found a new valued self, focusing her undergraduate research and writing on the psychological effects of pituitary tumors on individuals. She said, “I figured that, if I had to have this thing, I may as well get something out of it” (in Charmaz, 2011, p. 194).

Charmaz (2006, 2009, 2011) examined identity through time in both the fluid passage of the individual from one moment to the next—the experienced self—and in the more constant nature of the beliefs the individual holds about oneself—one’s self-concepts, which together form one’s identity. My own research did not focus specifically on experiences of illness, but Charmaz’s work was pivotal to my own in its assertion that though one’s experienced self and one’s self-concepts are distinct entities, they are fundamentally intertwined and even dependent upon one another. An individual’s self-concepts influence how one behaves in certain situations and contexts, and those very situational and contextual experiences have the ability to further develop one’s self-concepts. Because these self-concepts collectively form one’s identity, the interplay of the stable beliefs one holds about

oneself as well as the context-specific and situation-specific nature of one's experiences are key to understanding identity.

The music classroom's role in the development of adolescent males' identities serves as the basis of this study. The following provides the background for my study, delving more deeply into the concept of identity and the study's theoretical underpinnings.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Research on identity and adolescence from a number of fields is cited throughout this document in order to help the reader understand the groundwork that has been laid and which serves as a precursor for my own work. It is important to note, however, the specific theoretical framework through which the information will be filtered and which underpin the study.

On the most general level, a social psychological lens is employed. Hewstone and Manstead (1995) defined social psychology as "the scientific study of the reciprocal influence of the individual and his or her social context" (p. 588). Olsson (1997) asserted that because "music education takes place within interpersonal and institutional settings, [...] research in social psychology should be able to contribute to a better understanding of these settings" (p. 290). A number of more specific theories fall under the umbrella of social psychology. The one employed throughout my study is the personality and social structure perspective (PSSP). This framework is often used to conceptualize identity, and indeed a discussion of identity via this lens follows.

According to Côté and Levine (2002), PSSP can be utilized to “help us map out different facets of the interdisciplinary terrain of human identity” (p. 8). My lens, therefore, narrows even further by focusing in on musical identity. The social psychological research on musical identity is compatible with PSSP; it can be understood as a concept-specific application of the theory, adhering to the broader ideas of PSSP and meanwhile containing music-specific nuances all its own. In this way, my discussion of the theoretical framework moves from least specific to most specific.

Though Côté and Levine (2002) asserted the applicability of PSSP to discipline-specific identity studies, the authors of the music-specific identity resources I explored made mention of social psychology only in its broader sense (cf. Hargreaves & North, 1997; MacDonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002). The authors neither referenced PSSP, nor its counterparts (i.e., psychological social psychology and symbolic interactionism), distinctively. The specific taxonomy employed by those authors, however, distinguishes the view to which they subscribed under the larger umbrella of social psychology to be that of PSSP. MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell’s (2002) focus on “group membership [. . .] and the inter-individual and intra-individual levels” (p. 4), as well the importance Hargreaves and North (1997) placed on “the *reciprocity* that exists between the individual and the social environment” are consistent with PSSP. Group membership aligns with the PSSP category of “social structure,” inter-individual considerations with PSSP’s “interaction,” and

intra-individual considerations with PSSP's "personality." Supplemental music-specific applications of these are later outlined in Figure 3.

### **Identity: The Personality and Social Structure Perspective**

*Long ago, a king asked four blind men to describe an elephant by feeling its body. One blind man felt its leg and concluded the elephant was like a tree trunk. Another blind man felt its tail and concluded the elephant was like a rope. A third blind man felt the elephant's trunk and concluded it was like a snake. The fourth blind man felt its belly and concluded the elephant was like a wall. The king told the four blind men that they were all correct, but only partly so. Each had described a different part of the elephant, though the elephant, in actuality, was the sum of its parts.*

- Indian parable, adapted from Côté & Levine (2002)

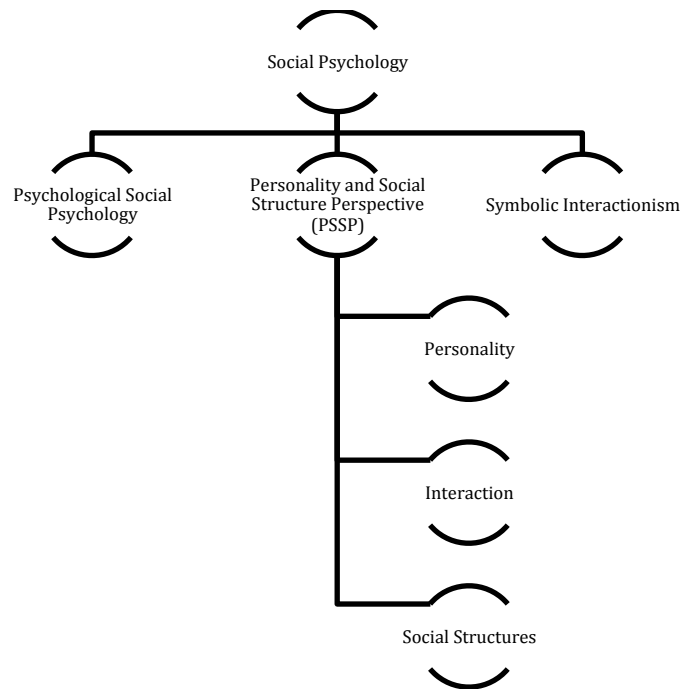
**Overview.** House (1977) distinguished three branches comprising the field of social psychology to be the following: The first is psychological social psychology, which refers to those aspects of social psychology typically taught in college psychology departments. The second is symbolic interactionism, largely adopted by sociologists, which asserts that the names and meanings we attach to ourselves and our experiences constitute our social reality. The third is the personality and social structure perspective (PSSP), which serves as the basis for this discussion. PSSP is a social psychological framework that encompasses personality, interaction, and social structure, thereby rendering it "most suitable to the task of developing a comprehensive understanding of identity" (Côté & Levine, 2002).

**Levels of analysis.** Côté and Levine (2002) contended PSSP to be the most fitting approach for the study of identity due to the varying levels of analysis it assumes: personality, interaction, and social structure. The first level, personality, engages the intra-psychic domain, or the internal psychological processes of the



individual. Psychologists and psychoanalysts focus primarily on this domain. The second level, interaction, shares similarities with symbolic interactionism in its micro-level focus on concrete behavioral patterns. On the macro-sociological level, we find social structures, denoting the “political and economic systems. . .[and] subsystems that define the normative structure of a society” (p. 7).

Côté and Levine (2002) pressed that it is fitting, then, for those studying identity through the lens of PSSP to draw from a number of frameworks. These may include psychology, sociology, and even biology, as explained below. Moreover, it is necessary to do so in order to view identity as a discrete body rather than one of its component parts. For example, an individual may report feeling anxious when expected to make small talk with co-workers each time he attends the annual holiday party. The individual has given information relating to the intra-psychic domain (feelings of anxiety and pressure to meet expectations), behavioral patterns (interacting with others through small talk), and social structures (the workplace). Each of these factors is pivotal to understanding the individual’s statement and positioning it according to the phenomenon being studied. Similarly, I took each of these facets into account throughout the study.



*Figure 1.* PSSP’s position in social psychology. PSSP is one of three branches of social psychology. It encompasses personality, interaction, and social structures.

**Identity classifications.** Another set of distinctions crucial to understanding PSSP is that of social identity, personal identity, and ego identity (Côté and Levine, 2002; Mead, 1934; Strauss, 1959). Social identity refers to one’s onus in various social structures. It also encompasses both the influence of such structures upon the individual, as well as the influence of the individual upon the structures themselves (Mead, 1934).

Personal identity bonds one’s social influences with one’s life experiences and constitutes one’s day-to-day behaviors and interactions (Goffman, 1959). For example, two individuals may receive identical job training in order to perform identical tasks in the same workplace. Nonetheless, these two may approach these

tasks differently based on previous life experiences. Individual A, who was fired from a previous job due to poor performance reviews, may work harder and achieve a greater work output so as to avoid being fired again. Individual B, who has seniority at the workplace and feels a greater sense of job security, may work at a more leisurely pace and achieve a lesser work output. Even if both individuals have similar work histories, something an individual witnessed or experienced in childhood could impact how they are compelled to perform on the task (Giddens, 1991, 1994). We may refer to one individual as “type A,” or we may say the other has “an easy-going personality.” In this way, personal identity is sometimes viewed as one’s “identity ‘style’” (Côté and Levine, 2002, p. 8) or their individuality.

Biological disposition plays a role in both personal identity—in relation to potentials—and in ego identity. One’s ego identity is composed primarily of one’s beliefs about oneself as they play out in the psychic (internal personal) domain, but the ego is nonetheless reliant on others for the external “validation and confirmation” (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 9) they lend to these internal processes. Mental health issues weigh heavily on the ego identity, as does the cogency of self-other relationships. Erikson (1968) asserted that there is a domino effect present between these varied facets of identity—personal identity, social identity, and ego identity: a firm ego identity allows for the development of character and fixed patterns of behavior, which in turn sets up the individual to fill stable roles within a society (Côté and Levine, 1987). Just as personality, interaction, and social structures all fall under the larger umbrella of PSSP, personal identity, social

identity, and ego identity fall under the larger umbrella of identity. I did not isolate these component parts in my study, as I was interested in identity as it is understood to result from the synthesis of these parts.

Note, therefore, that the discussion henceforth will refer only to “identity,” the sum of these constituent parts. This is deliberate, as these components exist on varying levels of analysis but bleed into one another, influence one another, and are reliant upon one another. For example, one’s biological disposition toward mathematics (ego identity) may influence a student’s concrete operations in math class (personal identity) and their decision to join others with similar dispositions as a member of the school’s academic challenge team (social identity). On a more basic level, continuity in one’s personal identity begets continuity in one’s social roles. Similarly, self-other relationships are forged in the social domain but offer the validation upon which a healthy ego identity relies. My focus is thus identity in its discrete form. The word “identities” appears on occasion, and this references singular identities present within a number of individuals. For example, Individual A has an identity, and Individual B has an identity. Collectively, they have identities, because Individual A’s identity differs from that of Individual B.

### **Identity: An Overview**

*He allowed himself to be swayed by his conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves.*

- Gabriel García Márquez (1989), *Love in the Time of Cholera*

**Dynamism.** Identities are not stagnant but are ever refashioning themselves on multiple levels: individually, culturally, and socially (Bernard, 2005; Erikson, 1968; Talbot, 2013). On the individual level, the development of one's identity is facilitated by instances of crisis and commitment that delineate an individual's sameness and difference in relation to other individuals as sustained over time (Erikson, 1968). Culturally and socially, the development of one's identity necessitates the redefinition of the characteristics—among them norms and values—belonging to their cultural and social group memberships (Roberts, 2000). Just as identities are ever changing as individuals adapt to the situational and contextual realities with which they are faced, the individuals to whom those identities belong are meanwhile refashioning these situations and contexts by means of their inclusion (Bernard, 2005; Erikson, 1968; Talbot, 2013). The experienced self, then, serves as those facets of an individual's identity that continually unfold by means of the individual's experience within a given context.

The dynamism of these factors contributes to the formation of a number of self-concepts, which are cognitive organizations of theories one holds about oneself (Damon & Hart, 1988; Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002). The experienced musical self has the ability to impact on self-concepts, then, as each self-concept is contextual, situational, and domain-related. For example, one of an individual's self-concepts might relate to his role within the family structure (domain) as a firm disciplinarian (concept) to his four-year-old son (contextual) in instances of dishonesty (situational). The individual's self-concept as a disciplinarian is only one

of many. Other self-concepts may include his role as a loyal spouse, a justice-seeking litigator, a compassionate sibling, and an aficionado of foreign languages.

Self-concepts often remain stable, though certain conditions and experiences can provide entry points for eliciting change within a given self-concept. For example, my identification as a harpist exists as one of my self-concepts. This self-concept has remained stable despite changes in my skill level, type of harp played, type of repertoire played, and types of performance opportunities pursued. An especially impactful experience, such as an injury that would make it physically impossible for me to play the harp, may permeate the boundaries of this self-concept, ultimately dissolving that self-concept and leading me to adopt that of a non-harpist. One's self-system, or identity, refers to "the overall view that we have of ourselves in which these different self-concepts are integrated" (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 8). Thus, if that hypothetical injury were to cause me to reject the self-concept of a harpist and adopt that of a non-harpist, it would subsequently impact my identity on a greater level.

**Social nature.** Identity is, largely, a social construct in that one's social identity is the result of his/her group affiliations and his/her interactions with other individuals (Kroger, 1989; Tajfel, 1978). The individual derives certain "value and emotional significance" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63) from these affiliations, and these values and areas of significance in turn impact identity, perpetuating the dynamic process of identity development.

Just as one's identity is continuously developing as a result of the social constructs to which one belongs, so are social structures continuously developing as a result of the individuals that constitute these structures (Jorgensen, 2011). Jorgensen offered an example of a small village on Cape Cod. The village's intimacy was attractive to urban dwellers; however, as urbanites flocked to the village to take advantage of its quaint quality, the very intimacy that had attracted them there was lost simply because so many urbanites had taken up residence. The individuals were attracted to the village's social structure, but the social structure itself was changed due to the individuals therein.

**Adolescence.** The development of one's identity is an important task of adolescence (Marcia, 1993; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Adolescence, designated by Erikson (1963) as the period typically encompassing ages 13 through 19, is when adolescents face the psychosocial developmental crisis of identity versus role confusion, asking themselves who they are and what they can be. Individuals facing these questions make sense of their roles in society by developing cognitively organized theories—self-concepts—encompassing these roles (Damon & Hart, 1988). Filling these roles, both physically and conceptually, marks an individual's transition from childhood to adult society (Marcia, 1993).

It is also during adolescence that the social influences of others on an individual take a marked shift away from the influence of adults and toward those of peers (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Sim, 2000). Identity confusion is the failure to establish an authentic identity in a critical stage of the identity construction process,

and there are a number of risks associated with identity confusion. One such risk is the tendency to engage in inter-group discrimination—making negative judgments of others on the basis of others’ differences from oneself—to a greater degree than those for whom healthy identity development is underway (Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2001).

### **Musical Identity**

*The sand below the border-mountain lies like snow,  
And the moon like frost beyond the city wall,  
And someone somewhere, playing a flute,  
Has made the soldiers homesick all night long.*

- Li Yi (1929), “On Hearing a Flute at Night”

**Music.** Nattiez (1990) posited that music, as it pertains to the social sciences, can be understood on three levels. These are: 1) the structural properties of music, 2) the cultural backgrounds and contexts of these structures, and 3) the ways in which people form understandings of these properties and contexts. Psychologists are concerned with the third of these functions. Social psychologists, more specifically, are interested in “the effects of the immediate social environment as well as the impact of broader-based cultural norms” (Hargreaves & North, 1997). Because a social psychological lens is employed throughout the study, the term “music” should be understood not just as organized sound but as an art work that functions in various ways in societies (Ball, 2010; Nattiez, 1990). This definition of music is congruent with PSSP due to the integrated and symbiotic nature of the personality, interaction, and social structures assumed under PSSP; therefore, when



I reference “music,” I am referencing music’s varied functions among people rather than its acoustic properties.

**Social nature.** Music, like identity, is largely a social construct (Abril & Flowers, 2007; Blackwell, 2011; Davidson, 1997; Gregory, 1997; Small, 1998). In almost every culture, mothers sing their children to sleep with lullabies, music accompanies communal rituals and ceremonies, and the singing of an anthem confirms one’s status as a member of a larger collective (Gregory, 1997). The themes, messages, and social narratives found in music lyrics form a basis for defining a collective identity, leading musical styles to perpetuate certain hegemonies (Blackwell, 2011).

Jorgensen (2011) referred to these collectives as “‘spheres of musical validity,’ [. . .] social-musical groups that form around particular musics [and] contribute to and express group identity” (p. 39). These collective identities affect not only the creation of music but also its interpretation; individuals make judgments about works of music based on musical and extra-musical elements deeply rooted by individuals’ cultural norms (Abril & Flowers, 2007). The act of musical performance, too, is inherently social, requiring the interplay of feedback and response between an orchestra member and her conductor, a front-man and his audience, or a jazz saxophonist “trading fours” with a trumpet player (Davidson, 1997; Small, 1998). Even if one were to argue musical performance by an individual in the absence of a listening audience is not social, Davidson (1997) pointed out that the musical score, style, and even perception by the performer are dependent on

“sociocultural rules which [. . .] give value to the composition and its performance” (p. 209).

**IIM and MII.** Because music and identity are both heavily reliant on the social dimension, it is not surprising that musical experiences impact the development of self-concepts. The discrimination of these vary by individual and context via the social dimension (Gracyk, 2004; Hargreaves et al., 2002). Musical experiences impact on identity development in two ways: through the development of identities in music (IIM) and through the development of music in identities (MII) (Arostegui & Louro, 2009; Dabback, 2010; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Hash, 2008; Sugden, 2005).

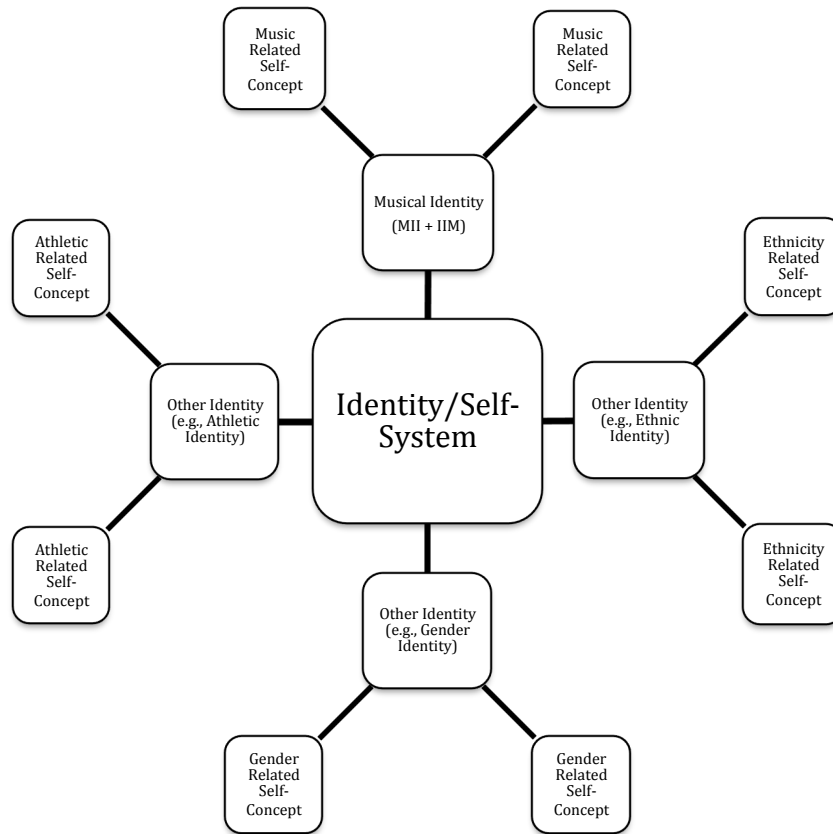
IIM refers to “aspects of musical identities that are socially defined within given cultural roles and music categories” (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 2). One’s self-concept as a pop artist is dependent upon the contemporary social norms exemplified in pop music. Similarly, a folk artist could not be identified as such without the rich social history preserved, in part, through their music (Arostegui & Louro, 2009).

In contrast, MII refers to “how we use music as a means or resource for developing other aspects of our individual identities” (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 2). Music can play a role in shaping individuals’ non-musical self-concepts (cf. Sugden, 2007). For example, 19<sup>th</sup> century educators used music, in part, in an effort to shape disciplined, moral behaviors in children (Hash, 2008; Johnson-Williams, 2015). As stated in the discussion of PSSP, personal identity bonds one’s social influences with

one's life experiences and constitutes one's day-to-day behaviors and interactions (Goffman, 1959). If a child were to subsequently adopt the above-mentioned behaviors—such as the diligence of following a daily practice schedule—this would indicate that something from the musical realm had impacted an extra-musical self-concept (personality trait: diligence).

Another example is modern-day retirees' prevention of feelings of stagnation through participation in music ensembles (Dabback, 2010). A hypothetical retiree may not join a chorus for the joy of singing or for the love of choral repertoire, but rather for the chance to engage within a new social structure upon losing the social structure of the workplace. Due to the involvement of social structures and interactions within those structures, the retiree's engagement with the chorus would qualify to social psychologists as a facet of identity under the PSSP model. These are examples of ways in which music can serve utilitarian purposes and thus plays a role in shaping individuals' non-musical self-concepts.

Both MII and IIM constitute one's musical identity, representative of the ways in which one's music-related self-concepts—whether related by context, situation, or domain—are integrated into one's larger self-system or identity (Hargreaves et al., 2002; Morrison, 2001). In short, music does not impact identity as the result of pitch patterns or note durations alone; "music's 'effects' come from the ways in which individuals orient to it" (DeNora, 2000, p. 61), with factors such as social context and culture-valued roles forming the basis for meaning-making (Abril & Kerchner, 2009).



*Figure 2.* Musical identity as it relates to overall identity. Area-specific self-concepts comprise area-specific identities. The collective area-specific identities comprise the self-system, or one’s overall identity.

**Opposing viewpoints.** It is important to note, at this point, that contradictory views regarding musical identity exist (Bernard, 2005; de Vries, 2010; Hargreaves et al., 2002; North & Hargreaves, 1999b; O’Neill, 2002). The existence of multiple musical identities has been postulated, each taking form in a different musical context (Bernard, 2005; de Vries, 2010). For example, a person who defines oneself as a music educator, harpist, and electronic music aficionado may possess three distinct musical identities: one as a music educator in school contexts, one as a

harpist in performance contexts, and one as an electronic music aficionado in the context of leisure activities. This is the view adopted by social constructionists.

Standing in contrast to the social constructionist view of multiple identities is that of social psychologists. A central tenet of social psychology is the notion of a singular identity encompassing multiple, context-specific selves (McConnell, 2011; Smith & Mackie, 2007). Social psychologists who study identity in and through music assert that the sum of one's roles, activities, and relationships in and through musical contexts form a singular musical identity (cf. Hargreaves et al., 2002; North & Hargreaves, 1999b; O'Neill, 2002). Thus, Hargreaves et al.'s (2002) notion of IIM and MII does not represent two distinct musical identities, but rather two components of a singular musical identity, much in the same way social psychologists Côté and Levine (2002) defended a singular identity enveloping the component parts of social identity, personal identity, and ego identity. In some ways, this distinction is a matter of semantics. Nonetheless, it is important to understand this distinction so as to understand that the term "musical identity" references both IIM and MII throughout this document.

The social constructionist view of identity shares more similarities than differences with the social psychological view, each suggesting that identities are multi-faceted. Nonetheless, a singular musical identity, consistent with the social psychological literature, is referenced throughout this study. The phrase "musical identities" also appears in the document, and this references the singular musical identities present within a number of individuals rather than multiple musical

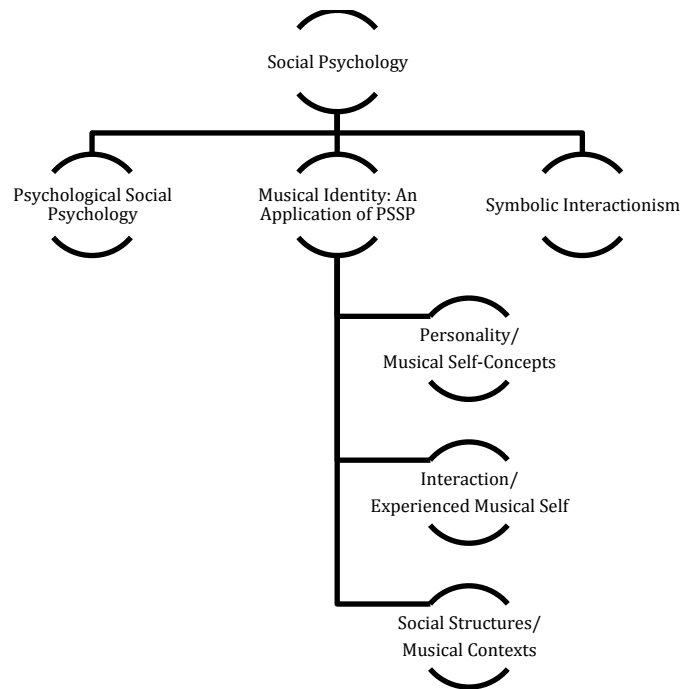
identities present within an individual. For example, Individual A has a musical identity, and Individual B has a musical identity. Collectively, they have musical identities, because Individual A's musical identity differs from that of Individual B.

**The music classroom.** The development of one's musical identity occurs, in part, in the music classroom (Abril & Flowers, 2007; Benham, 2004; Bowman, 2004; Carter, 2008; Lamont, 2002; Olsson, 1997; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). According to Lamont (2002), "school is an important social context where messages about the value of music, and who music should be for, are transmitted effectively" (p. 56). Much of this value is derived from the social dimension in response to the basic human needs of freedom and belonging (Bates, 2009; Osterman, 2000). Music educators can facilitate experiences of freedom by allowing for unimpeded creative pursuits. They can facilitate experiences of belonging by: 1) allowing for meaningful interactions with others, and 2) building competence, which allows for "social significance and relevance" (Bates, 2009, p. 25).

Belonging is also present in the music classroom's provision of community. Because community is defined by both boundedness and interconnectedness, reflective action of the self and dialogue with others are required to thrive in a community, be it a music classroom or otherwise (Jorgensen, 1995). The relationships present between individuals and peers and between individuals and the music educator, and the roles each serve in the social matrix of the music classroom, serve as constructs upon which individuals' self-concepts, in part, are built (Carter, 2008; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

**PSSP and musical identity.** My discussion of musical identity throughout this document is an area-specific application of PSSP. Just as Côté and Levine (2002) posited that the domains of personality, interaction, and social structures are essential components—yet not mutually exclusive ones, as each impacts the other—so are the components essential to understanding musical identity both varied and integrated (Hargreaves et al., 2002).

Throughout this document, my use of the term “self-concept” can be understood as a topic-specific application of PSSP’s “personality” in understanding musical identity. “The experienced musical self” can be understood as a topic-specific application of “interaction,” and the varied contexts discussed (“music classroom,” “informal contexts,” etc.) as applications of “social structures.” At times, I break each of these down and talk about how one impacts the other: how the experienced musical self censors the expression of specific self-concepts, or how one’s self-concept may be influenced by the perceptions of others within social spheres. Nonetheless, even when spoken of in isolation, these bleed together. Each is an essential component of a larger musical identity, yet none can be assumed to be a mutually exclusive category. The majority of the time, I refer to musical identity as a conceptualization of the synthesis of these facets.



*Figure 3.* Musical identity as an application of PSSP. Musical self-concepts, the experienced musical self, and musical contexts can be conceptualized as topic-specific applications of PSSP as they relate to musical identity.

## Male Identity

*You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him discover it in himself.*

- Galileo Galilei

My study was delimited to an all-male setting. The reason for studying a single gender, rather than both concurrently, is this: males and females construct their identities differently than one another (Baron-Cohen, 2004; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Durkin, 1995; Eckes & Trautner, 2000; Fagot, Rodgers, & Leinbach, 2000; Gurian 1996, 1998, 2007; Gurian & Stevens, 2011; Hannover, 2000; Munro, 2011; Newberger, 1999; Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003; Thompson & Barker, 2008). Gender-specific tendencies in the development of identity are the result of both sex



as a biological entity as well as “a set of socially, culturally, and historically constructed understandings” (Munro, 2011, p. 21) (cf. Baron-Cohen, 2004; Durkin, 1995; Gurian 1996, 1998, 2007; Gurian & Stevens, 2011; Moir & Jessel, 1990). I teach in an all-male setting, and it was my hope that my study might further my understanding of the population I teach.

**Brain-based differences.** Biologically, brain-based differences account for much of this distinction, evident in developmental and structural differences, chemical differences, hormonal differences, functional differences, and differences in processing emotions (Gurian & Stevens, 2011). For example, greater levels of oxytocin in the female brain lead females to be more empathy-driven, whereas the male brain is hard-wired for systems-driven, task-oriented processing (Baron-Cohen, 2004). Higher levels of brain stem activity in males are thought to contribute to impulsive behaviors, and lower levels of limbic system activities are thought to render males less adept at dealing with stressors and emotions through verbal means (Gurian & Stevens, 2011; Thompson & Barker, 2008).

The male brain is also more hierarchically-driven than the female brain, establishing social and cultural position through the comparison of one’s own place within the hierarchy to others’ place within the hierarchy (Gurian, 1998; Munro, 2011; Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003). Males “[make] decisions of importance to self and family and community based first on the sense of ‘Where do I fit among men?’” (Gurian, 1998, p. 98). This hierarchical drive is thought to contribute to males’ innate need for competition within collaborative structures (Gurian, 1996;

Thompson & Barker, 2008). Within those structures, males find purpose when their individual power contributes to the success of the collective.

**Social factors.** Social factors are key in the ways males uniquely construct their identities, gender serving as “a dynamic construct that draws on and impinges upon processes at the individual, interactional, group, institutional, and cultural levels” (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998, p. 788; Eckes & Trautner, 2000; Fagot, Rodgers, & Leinbach, 2000; Hannover, 2000). The dynamism of gender’s role in identity can be conceptualized by means of gender-as-stimulus, gender-as-process, and gender-as-product (Eckes & Trautner, 2000). As a stimulus, gender serves as a category in accordance with which people perceive others and are perceived, pass judgment on others and are judged, hold expectations of others, and behave. As a process, meaning is assigned to gender in accordance with specific cultures and contexts, its meaning varying from one context to the next. As a product, gender can be conceptualized as a “relational category... materializ[ing] in social encounters” (p. 11).

In summary, male identity development and female identity development differ from one another. Both the brain-based research in regard to the differences in the way males and females process the world around them, as well as the social psychological theories presented above in regard to the cultures gendered individuals build in response to that world, are indicative of the importance of this differentiation.

## **Framing the Problem**

*When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals; adjust the action steps.*

- Confucius

## **Badge of Identity**

Because music is one of the constructs adolescents wear as a badge of identity (North & Hargreaves, 1999b), it follows naturally that undeveloped musical identities and/or negative musical self-concepts are harmful to the student experience (O'Neill, 2002; O'Neill & Sloboda 1997; Ruble, 1994). Students' motivational behaviors are influenced in large part by the self-theories they hold, inclusive of—but not limited to—self-image and self-esteem (Dweck, 1999).

Erikson (1968) referred to adolescence as the time when the individual either moves toward a state of identity cohesion or toward a state of role confusion. While in a state of role confusion, the ego identity remains undeveloped, and the adolescent experiences confusion and is unable to make choices, particularly about important facets such as vocation and sexuality. In order to serve the best interests of their students, educators of adolescents must be mindful of the important roles played by musical identities and deliberate in their roles as facilitators of adolescents' identity development by means of their influence over the classroom environment and its procedures.

## **Informal Contexts**

A great deal of adolescent musical identity is tied to adolescents' musical

experiences outside of the classroom, particularly in informal contexts where teachers and parents are not present (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). Green (2002) found that music making and music listening experiences in informal contexts require “far more autonomy and ownership” (in Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003, p. 266) of individuals. Additionally, adolescents often engage with music in an arena known as the *third environment* (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). The third environment refers to “social contexts in which musical learning takes place in the absence of parents or teachers” (p. 266). Hargreaves and Marshall argued that music educators must appeal to students’ capacity for autonomy and ownership in order for music curricula to gain relevance and authenticity; engaging students in musical activities that appeal to their interests beyond school results in greater musical engagement of students and motivation to learn (Green, 2008).

Because educators cannot themselves enter students’ informal musical contexts, lest these lose their status as such, opportunities for students to draw in-school connections to their out-of-school music making and learning are created through educator provision of student autonomy. In short, the classroom cannot *become* an informal context or a third environment, but it can harbor opportunities for students to connect with and capitalize upon the types of music making and perhaps even music learning styles and procedures they would undertake in those contexts or environments. Ryan and Powelson (1991), acknowledging the contexts and myriad relationships involved in individuals’ lives, pointed out that students’ musical experiences and preferences vary on a macro level from culture to culture

and on a micro level from individual to individual. Thus, connections to the intrinsic motivators within informal contexts can only occur through the creation of opportunities whereby individuals can capitalize on those unique contexts and relations through autonomous experiences. Support for this idea harkens back to Erikson (1968):

...[T]he resourcefulness of young people proves itself when the conditions are right. [. . .] Democracy, therefore, must present its adolescents with ideals which can be shared by young people of many backgrounds, and which emphasize autonomy in the form of independence and initiative in the form of constructive work (p. 22).

Erikson pointed out that adolescents harbor the potential to engage meaningfully in their work when certain provisions—namely autonomy and initiative—are present in the environment. One such environment in which this might apply is that of the music classroom. Researchers have suggested that these provisions are necessary in creating a classroom environment that facilitates the development of musical identity among adolescents (cf. Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; Heath, 2001).

### **Secondary School Music**

Mills (1997) asserted that an area of concern in music education is that educators—piloted by curricula, which contain uniform goals without individual student experience taken into account—can focus too readily on teaching music and not readily enough on engaging students. Perhaps this is why enjoyment scores of secondary school music experiences are low in comparison with other curricular

areas and are growing lower each year (Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, & Tarrant, 2003). Furthermore, males report lower enjoyment scores of school music experiences than females (Campbell, 2009; Colley, Comber, & Hargreaves, 1994; Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, & Tarrant, 2003).

### **Engagement and Secondary School Music**

Here, I would like to clarify the term “engagement” as it is used throughout this document. One’s identity informs their roles and behaviors in a given context; the choices one makes in the music classroom are due, in large part, to the self-concepts one holds. Engaging one’s identity can be thought of as a performative act: if one holds the self-concept of “talented singer,” one might engage their identity when they decide to audition for the solo part in a choral work. In contrast, if that same individual decides not to audition for the solo for fear that their classmates might mock them, they have not engaged their self-concept of talented singer. That particular self-concept is still part of the individual’s identity, but they have chosen not to enact it in this particular situation. Aspects of the individual’s identity—such as the individual’s desire to maintain a positive social relationship with their peers in the ensemble—informed the individual’s decision not to audition for the solo, and that decision was to forgo the engagement of a particular self-concept. In this way, engagement of one’s musical identity should be conceptualized throughout this document as the enactment of musical self-concepts.

According to Kratus (2007) and Williams (2011), the large ensemble model instituted in the early 1900s remains relatively unchanged in today’s secondary

music programs. This is problematic because the lived realities of adolescents—particularly their musical engagement outside of school—have changed.

Advancements in technology, especially, have individualized the means by which adolescents create and consume music in informal contexts. The researchers suggested that if secondary music programs are to see gains in enrolment, they must first gain relevance in the eyes of the adolescent students who serve as their primary stakeholders (cf. Kratus, 2007; Williams, 2011).

Theory and praxis should be inextricably linked to one another (Elliott & Silverman, 2015). Researchers seek to identify and understand various phenomena in education in order that educators, in turn, might allow the resultant theory to inform their approach among their students. Understanding the implications of research on students' musical identities, therefore, might spur deliberate measures in curriculum design and praxis among music educators. Researchers have suggested that to do so successfully, the classroom environment should contain entry points through which students might connect with their out-of-school musical interests and endeavors (Green, 2002, 2008; Williams, 2014). Because researchers have indicated that male students are especially underserved (Colley, Comber, & Hargreaves, 1994; Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, & Tarrant, 2003), understanding the musical identities of adolescent boys—both their engagement in the music classroom and how connections might be made to their musical lives outside the classroom—might help educators better serve the male students in their care. I am

particularly interested in better understanding this phenomenon due to my role as a music educator in an all-male school.

### Summary and Rationale

*I thought I was like her.  
I would have sung, played the violin, piano, flute,  
made music my life's work. I could hear the rapture;  
the sound of the metronome as we stood straight,  
chin up, heels of our Mary Janes  
and loafers against the wood step.  
Sometimes on the way to school,  
I felt a melody build in the cave  
of my body like a sudden  
brightness just before letting go.  
In assembly we stood in tiers depending  
on our height as if we were the chorus  
on the steps of the Theatre of Dionysus  
looking into the hollow stage  
in anticipation of a great tragedy.  
We followed the tempo  
against the movement of our maestro's stick,  
watched the O of her lips  
as she mouthed the words. I concentrated.  
I let the air fill my diaphragm  
just as she instructed [. . .]  
"My country 'tis of thee  
sweet land of liberty  
of thee I sing;  
land where our fathers died..."  
I sang louder, inhaling the air  
and allowing it to sail through my being  
until it was no longer me but the notes  
of a beautiful bird dispatched  
of her doom to echo the same notes  
who had at last found her voice.  
But it was too late.  
In that one glance of betrayal  
she saw inside the hidden chamber  
my true self inhabited  
and deemed to silence it.  
My teacher looked at me  
and put her index finger over her stern lips.  
I never sang again. I was quiet.*

- Jill Bialosky (2001), "Music Lesson"



Identities are dynamic constructs that are refashioned on a continuous basis. Adolescence serves as an especially pivotal period for the development of one's identity. Much of this refashioning is the result of the social structures of which an individual is part and an individual's experiences and interactions within various social and cultural contexts. Music, too, is largely a social construct, and musical experiences impact on the development of one's identity via the social dimension. The music classroom is one such social context in which one's musical identity might be engaged.

Researchers have found that adolescents are more readily able to engage with and develop their musical identities when provided with opportunities to connect with their musical lives outside of school (Green, 2002; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). Because males and females construct identity differently than one another (cf. Baron-Cohen, 2004; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Durkin, 1995; Eckes & Trautner, 2000; Fagot, Rodgers, & Leinbach, 2000; Gurian 1996, 1998, 2007; Gurian & Stevens, 2011; Hannover, 2000; Munro, 2011; Newberger, 1999; Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003; Thompson & Barker, 2008), studying the musical identities of adolescent males, specifically, may provide different insights than studying the musical identities of adolescent females. Scholars postulate that boys' low enjoyment scores of school music experiences, as well as boys' lesser likelihood to self-identify as musicians in school than their female counterparts, may indicate a chasm between theory and praxis in regard to music education practices (Lamont, 2002; Lamont & Tarrant, 2001).

Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves (2002) reviewed a number of publications in which researchers addressed the topic of the role of music in youth identity, concluding:

... [I]t is clear that the relationship between identity and music develops within a social context, and that future studies must continue to acknowledge this. A comprehensive explanation of musical behavior will only develop when these influences are identified (p. 146).

As previously stated, music education theory and praxis should be inextricably linked (Elliott & Silverman, 2015). When an area of weakness is identified in praxis, theory may beget a solution. When a phenomenon is not yet understood well enough for such theory to be conceived, an examination of praxis may beget better understanding. Lamont (2002) asserted that a number of goals in music education are reliant upon “whether children’s musical identities can be encouraged” (p. 56). Furthermore, Lamont identified secondary students and boys to be two categories that qualify as “‘at risk’ children in terms of musical identity” (p. 56). At my study’s research site, an all-male school, the published strategic plan (Murray, 2007) included the development of boys into “accomplished and independent young men” (p. 4). The teachers within the school’s music program reported that they attempted to be mindful of the role of one’s musical identity in one’s greater identity and strove to facilitate the development of identity—both in music (IIM) and through music (MII)—within their classrooms.

In conclusion, music educators cannot adequately address the needs of the adolescent males in their care without first understanding how musical identity is developed among adolescent males in the music classroom. Because researchers have shown that music educators could be addressing the needs of adolescent males better than what is current practice, it naturally follows that we must seek to better understand the phenomenon of adolescent male identity as it pertains to the music classroom. The exploration of this phenomenon, therefore, is worthwhile, as furthering the understanding of adolescent males' musical identities may subsequently impact praxis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class in order to learn what factors of the environment adolescent males perceive as impactful in the development of their musical identities. Moreover, because researchers have posited that informal music contexts are pivotal in the development of adolescent identity and that connections can be drawn between formal and informal settings, I wanted to learn what role, if any, in-class connections to students' informal musical contexts play in the engagement of their musical identities.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions guided this endeavor: First, in what ways, if any, are adolescent males' musical identities engaged in the general music classroom?

Second, what role, if any, do in-class connections to informal contexts play in this engagement?

### **Key Assumptions**

Because social psychologists posit that identities are developed through individuals' moment-to-moment experiences and interactions within their environments, a first key assumption of the study is that the engagement of and development of identity are not mutually exclusive categories but are dependent upon and inseparable from one another (Caronia & Caron, 2004; Fine, 2004; Munro, 2011). Engagement and development thus represent two components of a singular process. For example, a student, while completing a composition-based project, is both engaging in the process of composition and is developing as a composer, regardless of whether that be in the fluid realm of their experienced musical self or in the more stable realm of their musical self-concepts. The term "engagement," as it is used throughout this document, can be thought of therefore as the performative act of expressing (as opposed to censoring) one's self-concepts in the context of the music classroom.

A second key assumption of the study is that connections can exist between informal musical contexts and the general music classroom (Green, 2008). As discussed earlier, because the classroom cannot *become* an informal context, lest it lose its definition as such, connections to these contexts take place through opportunities for student autonomy (Ryan & Powelson, 1991). This can occur on varying points along a continuum, from the selection of a piece of repertoire of the

students' choice toward one end to a student-chosen, student-designed unit of study toward the other end.

A third key assumption of the study is that any change in self-concept, inclusive of the rejection of a previously held self-concept or the adoption of a new self-concept, represents the presence of particularly impactful identity engagement and development (Charmaz, 2011). Although the research questions do not explicitly mention self-concepts, these are the building blocks of identities; one's musical identity is comprised of musical-related self-concepts. A change in a self-concept could signify an important area for further data collection and analysis.

### **Scope**

Prior research has shown that adolescents' musical experiences in both formal and informal settings impact their musical identities. I set out to better understand the ways in which this occurs specifically in the general music classroom, particularly among adolescent males. Investigation of both IIM and MII comprised the exploration of students' musical identities as they pertained to students' experienced musical selves and musical self-concepts.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Introduction

In the review of literature, I explore the work of researchers who have investigated phenomena relevant to my study. It would be both impossible and intemperate to explore every study under the umbrellas of adolescence, identity, music, and education. My focus thus turns to key themes that emerged within the literature at the intersection of these areas: the relationship between self and other, group membership, and connections between and formal and informal musical environments. These themes are discussed, at times, in gendered contexts and, at times, in non-gendered contexts. Furthermore, I discuss the secondary general music classroom as the “missing piece” of the puzzle in regard to research on adolescents’ musical identities. In the review of literature, I position my study among those that precede it and identify an area in which my study makes a unique contribution to the literature.

### Self and Other

*I hate how I don't feel real enough unless people are watching.*

- Chuck Palahniuk (1999), *Invisible Monsters*

Self, despite its reference to the individual, is in many ways a social construct. The roles one fills within a culture or society are part of one’s identity (Hargreaves et al., 2002). Though identity refers to those qualities, sustained through time, which delineate an individual’s sameness and dissimilarity in relation to other individuals, identity is nonetheless informed by the social structures of which the individual is

part (Erikson, 1968; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). Erikson (1968) asserted that one's identity is comprised of one's concurrent observation of the world around them and reflection of their onus in that world.

The role of the "other" in the construction of the "self" has come under debate. McCall and Simmons (1978), for example, found significance to come from within the individual, through the self-relations harbored within the ego identity. According to them, it is not as important that others perceive a group and its members a certain way but that an individual within the group "likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position" (p. 65).

Kinney (1993), who examined a school's social systems during the transition from middle school to high school, refuted this finding. Kinney found that individuals with negative social identities in middle school were able to redefine others' perceptions of them during the social system transition, demonstrating the role of the other and the social environment in defining the self.

Reichert and Kuriloff (2006) conducted a mixed methods study in order to identify areas of correlation between boys' identities and their experiences at school. The researchers were not surprised to find a direct correlation between boys' self-concepts and school achievement. They found an indirect correlation between boys' anxiety levels and their degree of hegemony with school demographics related to race, number of years at the school, and parents' level of education. Open-ended interviews were then used to probe the boys' school experiences to uncover the nature of such correlations. The participants revealed

that in response to others' social appraisals of them, the boys constructed cautious public identities in order to navigate their school's social environment and the pathways perceived as available to them within that environment.

### **In-Groups and Out-Groups**

North and Hargreaves (1999b) investigated the musical preferences of 18-19 year olds. The researchers found that musical preference acted as a badge of identity among study participants in the sense that one's preferences conveyed not just musical but also extra-musical information to one's peers regarding their perceived identity. For example, the researchers found that the study participants made assumptions regarding one's personality and social affiliations based on one's musical preferences. Furthermore, the adolescents involved in the study were more likely to make positive assumptions regarding the extra-musical characteristics of those whose musical preferences were similar to their own. The study participants were more likely to make negative assumptions regarding the extra-musical characteristics of those whose musical preferences differed from their own. In a study conducted by Palmonari, Pombeni, and Kirchler (1990), the researchers made the same conclusions: adolescents judge those with musical preferences similar to their own more favorably than those whose musical preferences differ from their own.

Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves (2001) conducted a quantitative study based on social identity theory to investigate the effects of social categorization on adolescent boys' behaviors. The researchers found that participants viewed their



perceived musical preferences to be an important factor in the construction of their social identity. Students equated certain characteristics of the individual (e.g., snobby, cool) with certain types of music (e.g., classical, indie). The students estimated the musical preferences of those within “out-groups”—social structures that differed from their own—to fall into musical genres for which they had previously provided negative descriptive adjectives. They perceived those within their own “in-group”—any social structure to which they felt they belonged—to possess musical preferences for styles to which positive descriptive adjectives had previously been assigned. The researchers concluded that musical preferences were an undeniable dimension of social categorization among male adolescents.

Orozco (2015) conducted interviews with eight women ranging in age from adolescence to early adulthood who identified emo among their musical preferences. Orozco found that the women’s preference for emo, which is not considered to be a “popular” music style, caused the women to perceive that others thought of them as members of an out-group rather than an in-group. Despite perceiving that others ascribed negative attributes to them on the basis of their musical preference, the study’s participants also reported that their preference for emo music acted as a springboard for the formation of social bonds with other emo fans.

Vaughn (2012) explored the role of rap music in identity development during adolescence through a retroactive study among young Black adults. In setting the stage for this exploration, the researcher echoed some of the themes mentioned

here: that music plays a role in adolescents' formation of identity (Alridge, 2005; Kubrin, 2005; Miranda & Claes, 2008; Watts, Abdul-Adil, & Pratt, 2002), that how others perceive one impacts the formation of one's identity (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005; Brown, 2009; DeCarlo, 2005), and that people make assumptions about others based on others' musical preferences (Gardstrom, 1999; Kubrin, 2005; Miranda & Claes, 2004; Rose, 1994; Selfhout, Delsing, ter Bogt, & Meeus, 2008). Vaughn (2012) found that participants' ability to relate to the themes discussed in rap music "allowed [them] to explore and reveal who [they are] through artists' lyrics" (p. 47). Participants, however, also felt judged by non-rap listeners on the basis of rap's lyrics. Study participants felt that others made judgments about what they must be like based on the subjects explored by rap artists and based on the personalities of those whom others do know personally who also listen to rap.

Richardson and Scott (2002) found that the type of music one liked and listened to did not automatically determine study participants' inclusion in a given in-group. In some instances, a participant's ability to identify with the themes present in the music's lyrics denoted the participant's inclusion in the in-group, whereas a participant's inability to identify with these themes resigned the participant to the out-group. The researchers found this to be the case specifically with rap music. Richardson and Scott posited that this may be because the themes often discussed in rap, such as poverty and violence, are those which typically categorize one as a member of the out-group in relation to mainstream American society. Hip-hop culture, then, has become a subculture consisting of those

individuals who have experienced social disenfranchisement and for whom the subculture itself serves as an in-group. Richardson and Scott concluded that rap music sometimes plays a role in adolescents' identity development by providing an in-group for those who might otherwise feel as though they are part of the out-group as it pertains to other social spheres.

Mueller (2002), who compiled a number of perspectives from sociological studies of music, found that musical preference served as an important factor in adolescents' social identity, both in its ability to serve as a "social glue" bonding adolescents to other social groups and individuals with similar preferences and in its ability "to reinforce symbolic boundaries between themselves and categories of people they dislike" (p. 596). By creating boundaries between the self and other, music can serve as a means of identification (Folkestad, 2002); "I am a musician," "I play in an orchestra," and "I like emo" signify that one is allied with a particular group. Mueller asserted that musical preferences themselves not only serve as means of delineation of one individual from another but that they, at times, can also serve as ways of reinforcing pre-existing boundaries.

### **Distinction**

Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skarberg, and Nielsen (2014) conducted a mixed methods study encompassing ethnography and case studies. The researchers were interested in musical gentrification—the ways in which music conforms to middle class or majority sensibilities. Historically, musical distinction was denoted by high-brow and low-brow musics. The researchers found that more recently, diversity has come

to be the primary distinctive feature. In a culture in which musical gentrification is the norm, genres that hold lower social, cultural, and aesthetic status become novel objects of interest. In this way, being defined as “other” can serve as a mark of distinction. What is most interesting about this study is how the idea of the other stands in contrast to the studies above. In the preceding studies, the other carried negative connotations to those who did not identify with it. According to Dyndahl et al., however, the other can serve as an escape from musical gentrification by acting as a mark of distinction.

Richards (1998) found that study participants perceived that their non-musical spheres of identity impacted the choices they made in regard to their musical identities, particularly in regard to the ways in which they used music as a mark of distinction. Richards found, for example, that one’s gender identity can harbor a number of self-concepts that may, in turn, influence one’s musical decisions; males, in particular, avoided emotion-laden songs, as “rational discrimination, choice, and control [were] qualities affirmative of ‘macho’ masculinity” (Dibben, 2002, p. 126). In this way, the music one chooses not to listen to is as much a mark of distinction as the music one does choose.

Finnäs (1989) compared adolescents’ publicly stated musical preferences with their privately stated musical preferences. The researcher found that the music participants reported disliking was as important to them as the music they reported liking in the ways in which participants defined their music preferences. Moreover, the researcher found that participants reported substantially greater dislike for

genres—particularly unpopular genres that would identify one with a preference for the genre as a member of an out-group—when these reports were made publicly in the presence of their peers. Finnäs concluded that one’s musical likes and dislikes were both key to participants’ musical identities, and these distinctions were especially important in adolescents’ use of music as a means of social categorization.

### **Group Membership**

Vocal and instrumental performance ensembles form the backbone of many secondary music programs. It is not surprising, then, that a wealth of performance ensemble-based studies is found at the intersection of school, music, and identity research. Research at the intersection of community-based music ensembles and identity is included here, too. These ensembles constitute a formal learning environment and are therefore similar to school music ensembles in a number of ways. Consequently, I have included discussions of them here as well.

### **Instrumental Ensembles**

Fetter (2011) conducted case studies of string ensemble students. The researcher found that the participants perceived that music facilitated connections with parts of their identities otherwise un-accessed. Moreover, their experiences in their string ensembles bridged connections between themselves and people with whom they otherwise might not have made these connections. One participant in particular reported that it was not until she performed with other like-minded individuals in a performance ensemble, all of them working toward a common musical goal, that she self-identified as a musician. She “[felt] like a musician the

most” (p. 83) when realizing the value of musical performance through connection with an audience.

D’Alexander (2015) investigated the effects of community youth orchestra participation on elementary-aged Latino children’s musical identities. The researcher found that personal, social, and musical factors played roles in the participants’ experiences in the orchestra and the perceived development of their musical identities. D’Alexander pointed out that because the study participants represented a socioeconomically marginalized sector of the population, many of them did not have access to music classes during the regular school day; this rendered their participation in the community music group particularly pivotal in the perceived development of aspects of their musical identities that might otherwise have gone undeveloped if not for their experiences in the community orchestra. Like Fetter (2011), D’Alexander found that the social aspect of the community orchestra was perceived by participants to impact identity development through the identification of shared goals, as well as through one’s individual role in helping the group meet those goals and through the development of friendships among orchestra members.

Dagaz (2010) studied the experiences of students, parents, and directors involved in two high school marching bands in order to learn how participation in these ensembles impacted school identity and school engagement. Although not a study of musical identity in particular, the researcher found that musical identity played an important role in the phenomena under study. Dagaz reported that in

these ensembles, common musical goals and musical interests served as the social glue that bonded individuals who were diverse in all but those specific music-related ways. Dagaz pointed out that although communities are inclusive structures, they are also exclusive structures because they enable the creation of “boundaries that constrain or enable access for certain individuals or groups” (p. 157). The marching band communities Dagaz investigated, however, were perceived as sites of inclusion for any who desired membership, regardless of what other factors or other group memberships might make them diverse. Dagaz concluded that the marching bands investigated had acted as “communities of difference” (p. 157) in which the ways in which one differed from another within the group did not impede one’s group membership.

### **Choral Ensembles**

As was the case with instrumental ensemble membership, choral ensemble membership was perceived by research participants to foster identity development through individual and group pursuit of shared goals. Faulkner and Davidson (2006) investigated the experiences of members of male choruses in Iceland. The chorus members reported feelings of social connectedness, and they perceived this connectedness to be the result of collaborative musical experiences. Rohwer (2009) asked high school choral students to write letters to freshmen who were to soon enter the choral program. One of the themes that appeared in the students’ letters was that the students perceived that working toward shared musical goals contributed to feelings of interconnectedness among one another.

Mills (2008) explored the musical identities of community children's choir participants. Mills dove more deeply into the nature of the relationships at play in the development of participants' identities: between their personal identities and their participation, between their musical identities and their participation, and between interpersonal relationships with peers within the ensemble and the conductor. Mills used observations of rehearsals, focus group interviews, questionnaires, and individual interviews as data sources.

Mills (2008) found that participants perceived that their experiences as members of the ensemble helped cultivate positive self-concepts, both musical and otherwise. Participants perceived that their self-concepts were positively strengthened due to the skills they acquired in rehearsals and as the result of comparison of their ensemble to other ensembles in the area. Participants perceived that the constant presence of the ensemble during periods of transition in their lives aided in the development of values such as confidence and commitment. Participants also reported that the familial quality of the ensemble contributed to feelings of acceptance that some of the musicians did not feel from their peers in other settings.

Sugden (2005), too, found that students' reasons for participating in chorus were often connected to their perceived identities. Via a music self-perceptions inventory, students reported such motivations for ensemble participation as "to help me get to know myself better," "to find out who I am," and "to fulfill God's call to me" (p. 94). Sugden found that the experienced musical self—in this case, in regard



to ensemble participation—was perceived by participants as aiding in the development of more stable self-concepts.

Freer (2015) conducted a research study exploring the male voice change and its impact on males' identities and musical involvement. Of the males interviewed, those who left the choral setting typically did so during the transition from middle school to high school. Freer found that of the various factors influencing boys' decisions to stop singing within a choral setting, gendered factors played a role. Among these factors were students' perceptions of the teacher's interest in adolescent males, the application of techniques geared toward the changing male voice, and the teacher's philosophy in regard to the vocal and identity development of their male singers spanning various developmental levels.

Ramsey (2013) investigated the experiences of males enrolled in a high school men's chorus. Ramsey found that the singers defined their experience in two ways. First, the singers reported the establishment of a brotherhood and of their membership within that brotherhood. The researcher described the second of these using the metaphor of a tightrope: both the teacher and the student walked the tightrope of the repertoire. Vulnerability acted as the wind that attempted to derail them, and trust acted as a safety net beneath them. The singers reported that these experiences differed from those within the high school's mixed chorus because participants perceived they could more readily be themselves in the men's chorus. This, in turn, led to closer relationships with other men's chorus members than with mixed chorus members, as well as greater feelings of comfort in the men's

chorus environment.

Ramsey (2013) found that participants' experiences in the men's chorus also differed from other non-musical all-male activities, such as sports. Participants reported that they felt they could be more vulnerable, experienced less intra-group competition and conflict, and experienced a more intimate brotherhood in the men's chorus than they did in non-musical all-male groups. Ramsey considered what bearing the students' participation in the men's chorus had on their identities, concluding that their experiences were indeed perceived by participants as formative in the development of their identities, but that the nature of this development differed among participants. For some participants, self-concepts in the realm of IIM were developed, including the development of an identity as a musical leader. For other participants, self-concepts in the realm of MII were developed, such as greater awareness of one's gender role.

Harrison (2008) also investigated the experiences of adolescent males' participation in an all-male chorus, finding that the participants perceived that they experienced identity development as the result of their involvement in the ensemble. Harrison's particular interest was the role of gender in this process, and the researcher posited that participation in the group allowed adolescent males to construct positive gender identities that often times stood in opposition to the gendered stereotypes that exist about male chorus members. Harrison wrote, "too few students are able to realize their potential as a result of stereotyping and other gender-related societal forces" (p. 278). The researcher also found that the music

teacher's role in the participants' ability to construct positive identities through choral music was perceived by participants as pivotal: a music teacher who is not mindful of these societal dynamics and the verbal bullying that often accompanies these dynamics may serve to intensify the fears adolescent males have about participating in chorus.

Abrahams (2012) investigated the factors that compelled a group of middle school boys to join or to avoid joining their school chorus. Abrahams found that the boys were conscious of how others perceived them and that much of their decision-making was dependent on the desired nature of some of these perceptions and the undesired nature of other perceptions. Some of the study's participants decided not to participate in their school chorus for fear that they might become targets of homophobic harassment, regardless of their actual sexual orientation. Abrahams concluded that teachers should remain mindful of "the inner struggles of young men in middle school to develop their self-identity" (p. 82) and of how those struggles might subsequently impact their musical participation. Ignoring these factors may "give legitimacy to the peer pressures outside choir that influence young men in negative ways" (p. 82).

In a grounded theory study, Parker (2009) investigated social identity development among adolescents in three high school choral ensembles. The researcher found that actions and interactions influenced high schools students' social identity most often when belonging to one of three categories: choosing to try chorus and subsequently to stick with it, being chosen by the director to participate

in an exclusive choral group, and singing with others as a team. These categories were both intrapersonal (e.g., choosing to try something new) and interpersonal (e.g., being chosen and serving as a member of a team) in nature.

The participants identified certain strategies that they used in order to develop their social identities. Among these, autonomy and ownership were the most prominent. Parker (2009) found that certain “intervening conditions” (p. 135) influenced participants’ social identity development in their choral ensembles. These were perceived by participants to be of both positive and negative natures, depending on where a participant was situated in the “student-to-student power dynamics” (p. 236) that were present in the choral ensembles. Lastly, Parker found social categorization—identification of in-groups and out-groups based on musical preferences—to be among the consequences that participants perceived to result from developing their social identities in their choral ensembles.

According to the researchers who conducted these studies, the unique contexts in which musical experiences take place impact the development of participants’ musical identities. It is therefore important to study musical identity in a variety of contexts, including the secondary general music classroom, in order to gain a more complete picture of musical identity.

### **Making Connections**

Erickson (2005), Mercier-De Shon (2012), and Abrahams (2015) each emphasized the importance of drawing connections between students’ in-school musical experiences and their musical lives beyond school. Identities and students’

musical lives alike are multi-faceted, rendering a one-size-fits-all approach to music education a less effective means of fostering the development of students' musical identities than an approach that takes into account the diverse nature of students' experiences. Erickson (2005) noted that "individuals participate in multiple communities of practice, acquiring multiple [...] repertoires as their own personal culture, and these repertoires differ from one individual to the next, [even] among persons within the 'same' social category" (p. 8). Mercier-De Shon (2012) reinforced this sentiment with the assertion that teachers should remain mindful of "the range of social contexts and groups an individual interacts with, and the variety of roles an individual enacts within a range of settings and experiences" (p. 14).

The ways in which connections between students' in-school and out-of-school musical spheres might be bridged has been the subject of several studies. Two overarching themes emerged from this literature: first, music educators should seek to bridge students' formal learning environments with their informal musical environments and/or informal musical practices (cf. Abrahams, 2012, 2015; Dekaney & Robinson, 2013; Gottlieb, 2014; Green, 2002, 2008; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; North & Hargreaves, 1999a; Seifried, 2002; Shaw, 2014; Shepherd & Vulliamy, 1994; Swanson, 2015). These researchers have posited that this might be accomplished largely through opportunities for student autonomy. Second, researchers have suggested that music educators should seek to bridge students' musical lived realities with their musical possible selves, fostering connections between students' experienced musical selves in the school environment and their

musical identities beyond their years of schooling (cf. Freer, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2015; McPherson, 2015).

### **Bridging the Formal and the Informal**

Though much of Green's (2002, 2008) research has focused on the ways in which students engage with one another musically in informal settings, Green pointed out that informal learning processes can indeed take place in formal settings. According to Green, formal and informal musical practices are not separate entities but are two points along a continuum. Connections to the informal musical environment are often already common in conversations about music between peers in school.

Green (2002, 2008) interviewed popular musicians to learn their methods of informal learning. The researcher then implemented some of these methods in schools, studying how those methods played out in the contexts of the music classrooms. The teachers in these classrooms adopted a decidedly hands-off approach, allowing for student autonomy. The students reported feeling free to explore their musical voices unencumbered by the types of structured procedures and interventions often imposed upon them within formal environments. For example, rather than learning a song via the reading of standard notation, students were able to learn by observing student models.

According to Green (2008), "if we attempt to intervene too much in [students'] learning processes, structure their tasks, set them goals and assess them at every possible moment, we may also be interrupting the possibility of celebration

for them – and of enjoyment, ‘flow’, and even to some extent, of learning” (p. 116).

Green reported that the creative collaboration that often resulted from these instances of student autonomy helped students locate both their individual and collective voices. It is thus disheartening that other researchers have confirmed that informal musical practices go largely unimplemented and underutilized in the classroom “due to the gulf between what is considered and valued as ‘music’ at school and outside” (Lamont, 2002, p. 46; Shepherd & Vulliamy, 1994).

In 2013, Dekaney and Robinson compared the experiences of high school students enrolled in world drumming ensembles at two schools. The schools were alike in many ways, including demographic constitution, geographic area (both were located in urban areas), and class size. Questionnaires were administered to help determine students’ cultural backgrounds, perceptions of school music itself and of the students enrolled in school music courses, their musical preferences outside of school, their musical engagement inside of school, the musical choices they had made in life and how they felt those choices reflected their identities, and students’ perceived connections between music and culture in their school lives and personal lives.

Dekaney and Robinson (2013) found that at School A, there was a heavy focus on culturally relevant pedagogy—making curricular experiences relevant to students’ lives and cultures outside of school. Students in School A reported high enjoyment of their world drumming ensemble experience. At School B, there was diversity in the types of music studied but relatively little focus on delivering the

content in ways relevant specifically to students' lives and cultures outside of school. Students in School B reported low enjoyment of their world drumming ensemble experience. The researchers postulated that adopting culturally relevant pedagogies in school ensembles aids students in engaging their identities in more meaningful ways during in-school music-making experiences.

Shaw (2014) pointed out the disparity between the diversity of students' background and the one-size-fits-all mentality often present in schools. Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is an approach designed to better meet the unique needs, experiences, and preferences of diverse learners. Shaw investigated the experiences of adolescents enrolled in three choruses in which CRP was utilized. Of the various CRP-related facets of student experience investigated, the researcher's exploration of CRP's influence on students' musical identities was of note to this literature review.

Shaw (2014) found that whether students identified themselves as musicians or not depended largely on their similarity to or difference from the vocal models with which they were provided in the classroom. The students perceived that their teachers played a vital role in providing the vocal models upon which these comparisons and subsequent self-judgments were made. They perceived their teachers to be instrumental in the creation of social groups were either inclusive of diverse identities through the presentation of diverse musical models or exclusive of diverse identities through the presentation of a singular or "mainstream" (p. 302) model.



Seifried (2002) studied the experiences of students within a secondary school's guitar program. Seifried wanted to better understand what role students' out-of-school musical engagement—particularly the popular music to which they listen—might have on their in-school musical engagement when the teacher deliberately incorporated those out-of-school music genres and practices in the guitar classroom. Some of Seifried's findings reinforce what has appeared within this review of literature already: the notion that music, including one's in-school musical engagement, serves as a badge of identity that, in part, defines one individually and socially. Moreover, both IIM and MII were expressed by the study's participants; they identified both musical development (e.g., they became more critical music listeners) and extra-musical development (e.g., altered perceptions of school) as perceived benefits of involvement in guitar class.

The students' experiences in guitar class differed from their experiences in other classes due to the guitar class's inclusion of rock and popular music and informal practices, such as jamming. The participants described guitar class as a "class for them" (p. 117), explaining that because of the inclusion of repertoire they listen to in their everyday lives outside of school, they perceived the class as more meaningful and relevant to them than other music and non-music classes that did not draw such connections to their everyday lives. The participants further explained that although they strove to do well in their other classes in order to please their parents or to look good on college applications, their motivation to do well in guitar class was intra-personally driven.

Gottlieb (2014) studied sixth grade students' experiences in a school string ensemble in which the teacher deliberately employed democratic processes. Among these processes were opportunities for student autonomy and student decision-making. The researcher found that the participants felt "ownership and control over their creativity" (p. 121), and that the participants identified these as important aspects of the democratic learning environment. Gottlieb found that participants tied their identities as musicians within the ensemble to their roles as members of the group and creators within the group, but that identification as a "good" musician was tied to measurable factors such as how long a student had been playing an instrument and how much time a student devoted to practicing their instrument. The participants also tied their musical identities to others' perceptions of their musicianship, especially when praised by others for their musical skills. Davidson, Howe, and Sloboda (1997), too, found others' praises and encouragements to be a primary source of motivation and positive self-image for young musicians.

Gottlieb (2014) found that when describing their musical identities, the study's participants spoke of both in-school and out-of-school musical practices. Gottlieb asked participants to describe activities that were integral to their identity. Whereas music emerged as an important perceived facet of identity, most of the participants did not include their study of a musical instrument among their descriptions. Gottlieb concluded that including students as decision makers in the classroom might aid them in asserting ownership over their learning. Moreover, the researcher posited that students who make relevant connections between school

music classes and their musical lives beyond school may be more “likely to continue using the skills they have learned once they leave the school” (p. 127).

Swanson (2015) was also interested in the democratic learning environment, specifically in regard to small-group musical composition activities and the impact they may have on collective identity. Swanson investigated the group composition experiences of fourth- and fifth-grade students and found that the formation of a collective identity among classmates was pivotal in helping them find success in collaborative composition activities. The researcher found that a number of factors contributed to the ways in which the groups of students formed their collective identities. Of these, the most prominent were students’ ability to establish and fill the unique roles needed for group success, as well as students’ ability to navigate differing levels of musical skill present among group members.

Swanson (2015) found key discrepancies between how the same-sex groups handled certain musical decisions compared with how the mixed-sex groups handled these decisions. The same-sex groups were more likely to include vocals in their songs and tended to compose songs that adhered to popular music genres and deviated most from the “school music sound” (p. 117). The researcher posited that mixed-sex groups “[maintained] a nebulous definition of the song being created” in order to “[allow] for a greater number of access points, such that children with disparate musical preferences could find a degree of common ground” (p. 125).

Abrahams (2015) pointed out the disparity between how music is experienced inside school music classes versus in students’ daily lives beyond

school. Abrahams posited that in order for students to engage with music—rather than simply learn about music—students’ formal (in-school) and informal (out-of-school) music learning must be bridged. Abrahams suggested that to facilitate the bridging of these environments, music educators should engage four psychological constructs: musical imagination, musical intellect, musical creativity, and musical performance. Furthermore, Abrahams asserted that music educators should appeal to students’ musical agency by focusing their lessons not just on music literacy but also on “issues of social justice, globalization, personal identity, and themes of contemporary society” (p. 100). Abrahams concluded, “If school music is to be relevant for millennial students, we must teach in ways that connect with how they think and prefer to learn” (p. 100). Incorporating musical practices from students’ lives beyond school is one way in which music educators might achieve this.

Shehan Campbell, Connell, and Beegle (2007) sought to understand the meanings participants ascribed to music both in and out of school. The researchers analyzed essays about music education that adolescents had written as part of a contest. The researchers identified five themes among the essays. Four of these echoed what has been previously discussed in this document regarding musical identity: 1) the participants perceived music to be an integral part of their individual identities, 2) the participants perceived music participation to have social benefits, 3) the participants perceived that music served as a means of expressing those identities (IIM), and 4) the participants perceived that music aided them in constructing and expressing extra-musical aspects of their identities (MII). The fifth

theme the researchers identified was that many students perceived their school music program models as irrelevant to their musical interests and lives beyond school. The study participants made specific mention of their desire for music classes and curricula beyond the large ensembles model exclusively employed by their secondary schools at the time of the study, and more specifically, classes and curricula “relevant to their needs, their interests, and their hopes and desires” (p. 234). The researchers concluded that “school music is not yet all it could be and should be for these American adolescents” (p. 234), and that music curricula must be developed in such a way that the content of students’ informal musical lives is taken into consideration and applied in relevant ways in the formal environment.

The researchers mentioned in this section postulated that the multi-faceted nature of students’ musical identities necessitates the bridging of students’ formal and informal musical worlds. My study of boys’ identities took place within the confines of a general music classroom, but it included any connections students reported between those musical self-concepts enacted in the classroom and those enacted in informal settings in order to further explore this notion.

### **Possible Selves**

Freer’s (2006, 2009, 2010, 2015) narrative-based research on adolescent male singers stands at the junction of students’ experienced musical selves in the choral classroom and their musical lives beyond their years of schooling. Freer found that of the various aspects of students’ identities impacted by the social components of the ensemble experience, perceptions of their future possible

musical selves proved paramount. Camaraderie between participants and others in the ensemble, particularly older ensemble members who helped them navigate such things as the male voice change, encouraged participants to persist in the ensemble setting as a means of working toward their musical goals. Freer (2010, 2015) also found that the role of the teacher and his/her interaction with his/her male students was perceived by participants to be an important factor in students' development of musical possible selves, both positive and negative.

In the 2015 study, Freer found a connection between the timing of the male voice change and the ways in which the boys envisioned possible selves in regard to choral music. The boys' self-concepts were typically crafted by the skills they did and did not possess more so than by the effort they put into skill acquisition and their hopes for improvement. The presence of older male role models who had successfully navigated the vocal change and were active singers on the other side of this change was an important factor in the boys' abilities to envision possible selves as singers. Freer suggested that teachers hoping to facilitate the development of possible musical selves should also place emphasis on musical quality at each stage of vocal development, should provide a safe environment in which embarrassment about the voice change is minimized, and should provide students reassurance about what lies on the other end of the vocal change. Rogers (1961) posited that psychological unrest might result when discrepancies arise between one's actual behaviors and a desired possible self, further highlighting the importance of the teacher's role as a facilitator of possible selves.

A study conducted by Evans and McPherson (2015) also addressed students' visions for their future possible selves, the self-concepts they held in regard to their future musical engagement or lack of engagement as musicians or non-musicians. The researchers studied the musical engagement of instrumental students longitudinally. Roughly half of the participants had a strong vision for their future possible musical selves at the onset of the study. Each of these participants envisioned music as a long-term commitment, adopting a long-term vision of their identity as a musician. In contrast, the other half of the participants envisioned music as a short-term commitment. The latter group of participants were more inclined to see music as something one does in the moment rather than something that is an integral part of one's identity.

Evans and McPherson (2015) gathered data over a ten-year period, taking into account such factors as achievement and time spent practicing. They found that students who envisioned long-term possible musical selves spent more hours engaging in practice and experienced greater musical achievement than those who viewed music as a short-term activity rather than a more stable aspect of their musical identity. In this case, the engagement of participants' experienced musical selves was impacted by their future possible selves.

The researchers mentioned here postulated that students' experiences in the music classroom have the potential to impact their lives and their musical identities beyond their years of schooling. It is therefore important to be mindful of the musical self-concepts developed in school music programs, as these can become

stable parts of an individual's self-system. At my research site, in particular, the published strategic plan (Murray, 2007) included the development of boys into "accomplished and independent young men" (p. 4); Murray acknowledged that students' experiences at school have the potential to impact students in their lives beyond school. The faculty within the school's music department, too, ascribed to this notion and reported hoping to foster positive musical self-concepts among their students that might impact life-long musical learning and positive musical identities.

### **The Missing Piece**

Findings from these studies support what was discussed in Chapter 1: identity manifests in a variety of contexts, and the contexts themselves shape the development of one's identity. Consequently, in order to better understand the experiences of students in secondary general music classes, we must turn to studies taking place in the unique context of the secondary general music classroom. The studies I encountered at the intersection of general music and identity, however, pertained specifically to the identities of pre-adolescent children (cf. Mercier-De Shon, 2012) or the identities of the teachers and/or pre-service teachers themselves (cf. Bernard, 2003, 2005; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Draves, 2010; Haston & Russell, 2012; McClellan, 2014; Roberts, 1991). Moreover, the majority of studies I located pertaining to the general music classroom were in regard to elementary music. Researchers who mentioned general music at the secondary level spoke of the relatively small number of secondary general music programs as compared to the prevalence of the large ensemble model in secondary music education programs



(Kratus, 2007; Williams, 2011).

I was able to locate one study at the intersection of general music and students' musical identities. Mercier-De Shon (2012) studied the ways in which elementary school children "live in and live through music" (p. 5) in their general music class, which the researcher conceived as the ways in which their musical self-concepts encompassing both IIM and MII are enacted. Mercier-De Shon investigated various types of musical engagement—singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating—among four elementary school-aged participants.

Regarding singing, the researcher found that the children "tacitly negotiated a comfort zone for singing, based on familiarity of material and contextual circumstances" (p. 171). Regarding listening, Mercier-De Shon (2012) found that the children's listening preferences went beyond what was socially popular or part of their favorite genre; Mercier-De Shon found that the children often engaged in music listening in order to serve utilitarian purposes, including mood alteration and social engagement. Regarding performing on instruments and creation, the researcher found that the children were mindful of both their individual engagement and the goals of the collective while composing and performing, "orchestrating their fluid individual and social worlds" (p. 206). Mercier-De Shon concluded that children's identities might develop "within a nexus of individualized and social continuums of music experience and learning" (p. 211).

Mercier-De Shon's findings, particularly in regard to music listening, support the notion that musical identities encompass both MII and IIM and that both of these

spheres can be engaged in the general music classroom. Because adolescence is such a pivotal time in the development of one's identity (Erikson, 1963), it is worth investigating how these spheres might be engaged in the general music classroom at the secondary level, specifically. Because the faculty at my research site reported being mindful of the impact classroom experiences might have on students' identities (Murray, 2007), the school proved an especially appropriate site for this research.

### Summary

*She was a girl  
no one ever chose  
for teams or clubs  
dances or dates,*

*so she chose the instrument  
no one else wanted:  
the tuba. Big as herself,  
heavy as her heart,*

*its golden tubes  
and coils encircled her  
like a lover's embrace [...]*

- Robert Phillips (2000) "Instrument of Choice"

Researchers have established the importance of one's social interactions, inclusive of in-school musical experiences, in the formation of one's identity. The literature regarding non-performance ensemble school music experiences—commonly referred to as the general music classroom—and their contribution to the development of musical identity at the secondary level remains a missing piece of the identity puzzle. My investigation of the musical engagement of adolescent males in the general music setting provided a more complete picture of context-

specific musical identities. Several of the researchers mentioned in this review of literature postulated that the multi-faceted nature of students' musical identities necessitates the bridging of students' formal and informal musical worlds; thus, though my study of boys' identities took place within the confines of a general music classroom, it included any connections students reported between those musical self-concepts engaged in the classroom and those engaged in informal settings.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class in order to learn what factors of the environment adolescent males perceive as impactful in the development of their musical identities. Moreover, because researchers have posited that informal music contexts are pivotal in the development of adolescent identity and that connections can be drawn between formal and informal settings, I wanted to learn what role, if any, in-class connections to students' informal musical contexts play in the engagement of their musical identities. (See page 29 for an operational definition of engagement.)

The central research questions were: In what ways, if any, are adolescent males' musical identities engaged in the general music classroom? What role, if any, do in-class connections to informal contexts play in this engagement?

### Qualitative Research

Music is a "context-specific social practice" (Goble, 2010, p. 9), and the development of musical identities can occur in a variety of such contexts. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to capture the diversity and depth of people's musical experiences within their respective social groups and contexts (North & Hargreaves, 1999a; Orcher, 2005). The nature of the research questions themselves drove my choice to use a qualitative methodology; questions of *how* or *what* require subsequent description of phenomena, whereas questions of *why* require controlled

comparison of variables to establish cause and effect (Creswell, 1998).

Though qualitative studies are context-specific, they share certain universal qualities. First, natural settings (i.e., the music classroom) are used as sites for data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 1988). Second, the role of the researcher is common among qualitative studies: the researcher gathers data via words and pictures; analyzes and draws inferences from them in a detailed manner; takes into account research participant perspectives and the meanings they make of their experiences; and details the phenomena under study via writing that is at once reflective, expressive, descriptive, and logical (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 1988). Qualitative research is often summed up not by definitive conclusions but by a new set of questions (Wolcott, 1994). Such was the case with my study, through which greater clarity was found in relation to the research topic, but as the result of which new curiosities also arose.

### **Grounded Theory Methodology**

Creswell (1998) described qualitative research as a fabric that could only be understood by exploring its myriad qualities: its thread colors, its textures, its blend of materials, and so forth. Creswell pointed out that as these varied facets make the fabric complex, it is held together by means of a loom. In the same fashion, methodological frameworks help us bind the threads of qualitative data, working with them in a systematic manner that produces a cohesive end product. The methodological framework, or loom, employed in this study was that of grounded

theory.

It is important to note the difference between a grounded theory study and grounded theory methodology. The purpose of a grounded theory study is to generate a theory as it relates to a particular phenomenon, emerging from data from the field (Creswell, 1998; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1994) described a theory as the nature of the relationship between concepts or sets of concepts. Grounded theory is inherently inductive, using particular instances to postulate more generally. In a grounded theory *study*, a grounded theory *method* is used to build a theory.

A grounded theory *method*, however, can also be used in other qualitative studies through which the researcher does not build subsequent theory (Urquhart, 2013). Urquhart drew a distinction between a grounded theory study and a grounded theory method by explaining that “there are two basic research designs available. The first is what I would call a *theory-building design*, [and] the second is a *general design* leveraging grounded theory method.” Because I drew upon an existing theoretical framework when conducting my study (the social psychological understanding of musical identity), my study can be categorized as a general qualitative study in which I employed a grounded theory method. The specific ways in which I employed a grounded theory method are described throughout this chapter.

It should be noted that, under the umbrella of grounded theory, variations of grounded theory models exist (Evans, 2013). Different approaches arise from varied

assumptions regarding the relationship between the researcher and the data. These variants can be categorized as taking an objective, a post-positivist, or a constructivist approach. Objectivist theorists assume a knowable, objective reality. This reality is separate from the researcher and thus assumed not to be subject to researcher bias. Post-positivist theorists employ the scientific method for testing their hypotheses, meanwhile acknowledging that research participants may interpret their experiences differently from one another (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). Constructivist theorists assume that concepts are constructed rather than discovered, reality is subjective, and the subjective nature of the relationship between the researcher and participant affects the interpretation of data (Evans, 2013; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

I employed a constructivist grounded theory methodology. Constructivist grounded theory is not exclusive to those for whom constructivism serves as the theoretical framework of their research. Terming one's approach "constructivist grounded theory" simply acknowledges that the data obtained cannot be analyzed or discussed entirely objectively; its interpretation is largely influenced by the theoretical assumptions of the researcher (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). This key assumption is also found in the field of social psychology, the same field that provided the theoretical underpinnings of my study as discussed in Chapter 1.

Though grounded theory acts as a methodology by which data may be analyzed and interpreted, it does not determine the instruments or procedures used to gather that data. Instead, procedures such as selecting a research site and

collecting data are determined by the particulars of one's research problem (Charmaz, 2006; Urquhart, 2013). The following sections of the chapter detail my design and procedures.

### **Research Site**

The site of the study was an all-boys college preparatory school in the Midwest United States. In 2007, the school published a strategic plan for the future of the institution (Murray, 2007). The plan was developed by a steering committee comprised of the school's headmaster, six trustees, a representative from the school's parent association, and five members of the school's leadership team. Members of the Bennett Group acted as consultants to the steering committee. Three facets of the strategic plan proved pertinent to the design of a new music program. Murray, in the strategic plan document he authored, emphasized the mission of the school: the school's programs should promote not only intellectual excellence among its students, but also physical, creative, and moral excellence. Murray suggested, in other words, that curriculum and instruction should develop more than just content area knowledge; they should be tied to the development of one's character and to life skills that may be applied across domains. Second, Murray emphasized the importance of "delivering on 'moments of truth,' highly personal events that shape a boy's experience" (p. 5). The school's role in providing the opportunities that shape students' identities was acknowledged and prioritized. Third, Murray acknowledged the need to revisit the ways in which the school prepares its students due to the acquisition of new knowledge—particularly



gender-specific knowledge—regarding learning and the brain.

In response to the strategic plan, a new middle school music program called “Soundscape” was launched in 2010. The program was structured specifically to meet the above-mentioned goals of promoting academic and non-academic excellence among its students, providing opportunities for identity development among its students, and designing curriculum while cognizant of recent research regarding the male brain and the ways in which males learn.

The program was largely modeled after Leung’s (2004) “Multifaceted Music Curriculum” model. This model emphasized four dimensions: “the importance of popular, traditional (including folk and classical), and contemporary music,” (p. 2); “music at the local, national, and global level,” (p. 2); “embedding academic studies in appreciation, composition and performance activities,” (p. 2); and “integrating elements of other cultural subjects in the teaching of music” (p. 2). This model was chosen by the performing arts department faculty—myself among them—and the administration because of its comprehensive nature. The music faculty hoped that by providing a broad range of musical content and musical experiences, each student would be able to connect to something from their musical lives beyond school in a way that would hold personal meaning and relevance.

Research concerning the structure and functioning of the male brain guided much of the curriculum design. Research in psychology and brain science has shown that boys learn differently than girls (Gurian & Stevens, 2011; James, 2007; Lenroot et al., 2007). By catering to the unique learning styles of males, educators within the

program attempted to facilitate students' development of positive self-concepts and positive musical possible selves—ideas of musical self-concepts one might hold in the future—by providing learning opportunities that set students up for success in the classroom context (Campbell, 2009; Freer, 2010).

The faculty within Soundscape program, from which the participants were drawn, attempted to cater to the academic and non-academic developmental needs of adolescent males, providing an environment potentially rich in the types of developmental facilitation opportunities under investigation in this study. In summary, the research site was appropriate to the study. The all-male environment lent itself well to the study of male identity, and the school valued and prioritized identity development's place within the school experience.

### **Design**

I first conducted a pilot study in order to test and revise some of my instrumentation. After obtaining the necessary permissions from Boston University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), administrators at the research site, student participants, and students' parents, I conducted the full-scale study. This section describes how I selected participants as well as the procedures and instrumentation used to collect data.

The collection and analysis of data took place continuously and simultaneously over the course of two school trimesters. Data were collected at three levels, each level employing a smaller sample of participants than the one preceding it. A greater amount of data was also collected from each participant at

each level than at the level preceding it. Data sources included a questionnaire, a focus group interview, individual interviews, video reflections, and artifacts. A research assistant peer checked the data at each level.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted in order to test, and subsequently revise, the questionnaire that served as the first mode of data collection (Appendix F). The purpose of the pilot study was to help determine the duration of questionnaire completion and whether its questions would yield rich data in the form of participant responses.

The pilot study was conducted among a group of eighth-grade students during the spring prior to the full-scale study. This ensured that participants in the pilot study could not and would not participate in the full-scale study. In order to be eligible to participate in the pilot study, students had to have been enrolled in music class during the spring trimester and could not belong to my music class in particular. Twenty-seven students were eligible to participate in the pilot study. Of these, 26 students gave assent, and 16 parents gave consent; therefore, 16 students formed the participant cohort for the pilot study.

The questionnaire was administered via an online platform called Schoology during students' music class. The majority of students took approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire, with some students taking as little as 5 minutes or as long as 15 minutes. Students did not report any issues with the technology employed, nor did they ask for clarification regarding the

questionnaire questions or the questionnaire procedure.

**Question 1.** The first questionnaire prompt read: “What are your musical goals? What do you think you need to learn or experience to reach these goals?” Though all but one student listed at least one musical goal, two students stated that they had no goals because they did not wish to make music their career, but nonetheless listed a non-career musical goal. To avoid confusion regarding what constitutes a musical goal, the prompt wording was changed to the following for use in the full-scale study: “What are your musical goals? These goals can be in regard to a future career, or they could be non-career goals. What do you think you need to learn or experience to reach these goals? Why?” The question of “why” was added in order to move toward a more interrogative and less declarative line of inquiry.

**Question 2.** The second questionnaire prompt read: “How do you think the things you do/learn in the music classroom transfer to your everyday life outside of school?” Though answers regarding students’ experiences in the music classroom in general were desired, the majority of answers specifically pertained to the past trimester and/or unit of study. I determined that this problem would likely solve itself to some extent in the full-scale study, given that the questionnaire was to be administered during the first weeks of school rather than during the final trimester. The wording of the prompt was changed to the following to add clarity: “How do you think the things you do/learn in the music classes you’ve experienced in school transfer to life outside of school?”

**Question 3.** The third questionnaire prompt read: “How do you think the things you do in your everyday life transfer to your experiences in the music classroom?” Because all student responses regarded positive transferences, the wording of the question was changed to convey that positive, negative, and neutral transferences were all welcomed responses. This was achieved by providing examples for students to guide them in reflection. The new wording read: “How do you think the things you do in everyday life transfer to your experiences in the music classroom? (For example, you like to sing in class because your friends tell you have a good voice, you are afraid to try improvising in class because you don’t like doing unfamiliar things, or you prefer written work instead of performance-based activities because you know you’re a good writer.)”

In summary, implementation of the pilot study informed the design of the questionnaire used in the full-scale study. I learned that at least 15 minutes should be allotted for completion of the questionnaire, and that the prompts—with minor revisions—yielded reflective responses sufficient for use as study data and as the basis for choosing the Level 2 sample.

### **Research Assistant**

I selected one research assistant to aid me throughout the full-scale study. The function of the research assistant was to peer check the data at each level of analysis to aid in credibility. Just as the study’s procedures and instrumentation were scrutinized and approved by the IRB prior to the full-scale study, so too were the inclusion of the research assistant and the particulars of the research assistant’s

study-related activities.

The research assistant holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, focused in child psychology. The assistant was working as a clinical psychologist in a hospital and a consulting psychologist in the school at which the study took place at the time of the study. To minimize bias, data were given to the research assistant for peer checking only after the removal of all identifiable participant information.

The research assistant and I both completed training in research ethics when working with human subjects through the University of Miami's Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative prior to the commencement of the study. The completed training included human subjects protection training with social and behavioral foci. These credentials remained valid throughout the duration of the full-scale study.

## **Participants**

The study's participants were sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students enrolled in a non-elective general music program at an all-boys college preparatory school. All participants were males between the ages of 11 and 14. In compliance with the policies of Boston University's IRB, permissions were obtained from students' parents as well as students before commencement of the study. There were three levels of data collection, with 40 participants at the first level, 14 at the second, and 8 at the third.

I collected data over the course of two trimesters. This is the length of time during which seventh- and eighth-graders were enrolled in the course. Sixth-

graders were enrolled in the course year-round but only participated in the study over two trimesters.

I employed purposive quota sampling. Quota sampling preserved certain proportions within the sample; my sample contained similar numbers of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade participants. Purposive sampling enabled me to select a subset from a larger group to serve as the sample; my Level 2 and three samples contained participants likely to provide rich data, as identified by the questionnaire data collected from the Level 1 sample. Sampling procedures at each level are discussed in greater detail below.

Participant confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms. I removed all identifiable information from the data prior to peer checking. All transcripts, the pseudonym key, and any other physical materials that might have compromised participant privacy and/or confidentiality were kept in the researcher's office in a locked file for the duration of the study and destroyed at the conclusion of the study, per Boston University's policy. All non-identifiable data will be kept in a locked file for seven years post-study, also per Boston University's policy. All non-identifiable digital materials pertaining to the study are stored in password-protected folders within a password-protected user account on a private computer.

### **Level 1 Procedures**

**Sampling.** Sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students enrolled in Soundscape class during the first and second trimesters of the school year and who

were not my own students during that period were eligible to be study participants. Of those, consent and assent were attained for 41 students. All 41 Level 1 participants completed the questionnaire. One participant was removed from the study 2 weeks thereafter when he and his family moved away. Thus, the remaining 40 students comprised what was referred to as the “Level 1” sample.

**Questionnaire.** A questionnaire (Appendix L) was administered to all Level 1 participants via an online platform called Schoology. Permissions were set in such a way that only the research assistant and I were able to view participants’ responses. The questionnaire consisted of three open-ended short-answer questions regarding students’ musical goals and experiences in the music classroom.

The collection and analysis of data occur continuously and simultaneously when employing a grounded theory method (Urquhart, 2013). In this way, the Level 1 participants’ questionnaire responses not only served as data to be analyzed, but also aided me in determining avenues for inquiry among the Level 2 and Level 3 participants. For example, some of the interview questions that I asked Level 3 participants grew out of my desire to better understand things they made mention of in their questionnaire responses.

## **Level 2 Procedures**

**Sampling.** Purposive sampling was utilized to draw the 14-member Level 2 sample from the existing Level 1 sample. The Level 1 participants’ questionnaire responses, in addition to serving as data, were also used to aid the research assistant and me in selecting the Level 2 participants. Following initial coding of the



data, the research assistant and I identified which Level 1 participants yielded responses to which we were able to attach the greatest number of codes. There was a fairly obvious divide between those participants whose responses elicited a greater number of codes (typically 10 to 14 per question) and those whose responses elicited fewer codes (typically three or four per question), with only a handful of Level 1 participants falling between these markers.

We then read through the responses of the 12 participants whose responses had elicited the greater amount of codes and agreed that we perceived those participants to have been reflective about their experiences and open to sharing thoughts and feelings about their experiences based on the responses they gave. Of these 12 participants, two were sixth graders, five were seventh graders, and five were eighth graders. An additional two sixth graders were selected from the Level 1 sample, even though they were among those participants whose responses elicited fewer codes. This was done in order to preserve the ratio of sixth graders to seventh and eighth graders because quota sampling was employed. In total, four of the 14 Level 2 sample participants were sixth graders, five were seventh graders, and five were eighth graders.

**Focus group interview.** All Level 2 participants engaged in a focus group interview. Focus group interviews are useful tools in their ability to yield data quickly by encouraging interaction and discussion among participants (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Focus group interviews provide the moderator a great amount of control and flexibility, as the moderator can steer the conversation

toward a desired topic to elicit focused discussion and can also allow the discussion to follow tangents that may provide new perspectives or areas for exploration (Well, 1974).

Focus group interviews are especially appropriate for qualitative studies in the social sciences, as “the goals are to conduct an interactive discussion that can elicit a greater, more in-depth understanding of perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences from multiple points of view and to document the context from which those understandings were derived” (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, p. 16). The subjective relationships between participant and truth, participant and other participants, participant and moderator, and moderator and interpretation were acknowledged as opportunities for exploring new dimensions of the phenomena under study throughout the course of the research; just as the questionnaire responses at times informed interview questions asked at a later date, topics brought up in the focus group interview both served as data themselves and also influenced the proceeding data collection.

I moderated the focus group interview (see Appendix M), which was held during one 25-minute “extension block,” a discretionary block of time used for such activities as student clubs, extra help for classes, or unstructured free time. The interview took place in the middle school conference room. I audio recorded the interview using GarageBand software and transcribed the recording to Microsoft Word within 48 hours. No transcription-specific software was used during the study.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions but was not bound to the script; I, at times, allowed the conversation to follow tangents that arose and allowed for discussion between interview participants and one another, rather than just participants and me. Focus group participants were asked to speak one at a time, to talk as little or as much about a topic as they wanted, and to talk to one another and/or ask one another questions if they desired. Participants were told that there were no right or wrong answers, only different points of view. Participants were informed that the interview was being recorded, that their identifiable information would be removed upon transcription of the recording, and that they would have the opportunity to read the transcripts and make corrections as needed in case what they meant to say had been misrepresented in any way.

As with the questionnaire responses, the Level 2 participants' responses during the focus group interview served both as data to be analyzed and as avenues for further inquiry among the Level 3 participants. For example, some of the interview questions that I asked Level 3 participants grew out of my desire to better understand things they made mention of during the focus group interview.

### **Level 3 Procedures**

**Sampling.** Purposive sampling was utilized to draw the eight-member Level 3 sample from the existing Level 2 sample. The Level 2 participants' focus group responses, in addition to serving as data, were also used to aid the research assistant and me in selecting the Level 3 sample. The Level 3 sample was selected in the same way as was the Level 2 sample; following initial coding of the focus group

data, the research assistant and I identified which Level 2 participants yielded responses to which we were able to attach the greatest number of codes.

Three sixth graders, two seventh graders, and three eighth graders were subsequently identified from among the Level 2 participants, and these numbers preserved the integrity of the quota sampling. These students had the highest number of instances in which they spoke of their experiences and articulated those reflections with greater perceived depth than had the other focus group participants. This group was referred to as the “Level 3” sample.

**Individual interviews.** A modified version of an interview series designed by Dolbeare and Schuman (1982) was employed for the value it places on making meaning of experience by placing it in context. Dolbeare and Schuman’s interview series consists of three interviews, each with a particular function. I preserved the first and final interviews in this series, whereas I split the second interview in Dolbeare and Schuman’s series into a number of shorter interviews due to the extended nature of the participants’ immersion in the study. Functionally, these interviews remained the same as that of the second in Dolbeare and Schuman’s series. Each participant engaged one-on-one, privately, in the interview series. The semi-structured nature of each interview allowed me to pursue rich answers by probing beyond the initial questions.

The initial interview (Appendix N), which took place toward the beginning of the two-trimester course, dealt with the participants’ focused musical life history. The goal of this interview was to establish the context for the participants’

experiences. The interim interviews (Appendix O), which took place at the conclusion of each unit of study, dealt with the details of participants' experiences in their music class in a more concrete fashion. The final interview (Appendix P), which took place at the conclusion of the second trimester, required participants to reflect on their experiences, making meaning of them. Participants were told that they could talk as much or as little as they wanted, they could choose not to answer a question if they wished, and that they could stop the interview at any time. Participants were told that the interview was being audio recorded but that their answers would be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. They were also told that they would have the opportunity to read the interview transcripts at a later date to acknowledge that their words had been accurately transcribed and/or to make any necessary clarifications if I had misrepresented what they meant to say in any way.

All interviews were conducted in the student conference room during one of two during-school 15-minute break times. Each interview took as little as 5 minutes and as much as 15 minutes, with most interviews falling between the 7- and 10-minute mark. This length was chosen to fit within the confines of the students' regular schedules. Due to this time constraint, I sometimes had to decide between delving more deeply into one topic through probing with follow-up questions or getting through the rest of the potential questions that had been pre-written. In these cases, I chose to delve more deeply into the topic at hand in order to allow for students to speak in detail about a specific experience. Each Level 3 participant took

part in five one-on-one interviews, totaling 40 individual interviews overall. I transcribed each interview within 48 hours.

**Video reflections.** Three times during the study, I gave each Level 3 participant prompts for filming video reflections. These prompts were influenced by previously collected data. For example, one student reported that he felt he couldn't express himself in class. For his subsequent video reflection, I asked him to document this by excusing himself from class to comment on the situation and his feeling regarding the situation when it again arose. Participants were not permitted to shoot video footage in the classroom or footage including other students, as each class had at least one student for whom consent and/or assent had not been obtained. As with the interview questions, participants were told that they could speak as much or as little as they liked and that these video reflections were not mandatory in nature. Participants were also told that they would have the opportunity to read the video transcripts at a later date to acknowledge that their words and actions had been accurately transcribed and/or to make any necessary clarifications if I had misrepresented what they did or said in any way.

The participants were provided with flip cameras owned by the school and available for teachers and students to sign out. Flip cameras were given to students immediately before the class periods during which video data were collected and returned to me immediately following class. Cameras were stored in a locked drawer in my office when not in use, ensuring no one other than me had access to view the footage. I transcribed the footage within 48 hours and immediately deleted

the video footage following transcription. The flip cameras remained in my possession for the duration of the study. The research assistant and I each double-checked that all footage had been erased from each camera prior to returning the cameras to the school representative who was in charge of them.

Two of the participants did not complete the video reflections for reasons they cited as forgetfulness (i.e., “I didn’t remember until it was too late”) or irrelevance of the prompt to that day’s in-class activities (i.e., “I didn’t feel proud of anything in class that day, so I couldn’t make the video”). Two of the participants addressed one of the prompts, citing forgetfulness or that they did not feel they could afford to leave the class to complete the video in case they were to miss something important. Three of the participants addressed two of the prompts, and one participant addressed all three prompts. On two occasions, two of the participants belonging to the same music class decided to address the prompt together in a conversation-like manner. Nine video reflections in total were included among the study data, with 11 participant responses to the prompts among those nine recordings. The videos ranged in length from 2 minutes to 8 minutes.

A high-inference approach was used, requiring me to both record behaviors (e.g., “the student threw down his mallet”) and to draw inferences regarding the meaning of those behaviors (e.g., “the student threw down his mallet, frustrated at the difficulty of the passage”). Although a low-inference approach would inherently beget greater reliability, the data “[might] not be understood by recording specific behaviors without putting them into context” (McMillan, 1992, p. 129).

**Artifacts.** Toward the conclusion of the study, all Level 3 participants were asked to compile a portfolio of artifacts that they felt answered the question: “Who am I as a musician?” (Appendix Q). The portfolio was specific to the study; this was not an activity undertaken by all of the students in the music class. Participants were told that these artifacts could take the form of class projects, assignments, doodles in their notebooks, audio recordings, or anything else the participants deemed relevant.

All eight of the Level 3 participants submitted a portfolio. The size of the portfolio varied from participant to participant, with each portfolio containing between 4 and 12 items. All eight portfolios contained both in-school (e.g., completed assignments) and out-of-school (e.g., iTunes playlists) components. All identifiable information—specifically, student names on assignments—were removed prior to submitting the portfolios to the research assistant for peer checking.

### **Memos**

Researcher memos were written throughout all stages of data collection and analysis. These aided in tracking emerging categories and themes, documenting curiosities and other reactions, and directing further data collection. I found that my memos were, in fact, simply reflections on the data that had already been gathered and curiosities that had arisen that I hoped to explore through the ensuing data collection. Technically speaking, the memos were data; however, the memos functioned, to me, not as much as data in themselves as they did a sort of thinking-



out-loud about the data to help me organize and plan which niches to explore next within the data.

### **Sharing Decisions**

My primary obligation as researcher was not to the study itself, nor to the broader field of music education. My primary obligation was to my participants (Denzin, 1989). The participants showed openness in the disclosure of various aspects of their experiences and their identities, and I was responsible for protecting their trust. Flewitt (2005) proposed that sharing decisions is an important factor in maintaining trust and a balance of power between the researcher and the researched. Participants in this study were enlisted as shared decision makers.

Participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of participation throughout the study; none of the study-related activities were mandatory. For example, one participant opted not to respond to one of the one-on-one interview questions, and two of the participants did not address any of the three video prompts.

At times, I shared my memos with participants. I asked them to help me make sense of my observations. Was my gut correct in interpreting something they said a certain way, or was I making incorrect assumptions? Is there something else I should know about the music classroom—or something I should investigate further—about which I hadn't yet asked them? An example of a shared decision can be found in the final chapter, when I share an ancillary finding of the study: I asked

one of the participants, Mack, if he felt I was accurate in making an observation, and I asked him what he felt might be at the root of the observed phenomenon. In that instance, Mack was enlisted not only as one who provided data, but also as one who informed the interpretation of that data.

Furthermore, transcripts were not automatically assumed to be permissible for inclusion among the data. When participants reviewed data during the member checks, they were at that time allowed to explain content, make clarifications, and/or request that content not be included among the data. I understood that although losing data was not ideal, it might have proved necessary in order to avoid compromising participants (Price, 1996). If a participant were to request that data be removed, I would have suggested an alternate means of presenting the data—for example, a further level of identity cloaking—to preserve its inclusion while assuaging the participant's concerns about its inclusion. If the participant were still uncomfortable with the inclusion of the data, the data would have been excluded from the study. None of the participants involved in this study, however, requested the exclusion of data.

### **Credibility**

I sought to establish credibility by conducting member checks, engaging in the field for a prolonged period of time, and triangulating the data sources. Triangulation of data sources will be further discussed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, peer scrutiny via the research assistant's consultation on the collected data aided in credibility and dependability.

## **Data Analysis**

According to Bresler and Stake, (2006), “the primary task of the [qualitative] researcher is interpretation” (p. 294). The topic studied contained some complicated terminology such as “musical identity.” It was not expected that students would volunteer their experiences and the relevance they ascribe to those experiences using this terminology. It was expected, nonetheless, that certain topics relating to musical identity (e.g., self-concept) would naturally emerge from the data due to my utilization of social psychology as the theoretical framework through which the data were understood.

All audio and video recorded data were transcribed prior to coding. Audio recordings of the focus group interview and the individual interviews in the form of GarageBand voice recordings, as well as video files from the flip cameras in the form of .mp4 files, were transferred to a Microsoft Word text-only format with all identifiable information removed within 48 hours of data collection. No transcription-specific software was used during the study. I also segmented the text prior to coding.

### **Coding**

First, initial coding —also called open coding—was used to categorize the data. A category is, simply put, a unit of information (Creswell, 1998). At this stage of coding, each piece of segmented data received one or more codes based on what I felt was/were the primary idea(s) being conveyed by that segment of data (Urquhart, 2013). For example, although participants did not use the term “musical

self-concept,” much of what they expressed in the data were, in fact, statements and/or descriptions of musical self-concepts they held. Participants talked about their musical strengths, musical weaknesses, music-related things in which they took either pride or embarrassment, and the ways in which they saw themselves as musicians or non-musicians in general; therefore, I identified musical self-concept as a category to be used to identify and organize the data at this level. The strengths, weaknesses, etc. that they identified became properties of the category, each property receiving its own code as well.

*In vivo* coding, in which a participants’ own word or phrase extracted from the data serves as the code itself, aided in preserving the uniqueness of individuals’ voices (Charmaz, 2006). Four *in vivo* codes were identified during the initial coding. These were: limited, not limited, team, and being heard.

Each time I identified a new code, I searched the data for other segments to which that code could be ascribed. When all data were accounted for and I could find neither new codes to ascribe to the data nor additional segments to which to ascribe the existing codes, the codebook was created. I discuss the codebook further in the “peer checking” section to come.

Creswell (1998) described focused coding—also called axial coding— as the stage during which “the investigator assembles the data in new ways after open coding” (p. 57). At this level of coding, I was required to make “decisions about which initial codes [made] the most analytic sense to categorize [the] data incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Certain codes travelled together, and these

inter-code connections were highlighted during the focused coding. For example, the initial codes “enjoyment,” “teachers,” and “not limited” often appeared side-by-side and thus emerged as an avenue for exploration during the focused coding. Peer checking, described below, was employed at the level of focused coding.

Lastly, theoretical coding—also called selective coding—was used to draw major themes from the data. Creswell (1998) described selective coding as the stage at which “the researcher identifies a ‘story line’ and writes a story that integrates the categories in the axial coding model” (p. 57). The groupings of codes that travelled together and served as points of intersection during the focused/axial coding served as key plot points in this story. Using the previously mentioned group of codes that seemed to travel together (i.e., “enjoyment,” “teachers,” and “not limited”) and synthesizing what I learned from that focused code group as well as other focused code groups, for example, led me to conceptualize the theme that I labeled “freedom.” Peer checking, described below, was employed at the level of theoretical coding. The coding and analysis of the data at each level—initial, focused, and theoretical—will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

### **Peer Checking**

Light (1971) and Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) suggested that nominal (name-based rather than number-based) data can be peer checked and that meeting high rates of agreement between checkers can aid in establishing dependability in the coding of qualitative data. The research assistant peer checked samples of the data at each level of coding in order to establish dependability in the study.

At each level of coding, I gave the research assistant the codebook I had created and/or revised upon my own coding of the data at that level (cf. Hruschka, Schwartz, St. John, Picone-Decaro, Jenkins, & Carey, 2004; MacQueen, McLellan-Lemal, Batholow, & Milstein, 2008; Saldana, 2009). The codebook contained the codes themselves, definitions and explanations of each code, guidelines for when to use a particular code, guidelines for when not to use a particular code, and a hypothetical (i.e., not from the data) example of proper use of each code. The research assistant coded the data according to the codes I had provided in the codebook but could not see how I had coded each segment of data. Of course, qualitative data are largely subjective. The codes I created and provided in the codebook were my own, and there is no doubt that had my research assistant engaged in initial coding without referencing the codebook, a different set of codes would have emerged and the rate of agreement between us would have been very low. Having one researcher serve as codebook editor is a way of acknowledging the subjective nature of the coding of qualitative data (MacQueen et al., 2008; Saldana, 2009); nevertheless, peer checking serves to decrease the “risk of random error and bias in interpretation” (Hruschka et al., 2004, p. 320).

The rate of agreement between the research assistant and me was determined with Cohen's kappa. Cohen's kappa is a measure of agreement between two raters of categorical (non-numerical) data. Cohen's kappa is calculated using a mathematical formula. The numbers used to run the formula relate to how many categories are present and how often the two raters agreed or disagreed about how

to assign a segment of data to a specific category, rather than to data that is in itself numerical in nature. Cohen's kappa takes into account the probability of agreement by chance, which a simple percentage agreement does not. Kappa equal to or greater than .80 indicated a high level of inter-rater agreeability. When a high level of agreement was not met ( $k < .80$ ), the research assistant and I made codebook modifications and subsequently re-coded the data and re-assessed kappa until a high level of agreement was met.

### **Researcher Self-Disclosure**

As in all research, my study harbored the potential for bias. This potential was magnified by my role as a faculty member at the research site. Nonetheless, the research location was essential. The research site was atypical because it was among only a handful of all-boys schools in the nation with a secondary music program structure of this nature, and it served as the only in its state. Moreover, the unique goals of the school's music program, including the delivery of "highly personal events that shape a boy's experience" (Murray, 2007, p. 8) (i.e., any academic or extra-academic experience that impacts or develops a self-concept), positioned it as an ideal research location for this particular study of musical identity.

### **Organization**

The results of my study and the analytical processes by which I arrived at those results are detailed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. I present data in context in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 is organized according to portraits of each Level 3 participant, as they

are the participants from whom the most data were gathered and among whom themes began to emerge. Within each portrait, the data are presented in the form of the participants' own words, allowing the reader to gain familiarity with each participant's voice and to situate the data in the context of each participant's experience. Data from Level 1 and 2 participants, too, are combined and included in a final portrait.

I describe the various codes and levels of coding that emerged from the data in Chapter 5. I explain my codes and thought processes in drawing connections among those codes through an explanation of my initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding. Data are further analyzed through the synthesis of participant voices. This is achieved by pulling like phrases from among the portraits and grouping them together according to the themes they spurred and support.

The findings and implications of the study are discussed in Chapter 6. I revisit and answer the research questions in this chapter. Furthermore, I raise new questions regarding adolescents, their musical identities, and classroom contexts that may serve as worthwhile paths for future research that came to light as a result of the study.

In regard to these final chapters, one should note the formatting of the data presented. Participants' words—regardless of whether they first appeared in an artifact, an interview, a questionnaire, or a video reflection—are always denoted by single spaced, indented text. Where multiple pieces of data appear, they are separated by vertical space.



This is an example of what a single piece of data might look like. Notice that it is indented and single-spaced. (Data source listed in parentheses)

This is an example of what a second piece of data might look like. It is indented, single spaced, and separated from the preceding piece of data with vertical space. (Data source)

Where text is linked together by means of a bracket to the left of the text, the reader is viewing a dialogue—sometimes between two participants, sometimes between a participant and me. The bracketed text should be read as a singular source of data.

Person 1: Example of dialogue.

Person 2: The dialogue continues. This is the response to Person 1’s dialogue.

Person 1: Example continued.

Person 2: Example continued. (Data source)

In the above example, a conversation is taking place between Person 1 and Person 2. The bracketed material is one piece of data collected at one time, rather than four pieces of data collected at four different times.

The data have been edited for clarity by the omission of words like “umm” and “uhh.” Pseudonyms appear in place of participant names and teacher names in order to protect participant confidentiality.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA IN CONTEXT

Portraits of each Level 3 participant follow in this chapter. Each portrait is arranged in accordance with three broad topics: musical identity, experienced musical self, and informal contexts. These topics can be conceived of as area-specific applications of PSSP as it relates to the domain of music. Data are presented through participants' own words, allowing the reader to gain familiarity with each participant's voice and to situate the data in the context of each participant's own experience. Because far less data were collected from the Level 1 and Level 2 participants, these participants do not each have their own portrait. Instead, their words appear here in a combined final portrait.

### **Cody**

Cody, a sixth grader, is new to the school this year, but he seems right at home in the school's music wing. In addition to his general music class, he is also a member of the school's choral group and jazz band. Cody earns high marks in and out of music class. He is kind to his friends and has a strong work ethic.

### **Musical Identity**

Cody's understanding of "what a musician is" is tied to the notion of identities in music (IIM) via the act of performance. He says:

There's the basic side of it, someone who plays a musical instrument [. . .], a type of artist that paints a picture for your ears instead of your eyes.  
(Interview 1)

By that standard, Cody views himself as a musician:

I think I have a good voice, and I like to sing. (Questionnaire)

I really like making music. (Questionnaire)

I really like composing music. (Questionnaire)

When asked if he is a musician, Cody mentions his membership in both vocal and instrumental school ensembles. To Cody, however, musicianship is also based on one's level of focus within the realm of performance. "Specifically learning one instrument," and excelling on that instrument rather than dabbling in many, "is what can make you a musician." Cody clarifies:

This is probably my fourth year of playing piano now. [. . .] I'm definitely experienced with it. [. . .] I'm pretty sure I am good, cuz I've been playing piano for four years, which is a decent amount of time. (Interview 1)

To be considered a good musician, though, requires more than just dedication. Whether Cody classifies himself as a good or as a mediocre musician is dependent on the context in which he is situated:

Cody: At my old school, [. . .] it wasn't very advanced. It was easy even for a year, even if you had only played piano for a little while. It was easy to get the flow of things and know the answers to any question.

Me: Did you consider yourself a good musician in that class?

Cody: I did. [. . .] I think I'm still learning how to be a good musician in a more advanced music class. (Interview 1)

Again, Cody's musical self-concepts reside in the realm of IIM, as they are socially

dependent. Cody's confidence was strengthened throughout the year as he realized he had much to offer, even in the context of that more advanced class, thanks in part to the skills he had gained in his private piano lessons:

[Others valued] my slightly more advanced knowledge of musical notation and accidentals and things like that. Because I know a lot of content, so I know what to do and how to do it. (Interview 5)

I do really like playing instruments in class because I play piano.  
(Questionnaire)

### **Experienced Musical Self**

The immediate goals Cody holds for himself, as well as the endeavors he undertakes in order to meet these goals, are directly tied to bolstering the strengths he identifies among his musical self-concepts:

My first goal is to learn more about musical theory. It is something that I would like to learn more about because [. . .] this is a very necessary skill for composing music. My second goal is to become a better singer. I think I have a good voice. [. . .] I am in chorus, so that should help. (Questionnaire)

Cody's participation in chorus allows him to capitalize on his voice, a strength he identifies among his musical self-concepts.

Cody identifies areas of weakness, too. However, rather than seeking to strengthen these areas, he instead avoids them:

Me: And what do you think made it so that you could participate well?

Cody: Because I know a lot of content, so I know what to do and how to do it.

Me: Do you think that if you didn't know those things and you weren't as confident in those topics, do you think you'd be as able to participate?

Cody: I'd probably shy away. I wouldn't want to look like I don't know what I'm doing. (Interview 5)

Cody capitalizes on his strengths and avoids activities that might reveal his weaknesses. In doing so, Cody positions himself safely on a higher rung of the ladder within the classroom environment. This is important for him, as he views the stature of his musicianship in relation to the context of his immediate environment. This could also explain why Cody has recently found enjoyment in the act of improvisation as a means of self-expression. When reflecting on the class's recently completed "improvisation" unit, Cody says:

I've really been able to express myself when improvising, especially in the winter concert this past December. I really think it was fun to express myself through improvising because even though improvisation still can have structure—you still have to follow the key signature, follow the rhythm—it's still really fun because you can still make it up as you go. You're not pressured to do everything right, like when you're following notes on a piece of paper. It's like your sheet of music is your mind, and your pen is your imagination. [. . .] And it's definitely something I want to keep doing in concerts, and it's something that I really enjoy doing in concerts. (Video reflection 1)

As indicated earlier, whether Cody he sees himself as a good musician or as a mediocre musician is dependent on the context in which he is situated due to the socially dependent nature of IIM. Cody's twice-over assertion that improvisation is an activity he'd like to continue not just in class or in his private life, but specifically in concerts, could signify the ways in which this seemingly no-fault activity allows

him to identify as a strong musician in a public arena.

Cody also speaks of the enjoyment he finds in class projects and activities in which he is afforded an amount of freedom:

It was a very fun thing to do, and we could be as creative as we wanted to be. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Well I really enjoyed [the project], because we really got to decide everything we wanted to do. It was just a good experience to be able to play what you wanted to play. (Interview 2)

Cody's experience is dependent, moreover, on how he feels about his personal contribution:

A great part about composing is being proud of yourself after you finish the piece. But how could you feel that if you just sat back and relaxed while others in your group did all the work? (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Cody places importance not only on his individual contribution during group work in the classroom environment; he asserts that it is important to ensure others, too, have the opportunity to contribute—that they are “heard.” Cody perceives this to be more than just polite behavior on his behalf, but rather to be his responsibility:

A big responsibility is to make sure others are heard, in both the actual piece and when composing. If a person's idea is not being heard and another composer you are writing with is giving all his ideas and not letting another person speak that much, you should say something to him or her about it, as long as you are not being rude. [. . .] I wanted to play a melody on the keyboard, but then the bells wouldn't be heard, so I had to play a harmony instead. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

The inclusion of all group members' contributions sometimes means adapting to the unique blend of individuals within the group:

Cody: We sort of [each] brought something different, and we didn't know how to make them all fit together. And three of us were more oriented toward keyboard, when we really only needed two.

Me: And how did you end up reconciling that? How did you solve it?

Cody: We had someone work on [. . .] effects for the music, making it sound more like a rock piece. (Interview 4)

Within the bound social structure of the music classroom, Cody perceives others' unique musical identities to be as important a consideration of his experienced musical self as his own musical identity.

### **Informal Contexts**

Cody first alludes to his musical life beyond school when talking about the positive effect his previous two piano instructors had on his musical development. Both instructors allowed Cody to bring in pieces of music he had heard and wanted to learn, rather than sticking to a strict regimen of prescribed repertoire:

[They] both made very positive influences in my music career. They made it fun and made sure I'm playing things I wanna play, not just their music. (Interview 1)

The piano lessons themselves did not take place within an informal context. Nonetheless, both instructors made provisions for connections to Cody's informal musical context by allowing him to select music he knew and loved from that sphere

and using it as an educational tool in their own sphere.

Cody also draws a connection between the music classroom and life beyond the classroom when he applies a lesson from the class's "musical meaning" unit to the capacity for empathy in everyday life:

Because musical meaning, it doesn't always just have to do with music. There are a lot of other things, and other jobs and hobbies and things like that, where it's the same sort of concept. [. . .] Where something means something to you, but it means something different to someone else. (Interview 3)

Although the above statement is not specific to musical interactions, I have nonetheless included it here because it supports the notion that students apply the lessons learned in the music classroom to their lives beyond the classroom.<sup>1</sup> If Cody were to display empathy in another arena due to this musical lesson, as he suggests he might, it would be indicative of the notion of music in identities (MII).

Cody also alludes to his musical engagement beyond the classroom when reflecting on a group composition project he had just completed:

Cody: I wanna compose a little bit more, just to like see if I like it or not, and especially if I do it with friends. [. . .] It was helpful to figure out how to compose with a group. [. . .] Because it's experience in case in the future I end up composing music in a band or with other people.

Me: Is that something you aspire to do in the future?

Cody: Maybe, now that I know how. (Interview 2)

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<sup>1</sup> As the chapter progresses, more instances of such applications should become apparent. The most notable of these will be instances in which students identify new possibilities for their future selves as a result of their experiences in the music classroom.



Cody envisions a possibility for his future self in informal contexts. This is evident in his statement that he might take a skill learned in the music classroom and try it out with his friends. If and when Cody decides to try composing music outside of the school environment, he may decide that it's not for him, or he may really enjoy the experience and adopt composition as a personal strength and/or the musical self-concept of "composer." What is notable is that, in this instance, Cody has identified a possible self-concept—that of a composer—to be tried on in other contexts.

### **Nelson**

Nelson is an intelligent, athletic, and funny sixth grader who is well liked by his peers. In addition to his general music class, Nelson takes private music lessons. He studied piano for three years before giving it up in favor of guitar lessons this year. Nelson enjoys listening to music in a variety of contexts, including during car rides, in his room alone, and when running.

### **Musical Identity**

To Nelson, being a musician is not about reaching a degree of achievement in music, but about taking an interest in music:

Someone who has a passion for music. Because not all musicians play an instrument. Because they can like music, and listen to it, and have their own way of thinking about it. And I consider that a musician. (Interview 1)

Perhaps because Nelson's idea of what constitutes musicianship is tied to engagement and enjoyment, he cites these two areas when affirming that he believes himself to be a musician. These are the criteria he provides that qualify him

as a good musician:

I think I am a good musician outside of class and inside of class. Because I really like music out of class, and I really like the music in that class, the music that we listen to, and the projects we do are fun. [. . .] Outside of class, I practice my instrument almost every day. [. . .] And then, in class, I think I'm good at participating. (Interview 1)

Nelson mentions enjoying music in class, enjoying music outside of class, enjoying the music-related project work, participating well in class, and practicing his instrument regularly. These types of engagement impact on Nelson's musical identity as components of IIM. Nelson also speaks of MII:

I can express myself as a leader or as a follower. Like today, during class, we were deciding what we were going to do for our piece. And I gave some ideas, and I listened to some ideas. (Focus group)

Well I think a lot of times [. . .] I'm a leader. But I can also listen to other people's ideas and contribute my ideas. (Interview 1)

In these examples, Nelson references MII, or how he uses music as a means of expressing and developing other aspects of his identity (Hargreaves et al., 2002). Nelson is able to express his ability to be a leader—one who leads from the front and from the back—via how his leadership skills play out in regard to musical activities in class.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

In conjunction with his expression of MII, Nelson values the connections that music allows him to make beyond the realm of music:

Learning about music helps me have a connection to most people I meet. I have seen this when I have conversations with people. A common topic is “What music do you like?” Or “Do you like him? He is my favorite artist.” (Questionnaire)

Like when we learned about Beethoven and other stories, how music affected their lives. You don’t really see how things affect other people’s lives, just how it affects yours. And that was cool. (Interview 3)

It was a good working together experience. Like what to do, when to give an idea, but when to listen to other ideas. [. . .] I also think it was very important to work as a team, working to create music. [. . .] We had to accept other people’s ideas and suggestions for what they wanted the piece to sound like. [. . .] But we were able to create some compromises. (Interview 4)

Everybody really had a voice. It wasn’t just one person leading it and other people not doing stuff. It was a lot of team. It was a team effort. (Interview 2)

To Nelson, the utilitarian value of music lies in its ability to foster positive interpersonal relationships. Through the engagement of his experienced musical self via the classroom environment, Nelson is learning how to find common ground with others, how to put himself in another’s shoes, and how to compromise.

### **Informal Contexts**

Nelson has found that the technological developments his generation has seen have played a role in informal contexts:

Well, I think your computer, downloading music. And there’s also free stuff on the radio. And I think that really influenced what I like about music. [. . .] I have really wide genres [on my phone]. (Interview 1)

More notable to this study than the role of technology in informal contexts,

however, is the influence that the music classroom can have in these contexts. As with Cody, Nelson now considers certain future endeavors available to him outside of the school environment that hadn't previously been perceived as options to him:

If someday I wanna continue my musical career and be in a band or something. Like rock, or – I don't know, I haven't thought about it until now, or recently. Then if I do that, I'll use what I learned here with the teamwork and everything. (Interview 2)

Well, I think I wanna take guitar somewhere in my life, when I'm older. And I think what I'm learning right now about musical meaning, and how all of the pieces and parts fit together to make a piece, how that'll help me with writing different songs and things. Maybe I won't just play guitar, I can write the songs, too. Because now, I think, know I can. (Interview 3)

Nelson identifies two ways in which the activities presented in the general music classroom impact on his future possible self. First, Nelson identifies activities—playing in a band and writing songs—that he now sees as options to him that he hadn't prior to engaging with the music class curriculum. Second, Nelson talks about the various ways in which, if he does choose to pursue those outside endeavors, he will put to use the lessons learned via that curriculum. It is possible that Nelson intends to undertake these activities during his later years of schooling, but he leaves it open-ended in such a way—"in my life, when I'm older"—that implies he envisions a musical self-concept that will prove stable over time and can be accessed in a number of contexts.

## **Evan**

Sixth-grader Evan is an accomplished pianist who has been studying privately for the past seven years. He's also the faculty's go-to guy when they need a student performer for a special school event or need to fill time in an assembly. Because of his high level of musical achievement, he's also the easy favorite when his peers go about choosing partners for project work.

### **Musical Identity**

To Evan, a musician is someone who writes music and possesses the mental capacity that allows him/her to do so.

I think a musician is a person who's smart enough to make a piece of music that has all the components and that gets all, gets put together. (Interview 1)

Probably someone who knows musical meaning and can compose a song. (Interview 5)

In each of Evan's definitions of a musician, mental capability breeds musical consequence. Evan affirms that by this definition, he is a good musician:

I think I am [a good musician], personally. Because I've been doing some difficult pieces, and I know how to learn them and break them apart and practice them. And I know a lot of the components in music, like I said. And I know I'm still learning, but I could say I have theory books and know all that. (Interview 1)

Evan's assertion of why he considers himself to be a good musician encompasses skill and understanding. Although his above-mentioned definition of what defines

one as a musician implies that one must compose, his assertion that he is a good musician and the rationale he provides imply that putting one's mental capacity to use in the skill and understanding needed for the act of performance, too, can denote one as a musician.

Because Evan views music as a cerebral activity, he views others' lack of appreciation for music as a lack of understanding:

Sometimes when people don't really care for music, who don't really know what they're doing – you're trying to cooperate with them, and they just don't really get it. And they think “music, whatever.” Like just putting notes on a page, I feel like it's more than that. It's kind of personal. (Focus group)

Evan feels that if others could understand the nuances of music—that it's more than “putting notes on a page”—perhaps they could appreciate it as he does.

Because Evan's goal is to one day have a career as a concert pianist, his enthusiasm for classical music is part of his IIM:

Cuz [popular] music is good, I like it, but it's not as meaningful to me as classical music. [. . .] I think in my music path, I knew classical meant more to me. (Interview 3)

Classical music is a badge that Evan wears denoting the socially defined role (IIM) that music plays in his identity. It is more than just a musical preference; it is a marker of a career aspiration, and in his words, is his “path.”

### **Experienced Musical Self**

How others view Evan's musicality impacts heavily on his experienced

musical self. Evan is comfortable in settings in which he excels. Furthermore, he takes on new roles in these settings as entertainer and as teacher:

When my music is being expressed is when I really get to share my piano pieces with other people. And how they react – really, they love it. And that really makes me want to express my music even more when I see how much people enjoy it. [. . .] Cuz their reactions are always like “wow, that’s amazing.” (Video reflection 1)

I really do like to improvise sometimes in music class. I was in the xylophone ensemble, and I had had plenty of experience with improvising in that group. [. . .] I really noticed I was the role model of the class of music, cuz I was in the xylophone group in lower school. (Video reflection 2)

I’d say I am really comfortable in [music] class, because I’ve been doing music a long time, plus I study piano. So I just feel welcome there, I guess you could say. (Interview 1)

In [music] class we make music, and I show who I am as a musician. [. . .] One time, I tried to make a piece, [. . .] just playing for everyone who wanted to hear. (Interview 1)

I saw it was really new for people – some people were just learning it, and so I helped them on the class composition project. (Interview 2)

I know all the concepts of music, and I like expressing it to other people. (Interview 5)

I mean some people sort of knew that I play piano. I play, and some people are like, “Oh wow, he’s really good.” [. . .] And actually going back to lower school, I remember solo day – I really wanted to practice for it a lot, because I wanted to show them what I can play, how well I present the music. (Interview 5)

When I am creating and performing in a group, my responsibilities are to contribute to the song and help make it sound better and help others to get their part and understand it. Also, I am always flexible in moving to a different instrument to help the group succeed. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Evan's positive musical self-concepts clearly impact on his experienced musical self.

Evan seeks out opportunities to express himself musically to those around him and to better their experience in class, either by being entertained by him or by being helped by him.

Evan feels that the limitations the teacher, at times, imposes on classroom activities in turn limits his ability to express himself through those activities:

I thought it was relatively limited in my opinion. Because it was learning, it was basic, I get that, it's fine. But you know if I could have been a little expressive – expressing ideas, and letting people run [with them]. (Interview 2)

When an activity harbors the opportunity for a certain amount of autonomy, Evan enjoys not only the freedom he is afforded but also enjoys seeing how others in the class capitalize on that opportunity in unique ways:

It was really great to see other groups, too. I got to see what they did, and what their ideas [were] compared to someone else's, and that was really cool seeing that. (Interview 4)

For Evan, the provision of autonomy is a valued component of the music classroom both in the sense that it affords him the opportunity to express his own musical identity and to become more familiar with those of his classmates.



Part of what has built and continues to build Evan’s positive self-concepts is the influence of those in his life who challenge him to attempt things that seem out of reach at a given time. When Evan masters these challenges in his piano lessons and in the general music classroom, it impacts positively on his overall identity:

I wanted to show the music I learned, because those were pieces that are more difficult. And [. . .] [my] teachers gave it to me and broke it down. And it was hard, but I could do it, and I did do it. (Artifact: Three pieces of sheet music and accompanying explanation)

I guess you could say [my teachers] push me. They can say, “Oh yeah you can do this song,” even though it’s really hard. (Interview 5)

When speaking of a composition project, Evan says:

I think even after we forget the notes, we’ll always have that sensation of like, “Yeah, we wrote a song, we’re accomplished.” And I guess I could see [us] having more confidence. (Interview 4)

Evan’s exposure to more difficult things—things that prove challenging to his experienced musical self—develops his musical identity.

### **Informal Contexts**

Perhaps because Evan’s musical life outside of school takes place largely in another scholarly environment—that of private piano lessons—the connections Evan draws between school and life outside of school are between those two environments rather than any informal musical contexts he may or may not have. It is possible that Evan did not feel comfortable opening up to me about his informal

musical sphere, as that is a space inherently void of adults and teachers. It is also possible that because his musical aspirations are of the traditional classical cannon, the majority of his musical life is inherently guided by adults and teachers rather than by experiences within potential informal contexts.

### **Ross**

Ross is a seventh-grader and a strong student. He has earned recognition among his peers for his writing skills, is a boy scout and avid camper, and has a wonderful dry wit that sometimes flies above the heads of his peers but is enjoyed by the adults around him. Ross plays piano and takes private lessons on trumpet.

### **Musical Identity**

Ross views a musician not just as one who has a certain skill set, but one who knows how to harness its expressive powers:

A musician is someone who understands music and can express it to make people feel different things. (Interview 1)

By that definition, Ross considers himself a musician:

All of the pent up emotion from the past year went into that song. (Artifact: Lyrics to original song and accompanying explanation)

These days I like writing music because it can convey a message that normal words can't. (Interview 5)

I try to work to make things interesting, try to work some emotions into whatever work I do. (Interview 5)

Ross values the role music plays in his life for how it can, in fact, make him feel things.

I use music as sort of a cornerstone, to keep me calm. It's just always there. When I'm going to school, I play music through my headphones. When I'm at home doing homework or reading a tedious book, there's always music. That makes it better. (Interview 1)

Music controls his mood and saves him from boredom, making it a welcome staple in his day-to-day experience.

When asked about who he is as a musician, Ross responds:

I like music, and I'm pretty good at it. [. . .] I don't want to be a composer. I do think that music should be my vacation, in a sense. (Questionnaire)

Whereas the sixth-grade participants speak mainly of qualities they possess, not about those they don't possess, Ross gives us the first inkling of differentiation between what he is and what he is not; he *does* use music as a "vacation"—a means of relaxation or escape from reality (MII)—but he does *not* aspire to be a composer (IIM). Ross also does this when speaking of his musical preferences:

The music that I've started listening to – it's different than today's music, which I highly dislike, if you don't know already, like popular music. The music that I've started listening to is rock music. (Interview 5)

Ross labels his musical preferences not only according to what they are, but also according to what they are not. This specific type of differentiation should become even more evident in the portraits of the eighth-grade participants. Because musical

preference acts as a badge of identity among adolescents, defining his preferences in terms of his likes and his dislikes is a way for Ross to define not only who he is but also who he is not.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

Ross identifies composition processes as desired learning outcomes within the music classroom. His justification for wanting to learn these is so that he might apply what he learns, try it out himself, and use those experiences to create novel ones all his own:

I think I need to learn about how some composers write their music and see what works for me. Learning about other peoples' experiences helps me learn and find out how to make experiences of my own. (Questionnaire)

Ross also identifies obstacles that might hinder him from expressing himself musically. These obstacles come in the form of judgment from Ross's peers:

That there's other people there, because I'm worried that they won't accept what I do, or they won't like what I do. (Focus group)

Judgment, it does happen, especially with the kind of music that I listen to. I listen to hard rock, alternative, which is different for the popular likes of these days. (Interview 4)

I wonder what their varied thoughts will be. Will they look at me as a different person because I like this kind of music? (Interview 4)

As with Evan, musical genre serves as a badge Ross wears that signifies other things about him as an individual in the eyes of his peers. It also serves as a means of

differentiation between him and other students with different musical preferences. Ross is cognizant not only of this differentiation, but also of the fact that his peers, too, might consider this differentiation. These factors cause Ross to worry about the ways in which he might express certain musical self-concepts; the experienced musical self, thus, becomes more calculated.

Maintaining control of the experienced musical self is something Ross also feels he must do because of the nature of the classroom environment itself:

When you don't have a chance to say something without breaking the rules, then you're not really doing yourself any good just speaking up and expressing yourself. (Focus group)

The expectations of the classroom environment cause Ross to weigh potential actions and their consequences and decide accordingly, sometimes at the expense of self-expression. Other times, Ross avoids this tension altogether by forgoing the option to work with a partner:

When I work alone, there was a lot less arguing, because it's only myself, and it's hard to argue with myself. (Interview 2)

The expectations of this environment, however, also provide opportunities for Ross to shine among his peers by making particular contributions:

They would want to be partners with me. They knew I was reliable. They would look forward to hearing what I came up with. So yeah, they knew it would be thorough, so they – some people would be like, "Yeah, he's a good person to work with." (Interview 5)

I'm very critical of people's ideas, so they can get a cleaner copy because of how I criticize them and tell them what to do that could be better. (Focus group)

Ross feels that he makes valuable contributions in the classroom, via both the constructive criticism he gives and the work ethic he possesses. These are valuable due to the academic expectations inherent to the environment and ability of that criticism and work ethic to help Ross's peers meet those expectations.

To Ross, the behaviors of the adults who serve as authority figures within that environment are also pivotal. In this excerpt, Ross talks about how his past music teachers have both positively and negatively impacted his experienced musical self:

I'd say my band teacher at my old school, Mr. Bell, he was huge. He just helped me so much. He made music fun for me, and music was such a fun time. [. . .] I really disliked my first [piano teacher], because our personalities sort of clashed, and I didn't like her teaching style. And my last [teacher], well, music just got kind of boring, and she couldn't find any music that sort of fit me, that I enjoy playing. So I dropped out. (Interview 1)

Ross identifies his teachers within musical contexts as impactful in regard to his ability to enjoy his overall experience within that context. This relationship is so profound, in fact, that it prompted Ross to remove himself from the environment altogether when identified as negative.

Ross displays a more controlled and calculated experienced musical self than do the sixth grade participants. In Ross, the experienced musical self may even be

censored so as not to express too high a level of differentiation between the self and others within the environment.

### **Informal Contexts**

Ross, however, seeks out opportunities for differentiation in how he incorporates elements from his informal contexts into his work for the music classroom. An avid gamer, Ross designed one of his music projects to take on a Mortal Kombat (NetherRealm Studios, 2011) theme. Because Ross has a knack for technology, he chose to capitalize upon this skill in his chosen project formats, opting to make videos with wild editing techniques rather than to play his compositions live before the class. He also draws inspiration from the music he listens to in outside of school, saying:

When I wrote the music for one of our projects, I tried to think of what songs I like, and how I can portray emotions as they do. (Interview 5)

Ross capitalizes on the unique strengths and interests he has developed in his informal contexts and allows them to make his work for the class stronger as well as distinct from that of his peers.

As is the case with Nelson and Cody, Ross envisions new possibilities for his future self because of his experiences in the general music classroom:

Ross: I noticed, especially this year, some difficult times trying to describe my thoughts, cuz I'm a visual thinker. But music can describe images and places. It's so much easier.

Me: And how did you come to notice that?

Ross: It was mainly Mr. Lewis. He inspired me to write music, but once I started writing it, I realized that.

Me: How did he inspire you?

Ross: We started listening to a ton of different musics, and we started learning about it. (Interview 5)

Though these possibilities could manifest in other formal environments, they could too manifest in informal environments:

Ross: If I ever wanted to write or read more music, I could understand what an ostinato is, or a passacaglia.

Me: And do you foresee yourself writing more music?

Ross: I'd say yeah.

Me: Like on your own? Or like in eighth grade Soundscape?

Ross: I'd say yeah to both. (Interview 2)

Ross credits the listening and learning experiences undertaken in the music classroom with Mr. Lewis as the catalyst that helped him envision future music-writing opportunities and his desire to engage in these in and out of school. Ross goes on to talk about his dabbling in songwriting outside of school in particular, referencing the different types of music to which Mr. Lewis exposed him:

The songs – they've made me different as a normal person and as a musician. They've changed my tastes in music and how I want to write it. Cuz in the old days when I was a young boy, I'd just write out random notes and hope they'd sound good. But today I write stuff with a purpose. (Interview 5)



Although it's something he's done for many years, "just messing around," Ross's experiences in the music classroom have brought about a change in mindset regarding how he approaches songwriting. Ross credits his exposure to different types of music in the classroom for this change in mindset and thus his songwriting experiences in his life beyond school.

### **Devin**

The faculty members often refer to Devin as the "golden boy" of the seventh grade. Homeschooled until this year, he burst onto the school's scene as a straight-A student and a star athlete. Devin is gentle, quiet, and has a strong work ethic. Devin used to take piano, guitar, and violin lessons, but currently, his only organized music activity is his general music class.

### **Musical Identity**

Devin loves having music in his life, even writing in a questionnaire response:

My musical goal is to simply have music in my life as much as possible. I enjoy listening to music. (Questionnaire)

Although music is an enjoyable pursuit for Devin, he does not consider himself a musician:

I'm not a musician, not really, because I don't play an instrument. I mean, I used to, but now I don't. (Interview 1)

Devin believes that a true musician doesn't just play an instrument recreationally,

“but kind of excels at it” (Interview 5). Devin talks about what motivates him to want to pursue this for himself:

My sister, she plays the piano, and she’s pretty good at it. [. . .] And that encourages me to wanna take piano lessons or anything like that. (Interview 1)

Just as Devin’s relationships have the power to encourage him to pursue music, he also talks about the power of these relationships in discouraging him from pursuing music:

When I was taking music lessons, sometimes I wouldn’t like the teacher. [. . .] One of them was actually pretty tough when I was taking guitar lessons. I liked the guitar, but I didn’t like the teacher. He was kinda, I don’t know how to put it, maybe a little strict. [. . .] If he tells that you’re not practicing, he’ll really let you know about it. He gets pretty annoyed. When I didn’t practice enough, he got kinda mean. (Interview 1)

As with Ross, the relationship between the student and the teacher impacts Devin’s musical identity. Devin thinks that if this is what becoming a musician entails, it’s not worth the price. Thus, Devin has excluded self-identification as a musician from among his self-concepts. Part of Devin’s musical identity then, as it pertains to IIM, is his self-identification as a non-musician.

Similarly to Ross, Devin speaks of the increasing importance of differentiation in expressing his musical identity. It is interesting to note that although Devin identifies as a non-musician, he is also able to identify as being musical in a given situation:

Me: When you were working on the project, were you being musical?

Devin: I'd say yes because I wanted to make it like good, make it a little bit creative, different from everybody else's. Trying to make it a little bit, you know, kinda special. (Interview 2)

Devin judges his work in the music classroom according to how it compares to that of his peers, striving for distinction. In contrast to Ross, however, Devin does not feel pressured by the badge of identity as which his musical preferences serve. I asked Devin why he thinks some boys feel judged based on what music they like, whereas he does not. He replied:

Well, my music choices are probably a little closer to [the popular music] people like than maybe [those other boys'] choices. (Interview 4)

Devin identifies differentiation as a factor of importance twice over: First, he states that he strove for differentiation in his project for class. Second, he states that he doesn't feel judged on the basis of his musical preferences due to the lack of differentiation between his own preferences and those of the peer majority. Differentiation is indeed manifesting among the seventh grade participants as an important consideration pertaining to the ways in which one's musical identity is engaged.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

In the classroom, Devin's experienced musical self is greatly influenced by others. Devin often feels unable to express himself musically due to his peers' perceived lack of focus and his peers' difference of musical opinions:

Well you see, it's really hard to come into class every time and depend on the other kids to have a good class. Because if they're not paying attention or really focusing, then you probably won't have a very productive class. And that's pretty important to me is what I'm saying. (Focus group)

Well, sometimes my partner would disagree. So you know, I was trying to be musical, but because there was my partner's decision in there, too, I couldn't be the way I wanted to. (Interview 2)

When we were practicing, it was kind of frustrating, because people wouldn't cooperate. And you know, when we messed up, some people would just kind of give up. And some people would just mess around and wouldn't care. (Interview 4)

I mean it's kinda hard to be a musician in class because, I mean, I don't think you get a lot of opportunities. I mean, there might be a lot of opportunities, but as I mentioned before, it's just the people there. I don't know, they kinda prevent me from doing that type of stuff. (Interview 5)

If I share an idea with my friends or something, toward the project, some of them would cooperate and understand my idea, and some of them would not even acknowledge it. They would say "that's wrong" and move on with their idea. [. . .] I mean, it kinda makes me lose confidence in what I'm saying. (Interview 5)

Devin perceives that his peers are not as focused as he is and that they do not share the same ideas as him. He identifies these as factors that hinder his ability to express himself musically. Interestingly, it is also the chasm that exists between him and his peers that Devin feels makes him an asset to the class. When asked what others most value him for in his music class, Devin responds as follows:

I kind of balance the class out. [. . .] Some kids were just messing around and stuff. They don't really pay attention or focus. And you know, I'll try to tell

them to focus so we can get the project done as efficient as possible, and try to practice so we can perfect our parts and stuff like that. [. . .] I guess I just balance out the good and the bad. [. . .] I think they notice. (Interview 5)

The differences Devin identifies between himself and his classmates may serve as sources of frustration at times, but they are also what allow Devin to be seen in a positive light by his peers within the class.

The frustration that Devin feels regarding not being able to express his experienced musical self in the way in which he would like suggests that perhaps he sees more value in himself as a musician than he reports. He reports that he is not a musician because he does not fit the socially defined role of one who excels on an instrument (IIM), yet he clearly values certain musical self-concepts (i.e., a balancing agent among his peers in music class), as evidenced by his longing to express himself musically (i.e., “I was trying to be musical”) and his subsequent vexation at having those efforts interrupted. His assertion that “it’s kinda hard to be a musician in class” could indicate that he does in fact identify as a musician, but that he finds it difficult to exercise that self-concept in the context of the music classroom.

### **Informal Contexts**

When Devin speaks about musical experiences beyond the classroom, he does not mention informal contexts. The one connection he does draw between his experiences in the music classroom and life beyond the classroom is in regard to his interest in perhaps taking violin lessons again:

Well, that can kinda translate to—if I play a different instrument. It kinda helps me understand the notes a little better than just going in with no experience. (beat) I might go back to playing the violin, I think. (Interview 3)

Devin does not specify the context in which he may play violin again—alone in his room, in a school orchestra, or in another setting. If he takes violin lessons again, the presence of an instructor means these experiences will not take place in an informal environment. It is likely the possible resurrection of this particular self-concept (i.e., an instrumentalist, and therefore a musician according to Devin’s definition) will take place in another formal context rather than an informal context. It is nonetheless notable that Devin, who had discounted the possibility of being an instrumentalist, is again considering it upon reflecting on the knowledge base he’s gained over the past few months in his general music class.

### **Eddie**

Eddie is in eighth grade. He is laid back and funny, and his teachers consider him the “resident technology guru.” In addition to taking general music, he plays percussion in the school’s auditioned chamber orchestra as well as in its non-auditioned orchestra. Eddie does not study percussion privately.

### **Musical Identity**

Eddie does not view a musician as one who has achieved a certain level of skill, but rather as one who has a passion for music and makes it part of their life:

I just always try to have as much music as I can. (Video reflection 2)

Music, it's just such a big part of my lifestyle that I feel I would be classified as a musician. (Interview 1)

In addition to identifying music as an important aspect in his life, Eddie feels that his musical practices serve as a means of self-expression:

I express myself by the types of music I listen to. And it's all about what mood I'm in. Like if I'm in a sad mood, if I'm having a bad day, I'll listen to sadder songs. But if I'm happier, or if I'm hyper, I'll listen to dubstep. [. . .] And you can express yourself by what different types of music you listen to and when you listen to it. (Focus group)

Eddie feels that one does not need to be actively making music to express oneself musically. Self-expression can occur through other types of musical engagement, including choices regarding music listening, serving as an example of MII.

Because music serves as a way to express aspects of one's identity, musical preference is one area in which adolescents differentiate between self and other (North & Hargreaves, 1999b; Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2001). Eddie speaks of the judgment he sees among his peers regarding musical preferences:

The people in the class aren't really open to other people's ideas on what good music is. They think only pop music is good and that's the only type of music, when other types of music are good. (Focus group)

I am more (air quotes) mainstream, so I don't have that problem as much. But I see people like Jay – or there are a couple other people in the school – where it may not be that type of music, but they're not mainstream types of music. They often do get told to just stop playing, or even harsher words are said. (Video reflection 1)

Eddie recognizes his classmates' tendency to view differentiation as a negative thing. Eddie, too, engages in this practice when he insults pop music:

And they judge what type of music I like. Everybody's different. Like they're not gonna like the same exact piece of nothing that pop music is. (Focus group)

For Eddie, the differentiation of musical preferences serves as one criterion for judgment. Eddie sees others being judged on the basis of their musical preferences, and he too feels judged on this basis. He does not feel judged to the extent that his peers are, however, given that his own preferences align more with the peer majority. Although Eddie does not insult the individuals who listen to pop music in the excerpt above—does not make judgments about their IIM—he is not exempt from the notion that “other” is negative rather than just different when he calls pop music “nothing.”

Eddie, like Devin, expresses the value he sees in differentiation within the arts:

I liked how we could use a lot of creativity. It was a very open project, and everybody's song was different. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Art is creativity. You cannot censor creativity. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

The boys in this study reported that musical preference can become something that is used to compare the self to the other. Music or a music genre, in these cases, acts



as a symbol that reflects on the individual via IIM, and the other is often viewed as negative. According to both Devin's and Eddie's testimonies, though, this stigma can disappear when musical differentiation is tied to the act of creation. It becomes something one does—an activity-specific self-concept—as opposed to something one wears as an outward reflection of other aspects of their identity, as reported by the study participants. Moreover, Eddie sees value in differentiation when skill sets are distinct:

I learned that I can't do everything to create a piece of music. You need different people with different talents to make a full song. In our groups, in our social justice songs, groups of two or three made the best songs, just because they had different people with different skill sets to do that.  
(Interview 5)

I'd say other people, classmates, you need them to create a good song. You need other people's skill sets, because you don't know everything. (Artifact: Picture of a piano and accompanying explanation)

Whether in regard to genre preference or to musical skill set, the stigma sometimes tied to differentiation seems to disappear—and can even be viewed as an asset—when utilized for the purpose of creation. This notion seems to hold particularly true for Eddie when working with his classmates toward a common goal.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

Eddie self-identifies as a musician due to his interest in music and passion for music rather than his level of achievement in musical endeavors. When speaking of

his experienced musical self, however, Eddie's role in the classroom is defined by musical/academic achievement:

I've played so many different instruments. I don't know how to play them any more really, but my overall knowledge of music, I can put that to different uses in the classroom. I think it's expressing myself because it's showing what I can do. (Focus group)

I feel like I'm someone who can be helpful in the class and who knows a lot of the stuff and can understand new things that we learn about pretty quickly. (Interview 1)

Eddie's musical knowledge aids him in defining his intrapersonal (i.e., expressive, fast learner) and interpersonal (i.e., helpful) roles alike within the classroom context. These utilitarian outcomes reflect MII in Eddie's experienced musical self. Eddie's experienced musical self is not confined to achievement, though. His belief that one's musicality can be revealed through passion and interest carries over to the ways in which he expresses himself musically in the classroom context:

Every time I left class, I always had some song stuck in my head, so yeah, I think [I] was being musical. (Interview 3)

I like to sing outside of class, so it helps in music class. (Questionnaire)

Whereas Eddie prioritizes passion over achievement in defining his ever-developing musical identity, both factors prove to be important components of his experienced musical self as it pertains to the general music classroom.

## **Informal Contexts**

Eddie has found that the third environment can further his musical education:

I want to learn more songs on the piano. Not from a teacher, just learn them off YouTube. (Questionnaire)

Like Nelson, Eddie identifies technology as means of musical engagement within informal contexts. Eddie, however, cites not just musical engagement but also musical learning within the informal context of the third environment. Eddie also identifies a future possible self, although he does not attribute this specifically to anything that may have occurred in the music classroom.

Eddie takes things he is exposed to by the classroom teacher and, at times, adds them to his musical engagement in informal contexts:

I think that it's actually in our classes, we hear about different types of music, and I've actually started listening to some of those types that we've talked about in class. (Video reflection 1)

Just as Ross ties classroom exposure to the new songwriting practices he's undertaken, Eddie credits new listening practices in his life beyond school to the exposure to different types of music he gained in the general music classroom.

Eddie echoes Nelson's sentiments, as the two boys reference MII when speaking of their use of music for utilitarian purposes. Eddie's brother is an activist who regularly protests police brutality at demonstrations in downtown Cleveland.

Eddie draws a connection between the “music as a social force” unit his class undertook and his own upcoming involvement in those demonstrations:

And they were actually singing some of the songs, but they changed some of the words so it was about the current events. Because I’m thinking of going out with [my brother] sometimes. [. . .] I would go out anyway, but it inspires me to do the song [at the demonstrations], because the unit shows how it’s gotten so much stuff done in the world today. (Interview 4)

In the classroom, Eddie was exposed to using music as a tool for social justice, learned about how others used it the past, and completed a project in which he wrote a piece of music on a social justice topic of importance to him. Now that he has added this tool to his belt, he seems determined to go out and use it beyond the walls of the school.

### **Mack**

Mack, an eighth-grader, can be goofy but can also be thoughtful and sensitive. He is an average student. He has many friends, and he shines onstage in the school’s theater productions as well as on the athletic field. He does not take private music lessons, but he is vocal about his passion for music and its place in his life.

### **Musical Identity**

Mack doesn’t consider himself a musician:

I really don’t play any instruments. [. . .] Though I love [music], I can’t really do anything with it. (Interview 1)

I think if you play an instrument, you are a musician, because you literally are making music. If you're not playing an instrument, you're just enjoying music. (Interview 5)

Mack ties the concept of "musician" to one who holds a certain skill set that he does not possess. Despite not identifying as a musician, Mack does have a keen interest in music, especially heavy metal and rock and roll. Among his self-concepts are non-musician, but also music lover. Like the other participants, his musical preferences serve as an extension of who he feels he is as an individual, and insults to his musical preferences are taken as seriously as though they were blows to him as an individual. To Mack, who wears rock and roll and heavy metal as badges of identity, his musical preferences and his identity go hand-in-hand:

My musical tastes are kinda weird compared to what other people typically like, and that expresses what I like. [. . .] And I guess it's just who I am. (Interview 5)

Okay, so I wanna talk about how biased some kids are for musical preferences. So me and Jay, we were in English class, and a kid comes up – I'm not gonna say who it was but he – we were talking about "Hotel California" by the Eagles, and some kid comes up and shuts his computer and says, "Everything from the 90s and below sucks." And we got in a really heated argument. It got pretty intense. (Video reflection 1)

Mack sees his musical preference as an extension of who he is (IIM), and arguments with peers about those preferences can escalate quickly.

Differentiation in regard to musical preference serves as a way for others to identify Mack as the other. It also serves as a way for them to attach negative

connotations to Mack on the basis of being the other. Moreover, differentiation in regard to musical preference also provides Mack with the information he needs to identify the judging peers as other in his eyes:

And then I heard a couple kids saying under their breath, “Oh my god, these people are so talentless.” And I was about to ask why, but I don’t know – I don’t think I would get a proper response to a loaded statement like that.  
(Video reflection 2)

In the above excerpt, Mack lets on that because the other boys hold the opinion that they do—that the artists Mack enjoys are “so talentless”—they must not have the capability to speak in an intelligent way about their own preferences or thoughts toward this. Mack is not judging his peers’ musical preferences, but he is making other judgments about them (i.e., unable to solicit a “proper response” if questioned about their opinions) on the basis that they do not share his musical preference. In the next excerpt, Mack responds to the judgment of a classmate with opposing musical tastes by passing judgment of his own:

Mack: I love rock and roll and heavy metal, so I try and – yes (to Russell, who shot him a “look”) – so I try and play it usually pretty fast and—

Russell: Why don’t you try to play music people actually like?

Mack: Hey, you’re the one who said Kanye West.

(other boys laugh) (Focus group)

Mack also refers to pop music as “garbage” during the focus group interview, after another participant mentions liking pop artists. Although Mack is strong in his

conviction that others wrongly judge him based on his musical preferences, he too judges on the basis of musical preference.

I asked Mack why it could be that I was making the following observation: Among the sixth-grade participants, little to no judgment based on musical preferences is felt. Among the seventh-grade participants, inklings of “the other” can be seen and one’s classroom engagement—the experienced musical self in a particular context. These are sometimes called into question and sometimes regulated. Among the eighth graders, however, musical genre serves as an identifying badge that either yells out “I am like you, and that is good,” or “I am unlike you, and that is bad.” Mack responds:

Music, when I was really little, I just knew it was some medium in the world that I didn’t really care about. But as I got older, I actually started to care about what I listened to and be specific on who I liked. (Interview 4)

As one navigates the adolescent years, further levels of differentiation within oneself—“I like this” and “I don’t like that genre/person/song”—breed new ways of differentiating between self and other (Finnäs, 1989; Tarrant et al., 2002).

Although the differences between Mack’s musical preferences and those of his classmates at times serve as a catalyst for judgment, Mack is also able to take pride in the differentiation at times:

But yeah, I said, “Oh Harry Belafonte,” and everyone turned around and was like, “Who?” And then when Mr. Taylor played “My Generation” by the Who, and I’m like “I love the Who!” And they actually said, “Who is the Who?” [. . .] This is really biased, but I really have better taste in music. [. . .] But I do feel

kind of superior to everybody else, because I do have this wide knowledge of music and bands and musical styles, while they're just listening to what's cool right now. (Interview 3)

The degree of judgment appears to be in congruence with the degree of differentiation among participants; however, it is evident in the above example that differentiation can also prove a factor upon which positive judgments can be based. Mack perceives that he possesses unique skills for which his classmates value him:

[Others value] my artistic liberties I can go with, and how far I would stretch to get a musical assignment done. (Interview 5)

Although Mack does not self-identify as a musician, his musical passions, preferences, and drive (“how far I would stretch”) are factors at play in his music related self-concepts through MII; Mack uses these factors—and the fact that they differ from those of his peers—to bolster his self-concept as one who is sophisticated.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

Mack views the musical differences that exist between him and his classmates with a sense of pride. Though his ideas sometimes get shot down, his experienced musical self remains strong. Having his musical preferences insulted is not necessarily a positive experience, but Mack anticipates the outcome and expresses himself nonetheless:

It's mostly that age group when you actually wanna get work done with music, other kids'll just throw your ideas away. For example, everyone who



knows me knows I like old things from the 70s and 80s. So I'll try and bring up something like classic rock or something. And they'll blow my idea away for something like pop or dubstep or something. Not trying to be open. Not accepting other things in music. (Focus group)

Kids just flat out not listening to your ideas, just thinking their way is the only way, and not taking in anything else that anyone else says. They think they're right, their genre of music is the best. That's the end of the story. (Focus group)

The following example appeared above in the "musical identity" section, but I have included it here, too:

But yeah, I said, "Oh Harry Belafonte," and everyone turned around and was like, "Who?" And then when Mr. Taylor played "My Generation" by the Who, and I'm like "I love the Who!" And they actually said, "Who is the Who?" [. . .] This is really biased, but I really have better taste in music. [. . .] But I do feel kind of superior to everybody else, because I do have this wide knowledge of music and bands and musical styles, while they're just listening to what's cool right now. (Interview 3)

More than just an expression of his MII, this is also an expression Mack's experienced musical self. When Mack is able to express musical preferences and knowledge that his peers within the music classroom do not possess, he takes pride in what he sees as a more sophisticated musical self and at the chance he has to express this self in the classroom context.

Mack embraces the other when musical genre is a means of creation rather than a badge of identity. In the excerpt below, Mack talks about his experience working on a group composition project with a student whose musical interests differ from his own:

I wanted him to feel that he had some influence on it, and it wasn't all my idea. I wanted him to feel that he had his own say on what he wanted to do for this piece. [. . .] Cuz we both really love music. We like different forms of music, but we also have a common love that music is a form of entertainment and it's a great thing, and we'd work together on that. (Interview 2)

The above statement echoes data from both Devin and Eddie. When musical differentiation is tied to the act of creation in the classroom, such as during project work, the stigma associated with differentiation disappears. Differing musical preferences are no longer seen as the basis for negative comparisons between self and other. Instead, music becomes something one does as opposed to something one wears as an outward reflection of identity. Perhaps because such classroom experiences allow for the experienced musical self to be expressed free of judgment, Mack ends one of his interviews with the following plea:

Tell Mr. Taylor to play more classic rock. It really helped me out! (Interview 3)

Mack feels that exposing students in the class to different types of music helps lessen the blow of judgment toward others who have adopted those types of music as badges of identity, a sentiment that is echoed by Jay in the next portrait.

Mack makes mention of differentiation not only in regard to musical preference, but also in regard to skill set:

[Group projects] would give us more confidence, like to find out if we can sing if we ever wanted to sing. It would give us more room to experiment when we're doing the ginormous project. And if you find out you're good at singing, [or] not so good at singing, or something you've learned while trying

to sing, you could give that to the person who actually is singing. (Interview 4)

Like Eddie, Mack sees benefit in differentiation in regard to creation (as he is referencing class projects) and to group work in particular. Mack takes this notion one step further by suggesting that working in a group allows for the exploration of and experimentation with differing skills.

Mack also exercises his musical self when he uses an instrument in the classroom environment:

Me: When you were doing your program music project, were you being musical?

Mack: Yes, I was.

Me: Tell me about the ways in which you were being musical.

Mack: I got musical because [the project] let me play an instrument basically. (Interview 2)

It is interesting that Mack perceives the use of an instrument enables him to be musical, but that being musical does not constitute being a musician, by his definition. What is even more interesting is that Mack defines a musician as one who plays an instrument and says that, on those grounds, he is not a musician; however, he reports using instruments in his music class and, as described below, in his third environment.

## **Informal Contexts**

In his spare time, Mack is teaching himself how to play bass guitar. He chose this instrument due to its prevalence in rock and roll and heavy metal. Mack brings the bass into class when working on class projects, and he uses the lessons learned in one of the class units to help him self-teach at home. Mack clearly has a third environment, and it's interesting that he draws concrete connections between his engagement in that environment and his classroom engagement; he uses the lessons learned in the third environment when working on class projects, and he uses lessons learned in music class to propel his progress in the third environment. Mack reports that he does not consider himself a musician because he does not play an instrument, even though he reports that he is teaching himself how to play the bass guitar in his third environment. It is interesting that Mack does not feel his musical engagement in the third environment—even as an instrumentalist, the factor he provides that defines one as a musician—constitutes a self-concept as a musician himself.

More notably, Mack's future possible self is shaped in part by something to which he has been newly exposed in his music class. Upon completion of the "music of black Americas" unit, Mack reflects:

I will probably go out of my way to listen to more music of that genre, try many more African American artists, definitely try that out. [. . .] I wanna open up and see what else there is. And I already found Jimi Hendrix and Bob Marley, but I'll also try to find stuff in metal and rock that have more African Americans in it. [. . .] It's a way to expand my musical knowledge and try and find more music to love. (Interview 3)

Mack's love of music and desire to seek out new music has been present from the start, but the class content provides him with a specific avenue through which he now plans to seek out that music. This serves as another example of the ways in which the connections participants draw between their experiences in the music classroom and their informal environments are often in relation to their future possible selves in those informal contexts.

### **Jay**

Jay is in eighth grade. He is intelligent and can be a class clown. He loves to sing and act. He often earns large roles in the school's theater productions and wins solos with the chorus. He started a barbershop quartet with three other students, and he recently started electric guitar lessons.

### **Musical Identity**

Jay views himself as a musician for the many ways he uses music in his life. He plays piano to combat boredom, listens to music to relieve stress, and earns accolades for his singing abilities. Not dissimilar from his peers, Jay views music as a reflection of who he is, musically and extra-musically:

I feel like you can express yourself as an individual through music, because what music really is, is people displaying their emotion by playing an instrument. So, if you do that, then you can express how you're feeling, not just influence how other people are feeling. You're expressing yourself as an individual, but music is the catalyst. (Focus group)

Jay's assertion that music is a catalyst for expressing himself as an individual speaks to MII in his musical identity. It is perhaps for this reason that he enjoys the

provision for personal expression that opportunities for autonomy provide him:

[The project] was a little more fun because we could sculpt it into anything that we wanted. We weren't limited. (Interview 2)

In regard to IIM, Jay's self-concept as a musician is also derived largely from what others think of him musically:

I'd like to say I'm a good musician, but that's one of those things that people have to tell you. You can't just say, "I'm awesome." You have to let other people tell you you're awesome. You can't create your own titles like that. (Interview 1)

Some people have told me that I am [good]. My partners said I was good, and that makes me feel better about myself. (Interview 5)

I have gotten a lot better with musical instruments, which can help me impress people a lot more. (Questionnaire)

Whereas music serves as a means of expressing himself as an individual, how Jay sees himself as a musician, specifically, is largely influenced by how others view his level of musical achievement.

As was the case with Mack, the difference between self and other in terms of musical preferences can serve as a point of pride for Jay:

I think my music says, first of all, I'm not the same as everybody else. I branch out. Cuz you know, not a lot of people my age like Texas blue. It's more rare for you to find somebody like that. (Artifact: Picture of electric guitar and accompanying explanation)

Despite the pride that Jay feels in regard to this differentiation, Jay sometimes uses differentiation as a means of judging others' musical preferences:

Russell: [I express myself] with my knowledge of many different musical pieces written by some famous artists of today, like Kanye West.

Jay: (sarcastically) Yeah GREATEST artists of today. (Focus group)

As with the other participants, music is more than just music to Jay. It's a component of his identity that serves as a basis for judgment. These judgments can be viewed as positive when they distinguish him as having what he perceives to be a more sophisticated musical identity than others his age, but this perceived sophistication can also serve as the basis upon which he justifies passing judgment on others' musical preferences.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

In regard to the experienced musical self, Jay finds comfort in familiarity. Jay likes performing and improvising in class because he finds it comes easily to him. Because of his theater experience, he is comfortable performing before his peers, and he knows this gives him an advantage in the context of the music classroom. Nonetheless, he finds that when the gap between self and other is wide, the experienced musical self is unable to be fully expressed. When the gap is narrow, comfort is found:

But sometimes it's hard to express yourself musically when you don't listen to the same music as everybody else. [. . .] So when I play it, I generally get

comments like “turn that garbage off,” or “that sucks,” and then somebody goes and turns on some J-Beibs. (Video reflection 1)

Your best hope is to just go with someone who thinks like you musically. (Focus group)

I think in music, it’s hard to work with other people. I mean, it’s different when it’s a band, because there’s still one guy composing a song. But it’s hard to have multiple people composing the same song, because everybody thinks a little differently, and just that little bit of difference can completely throw off a musical piece. (Focus group)

These differences can serve as obstacles that get in the way of expressing Jay’s musical identity in the company of his peers. Despite this sentiment, Jay’s testimony furthers the notion laid out by Eddie and Mack that though musical differentiation can lead to adversity in terms of adolescent boys’ identities, it can be appreciated in the context of creation. Although Jay speaks during the focus group interview of the difficulties encountered during group composition, he later speaks in a one-on-one interview of the benefits of differentiation in regard to a composition project he completed with a partner:

Liam – and I think he would agree in me saying this – he’s not as musically talented as I am, but then again I can’t run GarageBand as well as he can. So if he had been alone, he would have been able to super spoof up the thing that he played, but that might not have been as good. [And] I might have been able to play something cool, but I wouldn’t have been able to make it sound nice on GarageBand. And we don’t like the same music, but it lets you have people with strong suits and it leads to a good project. (Interview 2)

In this case, Jay is not referencing musical preference as an outward reflection of



identity. Instead, he is referencing specific musical skills and what one does during the act of creation in the music classroom. As we have seen before, the stigma surrounding differentiation disappears when this distinction is made.

When reflecting on the experienced musical self after the “music of black Americans” unit, Jay brings up the topic of judgment based on musical preferences. He ties in how the practice of judgment actually contradicts the unit material:

Jay: The music of blacks and whites, you know, they started playing jazz, and that started to integrate. All the people started to realize, “Wow, this is actually pretty cool. This isn’t just people singing about the troubles of their lives. It’s people saying interesting things, and I love it.” [. . .] I think that maybe we can come to a better understanding about these things, but people will always be judgmental. The bigger group seems to always wanna gang up on the smaller group a little bit. They seem to want to enforce their dominance.

Me: And by the bigger group, you mean the guys who like the mainstream music?

Jay: The mainstream music. I know for a fact a lot of the kids in my grade like rap and pop music. And while I like those styles, I prefer blues and rock. And I feel like sometimes when I play a song, people will be like, “What is that, dude?” (negative tone). And then they play their song, and I’m like, “What is that, dude?” (negative tone). (Interview 3)

Jay identifies a lesson learned during class within the unit content regarding acceptance of the other, or understanding of the other at the least. He hypothesizes that the group has the ability to apply this lesson in their own interactions with one another, but that he is not optimistic that the trend toward judging the other will change when the other is the minority.

This unit, in particular, is pivotal in Jay’s ability to express certain self-

concepts in the class environment. He attributes this to the fact that the teacher exposed the whole class to the style of music that resonates with Jay in a compulsory manner:

Jay: I think since we got to listen to some Texas blues, Chicago blues, Delta blues in this unit, I was given a pass to be more of my musical self I guess you could say.

Me: How do you think teachers can allow for more or those passes in class in a general sense?

Jay: By doing exactly what Mr. Taylor is doing. [. . .] What he does is show us many different styles of music. So we learned about classical music, which gives you a pass to be like, "See, isn't this cool? This isn't what you thought, with just people playing violins and stuff. This is cool." And then people who like other sorts of music, like jazz or blues, like I do, probably just opening people's eyes to different kinds of music.

Me: So you think compulsory – required exposure to many different things?

Jay: Yes, I do. I do. [. . .] You're saying, "Go ahead, listen to whatever you want – this is cool, too, though." (Interview 3)

Even though Jay previously stated that the capacity to understand the other was possible but not probable when the other was the minority, Jay reports that exposing the majority to the other "gave [him] a pass to be more of [his] musical self" in the music classroom. Later in the interview, Jay is asked to hypothesize how a project shared with the class at the end of the unit might have played out for him:

Me: If you had listened to blues music in class, do you think you'd feel more comfortable, then, writing your song in a blues style? Or do you think you would still be judged by your peers just as harshly?

Jay: I think it would be more comfortable, because they'd be a little looser to it at that point. [. . .] It wouldn't be so shocking.

Me: Would you be more likely to write in that style?

Jay: Yes. (Interview 3)

Jay finds that when his classmates are exposed to his particular type of “other,” that type of other becomes a little less intimidating to them as they grew to understand it more. Because that exposure doesn't come from Jay himself, the students don't view it as a reflection of the individual—a comparison of self to other. Nonetheless, by knowing that his peers have gained familiarity with that which Jay wears as a badge of identity, he feels more comfortable wearing that badge in their presence.

### **Informal Contexts**

As with Nelson and Eddie, Jay seeks out instruction in a musical interest beyond the walls of the school or private lessons, teaching himself how to play the electric guitar in his third environment. He attests to drawing on his self-generated guitar knowledge when creating songs for class projects.

Jay also identifies something from the classroom environment that he foresees himself using in informal contexts:

It helps to learn different ways to express yourself, so you have these different ways in your arsenal when you want to use them. You can pluck different tools from your tool belt. You don't just have one way to say something. [I added] expressing myself through music. You know, I hadn't really thought about doing that. I never really thought about writing my own song or collaborating with someone to create my own song. I'd always just played songs other people had written. And it's actually fun to write your own song. (Interview 4)

Jay had the capacity to express himself through music prior to his enrollment in the general music class. Nonetheless, he hadn't realized this capacity or the purposes for which it could be put to use by his possible future self until taking the class.

### **Final Portrait**

The final portrait includes those participants who were members of the Level 1 sample only or the Levels 1 and 2 samples only. Their words echo many of the concepts explored in the Level 3 participants' portraits.

### **Musical Identity**

The sum of one's roles, activities, and relationships in and through musical contexts forms one's ever-developing musical identity (Hargreaves et al., 2002; North & Hargreaves, 1999b; O'Neill, 2002), and the Level 1 and 2 participants touch on these varied facets when alluding to their own musical identities. At times, the participants reference musical self-concepts in regard to IIM:

Sammy: I need to know how to be courageous and not be afraid to show others my voice. [. . .] I also want to be a viola teacher at my teacher's business called Four Oaks. (Questionnaire)

Ned: My musical goals are to stay with the violin and to keep making the orchestra. Another one of my goals is to make the choir. (Questionnaire)

Don: I would like to audition for the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, maybe even [play] the cello as a career. [. . .] To be a musician as a career, I would have to maybe major in music in college. I need to keep up the instrument for a very long time to play as a career. (Questionnaire)

Austin: I think it would be really cool to be able to be a part of some sort of orchestra or band all the way through college. Right now I am in the chamber players and middle school orchestra, and I want to be in the orchestra at the high school campus. (Questionnaire)

Landon: I have always loved the guitar. Also, my guitar teacher and people that I have played for say that if I continue the work I keep putting into the guitar, I could definitely become professional. (Questionnaire)

Russell: My knowledge of many different musical pieces written by some famous artists of today, like Kanye West – [. . .] I feel that's being self-expressive because it's not just music everybody likes, it's music that I like. (Focus group)

The boys speak of self-concepts found in current or possible future group membership (Don and Austin), in preference for musical genres (Russell), and in possible careers in music (Landon, Don, and Sammy). In these ways, the boys allow us a glimpse into their identities in music (IIM).

The boys also express self-concepts harbored within MII, or music in identities. Music can serve utilitarian purposes, be they personal expression, college admissions, résumé building, or mood regulation:

Jaxon: [My goal is] to get first place in a few competitions and for college. I need to be more musical so I can be more expressive. (Questionnaire)

Christian: [My goal is] to be able to play percussion so I can put it on my résumé. (Questionnaire)

Robert: I like to sing when I'm alone to songs on [the radio], to clear my mind. (Questionnaire)

According to Justin and Darnell, music can do more than just develop other aspects of one's identity; it has the power to influence how others see them, too:

Justin: In the music room, if someone else has a question, you answer it because [. . .] you get to show off and show that you're smart. (Focus group)

Darnell: I like to express myself [by] putting my own style on things, not following the rules like "this note goes here" and "those notes go there." Like experimenting with them, and seeing what will sound good. And not caring about anyone but me, and not [whether] others will think that it's bad. That shows that [I'm] creative and that [I] can put [my] own style on things and not care about what other people think or say. (Focus group)

As we saw with the Level 3 participants, the boys' musical identities encompass not only those things they are and/or want to be, but also those things they are not and/or do not aspire to become:

Chase: I just want to be good at instruments, not really have a life in it. (Questionnaire)

Eli: I would like to learn most everything about music. I wouldn't like to learn an instrument, but just have the knowledge of music to be possible to answer questions. (Questionnaire)

One of the things that came up among the Level 3 participants is the judgment they feel on the basis that their musical preferences differ from the mainstream preferences of their peers. I inquired about this during the focus group interview:

Me: Those of you in the group who do like pop and dubstep and stuff, do you guys feel that same pressure, like people are gonna judge you?

Six or seven participants at once: No/Nope (Focus group)

It seems that among the boys who participated in the study, the further removed one's preferences are from the mainstream, the more likely one is to feel judged on the basis of those preferences.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

The boys speak both of instances in which they feel comfortable expressing themselves in the music classroom and instances in which they feel uncomfortable. When they feel comfortable, it grows out of a given class activity's alignment with a pre-existing positive musical self-concept:

Benjamin: I consider myself a good musician, so I like to try whatever I think is the most challenging [option]. (Questionnaire)

Austin: I'm not afraid to get up and play an instrument [in class] because I am pretty good at instrumentation. (Questionnaire)

Carlos: I used to play the bells, and that helps me if we do anything with the xylophone, because I'm already used to playing the bells which is like the exact same as the xylophone. (Questionnaire)

Frankie: I think that in music class I like to do written work [. . .] because I feel more in control when I'm simply writing. (Questionnaire)

When the boys report feeling uncomfortable in the music classroom, they tie it to the social aspect of the environment:

Blake: I am shy sometimes [in class] because there [are] a lot of people.  
(Questionnaire)

Robert: [Performing] on a stage or in front of a small class terrifies me and I just hate to do it. I prefer to write down my feelings, but not share them.  
(Questionnaire)

Noah: I love listening to music, but talking about it is not my thing.  
(Questionnaire)

It is possible that these boys, like the boys in the previous set of examples, have positive musical self-concepts; however, in regard to performing for others or speaking with others, these boys mention the social aspect of the classroom as a source of discomfort.

The social component of the classroom, beyond being a source of discomfort, can hinder the boys' ability to be musical in the classroom:

Brady: I feel like having other people in the class is good, cuz they can have good input. But I also don't like it, cuz some people may like different things than you do. And you're like "I want to play this," and they're like "No, I have to play this." (Focus group)

Brady: I feel like if other kids are misbehaving, then it stops you from getting done what you have to get done. And if you can't figure out how to play piano, because they're doing something on this side while you're trying to do something over here, it stops you from knowing what you have to know.  
(Focus group)

Justin: If someone else is not behaving, and then the teacher gets really mad at them, then everybody's quiet. And even if you're really happy, it makes you sad, and then you don't wanna learn, and you just wanna get over with the class and go somewhere else. (Focus group)



In the above examples, the presence of others in itself is not a hindering factor. Rather, it is others' behavior that can derail the musical engagement of the individuals in the music class.

### **Informal Contexts**

The Level 1 and 2 participants mention various types of musical engagement in informal contexts, including listening to the radio, playing an instrument alone at home for personal enjoyment, and aspirations to one day play in a band. A few boys draw connections between the music classroom and informal musical contexts:

Brady: The music that I listen to affects me because it decides what I listen to and do in class. For example, I might like an artist and choose to do a research project [on them]. (Questionnaire)

Carlos: Learning about the instruments and the pitches in music helps me analyze music outside of my school life, which helps me appreciate music at a deeper level. (Questionnaire)

Justin: In life, it makes me happy when I play the piano and gives me pleasure, even when I am by myself. [. . .] In life, when I sing the songs that I learn from school, it makes me really happy, even when I'm sad. (Questionnaire)

Carlos's in-class musical experiences impact his music appreciation (IIM) outside of school. Justin utilizes music, inclusive of music learned in school, for the purpose of mood regulation (MII). Brady speaks of his musical interests beyond school serving as possible avenues for in-class engagement. In these ways, the boys suggest that

the musical activities undertaken in formal and informal contexts can impact on one another.

### **Summary**

The boys who participated in the study provided personal accounts in the form of questionnaires, focus group and one-on-one interview responses, artifacts, and video reflections. These accounts touched on a number of topics, most notably the boys' musical identities and their experienced musical selves in the context of the general music classroom.

The boys' accounts confirmed that they indeed perceived that the music class impacted the development of their musical identities: Cody referenced budding musical self-concepts when he spoke of "learning how to be a good musician in a more advanced class," his newfound passion for improvisation and desire to keep expressing himself using the skills learned in the class's improvisation unit, and his desire to "compose a little bit more . . . now that [he knows] how." Evan, too, spoke of the development of a positive musical self-concept when he referenced the sensation of accomplishment he knew he would always have long after a composition project was complete and "even after [he] forget[s] the notes." Nelson asserted that learning about music helped him foster connections with other people, and it also helped him envision a future possible self as a songwriter in a band. Ross said that the new types of music to which Mr. Lewis exposed him "made [him] different as a normal person and as a musician," "chang[ing] [his] tastes in music and how [he] want[s] to write it." Due in part to the class's "music as a social force"

unit, Eddie was inspired to use protest songs as a form of demonstration against police brutality in a downtown Cleveland rally.

As discussed among the key assumptions of the study (Chapter 1), social psychologists posit that identities are developed through individuals' moment-to-moment experiences and interactions within their environments (Caronia & Caron, 2004; Fine, 2004; Munro, 2011); therefore, the engagement of and development of identity are not mutually exclusive categories but are dependent upon and inseparable from one another. Engagement and development thus represent two components of a singular process. At times, the participants spoke of factors of the classroom environment that allowed them to more fully engage their musical identities. Both Jay and Mack referenced how the music teacher's exposure of the class to different types of music—those that Jay and Mack liked but that were not the mainstream preference of the majority of the class—afforded them the opportunity to express themselves musically within the classroom with less perceived judgment from their peers.

The boys also drew connections between the classroom context and informal contexts. Within those informal contexts, the boys often envisioned possibilities for their future selves. For example, Nelson spoke of utilizing the lessons he learned in the music classroom regarding composition and teamwork in possible future experiences as a member of a band, and Ross spoke of using the composition strategies he learned from Mr. Lewis for the purpose of “describing [his] thoughts” both in future music classes and in his life outside of school. The boys' descriptions

of their musical identities encompassed both music in identities (MII) and identities in music (IIM). These accounts acted as the foundation upon which the analysis of data and ensuing discussion were built, which are found in the proceeding chapters.

## CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class in order to learn what factors of the environment adolescent males perceive as impactful in the development of their musical identities. Moreover, because researchers have posited that informal music contexts are pivotal in the development of adolescent identity and that connections can be drawn between formal and informal settings, I wanted to learn what role, if any, in-class connections to students' informal musical contexts play in the engagement of their musical identities. (See page 29 for an operational definition of engagement.)

The following research questions were explored: In what ways, if any, are adolescent males' musical identities engaged in the general music classroom? What role, if any, do in-class connections to informal contexts play in this engagement?

### Initial Coding

During the initial coding, I identified categories—basic units of data—among the data. As expected, the participants did not volunteer their experiences and the personal relevance of those experiences through the use of field-specific terminology such as “third environment,” although field-specific concepts were nonetheless the topics of which they spoke. Some codes were thus named in accordance with the field-specific terminology. *In vivo* codes, which preserved participants' exact words, were also used in some cases. Because initial coding is a

process during which one works with highly-fragmented pieces of data, I have organized the discussion of the initial coding in accordance with the broader concepts that organized the data as they were presented in Chapter 4—musical identity, experienced musical self, and informal contexts—to aid in readability. The examples provided are by no means exhaustive; rather, they are selections provided to help illustrate my thought process throughout the coding process.

### **Musical Identity**

Music-related statements in regard to strengths, weaknesses, and beliefs about oneself were coded under the category of “musical self-concept.”

Cody: I think I’m still learning how to be a good musician. (Interview 1)

Devin: I’m not a musician, not really, because I don’t play an instrument. (Interview 1)

The strengths, weaknesses, positive self-concepts, and negative self-concepts that participants identified as properties within that category were also coded accordingly. For example, Devin’s statement “I’m not a musician” was coded as both “musical self-concept” and “non-musician.”

Musical preference is something adolescents wear as a badge of identity (North & Hargreaves, 1999b), and references to preference were abundant under the umbrella of musical identity.

Eddie: I express myself by the types of music I listen to. And it’s all about what mood I’m in. Like if I’m in a sad mood, if I’m having a bad day, I’ll listen

to sadder songs. But if I'm happier, or if I'm hyper, I'll listen to dubstep.  
(Focus group)

Mack: My musical tastes are kinda weird compared to what other people typically like, and that expresses what I like. [. . .] And I guess it's just who I am. (Interview 5)

In congruence with PSSP, references to musical actions, interactions, and social structures were categorically coded under the larger umbrella of musical identity when participants tied them to skill, preference, or personality (Côté and Levine, 2002).

Cody: I do really like playing instruments in class because I play piano.  
(Questionnaire)

The categories used in the initial coding and falling under the umbrella of musical identity include: musical self-concept, non-musical self-concept, strength, weakness, positive self-concept, negative self-concept, music genre, judging, being judged, musician, non-musician, friends, classmates, motivation: performance-related, motivation: group membership, motivation: college, motivation: career, motivation: self-expression, motivation: enjoyment, motivation: grades, specific non-goal, understanding the other, overcoming fears, overcoming weaknesses, maximizing strengths, musical skill application, musical knowledge application, non-musical skill application, non-musical knowledge application, consequence: group membership, consequence: college, consequence: career, consequence: grades, conversing/connecting with others, mood alteration, and sophistication. Some of

these categories appear again under the umbrellas of experienced music self and/or informal contexts.

### **Experienced Musical Self**

Where participants' statements referenced the music classroom and the interactions and social structures therein as the context-specific catalysts for their judgments and conduct—expressions and consequences of their musical identities—categories under the larger umbrella of experienced musical self were assigned.

Me: And what do you think made it so that you could participate well?

Cody: Because I – I know a lot of content, so I know like what to do and how to do it.

Me: Do you think that if you didn't know those things and you weren't as confident in those topics, do you think you'd be as able to participate?

Cody: I'd probably shy away. I wouldn't want to look like I don't know what I'm doing. (Interview 5)

Evan: When my music is being expressed is when I really get to share my piano pieces with other people. And how they react – really, they love it. And that really makes me want to express my music even more when I see how much people enjoy it. [. . .] Cuz their reactions are always like “wow, that's amazing.” (Video reflection 1)

The categories used in the initial coding and falling under the umbrella of experienced musical self include: expectations, trying on identities, curiosity/wondering, boredom, open-mindedness, in control, out of control, nervous, shy, uncomfortable, comfortable, judging, disappointing others, others'



expectations, seeking approval, pushing/challenging oneself, enjoyment, peers, teacher, school setting, ensemble setting, motivation: performance-related, motivation: pleasing others/entertaining others, musical skill acquisition, musical knowledge acquisition, non-musical skill acquisition, non-musical knowledge acquisition, investing time (practicing), listening, understanding the other, studying (non-practice), overcoming fears, overcoming weaknesses, maximizing strengths, trying new things, getting feedback, musical skill application, musical knowledge application, non-musical skill application, non-musical knowledge application, consequence: performance-related, consequence: group membership, consequence: self-expression, consequence: enjoyment, consequence: pleasing others/entertaining others, conversing/connecting with others, and mood alteration. It was also under the umbrella of the experienced musical self that four *in vivo* codes emerged: limited, not limited, team, and being heard.

### **Informal Contexts**

When participants mentioned musical activities and endeavors beyond the formal setting, categories under the larger umbrella of informal contexts were assigned. These data, at times, were easy to distinguish because they made specific mention of the absence of adults:

Eddie: I want to learn more songs on the piano. Not from a teacher, just learn them off YouTube. (Questionnaire)

Other times, they were mentioned in tandem with the formal environment, in which

case both appropriate codes were assigned:

Eddie: I think that it's actually in our classes, we hear about different types of music, and I've actually started listening to some of those types that we've talked about in class. (Video reflection 1)

Participants often referenced informal contexts when they spoke of future possible selves. For example, when reflecting on a songwriting unit undertaken within the general music classroom, Jay said:

Jay: It helps to learn different ways to express yourself, so you have these different ways in your arsenal when you want to use them. You can pluck different tools from your tool belt. You don't just have one way to say something. [I added] expressing myself through music. You know, I hadn't really thought about doing that. I never really thought about writing my own song or collaborating with someone to create my own song. I'd always just played songs other people had written. And it's actually fun to write your own song. (Interview 4)

In this instance, Jay referenced a skill he gained in the music classroom (i.e., how to express himself through music), but his point was that he now has this skill available to him if he ever needs to call on it in the future. The tool was forged in the classroom, and he now wears it on the tool belt that he carries with him into the rest of his life. The possibilities participants envisioned for themselves were often in regard to their musical lives beyond the walls of school or other formal contexts.

The categories used in the initial coding and falling under the umbrella of informal contexts include: trying on identities, friends, social media, alone, home, car, sports, trying new things, consequence: musical skill application, consequence:

musical knowledge application, consequence: non-musical skill application, consequence: non-musical knowledge application, consequence: self-expression, consequence: enjoyment, consequence: appreciation, understanding the other, conversing/connecting with others, mood alteration, and sophistication. Some of these categories appeared in regard to musical identity and/or experienced musical self in addition to informal contexts.

### **Triangulation of Sources**

At the level of initial coding, triangulating data obtained from various sources—questionnaires, focus group interview, individual interviews, video reflections, artifacts, and memos—served two purposes. First, the data obtained across sources were compared in order to establish credibility.

At times, contradictions served to highlight important distinctions to be made among the data during the next round of analysis (focused coding).

Memo: Eddie compares himself to others on the basis of musical preference, and he sees his friends being judged by others on the basis of their preferences, too. But when Eddie talks about projects and class activities, even if they're totally different styles or those genres that were judged before, it's all cool. I saw this with Devin, too – Is what you do in the classroom different than who you are in the classroom? Or are they the same? Look for references to each. Do the boys view these as connected, or separate entities?

In this case, triangulating the data across sources helped me identify nuances that required attention during the focused coding.

I found that the data were not always consistent between participants, too.

These became avenues for further probing. At times, these contradictions became the basis for researcher memos and helped me seek clarity:

Memo: So far, the sixth grade participants don't report feeling judged, and I don't hear them judging others in how they talk about their classmates' musical styles and stuff. The eighth graders talk a lot about feeling judged in class for their musical tastes, and I hear them passing a lot of judgment on their classmates' tastes, too. Is this an age thing? I should bring up judgment with my seventh graders to hear what they'll say.

In this case, the contradiction between the younger participants' reports and the older participants' reports prompted me to bring up the topic of judgment with my seventh graders to hear what they had to say on the subject. The analysis itself—particularly the triangulation of data—revealed avenues for further probing as the data collection continued.

Overall, though, triangulating the data among sources showed consistency among participant reports. As an example, here are three instances in which Evan, one of the study participants, made similar statements regarding his role among his classmates via three different types of data sources:

Evan: I saw it was really new for people – some people were just learning it, and so I helped them on the class composition project. (Interview 2)

Evan: When I am creating and performing in a group, my responsibilities are to contribute to the song and help make it sound better and help others to get their part and understand it. Also, I am always flexible in moving to a different instrument to help the group succeed. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Evan: I really do like to improvise sometimes in music class. I was in the xylophone ensemble, and I had had plenty of experience with improvising in that group. [. . .] I really noticed I was the role model of the class of music, cuz I was in the xylophone group in lower school. (Video reflection 2)

In all three instances, across three different data sources, Evan reported that his musical skillset guided his role as helper and role model among his peers in class. These data and the other study data were thus accepted due to the credibility established through the triangulation of data across sources.

I would like to note here that although researcher memos were included among the data, each stand-alone memo was triangulated with at least two other data sources in order to determine its credibility. I found that my memos were, in fact, simply reflections on the data that had already been gathered and curiosities that had arisen that I hoped to explore through the ensuing data collection. The memos functioned, to me, not so much as data in themselves as they did a sort of thinking-out-loud about the data, which helped me organize and plan which niches to explore next within the data.

### **Focused Coding**

Creswell (1998) described focused coding—also called axial coding— as the stage during which “the investigator assembles the data in new ways after open coding” (p. 57). After the data were categorized, a number of connections across categories emerged. At the first round of codebook revision at this level, the research assistant and I decided to combine certain codes together into singular codes. For example, “strength” and “positive self-concept” were combined, as were

“weakness” and “negative self-concept”; “friends” and “classmates” were combined into “peers”; and “pleasing others,” “entertaining others,” “disappointing others,” and “others’ expectations” were combined into “being judged” (“judged” having neither a positive nor negative connotation specified).

The second round of codebook revisions at this level, rather than combining codes, further segregated certain codes. For example, “trying new things” was split into “trying new things” and “open-mindedness” to account for instances in which participants said that although something might not be for them, they would not judge another’s pursuit of it. Under the umbrella of “being judged,” “tension” was added to account for instances in which the feelings of negative judgments made against them altered participants’ feelings or willingness to participate in the classroom; the code “enjoyment” already existed at the level of initial coding and accounted for instances in which positive judgments bolstered participants’ willingness to participate.

After identifying relationships among the initial categories and combining and/or segregating them accordingly, a new categorical system emerged. The codes ultimately used at this level of analysis were: strength/positive self-concept, weakness/negative self-concept, trying new things, genre, judging, being judged, enjoyment, tension, peers, teacher, appreciation, sophistication, and future self. The *In vivo* codes—codes born of and preserving participants’ own words—also remained in tact at this level. These were: limited, not limited, team, and being heard.

What was profound at this level of analysis were not the categories themselves, but rather the connections made among categories. Certain codes travelled together. At times, these patterns echoed what had been found in prior research. At other times, these codes bonded to one another in surprising combinations. I labeled these groups of travelling companion codes “focused threads,” and I identified four threads among the data. These threads served as the crux of the focused analysis and laid the foundation for the theoretical analysis that followed. Again, the examples provided are by no means exhaustive; rather, they are selections provided to help illustrate my thought process throughout the coding process.

### **Focused Thread 1**

The first thread that stood out contained the codes “enjoyment,” “teachers,” and “not limited.” Although “teachers” will not be obvious in these excerpts, these excerpts come from interview questions in regard to class activities designed by the participants’ general music teacher.

Jay: [The project] was a little more fun because we could sculpt it into anything that we wanted. We weren’t limited. (Interview 2)

Cody: Well I really enjoyed [the project], because we really got to decide everything we wanted to do. It was just a good experience to be able to play what you wanted to play. (Interview 2)

Not surprisingly, “tension,” and “limited” also appeared side by side.

Devin: I was trying to be musical, but because there was my partner's decision in there, too, I couldn't be the way I wanted to. (Interview 2)

Evan: I thought it was relatively limited in my opinion. Because it was learning, it was basic, I get that, it's fine. But you know if I could have been a little expressive – expressing ideas, and letting people run [with them]. (Interview 2)

These findings served as the basis for the theme titled “freedom.”

### **Focused Thread 2**

The second thread that stood out contained the codes “enjoyment,” “team,” “peers,” and “being heard.”

Mack: I wanted him to feel that he had some influence on it, and it wasn't all my idea. I wanted him to feel that he had his own say on what he wanted to do for this piece. (Interview 2)

Cody: A great part about composing is being proud of yourself after you finish the piece. But how could you feel that if you just sat back and relaxed while others in your group did all the work? (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Nelson: Everybody really had a voice. It wasn't just one person leading it and other people not doing stuff. It was a lot of team. It was a team effort. (Interview 2)

These findings served as the basis for the theme titled “belonging.”

### **Focused Thread 3**

The third thread of codes that stood out contained the codes “strength,” “weakness,” “sophistication,” “tension,” and “peers.” Participants found, at times,



that it was easier to work alone due to the differences that existed between them and their peers.

Ross: When I work alone, there was a lot less arguing, because it's only myself, and it's hard to argue with myself. (Interview 2)

Jay: I think in music, it's hard to work with other people. I mean, it's different when it's a band, because there's still one guy composing a song. But it's hard to have multiple people composing the same song, because everybody thinks a little differently, and just that little bit of difference can completely throw off a musical piece. (Focus group)

Nonetheless, the majority of the time, participants found their differences served as assets.

Eddie: I learned that I can't do everything to create a piece of music. You need different people with different talents to make a full song. In our groups, in our social justice songs, groups of two or three made the best songs, just because they had different people with different skill sets to do that. (Interview 5)

Eddie: I'd say other people, classmates, you need them to create a good song. You need other people's skill sets, because you don't know everything. (Artifact: Picture of a piano and accompanying explanation)

The participants recognized the unique challenges and benefits of one's sameness and different in relation to others—one's identity (Erikson, 1968). These findings served as the basis for the theme titled "distinction."

#### **Focused Thread 4**

The final thread of codes that stood out contained “trying new things,” “judging,” “being judged,” “open-mindedness,” “closed-mindedness,” “future self,” “teacher,” “peers,” “genre,” “appreciation,” and “tension.” Within this grouping, interesting variances surfaced. Where the “new thing” to be tried or “genre” to be heard were introduced by the teacher, “open-mindedness” and often times “appreciation and/or “future self” were present.

Mack: I will probably go out of my way to listen to more music of that genre, try many more African American artists. (Interview 3)

Jay: What [Mr. Taylor] does is show us many different styles of music. So we learned about classical music, which gives you a pass to be like, “See, isn’t this cool? This isn’t what you thought, with just people playing violins and stuff. This is cool.” And then people who like other sorts of music, like jazz or blues, like I do, probably just opening people’s eyes to different kinds of music. (Interview 3)

Where the “new thing” or “genre” appeared alongside “peer,” however, it was accompanied by the codes “closed-mindedness” and “tension.”

Jay: I know for a fact a lot of the kids in my grade like rap and pop music. And while I like those styles, I prefer blues and rock. And I feel like sometimes when I play a song, people will be like, “What is that, dude?” (negative tone). And then they play their song, and I’m like, “What is that, dude?” (negative tone). (Interview 3)

Jay: But sometimes it’s hard to express yourself musically when you don’t listen to the same music as everybody else. [. . .] So when I play it, I generally get comments like “turn that garbage off,” or “that sucks,” and then somebody goes and turns on some J-Beibs. (Video reflection 1)

Teacher versus peer proved to be an important consideration in regard to participants' openness when exposed to new musical ideas. These findings served as the basis for theme titled "exposure to the other."

### **Theoretical Coding**

During focused coding, the initial codes were reorganized and reassembled so as to identify the associations present between them. This allowed for connections to emerge. Above, four notable focused threads were introduced. These served as the basis for the themes that manifested and which are introduced below. As it did during the initial and focused coding processes, the triangulation of data obtained from various sources helped to establish credibility during the theoretical coding.

After three rounds of coding, four themes emerged from the analysis of the data: 1) freedom in decision-making, 2) belonging to the classroom community, 3) distinction among peers, and 4) exposure to the other. These themes emerged as a result of the focused threads identified during the previous round of analysis, comparison of those threads both within initial categories and across initial categories, and the ways in which the absence of or addition of one code within a thread affected other codes within that thread within and across categories.

### **Freedom**

The first theme to emerge was "freedom in decision-making," or, more simply, "freedom." Much of adolescent musical identity is tied to adolescents' experiences in informal contexts (Green, 2002, 2008; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003).

It is possible for classroom contexts to contain entry points through which students might draw connections between their formal and informal environments. Mack saw a composition project as an opportunity to put to use the bass guitar skills he had been developing in his third environment, Ross themed a music class project after *Mortal Kombat* (NetherRealm Studios, 2011), and Brady used music class projects as a platform for learning about the musical artists he enjoyed listening to outside of school. These connections between formal and informal contexts lent relevance and authenticity to classroom music for the students within context of the research site.

Because educators cannot themselves enter students' informal musical contexts, the provision of student autonomy served as a means by which educators within the setting helped bridge these two worlds. The participants were better able to exercise their musical identities when they perceived fewer boundaries surrounding their experienced musical selves. The study participants spoke positively of autonomy in the classroom:

Cody: It was a very fun thing to do, and we could be as creative as we wanted to be. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Mack: [Others value] my artistic liberties I can go with, and how far I would stretch to get a musical assignment done. (Interview 5)

Eddie: I liked how we could use a lot of creativity. It was a very open project, and everybody's song was different. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

The students did not just mention experiencing a greater sense of enjoyment from activities and projects with greater levels of autonomy; Mack spoke of others valuing him within the classroom context for the artistic liberties he took when afforded the freedom to do so, and Devin and Evan both attested that the limitations placed on a project prohibited their ability to express themselves through the project (see Focused Thread 1). The boys perceived that their ability to engage their musical identities in the general music classroom was congruent with the amount of freedom they were afforded in that context.

When the study participants perceived they were able to authentically express their musical identities within the music classroom, it was often when provisions for freedom were made. When the classroom teacher incorporated autonomous experiences into classroom lessons, the participants were able to exercise their experienced musical selves to the extent that they wished without feeling limited as they did with more explicitly structured activities. In summary, the boys' perceptions of freedom in the classroom environment impacted their perceived ability to exercise their musical identities authentically.

### **Belonging**

The second theme to emerge was "belonging to the classroom community," or, more simply, "belonging." Communities are defined by their boundedness and interconnectedness, rendering reflective action of the self and dialogue with others necessary in social environments (Jorgensen, 1995). The myriad relationships in the context of the music classroom served as constructs upon which participants' self-

concepts, in part, were built (Carter, 2008; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). To the study participants, part of belonging in the social sphere of the music classroom meant making sure their voices were represented. Cody, for example, touched on a number of factors tied to his developing musical identity. He spoke of the positive self-concept that grew on completion of a composition project, and more specifically, the fact that that positive self-concept grew out of his individual contribution to the composition. He also acknowledged the influence others can have in the development of one's self-concepts; he perceived that his positive self-concept in regard to his contribution to the composition project was enabled, in part, by others' willingness to let him contribute. He also hypothesized that if he had "sat back and relaxed while others in [the] group did all the work," he could not have held that positive self-concept. Cody's acknowledgment of both his place in the social dynamic of his project group, as well as the other group members' potential to influence his own musical identity, indicates his awareness of his boundedness and interconnectedness—his belonging—within the classroom community.

In addition to the importance placed on one's own voice, the boys also recognized the importance of others' voices and valued those voices as highly as their own:

Cody: A big responsibility is to make sure others are heard, in both the actual piece and when composing. If a person's idea is not being heard and another composer you are writing with is giving all his ideas and not letting another person speak that much, you should say something to him or her about it, as long as you are not being rude. [. . .] I wanted to play a melody on the

keyboard, but then the bells wouldn't be heard, so I had to play a harmony instead. (Artifact: Written assignment for class)

Despite the feelings of judgment that often surrounded participants' musical preferences (IIM), others' voices and varied preferences took a front seat when it was no longer about who they were but about what they did. It could be suggested that, in these moments, the participants valued the expression of another's musical identity above their own or that the group identity eclipsed their personal identities; however, I do not believe this to be the case. The study data regarding boys' experienced musical selves indicate that the experienced musical self is engaged in ways that serve each boy's self-interests. For example, Cody capitalized on his strengths and avoided activities that might have revealed his weaknesses in the classroom, Evan sought out opportunities to show off his more advanced level of musicianship to impress his peers, and Ross expressed himself musically in admittedly calculated ways for fear of what his classmates might think of him.

Because the experienced musical self is engaged in ways that serve the best interest of each individual's musical identity, I am compelled to believe that in these instances—when the act of creation was involved and all members of the community were stakeholders—the experienced musical self was engaged in such a way that promoted participants' sense of belonging. Identities are both personal and social in nature. In the music classroom, engaging as a member of the classroom community—belonging within that social sphere—is not only a social act but is also a way in which one's individual identity is engaged.

## **Distinction**

The third theme to emerge was “distinction among peers,” or, more simply, “distinction.” The participants saw distinction as a counterbalance to belonging. Belonging denoted the sense of boundedness and interconnectedness those within the classroom environment felt in regard to one another. Distinction, meanwhile, denoted the ways in which the students within that environment were differentiated from one another. Although distinction might appear to stand in opposition to belonging, both were facets of the participants’ musical identities, and these facets coexisted in the context of the general music classroom. Distinction, at times, proved to be a source of tension. Other times, it proved to be an asset in the sense that a student’s distinctive qualities made him an asset to the group dynamic through the contribution of unique strengths or skills.

At times, distinction created tension among the individuals within the environment as they attempted to reconcile their differences. This may lead one to believe that distinction was not a desired characteristic in the classroom; however, when the boys sought out ways to navigate these waters, they found that distinction could be manageable. They reported that despite the differences that existed between their varied musical self-concepts, they did not have to negate their individual musical identity in order to find success in the classroom environment:

Cody: We sort of [each] brought something different, and we didn’t know how to make them all fit together. And three of us were more oriented toward keyboard, when we really only needed two.



Me: And how did you end up reconciling that? How did you solve it?

Cody: We had someone work on [. . .] effects for the music, making it sound more like a rock piece. (Interview 4)

The boys recognized that distinction was not only manageable, but that distinction could even prove beneficial when approached with cognizance. The distinction of the individuals within the community was, at times, viewed as an asset:

Mack: [Group projects] would give us more confidence, like to find out if we can sing if we ever wanted to sing. It would give us more room to experiment when we're doing the ginormous project. And if you find out you're good at singing, [or] not so good at singing, or something you've learned while trying to sing, you could give that to the person who actually is singing. (Interview 4)

Evan: It was really great to see other groups, too. I got to see what they did, and what their ideas [were] compared to someone else's, and that was really cool seeing that. (Interview 4)

The boys who participated in the study came to not only recognize and value their own distinctive nature but also came to recognize and value the other based on others' distinctive features. Interestingly, the value of others' distinction appeared to play out for the participants only when the act of creation was involved. The distinction of one's badge of musical identity, in the form of one's musical preferences, still acted a means of judgment and negative comparison between self and other in the realm of IIM among the participants.

The study participants felt that their musical differences made them distinct from one another, and this, at times, resulted in feelings of pride. Belonging and distinction are important components of group identity and the musical identities of the individuals therein (cf. Bates, 2009; Osterman, 2000; Richards, 1998), supporting Erikson's (1969) assertion that identity is largely the delineation of one's sameness and difference in relation to others. When the study participants engaged their musical identities in the context of the general music classroom, the distinctive components of their musical identities emerged as considerations to be both reconciled and utilized.

### **Exposure to the Other**

The fourth theme to emerge was "exposure to the other." Past research has shown that music is one of the constructs adolescents wear as a badge of identity (North & Hargreaves, 1999b). Tarrant et al. (2002) took this a step further by identifying musical preference—or genre—as a common badge among adolescents. The researchers found that students' preferred genres spoke not just to their musical preferences finitely (IIM), but rather acted as symbols denoting other non-musical characteristics about the individuals wearing them (MII). Those with similar musical preferences were viewed as belonging to the same social structure, possessing positive personality traits, and categorized as similar to the self in a broader sense. Those with dissimilar musical preferences were viewed as belonging to a different social structure, possessing negative personality traits, and categorized as the other.

Mack and Jay often felt judged by their peers on the basis of the musical badges they wore. Ross spoke of taking caution with his public musical identity on the basis of his musical preferences in order to safely navigate the classroom environment (Reichert & Kuriloff, 2006). These findings are congruent with what past research has shown, and they are not surprising. Exposure to the other via the posturing of badges of identity often leads to assumptions about and judgments of individuals during adolescence.

What I did find surprising, however, were the students' assertions that exposure to the other via compulsory content introduced by the general music classroom teacher allowed for judgment-free exposure to the other. Moreover, it allowed for those typically seen as the other to better express their musical identities in the classroom arena. We first saw this openness to the other in the participants' reflections on what lessons learned in class they felt would carry over into their informal contexts:

Nelson: Like when we learned about Beethoven and other stories, how music affected their lives. You don't really see how things affect other people's lives, just how it affects yours. And that was cool. (Interview 3)

Ross: I noticed, especially this year, some difficult times trying to describe my thoughts, cuz I'm a visual thinker. But music can describe images and places. It's so much easier.

Me: And how did you come to notice that?

Ross: It was mainly Mr. Lewis. He inspired me to write music, but once I started writing it, I realized that.

Me: How did he inspire you?

Ross: We started listening to a ton of different musics, and we started learning about it. (Interview 5)

The participants dismissed those things which could be defined as “other” when these things were presented by other students, but they considered these things—even sought out opportunities to engage with these things—when components of “other” were presented by the teacher as part of the compulsory curriculum. More notably, Jay and Mack asserted that compulsory exposure of their classmates to their specific type of “other” proved beneficial to them in particular. It is worthwhile to remind the reader that Jay and Mack were the two participants who spoke most frequently about the feelings of judgment against them based on their musical preferences.

Mack: Tell Mr. Taylor to play more classic rock. It really helped me out! (Interview 3)

Me: If you had listened to blues music in class, do you think you’d feel more comfortable, then, writing your song in a blues style? Or do you think you would still be judged by your peers just as harshly?

Jay: I think it would be more comfortable, because they’d be a little looser to it at that point. [. . .] It wouldn’t be so shocking.

Me: Would you be more likely to write in that style?

Jay: Yes. (Interview 3)

Study participants reported that exposure to the other within the classroom, via the

curriculum, allowed them to envision possible selves available to them beyond the confines of the music classroom. Moreover, when participants' particular brand of "other" was introduced in the curriculum, the participants reported greater ease for the experienced musical self within that content.

Adolescents, while actively developing their identities through the process of individuation, ask themselves who they are and what they can be (Erikson, 1963). Subsequently, one "tries on" different self-concepts in order to determine what to reject from one's self-system and what to accept as a stable self-concept that, in part, shapes one's identity. Perhaps when musical preference/genre is presented as an individual's badge of identity, to open oneself to the other's genre would be to try on the other's badge, thereby adopting not only the genre itself but all of the characteristics of the individual for which it serves as a symbol. In contrast, when exposed to the other—as music processes, genres, roles, artists, etc.—via the general music teacher, these novel musical ideas present themselves not as another's badge. Instead, they are articles to be tried on, free of fault or judgment, and either accepted or rejected as part of the individual's musical identity. They are viewed not as an extension of the other but as a possibility of the self.

### **Summary**

Four themes emerged from the study data: 1) freedom in decision-making, 2) belonging to the classroom community, 3) distinction among peers, and 4) exposure to the other. The study participants tied each of these components of their general music classroom environment to the development of their musical identities.

Although they did not use the field-specific or theme-specific terminology listed here, the participants nonetheless spoke of the ways in which the presence of these four factors in the classroom environment afforded them opportunities to engage their musical identities, develop their musical self-concepts, and envision possibilities for their future selves. Participants reported they could more fully engage their musical identities when each of these factors were present in the classroom, with the exception of distinction, which at times helped and at times hindered the expression of particular self-concepts. Congruently, participants reported that it was more difficult to engage their musical identities when these factors were diminished or absent.

### **Discussion**

The boys who participated in this study confirmed both the fluid nature and the stable system of beliefs about oneself that constitute identity (Bernard, 2005; Erikson, 1968; Talbot, 2013). The boys' ideas about their musical identities and the self-concepts therein informed how they exercised their experienced musical selves. For example, one of Cody's musical self-concepts was tied to the act of performance. In the classroom environment, he sought out opportunities to capitalize upon the instrument-specific performance skills that he honed outside of school and in school ensembles. Of the less familiar activities undertaken during the school year, improvisation was memorable to him because he did not feel "pressured to do everything right." This allowed him to maintain a positive musical self-concept during these activities, even though he was less experienced with them.

Similarly, the experienced musical self impacts on musical self-concepts, often times playing out within the social dimension of the classroom (Kroger, 1989; Lamont, 2002; Morrison, 2001; Tajfel, 1978). Jay and Evan experienced the bolstering of self-concepts when their classmates praised them for their musical abilities while completing classroom activities like project work or solo day. Devin experienced the weakening of a musical self-concept when the expression of his experienced musical self within the classroom was disregarded by peers who didn't take the work as seriously as he or who shot down his musical ideas during project work:

Devin: If I share an idea with my friends or something, toward the project, some of them would cooperate and understand my idea, and some of them would not even acknowledge it. They would say "that's wrong" and move on with their idea. [. . .] I mean, it kinda makes me lose confidence in what I'm saying. (Interview 5)

It is not coincidental that Jay and Evan both reported seeking out opportunities to again exercise their musical selves in the classroom context, and Devin meanwhile reported feeling discouraged from sharing his own; these processes are not one-directional but are reciprocal.

Participants reported varied types of connections between their classroom experiences and their musical experiences in informal contexts, including exercising skills learned in class when completing music activities outside of school or other formal contexts, allowing such outside hobbies as video gaming and technological interests to inform how one's in-class project might be constructed, and using non-

musical interpersonal skills gained through classroom activities in interpersonal relationships beyond the classroom. Most notable, however, is the notion that exposure to new ideas and skills paved the way for the activities participants envisioned for their future possible selves beyond the walls of the classroom and/or their years of schooling. At times, these were made possible through skill acquisition. Other times, the capability had been there previously, but the perceived possibility hadn't.

The boys' in-class engagement of their experienced musical selves in the general music classroom and the expression of their musical identities at large were impacted by their informal musical contexts when particular interventions were present (Green, 2008). In the classroom, intervention sometimes came in the form of the provision of opportunities for student autonomy. Participants felt valued within the classroom context for the artistic liberties they took when afforded the freedom to do so, and they reported that the limitations sometimes placed on projects prohibited their ability to express themselves. The participants were better able to exercise their musical identities when they perceived fewer boundaries surrounding their experienced musical selves and more opportunities to apply interests from their informal contexts when completing activities within the formal context of the music classroom.

Intervention also came in the form of exposure to something novel. In those instances, the formal context impacted on the informal contexts and/or boys' future possible selves. Many of the participants held onto something they were exposed to



in the formal environment and found applications for it in their lives beyond the classroom. For Cody, it was the realization of his capacity for empathy. For Nelson, it was a teamwork experience. For Ross, it was a sense of purpose in his songwriting. For Devin, it was the knowledge base and experience that gave him the confidence to consider resurrecting his role as instrumentalist. For Eddie, it was the realization that he can use music to facilitate social change. For Mack, it was exposure to African American artists, and for Jay, it was a new tool for self-expression. Whether a particular exposure facilitated the development of identities in music (IIM) or music in identities (MII), whether or not it was socially defined, whether or not it served utilitarian purposes, and whether or not it was the intended learning outcome did not seem to bear consequence.

Students encountered the intervention within the context of the classroom, and their experienced musical selves were thereby engaged. The engagement of students' experienced musical selves caused them to envision opportunities and possibilities available to their future possible selves. Some of these possibilities may lie within the classroom context itself. A student who wins the praise of his classmates when he gives a speech, for example, may be more likely to add a speech component to an upcoming project. Some of these possibilities may lie beyond the classroom, within informal contexts. A student who had not thought to write music prior to completing a songwriting unit in class may decide to begin keeping a journal of lyrics as a form of self-expression. Because possible musical selves are important components of one's musical identity, these possible selves—and in some

cases, the undertaking and playing out of these identified possibilities—impact students’ musical self-concepts (Freer, 2006, 2009, 2010). Moreover, students’ musical self-concepts inform the ways in which their experienced musical selves are expressed in a given context, be it the general music classroom or elsewhere (Abril & Flowers, 2007; Abril & Kerchner, 2009). These relationships are symbiotic and are cyclical in nature.

## **CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class in order to learn what factors of the environment adolescent males perceive as impactful in the development of their musical identities. Moreover, because researchers have posited that informal music contexts are pivotal in the development of adolescent identity and that connections can be drawn between formal and informal settings, I wanted to learn what role, if any, in-class connections to students' informal musical contexts might play in the engagement of their musical identities.

Four key themes emerged from the analysis of data as described in Chapter 5: 1) freedom in decision-making, 2) belonging to the classroom community, 3) distinction among peers, and 4) exposure to the other. Here, I position these four themes relative to the research questions. I also report the possible relationship between age and musical preference-based judgment to be an ancillary finding of the study—a finding that was of interest but that did not address either of the research questions, and which would need to be further explored using quantitative methods due to the possible relationship between variables central to this finding. The chapter ends with a discussion of the implications of the study in regard to teaching, program advocacy, and future research.

## Addressing the Research Questions

### Question 1

*In what ways, if any, are adolescent males' musical identities engaged in the general music classroom?* The study participants perceived that four factors were key in the engagement of their musical identities in the music classroom: 1) freedom in decision-making, 2) belonging to the classroom community, 3) distinction among peers, and 4) exposure to the other. Participants reported they could more fully engage their musical identities when each of these factors were present in the classroom, with the exception of distinction, which at times helped and at times hindered the expression of particular self-concepts. Congruently, participants reported that it was more difficult to engage their musical identities when these factors were diminished or absent.

**Freedom.** The study participants spoke of both their dislike for limitations and the freeing effect of autonomy. The study participants did not just mention experiencing a greater sense of enjoyment in activities and projects with greater levels of autonomy; participants felt valued within the classroom context for the artistic liberties they took when afforded the freedom to do so. In contrast, the participants reported that the limitations placed on projects prohibited their ability to express themselves. The participants were better able to exercise their musical identities when they perceived fewer boundaries surrounding their experienced musical selves.

**Belonging.** As the music classroom is a socially and culturally defined environment, it is a context in which identities in music (IIM) may be engaged. To the study participants, ensuring their voices were represented within this social sphere was integral to the notion of belonging within that sphere. The boys also recognized the importance of others' voices and valued those voices as highly as their own. Interestingly, despite the feelings of judgment that often surrounded the boys' musical preferences, others' voices and varied preferences were better "heard" and more highly valued when the focus was not on who the student was but rather on what the student did. What the students did was seen as contributing to a team effort when the act of creation was involved within the classroom, rendering all members of the community stakeholders in the creation process. The students engaged their identities in music (IIM) in such a way that both asserted their place in the socially bound network of the music classroom while acknowledging others' place in defining that network as well.

**Distinction.** At times, distinction created tension between individuals in the music classroom. This was most prominent when distinction between musical preferences served as a factor upon which negative judgments about individuals were made. In these cases, the boys at times carefully censored the ways in which their musical identities were engaged; their experienced musical selves were, at times, calculated.

The boys, however, sought out ways to navigate these waters in order to improve their classroom experiences without negating their own musical self-

concepts during classroom activities that required creation, such as composition-based projects. During these creation-based activities, distinction was often viewed as an asset; the boys recognized that where they may possess a weakness (for example, a self-concept of “non-singer”), others’ unique strengths and self-concepts (for example, “singer”) helped satisfy the needs of the group and aided in achieving collective goals. When the study participants engaged their individual musical identities in the context of the general music classroom, the distinctive components of their musical identities emerged as considerations to be both reconciled and utilized.

**Exposure to the other.** The participants asserted that although they often felt judged when their musical preferences and personality traits marked them as “other,” exposure to the other via compulsory content introduced by the general music classroom teacher allowed for judgment-free exposure. It did so in two ways: First, compulsory exposure to the other allowed for those typically seen as the other to better express their musical identities, especially those self-concepts that differed from those of their peers, in the classroom arena. When the other was a component of the curriculum rather than solely an extension of one’s identity, participants felt less judgment from their peers in the context of the music classroom upon expressing that particular component of their identity.

Second, exposure to the other in the general music classroom—not via student-to-student relationships but via teacher-to-student relationships—allowed students opportunities to view novel musical genres and ideas not as extensions of

the other, but as a possibilities available to oneself in the present and/or the future. In these instances, participants were free to “try on” self-concepts and subsequently choose to adopt those self-concepts and incorporate them into their own self-system or to reject them from their self-system (Hargreaves, Marshall, & North, 2003; North & Hargreaves, 1999b).

## **Question 2**

*What role, if any, do in-class connections to informal contexts play in this engagement?* In-class connections to informal contexts were revealed in the role of freedom in students’ engagement of musical identities, as well as in the role of exposure to the other in students’ engagement of musical identities. The study participants reported that opportunities for student autonomy provided pathways for them to connect to their informal musical contexts. When participants drew these connections, they engaged self-concepts (i.e., video gamer, bass guitarist, etc.) that had otherwise gone unengaged in the context of the music classroom. In-class connections to students’ informal musical contexts—made possible by the music teachers’ provision for student autonomy (freedom in decision-making)—allowed for the boys to engage with class content in ways that were relevant and authentic to their lives beyond school.

Participants also drew connections between the music classroom and informal contexts when exposure to a skill or concept in the classroom spurred curiosities and/or the knowledge of possibilities available to students in their lives beyond school. When participants drew these connections, they engaged a specific

type of self-concept: a possible self. The participants envisioned these future possible selves being enacted in both other formal contexts (i.e., resuming violin lessons) as well as in informal contexts (i.e., listening to certain genres of music in one's leisure time). The connections participants drew between the music classroom and informal contexts were most often in regard to informal contexts in which no music learning was taking place, rather than the third environment.

### **Ancillary Finding**

Eighth graders Jay, Mack, and Eddie made judgments of others based on others' musical preferences. They also either experienced judgment by others based on their own preferences (Jay and Mack) or witnessed others with less popular musical choices being judged (Eddie). In contrast, the sixth grade participants did not report these phenomena at play in their own experiences within the music classroom. The sixth graders were aware of their own unique strengths, skills, and interests, but there did not exist the pressure to control the experienced musical self with caution on the basis of their musical preferences. Seventh grader Ross seemed to bridge these two worlds by considering what the consequence of expressing his musical preferences might be:

I wonder what their varied thoughts will be. Will they look at me as a different person because I like this kind of music? (Interview 4)

The sixth graders' lack of judgment, seventh graders' cognizance of judgment, and eighth graders' full engagement with judgment inspire curiosity regarding the



possible relationship between age and judgment based on musical preference.

Mack hypothesized that increased distinction might be at the root of the possible relationship between age and musical preference-based judgment:

Music, when I was really little, I just knew it was some medium in the world that I didn't really care about. But as I got older, I actually started to care about what I listened to and be specific on who I liked. (Interview 4)

This possible finding did not serve to address either of the research questions, but it was nonetheless of interest due to its pertinence to the engagement of musical identities within the context of the general music classroom. Because this possible ancillary finding is correlational in nature, quantitative methods would need to be utilized in order to properly explore the possible relationship between age and musical preference-based judgment. This is discussed further in the section titled "Recommendations for Future Research."

### **Implications for Teaching**

Freedom in decision-making, belonging to the classroom community, distinction among peers, and exposure to the other emerged as important factors at play in the perceived engagement of adolescent boys' musical identities in the general music classroom environment. The implications these hold for the general music classroom are discussed here.

#### **Freedom**

Much of adolescent musical identity is tied to adolescents' experiences in informal contexts (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). Classroom contexts should

provide entry points for connections to students' informal musical contexts in order for classroom music to gain relevance and authenticity (Green, 2002, 2008). Ryan and Powelson (1991) pointed out that these contexts vary from individual to individual based on the myriad influences and relationships involved in their lives; therefore, connections to students' informal contexts are established through the provision for autonomy made by the educator (Green, 2002, 2008).

Educators are charged with the task of balancing tradition and change. Allsup (2007) pointed out that schools are self-contained societies in which the principles of democracy can play out. It is important for schools to transmit cultural norms, but it is also important for schools to foster inclusion, as diversity often acts as a catalyst for a society's evolution. The educator's primary tasks, then, are to bring new understandings to familiar topics and to allow for the inclusion of the unfamiliar. When a music educator allows students to carry the music from the informal environments at play in students' lives into the classroom setting, it confirms that those students' musical preferences are worthy of study. Those students have the freedom to engage with repertoire in which they draw meaning and find relevance. They have the freedom to exercise their unique and ever-developing musical identities.

How freedom is enabled will differ from setting to setting. The limitations and autonomy afforded will be specific to each classroom, project, and perhaps even student in some cases. For example, if the learning objectives pertain to such skills as consulting scholarly sources and writing an academic research paper, it may be

possible to allow students to select their own topics within the realm of music rather than prescribing a research topic. If the learning objective is to draw connections between current events and the arts, perhaps students could bring in their own music libraries in which to seek these connections, rather than exploring it solely through a predetermined repertoire. In some settings, it might even be appropriate for students to construct a lesson for their peers on a musical topic about which they are knowledgeable and/or passionate beyond the boundaries of the curriculum.

Hendricks, Smith, and Stanuch (2014) asserted that key freedoms that should be afforded in the music classroom include the freedom to experiment, the freedom to take risks, and the freedom to express oneself. Musical mastery may come of such freedoms, but the ultimate purpose of these is to allow for self-actualization. Students are free to explore their self-concepts and further develop their musical identities without the fear of what consequences might come about if the varied self-concepts therein don't conform to the norms of the culture or setting. This allows for openness, an important component of the environment the educator constructs (Silvey, 2014).

Knowing how the intricacies of one's classroom, curriculum, projects, and students might inform the provisions made is part of the art—rather than the science—of teaching. The boys who participated in the study did not assert that autonomy delivered in one way was any better or worse than autonomy delivered another way. What was important to them was that some provision for freedom was

made so that they could exercise their musical identities in their own fashion.

### **Belonging**

The myriad relationships in the context of the music classroom serve as constructs upon which students' self-concepts, in part, are built (Carter, 2008; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). It is not surprising, then, that the study participants identified belonging as a key factor at play in the engagement of their musical identities in the general music classroom (cf. Bates, 2009; Osterman, 2000).

The social relationships cultivated in the music classroom—both with peers and teachers—are as valued by boys as their individual skill acquisition (Freer, 2012). The resulting sense of belonging even plays a role in freedom; boys look to the reactions and responses of their peers, not their teachers, for feedback about their individuality and the autonomous choices they make.

As with autonomy, a uniform prescription will not fit the needs of every classroom context as it pertains to belonging and its role in the engagement of musical identity. Music educators wishing to build a sense of community within the classroom should take into account such considerations as the ages and other demographic specifics of their students, the role of music within the school culture, the types of positive and negative connections that exist among the students beyond the classroom, and the individual and varied musical identities of the students in the group. Some of the ways in which educators can foster the sense of community so crucial to student belonging include, but are not limited to: cultivating relationships with students, building respect within the bounded environment through such

tactics as student-driven classroom rules, games and ice breakers that allow students to glimpse pieces of their peers' identities, and the creation of smaller learning pods or study groups within the class.

Criss (2010) suggested that educators can foster a sense of belonging among music students by providing opportunities for the construction of group identity. The group's identity will be largely defined by the connections between its individual members. The creation of a shared experience is one way in which educators can facilitate these connections. A collaborative effort or group decision can serve as an entry point for students to begin to connect with and identify with one another.

### **Distinction**

According to the study participants, distinction is a third factor at play in the engagement of musical identities within the music classroom. Distinction is as important a component as belonging in regard to group identity and the musical identities of the individuals therein. Groups of people, even within a singular setting or context, have different subjective experiences (Dyndahl, Karlsen, Skarberg, & Nielsen, 2014). The context in which one is situated "activates particular regions of self-knowledge" (McConnell, 2011, p. 3). In the context of the music classroom, these regions of self-knowledge manifest as musical self-concepts via IIM and MII. It is important, then, for music educators to contemplate what might be relevant in their students' lives (Silverman, 2003). Because of the importance of distinction and the subjective nature of experience, the allowance of freedom—as detailed earlier—is a

necessary component of this process.

The boys who participated in the study came to recognize and value their own distinctive nature and also the value of the other based on others' distinctive features when the act of creation was involved within the classroom environment. I therefore suggest educators facilitate classroom activities that allow for areas of distinction among students to emerge. This may take the form of differentiated instruction, assessment of multiple intelligences, or again, opportunities to draw connections between the classroom and informal musical contexts so that students might showcase the unique interests and skills they've cultivated beyond the classroom. Again, the art—rather than the science—of teaching is essential, especially given that musical preference still serves as a criteria upon which judgments and negative comparisons between self and other are often made among adolescents.

A community of barbers might always be freshly buzzed, a community of doctors might not be in want of medical care, and a community of butchers might never go hungry; however, the barbers might go hungry, the doctors might have unkempt hairdos, and the butchers might not get the medical care they need. A community with all three types of individuals, though, and with the distinct knowledge and skills each bring to the table, is sure to look good, feel full, and live a long life.

### **Exposure to the Other**

Because adolescents ask themselves who they are and what they can be as

part of the process of individuation (Erikson, 1963), exposure to the other is key in helping them understand the myriad options (types of distinction) available to them in the construction of their musical identities. The study participants confirmed what past research has shown: First, that musical preference is worn as a badge of identity (North & Hargreaves, 1999b; Tarrant et al., 2002). The participants viewed the perceptions others held about them as partially dependent on their musical preferences.

Second, the participants attested that both positive and negative judgments alike are made on the basis of those preferences. Adolescents make judgments about others on the basis of these preferences, and they too feel judged on the basis of these preferences (Mueller, 2002). Music serves as a means of creating a boundary between self and other (Folkstad, 2002). These judgments, though based on musical preference, are not exclusive to the musical characteristics an individual possesses. For example, Mack used the differences that existed between his own musical preferences and those of his peers as an indicator of his peers' perceived closed-mindedness.

The study participants, however, also reported that when they were exposed to unfamiliar content in the context of the music classroom via a compulsory curriculum, unfamiliar musical content (including genre) was not viewed as an extension of the other but rather as a possibility of the self. This resulted in participants envisioning new possibilities available to their future selves. It also allowed those participants who are typically identified by their peers as "other" a

safe arena for the expression of those distinct musical self-concepts.

I thus argue that exposure to the other in the general music classroom—not via student-to-student relationships but via teacher-to-student relationships—is of utmost importance. It allows students opportunities to carry empathy for the other into the varied contexts of their life both in and out of school, and it allows opportunities for students typically viewed as “other” to better express their musical identities in the classroom environment. In addition to the provisions educators make for autonomy, there is a definite place for prescribed, compulsory curricular elements in the general music classroom.

Though the science of teaching is important in these instances, the art of teaching is certainly not diminished. According to Jorgensen (2008), the judgments we make about what to teach and how to teach it are both practical and intellectual. Jorgensen suggested educators strive for balance between objectivity and subjectivity, rationality and compassion. Because the self can never completely know the other, educators’ judgments about exposure to the other will always be imperfect but will also always be of utmost necessity. Jorgensen wrote:

It is only possible to base our judgments on indicators—subjective assessments of what we believe to be the case—and hope that these suffice and that our students (or teachers) are willing to grant us the same benefit of the doubt that we grant to them (p. 63).

It is not an easy task to design a curriculum that is both appropriately broad in scope to expose students to many types of other as well as detailed enough to



allow for the depth of exploration that begets understanding of the other. It is not simple to know which types of other might be most necessary to explore within the time constraints of the semester or school year when teachers are not privy to their students' informal musical contexts. It is difficult to present the other with authenticity if the teacher himself or herself does not identify with that type of other. Talbot (2013) suggested that the other could be presented through "music identity projects," in which freedom, belonging, and distinction alike are engaged. These are musical identity sharing experiences that are both compulsory—and therefore not imposing of one's identity onto another—and autonomous. A music identity project employs music as the medium by which students communicate their varied identities. Talbot wrote:

Each song becomes a conversation piece that leads to greater discussion and connections between all participants. [. . .] Students see themselves as equal contributing members of the class culture as they recognize and make connections with the histories, identities, socio-cultural backgrounds, and preferences of other classmates (Talbot, 2013, p. 69).

Rampal (2015) postulated that music teacher preparation programs historically have not prepared educators to understand and expound on their student's "multiple lived realities" (p. 25), but that educators can nonetheless be powerful agents in shaping the classroom culture. Rampal suggested that educators commit to empowering the collective by engaging with students in critique of cultural norms, especially those that perpetuate social partisanship. In combating

racial inequities, for example, this may take the form of regarding whiteness as a culture rather than a norm, regardless of the demographic makeup of one's school or geographic region.

As with freedom, belonging, and distinction, incorporating exposure to the other into one's classroom environment requires a great deal of thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and discretion. These considerations render teaching a challenging task, but an important task.

### **Implications for Program Advocacy**

One's social affiliations play an important role in one's identity, for the individual attaches "value and emotional significance to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). It has been shown that boys construct cautious public identities—or experienced musical selves, in the case of the music classroom—in order to navigate their school's social environment on the basis of those memberships (Reichert & Kuriloff, 2006). The study has shown that the general music classroom is a setting in which boys' experienced musical selves and musical identities can be expressed and subsequently developed due to the reciprocal relationship they share.

Why do we need to be mindful of these authentic means of connection and expression? Kratus (2007) suggested American music education is at a turning point. First, the repertoire typically taught in school music programs—classical, folk, jazz, etc.—is no longer relevant to many secondary music students in their lives beyond school. Second, technological advances such as portable electronic music devices and composition programs like GarageBand have shaped music into an

increasingly individual endeavor in adolescents' lives, while the large ensemble model prevails in secondary music education programs.

Williams (2011) pointed out that the large ensemble model has remained relatively unchanged since the early 1900s despite the changing musical landscape with which adolescents engage outside of school. Williams suggested that this explains why, despite the importance of music in adolescents' lives, enrollment in school music programs is declining. Musical identities are still social and contextual in nature, but the nature of the community itself has changed. Students cannot authentically exercise their musical self-concepts—cannot fully engage their experienced musical selves—in the music classroom unless educators acknowledge the nature of these changes and adapt accordingly. Allsup (2014) suggested that the field of music education move away from the apprentice model and toward the model of music as a humanity.

Allsup and Benedict (2008) spoke of the fear many associate with music program cuts and music program advocacy. The researchers suggested that music educators and advocates often resolve to put on a brave face, go forth with outward confidence, and pretend that that fear does not exist. The researchers contended that instead, music educators and advocates should examine that fear, for to fear is to commence the process of self-critique. Rather than asking how we can bridge the gap between our current model of secondary music education—namely, the large ensemble model—and our students' varied lived experiences, we should shine the magnifying glass on that model.

I argue that we must turn directly to the stakeholders, our students, for guidance. What can we learn about their musical identities that might aid us in constructing classroom environments that allow them to engage those identities authentically? The study participants identified four key factors in the facilitation of the engagement of their musical identities within the context of the general music classroom: freedom, belonging, distinction, and exposure to the other.

Though I do not claim that ensemble-based musical classrooms are incapable of providing these environmental factors, I do suggest that the general music classroom—particularly at the secondary level—lends itself well to the provision of these factors. The general music classroom easily allows for connections to students' informal contexts; opportunities for autonomy; the recognition and development of individual strengths and skillsets; opportunities for small and large group work; and exposure to a variety of socially and culturally defined music roles, processes, and categories due to the flexibility of its curriculum. The secondary general music classroom's curriculum is not constrained by the need to master standard repertoire, to earn high marks festivals and competitions, or to polish concert repertoire by the performance date. Whereas the schedule and structure of ensemble-based music classes often compel the available time to be allocated for the purpose of group excellence in pursuit of a common goal, the flexibility of the general music classroom allows for focus on individual excellence by means of both group and individual pursuits, as well as for stratification within the environment in regard to individual skills and interests.

Again, I do not argue the ensemble-based classroom's ability to provide the necessary environmental factors for the engagement of musical identities; a large body of research reveals that identity expression and development do, indeed, take place in such settings (cf. Abeles & Porter, 1978; Delzell & Leppla, 1992; Fetter, 2011; Freer, 2006, 2009, 2010; Hoffman, 2008; Mills, 2008; Moore, 2008; O'Neill & Boulton, 1996; Sugden, 2005). I do, however, posit that we should advocate for general music programming at the secondary level. Others, too, have advocated for programs that allow for the authentic expression of student identity through relevant, autonomous classroom experiences (cf. Allsup, 2014; Green, 2002, 2008; Kratus, 2007; Williams, 2011). The particular characteristics affiliated with the general music classroom provide an authentic setting in which freedom, belonging, distinction, and exposure to the other might manifest. Within such a setting, students are provided the opportunity to more fully engage their experienced musical selves and authentically express their musical identities.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Qualitative research is often summed up not by definitive conclusions but by a new set of questions (Wolcott, 1994). Such was the case with my study, through which greater clarity was found in relation to the research topic, but as the result of which new curiosities also arose.

### **Late Adolescence**

I previously discussed the possible relationship between age and musical preference-based judgment to be an ancillary finding of the study. Because the

relationship between two variables is inherent in this possible finding, it can only be properly explored using quantitative methods. Moreover, Mack hypothesized that increased distinction might be at the root of the possible relationship between age and musical preference-based judgment as observed among the study participants. Studying distinction and musical preference-based judgment in late adolescence may thus yield interesting results, especially if exposure to the other is included as a factor in that investigation. Will the two share a direct relationship as age progresses? Is there an age or level of distinction at which judgment plateaus? Is there a point at which a critical level of exposure to the other causes preference-based judgment to decrease, even in the presence of high levels of distinction?

I suggest a longitudinal study that follows a group of music students from early adolescence through late adolescence. I suggest the study focus specifically on participants' musical preference-based judgments of others and how they perceive others judging them on basis of their own preferences. The relationships between age and judgment, as well as exposure to the other and judgment, may prove worthwhile explorations.

### **Female Identity**

As discussed in the introductory chapter, males and females construct their identities differently than one another (Baron-Cohen, 2004; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Durkin, 1995; Eckes & Trautner, 2000; Fagot, Rodgers, & Leinbach, 2000; Gurian 1996, 1998, 2007; Gurian & Stevens, 2011; Hannover, 2000; Munro, 2011; Newberger, 1999; Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003; Thompson & Barker, 2008).

Biologically, brain-based differences account for developmental and structural differences, chemical differences, hormonal differences, functional differences, and differences in processing emotions (Gurian & Stevens, 2011). Socially, gender serves as an identity stimulus by which people perceive others and are perceived, pass judgments on others and are judged, hold expectations of others, and behave (Eckes & Trautner, 2000).

Gender's effects play out differently within specific cultures and contexts. The choral setting serves as one such example. Boys tend to believe that their vocal skills are fixed, whereas females tend to be process-oriented and believe they can improve their skills through deliberate practice (Freer, 2012). Additionally, adolescent males prefer peer-to-peer feedback models, whereas adolescent females prefer adult-to-peer feedback models. Armed with this information, conductors cognizant of these differences will likely employ different rehearsal strategies with an all-male chorus than they would with an all-female chorus.

My study looked specifically at the experience of adolescent males in the general music classroom. Conducting a similar study in an all-female setting may lead to different results. Because single-sex schools and single-sex classrooms have a place in the educational arena, it is worthwhile to learn what factors females might report as key in engaging and developing their musical identities in the context of the music classroom. This will aid teachers in all-female settings in constructing classroom environments that allow for relevance and the authentic expression of females' musical identities.

I suggest that, in designing such a study, the researcher specifically explore the notion of “exposure to the other” as introduced by peers and the notion of “exposure to the other” as introduced by the classroom teacher. It has already been shown that males and females express different preferences depending upon the source of the performance feedback. Will the differing attitudes toward peers and adults impact how females experience exposure to the other?

Finally, if such a study is conducted, I recommend recruiting participants spanning sixth through twelfth grade. My own study’s participants spanned sixth through eighth grade, and I found I had questions at the conclusion of the study regarding the nature of the findings as they pertained to the full span of adolescence.

### **Co-Ed Contexts**

In addition to studying males and females in single-sex settings, conducting similar studies with each in co-educational contexts may, too, yield different results. The impact that the presence of males and females have on one another in such contexts may prove significant due to the materialization of relational categories in social interactions (Eckes & Trautner, 2000). Eddie and Jay alluded to this in the following excerpt:

Eddie: At a normal co-ed school you’d get made fun of – Or many people wouldn’t do [something], because they want to impress the ladies. But here, we don’t have to worry about that, so we get out of our comfort zone a lot easier. And it’s easier for Jay to just play that kind of music and go out of his comfort zone, and same with me. We’re not worried about the (air quotes) ladies—



Jay: Impressing anybody

Eddie: Yeah, we're just a group of guys, so we can just hang out and play whatever we want. (Video reflection 1)

It may be interesting to investigate how the experienced musical self might manifest differently in co-educational contexts as compared to single-sex contexts. Will a more cautious public identity be constructed to further protect one's varied musical self-concepts? Will perceived masculinity and/or femininity be among the extra-musical facets of the individual signified by one's musical preferences? Is exposure to the other more or less effective at minimizing judgment when "the other" refers to gender, and when exposure takes place in a co-educational versus a single-sex setting?

I suggest conducting a study that explores the engagement of musical identities in the co-educational general music setting, using the themes of freedom, belonging, distinction, and exposure to the other as launch points in the interview process. I suggest that the researcher cast a sufficiently broad net when exploring the topic of exposure to the other, but also focus in specifically on gendered others.

### **Methodological Changes**

There are methodological changes I would make if I were to complete the study again. First, I would allow more time for the one-on-one interviews. Rather than scheduling these during a 15-minute block with a necessary time limit due to students' class schedules, I would schedule them after school so as to allow the conversation to end organically. I found that the interviews often unfolded in

unexpected and meaningful ways, going off on interesting tangents. Following these tangents sometimes meant sacrificing other questions I had intended to ask later in the interview. Making sure we covered all of the topics as intended sometimes meant abandoning a line of conversation that may well have provided meaningful data if followed. I had anticipated the richness of the boys' lived experiences, but I had not anticipated the extent to which they were willing to expound on these experiences as they did in our one-on-one sessions. It was a pleasant surprise, but one I wish I had the foresight and provision to accommodate.

Second, I would record all audio material with two recording devices rather than one. A technology malfunction is not likely, but it is naïve to think it is not possible. In the 48-hour window I allotted between an individual interview session and its subsequent transcription, one audio file was rendered corrupt, and the interview was lost. If I were to conduct the study again, I would hope for the best-case scenario but plan for the worst-case scenario.

### **Limitations**

This study was delimited to an all-male setting. Conducting a similar study in an all-female context, or even studying boys in a co-educational context, may have resulted in different findings. Because I am a music educator in an all-male school, studying the musical engagement of boys in this specific context was of particular interest to me and helped further my understanding of the population I serve.

The population eligible to serve as study participants within that setting was further limited to encompass only those students who did not have the researcher

as their teacher. Although the school was situated just outside of a diverse urban area, its demographic makeup was relatively homogenous: 74.4% Caucasian, 8.1% Asian, 7.4% Mixed Race, 6.3% African American, 1.9% Middle Eastern, and 1.9% Latino Heritage. It is important to keep the unique context of the research site in mind, as findings are not generalizable.

Certain limitations were also placed on the data collection due to time constraints. Individual interviews were constrained to 15-minute blocks of time. These blocks were built into participants' school schedules as unstructured time, and only that time could be used so as not to interfere with participants' classes. Similarly, the focus group interview was constrained to a 25-minute block of unstructured time built into participants' school schedules. These time constraints sometimes necessitated ending an interview in spite of the momentum of the conversation between the participant and me.

My own limitations impacted the study as well. As is true of any researcher, I was only able to gather, transcribe, and analyze a finite amount of amount of data. I opted, therefore, to limit the number of Level 3 participants and dive deeper with each. The alternative to this was to include a greater number of participants among the Level 3 sample but spend less time with each and collect less data from each. I decided that the former option was more likely to yield rich data and, subsequently, a deeper analysis than the latter.

## Conclusion

*By the help of an image  
I call to my own opposite, summon all  
That I have handled least, least looked upon.*

*And I would find myself and not an image.*

- W. B. Yeats (1919), excerpt, "Ego Dominus Tuus"

The personal accounts of eight middle school boys and the engagement of their musical identities within the general music classroom supply the foundation upon which my study was built. The boys revealed themselves to be enterprising in the engagement and development of their musical identities when freedom, belonging, distinction, and exposure to the other were factors through which their musical identities were engaged in the classroom environment.

The curiosities that arose from my role as a teacher in the middle school general music classroom spurred questions. These questions became the basis of my research. That research unearthed varied intricacies at play in the dynamic relationship between adolescent boys' musical identities and the general music classroom.

But to a researcher-practitioner such as myself, theory is only as good as the praxis it begets. My research findings have greatly impacted my practice as a classroom teacher in the months since the study's conclusion. I have been more mindful in the provisions I make for autonomous experiences in the classroom, enlisting student support in determining the balance between structure and freedom in a given activity. I began the school year by facilitating a shared

experience with each of my classes—one that required collaborative effort and aided in establishing a group identity. I have become increasingly aware of the interplay between objectivity and subjectivity at work in both my students and in me, remaining mindful of the importance of what is prescribed within the curriculum and what I might allow to emerge organically within the classroom environment. I have embraced the tensions that have arisen between tradition and change, using them as vantage points for questioning my own positions, privileges, and assumptions.

I am grateful to the boys who participated in the study for serving as my teachers this past year. They have brought a new mindfulness to my practices as a researcher and as a music educator.

## EPILOGUE

In the final chapter, I mention that my research findings have impacted my practice as a classroom teacher in the months since the study's conclusion. As I read through this final draft of the document post-defense, I am struck by how loudly this rings true as we now enter the final weeks of the school year, between when I wrote those words and the present moment. I would like to speak more explicitly about what I have seen unfold in my own classroom.

First, I mentioned that I began the school year by facilitating a shared experience that required collaborative effort and aided in establishing a group identity. To cite a specific example, my sixth graders began the year with an activity adapted from Higgins and Campbell's (2010) book titled *Free to Be Musical: Group Improvisation in Music*. Each boy was tasked with composing a short musical line, only a few seconds long, that he felt reflected him in some way. Each boy performed his for the class, his classmates discussed what they felt the musical line said about him, and the composer had the chance to weigh in with what he had attempted to convey about himself.

During the next meeting of the class, the sixth graders were randomly assigned to three pods of students, and they had to find a way to incorporate the musical line of each boy within the pod into one larger musical work about one minute in length. After each pod performed their resulting musical work for the other pods, the three pods were tasked with combining their three respective pieces into one during a third class period. The only guideline was that the piece could not

be in “A B C” form—they had to find a way for their respective pieces to coexist in harmony (pun intended), which required careful manipulation of certain musical elements.

Post-performance, we discussed the various permutations each boy’s original musical line endured as it was incorporated first into a small-group work and then into a large-group work. What changed? What remained intact? What do you think this says about what it’s like to be part of a team? What do you think this says about what it will be like to be a member of this class this year? The ensuing discussion was not just a reflection on the composition activity, but rather aided in the establishment of the class’s group identity.

The boys latched onto and reiterated certain phrases during the group discussion, one of them being “we’re all on the same team.” I’ve heard this phrase uttered a few times throughout the school year, whether a student is attempting to mediate a disagreement between two other group members, or whether I find myself saying it when assuring a boy he can come in for extra help from me if he needs it. In short, beginning the year with collaborative creation established a strong sense of belonging within the classroom community among the students; as indicated within the study data, this provides a platform on which adolescent boys’ identities might be better engaged within that context.

I would like to share one more example of how the study has impacted my teaching practices and my classroom environment in the past year. Among the implications of the study was the importance of autonomy within the classroom

environment to allow for freedom in decision-making, connections to informal contexts, and to allow students to highlight areas of distinction among peers. My sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes are currently immersed in a project called “pursuing your musical curiosities.” The students have been tasked with exploring anything under the umbrella of music about which they are curious or passionate (e.g., how hip hop artists are discovered), an area in which they would like to see growth (e.g., learn how to play the drum set), etc., and to use the available class periods to engage in an independent study of their chosen topic. Some of the boys have elected to explore, in greater depth, a topic previously touched on in class. Gary, for example, found our program music unit fascinating, and he is currently writing his own piece of program music. His objective is to see if he can manipulate the musical elements in such a way that his classmates can figure out what is taking place in his story, given that there are no lyrics, only a vague title.

What I would like to highlight, however, is how this project has allowed for connections between boys’ formal and informal musical spheres. To do so, I’d like to tell you about Chad. Chad really wants to see *Straight Outta Compton* (Gray, 2015), a biopic that documents rap group N.W.A.’s rise to fame and struggles along the way. His parents won’t allow him to see the film due to its “R” rating. Chad asked me if he could design his project to be an exploration of N.W.A.’s message and influence. When I asked him to tell me what he knows so far about N.W.A., the discussion quickly turned personal. Chad told me about how “the man” tried to silence and censor N.W.A. after they released a song that addressed racism among police



officers; Chad feels his parents are trying to censor what he sees and hears, just as the industry tried to censor what rap audiences heard, and he feels that this is not a just practice. He even tied his argument into the “music as a social force” unit we undertook earlier in the year, citing that it’s important for everyone to watch this film and to hear N.W.A.’s message, given today’s hot-button issues of police brutality and racial profiling.

I asked Chad what he hoped to accomplish with this project. It turns out his aims are twofold: First, he wants to use his project presentation as a platform to highlight the concern he holds regarding issues of racism and abuse of power. Second, he wants to be able to watch *Straight Outta Compton* (Gray, 2015). He eventually admitted that he was hoping I could give him permission to watch it if it was his project topic, to which I responded that this was not my call to make. We agreed, however, that after he constructs his presentation and addresses the connection between art and society—and between N.W.A.’s music and modern day social issues more specifically—perhaps he could give his presentation for his parents in an effort to help them see the motivations behind his desire to see this film.

I should also mention that Chad is one of few African American students in the relatively homogenous (mostly Caucasian) school. It will be interesting to see how exposing his classmates to the other by highlighting certain racial prejudices they have not likely endured themselves will be received. The project itself is compulsory, yet the content therein was decided autonomously. The presentation

will be delivered by Chad, a peer within the class, yet its content will echo that which was delivered by me, the teacher, during the “music as a social force” unit. How will the boys receive this particular means of exposure to the other? Will they make negative judgments about Chad’s interests and convictions as the study participants sometimes did when “other” served as a self-concept a peer wore as a “badge of identity?” Or will the boys consider the other not as an extension of Chad but as a possibility available to the self, as they sometimes did when “other” was a component of the curriculum and was delivered by the teacher? I’m curious to see how this one will play out.

I decided to conduct research among adolescent males for a very simple reason: I teach adolescent males, and I want to do a better job of it. The things I have learned about adolescent males’ engagement of their musical identities in the general music classroom have had a marked impact on the decisions I make within my own classroom. I look forward to seeing what I can learn from Chad’s upcoming presentation and his classmates’ response to it, as the boys thus far have been (and surely will continue to be) some of my most influential teachers.

Appendix A:

Informed Consent Form for Parents/Guardians: Pilot Study

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM for PARENTS/GUARDIANS

**Title of Project:** *Identity Development Among a Group of Adolescent Males Enrolled in a Middle School General Music Program: A Pilot Study*

**Principal Investigator:** Katherine Willow-Peterson  
[kwillowpeterson@us.edu](mailto:kwillowpeterson@us.edu)  
216-321-8260 x8303

**Supervisor:** Dr. Patrick Freer  
[pfreer@gsu.edu](mailto:pfreer@gsu.edu)  
404-413-5949

- 1. Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the research is to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class and the impact it may have on the development of their musical identities.
- 2. Procedures to be followed:** The researcher will create a short survey consisting of three open-ended questions. Your child will be asked to complete this survey.
- 3. Duration:** It is estimated that the survey will take five to ten minutes to complete. Upon completion of the survey, your child will have completed their participation in this pilot study.
- 4. Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks to your child related to participating in this research.
- 5. Benefits:** Your child may learn more about himself through the opportunity for guided reflection afforded by the survey questions. Potential benefits to the field of music education include an increased awareness of how educators might construct classroom contexts in which impactful engagement and development of musical identity might be facilitated.
- 6. Statement of Confidentiality:** Your child's participation in this research will remain confidential. Only the principal investigator and dissertation supervisor noted above will have access to the survey results. All identifiable

information will be removed from the data, and data will be stored in a password protected file on a password protected computer.

7. **Right to Inquire:** You can ask questions about this research at any time, before and/or after granting consent to participate in the research. You may call either the principal investigator or the dissertation supervisor (contact information listed above). If you have any concerns about the research practices, you may contact Boston University's Institutional Review Board at 617-358-6115.
8. **Compensation:** There is no compensation available to you or your child for his participation in the research.
9. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to permit your child to participate in this research is voluntary. Your child does not have to answer any questions he does not want to answer and can stop at any time. There is no penalty for refusing to take part in or withdrawing from this study.

If you understand the information described above and will allow your child to participate in this research, please fill out the information below. You may email the form to Katherine Willow-Peterson at [kwillowpeterson@us.edu](mailto:kwillowpeterson@us.edu), or you may give it to your child to return as a hard copy. If a hard copy is turned in, Katherine will make a copy of the form and return it to you. Please return by February 28, 2014.

First and last name of child \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Person obtaining consent – Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B:  
Assent Form for Students: Pilot Study

## ASSENT FORM for STUDENTS

**Title of Project:** *Identity Development Among a Group of Adolescent Males Enrolled in a Middle School General Music Program: A Pilot Study*

**Principal Investigator:** Katherine Willow-Peterson  
[kwillowpeterson@us.edu](mailto:kwillowpeterson@us.edu)  
216-321-8260 x8303

**Supervisor:** Dr. Patrick Freer  
[pfreer@gsu.edu](mailto:pfreer@gsu.edu)  
404-413-5949

- 1. What is a research study?** Research studies help us to learn new things and test new ideas. People who work on research studies are called researchers. During research studies, the researchers collect a lot of information so that they can learn more about something. I am doing this study because I would like to learn more about the role that school music plays in the lives of middle school boys. I am asking you to join study because you are a middle school boy enrolled in Soundscape class.

There are a few things you should know about this study:

- You get to decide if you want to be in the study
  - You can say “no” or “yes”
  - Whatever you decide is okay
  - If you say “yes” now, you can change your mind and say “no” later
  - No one will be upset if you say “no”
  - You can ask me questions at any time
  - I will also get permission from your parent/guardian for you to take part in this study
- 2. What will I do if I am in this research study?** If you decide to be in this study, I will ask you to answer 3 questions on Schoology. It will take you about 5 to 10 minutes.
  - 3. If I join this study, will it help me?** This study may help music teachers create better lessons for their students.

4. **If I don't join this study, will it hurt me?** There is no penalty if you decide not to participate in the study.
5. **Will I be paid to do this study?** No, there is no compensation for participating in this study.
6. **What will happen to my information in this study?** Your name and any other information about you will not be shared if you join this study. Your answers to the survey questions will be kept private. The only reason I would need to share your information is if I found out you or someone else was in serious danger.
7. **Questions:** If you have any questions about this study, you can talk with me at any time. My contact information is listed on the first page.

If you are interested in being part of this research study, please sign your name below. I can make you a copy of this paper if you want.

Your name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: Katherine Willow-Peterson \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



Appendix C:  
Site Permission for Human Subjects Research: Pilot Study

**SITE PERMISSION for PILOT STUDY:  
UNIVERSITY SCHOOL, SHAKER CAMPUS**

**Title of Project:** *Identity Development Among a Group of Adolescent Males Enrolled in a Middle School General Music Program: A Pilot Study*

**Principal Investigator:** Katherine Willow-Peterson  
[kwillowpeterson@us.edu](mailto:kwillowpeterson@us.edu)  
216-321-8260 x8303

**Supervisor:** Dr. Patrick Freer  
[pfreer@gsu.edu](mailto:pfreer@gsu.edu)  
404-413-5949

- 1. Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the research is to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class and the impact it may have on the development of their musical identities. The pilot study, in particular, will be used to test and refine a survey instrument to be used later in the full-scale dissertation study.
- 2. Procedures to be followed:** The researcher will create a short survey consisting of three open-ended questions. Eighth grade Soundscape students for whom parental consent and student assent have been obtained will be asked to complete this survey.
- 3. Duration:** It is estimated that the survey will take five to ten minutes to complete. Upon completion of the survey, students will have completed their participation in this pilot study.
- 4. Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks to students related to participating in this research.
- 5. Benefits:** Students may learn more about themselves through the opportunity for guided reflection afforded by the survey questions. Potential benefits to the field of music education include an increased awareness of how educators might construct classroom contexts in which impactful engagement and development of musical identity might be facilitated.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Student participation in this research will remain confidential. Only the principal investigator and dissertation supervisor noted above will have access to the survey results. All identifiable information will be removed from the data, and data will be stored in a password protected file on a password protected computer.
7. **Right to Inquire:** You can ask questions about this research at any time, before and/or after granting permission for the pilot study to be conducted at the school. You may call either the principal investigator or the dissertation supervisor (contact information listed above). If you have any concerns about the research practices, you may contact Boston University's Institutional Review Board at 617-358-6115.
8. **Compensation:** There is no compensation available to students, parents, or the school for participation in the research.
9. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to allow the above-mentioned pilot study to take place on University School's Shaker Campus is voluntary. Students and parents have also been told that their participation is voluntary; students do not have to answer any questions they do not want to answer. Students and/or parents may retract permission to participate at any time. There is no penalty for refusing to take part in or withdrawing from this study.

If you understand the information described above and will allow the pilot study to be conducted on University School's Shaker Campus, please fill out the information below and return to Katherine Willow-Peterson

Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Name (signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Person obtaining consent – Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix D:  
Recruitment Script for Students: Pilot Study

(Script delivered during last 15 minutes of an 8<sup>th</sup> grade general music class)

I'd like to take some time to talk to you about something I'm doing that you might be interested in being part of. Just like you, I'm going to school right now. I'm working on a degree called "Doctor of Musical Arts in Music Education," which means that I'm studying how people teach music and learn about music.

Right now, I'm trying to learn more about the role that music plays in the lives of middle school boys. To help me learn about this topic, I'm conducting some research, and I'd like to offer you the chance to be part of this research. I'm looking for some 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys that would be willing to answer three questions on Schoology about three. Your information would be kept confidential, which means no one would see your name or your answers. It will probably take about 5 or 10 minutes for you to do.

I'm going to hand out a paper that talks a little bit more about the study. If you're interested, read through this when you have some free time, and think about if you'd like to be part of this. If you decide you would like to participate, sign the bottom and give it back to me. If you decide not to participate, that's totally fine; there's no penalty for not participating. Your parents will also receive some information about the study and will need to sign a form if they're willing to let you be part of it.

You can see me at any time with questions you have. Does anyone have questions for me now?

Appendix E:  
Recruitment Email for Parents/Guardians: Pilot Study

Dear parents of eighth graders,

My name is Katherine Willow-Peterson, and I am studying music education at Boston University. I am currently designing my dissertation study, which focuses on the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class and the impact it may have on the development of their musical identities. University School is the site of my research. The desired outcome of this research is to postulate ways in which educators might construct classroom contexts in which impactful engagement and development of musical identity might be facilitated.

This spring, I will be conducting a pilot study that will aid me in refining one of my data collection instruments, a short survey. I am writing to request permission to administer this survey to your son, who is enrolled in the third trimester Soundscape class. His answers will remain completely confidential, and they will not be used in the large-scale study. They will, however, help me to be sure I'm asking the right kinds of questions in order to yield rich data.

The details of the pilot study are found in the accompanying form. Please read over it and, if applicable, sign and return it so that your son can participate. You may also respond to this email with your electronic signature and confirmation of consent. Your son has been given a different form that explains the study in simpler language and asks if he is interested in participating.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,  
Katherine Willow-Peterson

Appendix F:  
Survey Questions: Pilot Study

1. What are your musical goals? What do you think you need to learn or experience to reach these goals?
2. How do you think the things you do/learn in the music classroom transfer to your everyday life outside of school?
3. How do you think the things you do in your everyday life transfer to your experiences in the music classroom?

Appendix G:  
Informed Consent Form for Parents/Guardians



## INFORMED CONSENT FORM for PARENTS/GUARDIANS

**Title of Project:** *Identity Development Among a Group of Adolescent Males Enrolled in a Middle School General Music Program: A Dissertation Study*

**Principal Investigator:** Katherine Willow-Peterson  
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216-321-8260 x8303

**Supervisor:** Dr. Patrick Freer  
[pfreer@gsu.edu](mailto:pfreer@gsu.edu)  
404-413-5949

- 1. Introduction:** Please read this form carefully. The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about your son taking part in a research study. If any of the statements or words in this form are unclear, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any questions.

If you have any questions about the research or any portion of this form, please ask us. Allowing your son to take part in this research study is up to you. If you decide to allow your son to take part in this research study, no action is required. If you do not allow your son to take part in this research study, please call or email Katherine Willow-Peterson via the contact information listed above in order to express that you do not grant permission for your son to participate.

The person in charge of this study is Katherine Willow-Peterson (referred to henceforth as the “principal investigator”), as supervised by Dr. Patrick Freer (referred to henceforth as the “dissertation supervisor.”) The contact information for both is listed at the top of this form.

- 2. Why is this study being done?** The purpose of the research is to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class and the impact it may have on the development of their musical identities.

We are asking your son to take part in this study because they are enrolled in a middle school general music class. 25 to 75 University School students will take part in this Boston University research study.

**3. How long will my child take part in this research study?** The study will take place August 2014 through March 2015.

**4. What will participation in this study entail?**

- Sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade Soundscape students will be asked to complete a short survey (three questions) regarding their musical goals and musical experiences within and outside of school. The survey will be administered via an online platform, will be administered during students' regular Soundscape class, and will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
- Of the students who took the survey, three to five from each grade level will participate in a 25-minute focus group interview regarding their experiences in music classes. For example, students will be asked in what ways they feel they can express themselves as musicians in Soundscape class, in what ways they can express themselves as individuals in class, and in what ways they feel the class setting might hinder them from being able to do so. Students will be chosen for focus group participation based on the openness and reflectiveness of their answers to the survey questions. The focus group interview will take place in the middle school conference room during an extension block. Students participating in the focus group interview but in no subsequent study activities will conduct member checks of the transcribed focus group interview in the week following the interview; they will read over the transcriptions of their interviews in order to acknowledge that their words and/or actions have been accurately transcribed. Member checks will also occur in the middle school conference room during an extension block and will take 15 minutes to complete.
- Of the students who participated in the focus group, two to three from each grade level will participate in a series of five- to ten-minute interviews. These students will be chosen based on the openness and reflectiveness of their contributions in the focus group interview, as well as the number of contributions made during the course of the interview. There will be as few as six or as many as eight individual interviews over the two-trimester time span. These interviews will take place in the student conference room during the mid-morning break, mid-afternoon break, and/or extension block. During the individual interviews, students will be asked to reflect on and comment on their experiences in class. Sample questions include: "When you were working on (name of project or activity), did you find yourself drawing from your experiences outside of school to help you with it?" and "What do you think others most valued about you in this class?" These students will also be asked, at times, to use flip cameras to record project work or respond to a given prompt. The principal investigator will give students blank (no stored footage)

cameras just prior to their music class, will give them the prompt at that time, and will address any questions students have regarding the prompt at that time. The prompts given will be based on previously collected data and may vary from student to student. For example, if a student mentions in an interview that they feel proud of a piece of music they wrote, the prompt may ask them to film themselves practicing the piece during the class practice time given and to comment on what they like most about it. This will occur a minimum of three and maximum of four times over the two-trimester time span. At the end of the class period during which the camera was given, the principal investigator will collect the cameras, transcribe the data into written format (removing identifiable information), and will erase the video footage. At the end of the study, this same group of students will be asked to compile a portfolio of artifacts from within and/or outside of class that they feel address the question: "Who am I as a musician?" At each point of data collection, students will be reminded that they can choose not to answer any interview questions, record any video reflections, and/or compile any artifacts.

- During the week following the final interview, students participating in individual interviews and video reflections will be asked to conduct member checks of the data; they will read over the transcriptions of their interviews and video footage in order to acknowledge that their words and/or actions have been accurately transcribed. These member checks will take place in the student conference room during an extension block and will take 15 to 45 minutes to complete.

**5. Expected Duration:**

- For some students (those who only take the survey), participation will entail no more than one contact and 15 minutes of time.
- For some students (those who participate in only the survey and the focus group), participation will entail a total of three contacts, including the member check. The time commitment for this group will be between 45 and 60 minutes in total.
- For the students who participate in all study activities listed in item 4, participation will entail a minimum of 12 and maximum of 15 contacts, including the member checks and video reflections. The time commitment for this group will be between 85 and 165 minutes in total.

- 6. How will you keep the study records confidential?** Your son's participation in this research will remain confidential. Only the principal investigator and dissertation supervisor noted above will have access to the survey results, focus group and individual interviews, portfolios, and transcriptions of video recordings. Flip cameras will be stored in the locked drawer of a filing cabinet in

a locked office, and all data will be erased from cameras after the footage is transcribed (put in written—not video—format). All identifiable information will be removed from the written data. Data will be stored in a password protected file on a password protected computer.

All study information will be labeled with pseudonyms instead of real names. The key that connects participant names to pseudonyms will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected computer to which only the principal investigator has access. This information will not be shared with the University School community; no one beyond the principal investigator will know which study information is yours.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:

- The principal investigator and dissertation supervisor
- The Institutional Review Board at Boston University. The Institutional Review Board is a group of people who review human research studies for safety and protection of people who take part in the studies.
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research

The results of this research study may be published or used for teaching. We will not put identifiable information on data that are used for these purposes.

- 7. Study participation and early withdrawal:** Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to allow your son permission to take part in the study, or you may withdraw your son at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty. If you decide to withdraw your son from this study, the information that he has already provided will be kept confidential.

Also, the researcher may take your son out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:

- The researcher thinks it is in his best interest
- He can't attend the interviews
- Other administrative reasons

- 8. Discomforts and Risks:** The researcher will ask focus group participants not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person said in the group. However, the researcher cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the discussion private. During the individual interviews, participants may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions, or they may be uncomfortable with some of the questions. Participants do not have to answer any questions they do not want to, and they may take a break or stop the interview at any time. Students may feel uncomfortable responding to the video

prompts given or may find use of the camera too distracting during class time; as with the interviews, students do not have to take any video footage or respond to any prompts if they do not wish to do so.

- 9. Benefits:** Your son may learn more about himself through the opportunity for guided reflection afforded by the survey questions. Potential benefits to the field of music education include an increased awareness of how educators might construct classroom contexts in which impactful engagement and development of musical identity might be facilitated.
- 10. Will I or my son get paid for taking part in this research study?** We will not pay you or your son for taking part in this study.
- 11. What will it cost me to take part in this research study?** There are no costs to you for taking part in this research study.
- 12. What alternatives are available?** You may choose not to allow your son to take part in this research study.
- 13. If I have any questions or concerns about this research study, who can I talk to?** You can ask questions about this research at any time, before and/or after granting consent to participate in the research. You may call either the principal investigator or the dissertation supervisor. The contact information for both are listed at the top of this form.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University IRB directly at 617-358-6115.

- 14. Voluntary participation:** Your decision to permit your son to participate in this research is voluntary. Your son does not have to answer any questions he does not want to answer. You and/or your son may retract permission to participate at any time. There is no penalty for refusing to take part in or withdrawing from this study.
- 15. Statement of Consent:** I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study.

Appendix H:  
Assent Form for Students

## ASSENT FORM for STUDENTS

**Title of Project:** *Identity Development Among a Group of Adolescent Males Enrolled in a Middle School General Music Program: A Dissertation Study*

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- 1. What is a research study?** Research studies help us to learn new things and test new ideas. People who work on research studies are called researchers. During research studies, the researchers collect a lot of information so that they can learn more about something. I am doing this study because I would like to learn more about the role that school music plays in the lives of middle school boys. I am asking you to join this study because you are a middle school boy enrolled in Soundscape class.

There are a few things you should know about this study:

- You get to decide if you want to be in the study
- You can say “no” or “yes”
- Whatever you decide is okay
- If you say “yes” now, you can change your mind and say “no” later
- No one will be upset if you say “no”
- You can ask me questions at any time
- I will also get permission from your parent/guardian for you to take part in this study

- 2. What will I do if I am in this research study?**
  - If you decide to be in this study, I will ask you to answer 3 questions on Schoology regarding your musical goals and musical experiences within and outside of school. This will take place during your regular Soundscape class and will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. You can skip any questions you are not comfortable answering.

- 3 to 5 students from each grade level will be asked to participate in a 25-minute focus group interview regarding your experiences in music classes. For example, you will be asked in what ways you feel you can express yourself as a musician in Soundscape class, in what ways you can express yourself as an individual in class, and in what ways you feel the class setting might make it hard for you to do so. The focus group interview will take place in the middle school conference room during an extension block. If you participate in the focus group interview but in no study activities after that, you will conduct a member check of the transcribed focus group interview in the week following the interview; during a member check, you will read over the transcription of your interview and in order to acknowledge that their words and/or actions have been accurately transcribed. This will also take place in the middle school conference room during an extension block and will take 15 minutes to complete.
- Of the students who participated in the focus group, 2 to 3 from each grade level will be asked to participate in a series of 5- to 10-minute interviews. There will be 6 to 8 individual interviews over the 2-trimester time span. These interviews will take place in the student conference room during the mid-morning break, mid-afternoon break, and/or extension block. During the individual interviews, you will be asked to reflect on and comment on your experiences in class. For example, I might ask you: "When you were working on (name of project or activity), did you find yourself drawing from your experiences outside of school to help you with it?" I might also ask you a question like: "What do you think others most valued about you in this class?" You will also be asked, at times, to use flip cameras to record project work or respond to a given prompt. I will give you blank (no stored footage) cameras just before your music class, will give you the prompt at that time, and will answer any questions you have about the prompt at that time. The prompts given will vary from person to person and will be based on things you talked about in your interviews. For example, if you mention in an interview that you feel proud of a piece of music you wrote, I may ask you to film yourself practicing the piece during the class practice time given and to comment on what you like most about it. This will occur 3 to 4 times over the 2-trimester time span. At the end of the class period during which the camera was given, I will collect the camera, transcribe the data into written format (removing your name and any other identifiable information), and will erase the video footage. At the end of the study, I will ask you to compile a portfolio of artifacts from within and/or outside of class that you feel addresses the question: "Who am I as a musician?" At all times and in all study activities, I will remind you that you can



choose not to answer any interview questions, record any video reflections, and/or compile any artifacts if you do not want to do so.

- During the week following the final interview, if you participated in individual interviews and video reflections, you will be asked to conduct a member checks of the data; this means that you will read over the transcriptions of your interviews and video footage in order to acknowledge that your words and/or actions have been accurately transcribed. These member checks will take place in the student conference room during an extension block and will take 15 to 45 minutes to complete.

**3. Expected Duration:**

- For some students (those who only take the survey), participation will entail no more than one contact and 15 minutes of time.
- For some students (those who participate in only the survey and the focus group), participation will entail a total of three contacts, including the member check. The time commitment for this group will be between 45 and 60 minutes in total.
- For the students who participate in all study activities listed in item 2, participation will entail a minimum of 12 and maximum of 15 contacts, including the member checks and video reflections. The time commitment for this group will be between 85 and 165 minutes in total.

- 4. If I join this study, will it help me?** Though there are no immediate benefits to you, this study may help music teachers create better lessons for their students in the future.
- 5. If I don't join this study, will it hurt me?** There is no penalty if you decide not to participate in the study.
- 6. Will I be paid to do this study?** No, there is no compensation for participating in this study.
- 7. What will happen to my information in this study?** Your name and any other information about you will not be shared if you join this study. Everything will be kept confidential, including your answers to survey and interview questions. Your video footage will be transcribed (turned into a written description), and your name will be removed from that, too.
- 8. Data Sharing:** At the conclusion of the study, I will share with others at the school what I have learned from the study in a broad sense. For example, I may share a principle I learned from the study and how teachers can use that

principle to write better lesson plans. However, none of your individual information will be shared with anyone at the school.

- 9. Risks/Discomforts:** I will ask those participating in the focus group interview not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person said in the group. However, I cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the discussion private. During the individual interviews, you may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions, or you may be uncomfortable with some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, and you may take a break or stop the interview at any time. You may feel uncomfortable responding to the video prompts given or may find use of the camera too distracting during class time; as with the interviews, you do not have to take any video footage or respond to any prompts if you do not wish to do so
- 10. Questions:** If you have any questions about this study, you can talk with me or with Dr. Freer at any time. Our contact information is listed at the top of the first page.
- 11. Conclusion/Taking part in this research study:** You do not have to take part in this research study. You can say “yes” or “no.” You can say “yes” now and change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us you want to stop. No one will be mad if you don’t want to take part in the study or if you change your mind about taking part in the study. Your parent or guardian can also decide to have you stop taking part in this study—that is okay, too.

If you are interested in being part of this research study, please sign your name below. I can make you a copy of this paper if you want.

Your name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: Katherine Willow-Peterson \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix I:  
Site Permission for Human Subjects Research

**SITE PERMISSION for DISSERTATION STUDY:  
UNIVERSITY SCHOOL, SHAKER CAMPUS**

**Title of Project:** *Identity Development Among a Group of Adolescent Males Enrolled in a Middle School General Music Program (Dissertation Study)*

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- 1. Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the research is to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class and the impact it may have on the development of their musical identities.
- 2. Procedures to be followed:**
  - Sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade Soundscape students for whom parental consent and student assent have been obtained will be asked to complete a short survey (three questions) regarding their musical goals and musical experiences within and outside of school.
  - Of the students who took the survey, three to five from each grade level will participate in a 25-minute focus group interview regarding their experiences in music classes.
  - Of the students who participated in the focus group, two to three from each grade level will participate in a series of five- to ten-minute interviews. These students will also be asked, at times, to use flip cameras to record project work or respond to a given prompt. At the end of the study, these students will be asked to compile a portfolio of artifacts from within and/or outside of class that they feel address the question: "Who am I as a musician?"
- 3. Duration:** August 2014 through March 2015
- 4. Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks to students related to participating in this research.

5. **Benefits:** Students may learn more about themselves through the opportunity for guided reflection. Potential benefits to the field of music education include an increased awareness of how educators might construct classroom contexts in which impactful engagement and development of musical identity might be facilitated.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Student participation in this research will remain confidential. Only the principal investigator and dissertation supervisor noted above will have access to the survey results, focus group and individual interviews, portfolios, and video footage. Flip cameras will be stored in the locked drawer of a filing cabinet in a locked office, and all data will be erased from cameras after transfer to computer. All identifiable information will be removed from the written data. Data will be stored in a password protected file on a password protected computer.
7. **Right to Inquire:** You can ask questions about this research at any time, before and/or after granting permission for the study to be conducted at the school. You may call either the principal investigator or the dissertation supervisor (contact information listed above). If you have any concerns about the research practices, you may contact Boston University's Institutional Review Board at 617-358-6115.
8. **Compensation:** There is no compensation available to students, parents, or the school for participation in the research.
9. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to allow the above-mentioned study to take place on University School's Shaker Campus is voluntary. Students and parents will also be told that their participation is voluntary; students do not have to answer any questions they do not want to answer. Students and/or parents may retract permission to participate at any time. There is no penalty for refusing to take part in or withdrawing from this study.

If you understand the information described above and will allow the study to be conducted on University School's Shaker Campus, please fill out the information below and return to Katherine Willow-Peterson

Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Name (signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Person obtaining consent – Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix J:  
Recruitment Script for Students

(Script to be delivered during last 10 minutes of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade general music classes)

I'd like to take some time to talk to you about something I'm doing that you might be interested in being part of. Just like you, I'm going to school right now. I'm working on a degree called "Doctor of Musical Arts in Music Education," which means that I'm studying how people teach music and learn about music.

Right now, I'm trying to learn more about the role that music plays in the lives of middle school boys. To help me learn about this topic, I'm conducting some research, and I'd like to offer you the chance to be part of this research. I'm looking for some 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys that would be willing to answer three questions on Schoology about music in their life. Your information would be kept confidential, which means no one would see your name or your answers. This will only take about 10 minutes to do. For some of you, that will be it. For others, I may ask you to take it a step further to participate in a group interview with other boys during one extension block. Of those boys, I will ask an even smaller group—2 or 3 from each grade level—to take part in some individual interviews, to video record some things in music class, and to make a portfolio of some of their class work.

I'm going to hand out a paper that talks a little bit more about the study. If you're interested, read through this when you have some free time, and think about whether you'd like to be part of this. If you decide you would like to participate, sign the bottom and give it back to me. If you decide not to participate, that's totally fine; there's no penalty for not participating. Your parents will also receive some information about the study and will need to sign a form if they're willing to let you be part of it.

You can see me at any time with questions you have. Does anyone have questions for me now?

Appendix K:  
Recruitment Email for Parents/Guardians

Dear parents of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders,

My name is Katherine Willow-Peterson, and in addition to teaching music at University School, I am a doctoral student in music education at Boston University. I am currently conducting my dissertation study, which focuses on the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class and the impact it may have on the development of their musical identities. University School is the site of my research. Through what I learn from this research, I hope to provide music educators with information they can use to write meaningful lesson plans and enhance the overall experience for their students.

This fall and winter, I will be collecting the data for the study. I am writing to request permission to include your son in the data collection, which will occur in Soundscape class. This will include answering a short survey and may include engaging in an interview. Additionally, students may be asked to participate in a focus group interview in which they will be asked about their experiences in music class. Some students will also be asked to compile samples of classwork into a portfolio and to reflect on classwork through video responses. All data collection will take place during the regular school day; no before- or after-school commitment is needed. Individual and focus group interviews will occur during the breaks built into the school day, specifically the mid-morning break, the after-lunch break, and the extension block. Pseudonyms will be used in place of students' real names in all stages of data transcription and coding.

The details of the study are found in the accompanying form. If you do not wish your son to participate in this study, please notify me via email ([kwillowpeterson@us.edu](mailto:kwillowpeterson@us.edu)) or telephone (216-321-8260 x8303). If you consent to participation, no action is required on your part. Your son has been given a different form that explains the study in simpler language and asks if he is interested in participating. I will only include your son in the study if both you and he agree to it.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,  
Katherine Willow-Peterson



Appendix L:  
Survey Questions

1. What are your musical goals? These goals can be in regard to a future career, or they could be non-career goals. What do you think you need to learn or experience to reach these goals? Why?
2. How do you think the things you do/learn in the music classes you've experienced in school transfer to life outside of school?
3. How do you think the things you do in everyday life transfer to your experiences in the music classroom? (For example, you like to sing in class because your friends tell you have a good voice, you are afraid to try improvising in class because you don't like doing unfamiliar things, or you prefer written work instead of performance-based activities because you know you're a good writer.)

Appendix M:  
Focus Group Interview Script and Questions

“Hi, my name is Katherine, and I’m going to be moderating this group interview today. First, I’d like to thank you for agreeing to be a part of this. This interview will be used to gather information that will help music teachers understand boys your age and their experiences with music. You were selected because you are thoughtful and articulate about your experiences.

My role as moderator is to guide the discussion. I’m going to ask the group some questions. There are no right or wrong answers, only different points of view. Please speak one at a time. You can talk as little or as much about a topic as you want. Feel free to talk to one another about the topics raised or even to ask each other questions if you feel compelled to do so.

You probably noticed the (computer/microphone/etc) sitting in the middle. We are tape recording because we don’t want to miss any of your comments; when we type up the results of this interview, everything will be completely confidential, and we won’t use your real names. You will have the opportunity to read your comments and make corrections in case we’ve misrepresented what you meant to say in any way.

Before we begin, do you have any questions for me about this group interview?

Let’s begin...”

1. To start, could you each tell me a little bit about yourself and your musical background?
2. In what ways do you feel you are able to express yourself *as a musician* in the music classroom?
3. In what ways do you feel you are able to express yourself *as an individual* (this can be non-musical) in the music classroom?
4. In what ways do you feel the music classroom makes it hard for you to express yourself, either as a musician or as an individual?

(Probes that can be used include, but are not limited to: “Could you explain that further?” “Could you give me an example?”)

“This concludes our time together. Thank you so much for being part of this experience.”

Appendix N:  
Initial Interview Script and Questions

Hi! I'm going to ask you some questions about yourself and about music. It will probably take about ten minutes. You can talk as much or as little as you want. You can stop the interview at any time. Your answers will be kept confidential, which means that no one besides me will know how you answered these questions, and I won't use your real name.

Do you understand that you can choose not to answer a question if you don't want to?

Do you understand that you can stop the interview at any time if you don't wish to continue?

Alright, let's begin...

1. Tell me about the various ways that music is part of your life.  
(If needed... When do you make music? Listen to music? Learn about music?)
2. If you were asked to write a dictionary definition for the word "musician," what would you write?
3. Tell me about who you are in your music class.
4. Are you a musician? In this class? Outside of this class?  
(Why/Why not?)
5. Are you a good musician? In this class? Outside of this class?  
(Why/Why not?)
6. Who has had a positive influence on your musical development? Who has had a negative influence on your musical development?
7. What sort of things do you think have helped shape you into the kind of musician you are? (Or "non-musician," depending on how they answered previous questions)
8. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about yourself, music, or music class?

Thank you so much for helping me with this project today. In a couple days, you will have the opportunity to read your comments and make corrections in case I've misrepresented what you meant to say in any way. This concludes our time together. I hope you have a great rest of your day!

Appendix O:  
Interim Interviews Script and Questions

Hi! I'm going to ask you some questions about yourself and about music. It will probably take about ten minutes. You can talk as much or as little as you want. You can stop the interview at any time. Your answers will be kept confidential, which means that no one besides me will know how you answered these questions, and I won't use your real name.

Some of the questions you hear will be similar to the ones you heard last time; it's okay to answer the same, and it's okay to answer differently.

Do you understand that you can choose not to answer a question if you don't want to?

Do you understand that you can stop the interview at any time if you don't wish to continue?

Alright, let's begin...

1. Could you tell me about your thoughts and feelings while you worked on (activity x)?
2. When doing (activity x), were you being musical?  
(If no, why not? What would have helped you be more musical?)  
(If yes, tell me about the ways in which you were musical.)
3. When you were working on (activity x), did you find yourself drawing from your experiences outside of school to help you with it?
4. Do you think you will end up using what you've learned from completing (activity x) in some other area of your life? What is it?
5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about yourself, music, or music class?

Thank you so much for helping me with this project today. In a couple days, you will have the opportunity to read your comments and make corrections in case I've misrepresented what you meant to say in any way. This concludes our time together. I hope you have a great rest of your day!

Appendix P:  
Final Interview Script and Questions

Hi! I'm going to ask you some questions about yourself and about music. It will probably take about ten minutes. You can talk as much or as little as you want. You can stop the interview at any time. Your answers will be kept confidential, which means that no one besides me will know how you answered these questions, and I won't use your real name.

Some of the questions you hear will be similar to the ones you heard last time; it's okay to answer the same, and it's okay to answer differently.

Do you understand that you can choose not to answer a question if you don't want to?

Do you understand that you can stop the interview at any time if you don't wish to continue?

Alright, let's begin...

1. Tell me about the various ways that music is part of your life.  
(If needed... When do you make music? Listen to music? Learn about music?)
2. If you were asked to write a dictionary definition for the word "musician," what would you write?
3. What do you think others most valued you for in this class?  
What did you most value about yourself in this class?
4. Are you a musician? In this class? Outside of this class?  
(Why/Why not?)
5. Are you a good musician? In this class? Outside of this class?  
(Why/Why not?)
6. Tell me about something we did in class or something that happened in class that stands out in your mind.
7. Why do you think this activity/memory stands out more than anything else?
8. What sort of things do you think have helped shape you into the person you are today?
9. What sort of things do you think have helped shape you into the kind of musician you are? (Or "non-musician," depending on how they answered previous questions)



10. Could you describe the most important lesson you learned about yourself through your experiences in music class? This could be something you discovered about yourself that you really didn't realize before, something that changed in you, or even something you noticed was really stable in you throughout these trimesters.

11. (Bring up things they may have talked about in interview one or the interim interviews... Do you feel the same way, or do you feel differently? Why? Why not?)

12. After reflecting on your experiences with music and this class, is there anything else you'd like to say?

Thank you so much for helping me with this project today. In a couple days, you will have the opportunity to read your comments and make corrections in case I've misrepresented what you meant to say in any way. This concludes our time together. I hope you have a great rest of your day!

## Appendix Q: Portfolio Prompt

Consider this question: “Who am I as a musician?” Compile a portfolio of at least two and no more than ten artifacts that you feel answer that question. Your artifacts may be in the form of projects/assignments from class, doodles in your binder, audio recordings, or things from outside of class.

When you think your portfolio is finished, look it over one last time. Is there something you feel is missing? If so, add it.

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## VITA

Katherine Willow-Peterson graduated Magna Cum Laude from The Boston Conservatory with a Bachelor of Music degree in Harp Performance in 2005. She went on to graduate Summa Cum Laude from the same institution with a Master of Music Education degree in 2006. This dissertation serves as the final requirement for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Music Education at Boston University, with anticipated graduation in 2016.

Katherine's teaching experience includes vocal, instrumental, and general music classrooms at the elementary and secondary levels. She is currently a member of the faculty at University School in Cleveland, Ohio, where she teaches middle school music, acts as music director and accompanist for theatre productions, runs the after school music program, coaches soccer, coaches track and field, and serves as a mentor teacher. She is also a member of the task forces for curricular innovations, for experiential and immersive learning, and for data-driven change.

Katherine's research interests include identity development, the arts as catalyst for social change, and social justice in and through music education. She has presented on theory and praxis for a number of organizations, including the International Boys' Schools Coalition, the Chautauqua County Music Teachers Association, the Massachusetts Music Educators Association, and the American Harp Society.

Katherine is a co-founder of GentleMUSES, the therapeutic music program at Massachusetts General Hospital. Other professional affiliations include the Ohio Music Education Association, National Association for Music Education, The MayDay Group, Jamestown Concert Association, Musicians' Alliance for Peace, and Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity.

Katherine, a classically trained harpist, is also an active performer. Solo performances include world premiers of works by Mohammed Fairouz, Rudolph Rojan, Joseph Hollings, and Armand Qualliotine. She has also been a soloist with the Boston Early Harp Symposium and the Boston New Music Festival. She has appeared with the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Philharmonic Orchestra, Jamestown Choral Society, Lucie Arnaz's Babalu Band, Western New York Chamber Orchestra, Quincy Choral Society, and the Ludovico Ensemble.

Katherine is the recipient of a number of awards, including the William A. Seymour Award, Florence L. and Leonard J. Field Memorial Award, Drs. Paul and Adelaide Ellsworth Weston Award, Emily Harrington Crane Award, Chautauqua County Music Teachers Association Award, and the National Collegiate Student Government Award. She is a Boston Conservatory Chamber Music Honors recipient and a member of the National Dean's List through the United States Achievement Academy.

When not teaching, researching, or performing, Katherine enjoys practicing yoga and playing ice hockey.