ScholarWorks@GSU

"Music is Waiting For You:" The Lived Experience of Children's Musical Identity

Authors	Mercier, Michelle
Citation	Mercier, Michelle. ""Music is Waiting For You:" The Lived Experience of Children's Musical Identity." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2012. https://doi.org/10.57709/3074209
DOI	https://doi.org/10.57709/3074209
Download date	2026-05-17 00:28:02
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14694/11071

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, “MUSIC IS WAITNG *FOR* YOU: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN’S MUSICAL IDENTITY, by L. MICHELLE MERCIER-DESHON, was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student’s Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

____
Joyce E. Many, Ph.D.
Committee Co-Chair

____
David E. Myers, Ph.D
Committee Co-Chair

____
Dana L. Fox, Ph.D
Committee Member

____
Jodi Kaufmann, Ph.D.
Committee Member

____
Date

____
Dana L. Fox, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology

____
R.W. Kamphaus, Ph.D.
Dean and Distinguished Research Professor
College of Education

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quote, to copy from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education's director of graduate studies and research, or by me. Such quoting, copying, or publishing must be solely for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from this publication of this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

____

L. Michelle Mercier-De Shon

NOTICE TO BORROWERS

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is:

L. Michelle Mercier-De Shon
2940 Browns Mill Rd. SE
Atlanta, GA 30354

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Joyce Many
Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology
College of Education
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30302-3980

VITA

L. Michelle Mercier-De Shon

ADDRESS: 2940 Browns Mill Rd. SE
Atlanta, GA 30354

EDUCATION:

Ph.D.	2012	Georgia State University Teaching and Learning: Music Education
M.M.	2006	Georgia State University Music Education
B.M.	2001	Georgia State University Music Education

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2010-2011	Instructor, Art and Music in the Classroom Georgia State University
2006-2010	Teaching Assistant Georgia State University
2004-Present	*Sound Learning* Site Coordinator Georgia State Univeristy
2001-2004	General and Choral Music Specialist Centennial Place Elementary School, Atlanta, GA

PRESENTATIONS;

2009	"The Lived Experience of Children's Music Learning" Georgia Music Educators Association Conference
2009	"Come Together: An Overview of Innovative Music Education Programs" Georgia Music Educators Association Conference
2003-Present	*Sound Learning* Professional Development for Musicians and Teachers Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Atlanta-area Elementary Schools

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Music Educators National Conference

ABSTRACT

"MUSIC IS WAITING *FOR* YOU:" THE LIVED EXPERIENCE
OF CHILDREN'S MUSICAL IDENTITY
by
L. Michelle Mercier-De Shon

This phenomenological study of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990) explored the perspectives of four 4th grade children as they live in and live through music to formulate their musical identities. Framed within perspectives of symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and figured worlds (Holland, et al., 1998), data were collected using methods consistent with qualitative inquiry. These included: observations of quasi-formal music learning settings, in musical playgroups and during professional musicians' presentations; close observations of children's daily school lives; and planned discussion group interviews (O'Reilly, 2005). Findings emerged from the data via a *bricolage* of existentialist (Morrisette, 1999; Holyroyd, 2001) and interpretative phenomenological analyses (Smith, 2003).

Children in my study explored and expressed their musical identities through self-directed engagement across multiple modalities of singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating music. They engaged with these modalities in individualized and shared ways. Singing was situated, by context and in concert with social and gender comparisons. Listening, performing, and creating encompassed a trajectory from experimentation to intentionality, with continually embedded exploration and musical play.

Findings indicated that children in middle childhood may actively shape their musical identities within a dynamic nexus of individualized and social continuums of

music experience and learning. These continuums may be understood along three dimensions: development; components, i.e., music participation and learning; and processes. The *developmental* spectrum of children in middle childhood provides a fluid context for understanding musical identity, revealed not as a fixed entity, but through interweaving elements of their past, present, and future musical lives. *Self-directed music participation and learning* may shape musical identity and provide a context for its expression through both musical and social roles, as children enact musical behaviors through social interaction. Finally, children's musical identity may be understood as a *process*, in which personal dialogue meets external discourses, as children continuously negotiate self-conceptions of musicality within and among their musical worlds. Findings indicate that music teachers may offer opportunities for exploration and musical play as a basis for concurrently nurturing the development of musical identities and fostering musical understanding.

"MUSIC IS WAITING *FOR* YOU:" THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN'S MUSICAL IDENTITY

by

L. Michelle Mercier-De Shon

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Teaching and Learning: Music Education
in
the Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology
in
the College of Education
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2012

Copyright by
L. Michelle Mercier-De Shon
2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout my dissertation journey, the words of John Lennon echoed in my head, as he sang, "life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans." Were it not for the guidance of my colleagues and the enduring support of my family, this story of four musical children might not have been told.

I would like to thank those four special children who openly shared their musical lives with me, and thank the teachers and administration at Drake Charter School for opening their doors to me.

I would like to thank Dr. David Myers for his mentorship and sustained encouragement across the miles. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Jodi Kaufmann, Dr. Joyce Many, and Dr. Dana Fox for their continued support. My friends in the doctoral program, Todd, Elise, David, and Bernadette shared hours of thoughtful insight and moments of laughter and tears that I will always cherish. I offer special thanks to Doug Stevens for helping me with music notation and sharing his thoughts about children's musical engagement.

I would like to thank my mother and father, Luetta and George, for always believing in me and supporting my educational and musical goals throughout my life. To my wonderful husband Freddy, thank you for holding my hand and for your unconditional love. Thanks to my extended family: Gerti, Markus, Mee Hyang, Felicia, Eli, and Joe for always reminding me, "you can DO it!"

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of my brother Tim and my father-in-law Dr. Fred De Shon. Tim, you took me to my first rock concert and shared your albums with me. You will always be a part of my musical identity, and more importantly, you taught me to face every new day with a smile. Dr. Fred, you taught me to have compassion for others, especially children, and to never give up on my goals. You will always be the wise owl watching over me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

List of Figures……..iv

Chapter
1 INTRODUCTION……….………………………………………………………..1
Conceptualizing and Defining Musical Identity………...……………..…...4
Rationale…….……………………………………………………………….…6
Purpose of the Study……………………………………………………………10
Research Questions……………………………………………………………...11

2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE…………….…………….…..…..12
Part I: What are Self and Identity and How are They Studied?...................13
Part II: Major Contributions to Self and Identity Research and Theory…...18
Part III: Musical Identity and Music Learning…………………………….29
Summary and Limitations of Literature Review………………………….…...47

3 DESIGN OF INQUIRY………………………………………………………50
Epistemology and Theoretical Framework………………………………...50
Methods……………………………………………………………...….57
Credibility, Researcher's Role, Ethics, and Representation…….…………….81

4 FOUR CHILDREN AT DRAKE CHARTER SCHOOL………………….88
The Participants…………………………………………………………….89
The Research Settings……………………………………………………...95
Sound Learning Visits………………………...……………….………..99

5 MUSICAL PORTRAITS……………………………………..………..110
Landon: The Musical Nomad……………………………..…………..110
Keisha: Through the Musical Looking-glass…………….……………...123
Charles and His Musical "Block City"…………………..……………….136
Tonya and Her "Danse Africaine"……………………..…………………146

6 CHILDREN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MUSICAL IDENTITY…......163
Part I: Musical Identities Across Musical Modalities………….…......164
Part II: The Lived Experience of Children's Musical Identity…..…...…211
Implications…………………………………………...…………..228
Conclusions………………………………………...………..……232

References…………………………………….…………………………….234

Appendixes…………………………………………………….……………....247

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

1 Components of Wenger's (1998) Social Theory of Learning…………….55

2 Data Collection Contexts and Questions…………………...………….76

3 Data Analysis Steps, Sources, and Analytical Products………..………...80

4 Performing on Instruments……………………………..……………..182

5 Creating Music……………………………………….……………….195

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> If you're playing an instrument, it doesn't mean that you don't have *fun.* It doesn't mean that you can just sit there and do nothing. Because music is something out there waiting *for* you, and you can have fun with it.—Keisha

This eloquent statement of a child's conception of music participation and learning was a seminal moment in my journey toward better understanding children's lived experience of musical identity formation. Beckoned by the enduring phenomenon of music, Keisha's desire to have *fun* may describe a symbiotic relationship children build with music as they actively and fluidly shape their musical identities.

The compelling questions that accompanied my journey through the musical worlds of four children were less about their cognitive experiences in formal music education programs, and more about *who they were* as musical beings. To me, focusing on music cognition or the nature of music development often elides what is right before our eyes: that is, all children, like Keisha, Landon, Charles, and Tonya, are already inherently musical, *living in and living through* music through individual expressivity and among social worlds.

Reflecting on Keisha, I considered her thoughts in relation to my own musical journey. I began piano lessons at age five, and realize, looking back, that it is difficult for me to separate "how I was taught" from "how it made me feel." My mother described the positive influence of my first piano teacher by pointing to my teacher's ability to identify my strengths and my personal connection with music:

> She always said you had a 'free' style and tried to select pieces accordingly. She didn't want to bother you with learning chords and scales, but felt you would be better off learning songs you liked. (personal communication, February 10, 2007).

My own musical identity did not so much *begin as a result of* these early engagements with music; rather, I consider my own musical identity as having emerged through these and many more experiences I have had and continue to have as a music learner, a performing musician, and a music educator. I conceive of my musical identity as an unfolding journey, where contexts, people, and music intersect in ways that may be planned or serendipitous, predictable or unpredictable, richly fulfilling or relatively innocuous.

As my own musical journey continues, I often reflect on my role as a music educator, including my interactions and observations of children, my own four years of elementary school music teaching, my undergraduate and graduate studies in music education, and my efforts to lead others in developing innovative child-centered music and arts-infused education programs in schools. Am I having the same impact on my students as my early piano teacher had on me? Is "how I teach" inseparable from "how it makes my students feel?"

Through this journey through the world of music education, what I continually confront is a nagging sense that too much of what "school music" does is to impose adult assumptions about children's musical lives, learning, and development on captive children who, out of their trust, deep desire to please, and inherent love of music, willingly and unwittingly cooperate with what we ask of them and take to heart what we say and do. Children's personal connections to music, as Keisha potently described, sometimes take a back seat to educators' assumptions that define what children "need to know." Perhaps this is the source of the frequently referenced dichotomy in the research literature between children's "real" musical worlds and the world of "school music"

(Campbell, 1998; Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, & Tarrant, 2003; Marsh, 1999; Snead, 2009). Perhaps this is part of why many elementary children, having been "required" to participate in music classes, elect not to continue participation in secondary schools (Sloboda, 2001). Perhaps this is part of the reason why so many young people, who have multifaceted musical lives beyond the classroom walls, find limited connections to their musical selves within the school setting. Perhaps we need to question why our larger society continues to view school music programs as "nice but not necessary." And perhaps this calls for problematizing the educational discourses and practices that often equate musicality with the special gifts possessed by the "talented few," rather than the natural impulses that all children possess and that are deserved of being nurtured as part of their educational experiences.

This research is part of my own continuing musical journey that includes reflecting on the above issues, extending the focus and methods of a pilot study on children's musical engagement with professional musicians visiting their school, and deepening the resulting line of inquiry that emerged out of my reflections and prior research. Like Welch (2005), I am convinced that "we are all musical," and that "our basic neuropsycho-biological design enables us to make sense of, and find significance in, the patterns of sound that are organized as music within our culture" (p. 117). My inquiry was not impelled by the fact that children can learn to successfully sing songs when they are properly taught, or that they are able to learn the names of the notes on the staff, or even that they can name and recognize music by "famous" composers. Rather, I was driven to understand how children's musical identities are formed within and throughout their musical lives, including the dynamic interchange among individual,

social and purely musical influences. I sought to understand children's natural curiosities and inquisitiveness about music, and the ways they seek out, relate to, and identify with music and with others in social musical worlds.

Conceptualizing and Defining Musical Identity: Living In and Living Through Music

Hargreaves, Miell, and Macdonald (2002) write:

> Music can be used increasingly as a means by which we formulate and express our individual identities. We use it not only to regulate our own everyday moods and behaviors, but also to present ourselves to others in the way we prefer. Our musical tastes and preferences form an important statement of our values and attitudes, and composers and performers use their music to express their own distinctive views of the world. (p. 1)

This chapter opened with Keisha's observation that music was "waiting *for*" her. This statement came unexpectedly and spontaneously, as she was in the midst of engaging her autonomous musical impulses in relation with her social world. From a theoretical perspective, it is helpful to draw from symbolic interactionism to conceptualize this relationship between the self and the social world. George Herbert Mead (1934/1967), a philosophical pragmatist, utilized symbolic interactionist theory to inform the American school of social psychology, conceptualizing the relationship between the self and the social world.

> The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process. (p. 135)

Drawing on the sciocultural theoretical work of Vygotsky (1930/1978), Penuel and Wertsch (1995) describe the relevance of Vygotsky's theories to identity formation. This interpretation conceptualizes identity as an interactive interchange and provides a methodological site for analyzing individual identity formation vis-à-vis societal

contexts. While Vygotsky never directly addressed the issue of identity formation, his work has much to offer our understanding of how sociocultural processes and individual functioning exist in a dynamic, irreducible tension. As Penuel and Wertsch (1995) describe:

> Identity formation must be viewed as shaped by and shaping forms of action, involving a complex interplay among cultural tools employed in the action, the sociocultural and institutional context of the action, and the purposes embedded in the action. Taking human action as the focus of analysis, we are able to provide a more coherent account of identity, not as a static, inflexible structure of the self, but as a dynamic dimension or moment in action, that may in fundamental ways change from activity to activity, depending on the way, in each activity, the purpose, form, cultural tools, and contexts are coordinated. (p. 84)

In this sense, Keisha's active engagement with music reveals her identity and its formation as a "moment in action" that may be analyzed and understood by the ways in which she uses this cultural tool and the ways in which that cultural tool, i.e., music, in turn may influence the action itself. Whether taking action alone or in the presence of others, Keisha's musical efforts place her in the context of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Wenger defines community of practice as the process of social learning that occurs and the shared sociocultural practices that emerge and evolve through social interaction. Similarly, Keisha's music making represents what Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998, p. 40-41) call "figured worlds"—those socially produced, culturally constructed activities within which identities are situated and interactively constructed.

I used this ongoing formation of the self in relation to the social world that I to conceptualize "identity" and, more specifically "musical identity." It would be apt to say that Keisha is *living in and living through music*, as all children do, as she forms her musical identity. This perspective takes into consideration one's identity as broadly

conceived from the perspective of symbolic interactionist and socioculture frameworks, and focuses on the processes and contexts one utilizes in specifically *musical* ways to formulate a musical identity. The phrase *living in and living through music*, as I have employed it, begs a phenomenological understanding of musical identity formation is warranted in order to understand this facet of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990), as a methodological "moment in time" (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). This moment in time must be understood from the perspective of children themselves. Drawing on the work of Hargreaves, Miell, and Macdonald (2002), my study was framed by the following definition of musical identity:

> Musical identity includes the roles, behaviors, and preferences enacted through one's engagement with music, as well as music's contribution to and interaction with aspects of one's overall identity.

Rationale: Why Study Children's Musical Identities?

Sloboda (2001) notes that while music seems to be a resource through which individuals address issues of personal autonomy and identity, most of the studies designed to investigate this phenomenon have been undertaken with adult participants.

> The details of the intimate hour-by-hour musical lives of children in contemporary society are almost unknown to us. We really need to know much more about what children autonomously use music for in their everyday lives. In particular, we need to know what are the 'natural' varieties of performance that are given meaning within their solitary, family and social settings. (p. 248)

Building on Sloboda's assertations, children are leading complex musical lives, and much of what they are naturally capable of and interested in musically may go unrecognized, or worse, ignored, in too many music classrooms.

Contemporary music teaching strategies, curriculum designs, and policy recommendations have evolved alongside considerable efforts of research that have

sought to deepen our understanding of and support for children's musical development, primarily from psychological perspectives. Historically, two predominant strands of research have typically been identified in the literature, representing contrasting vantage points from which to view children's cognitive musical development and learning. Developmental theories (Pflederer, 1964, 1969; Pflederer-Zimmerman & Sechrest, 1970; Swanwick, 1994) emphasize the cognitive shifts and processes involved in musical development. On the other hand, music learning theory (Gordon, 1997) identifies procedural sequential steps that lead to musical conceptualization and understanding through the analysis of musical content. To support children's musical development in school settings, national policy recommendations are articulated through documents such as *The School Music Program: A New Vision* (MENC, 1994) and *Performance Standards for Music* (MENC, 1994, p. v), and "suggest what every student in America should know and be able to do in music."

This focus since the 1960s on children's musical development from a largely cognitive perspective may be inadequate for accommodating the complete realm of musical experiences that children utilize in their ongoing formation of musical identities. For example, Bartel (2004) speaks of the *tabula rasa* assumption within the traditional paradigm of music education that presupposes children know nothing of music until they are properly taught in formal school or private lesson settings. As Bartel explains, "the assumption is that when children enter school or start piano lessons they are essentially a blank slate. So what we teach is a skill sequence that starts at zero and builds in a continuous spiral to the highest level of performance" (p. xiii).

Placing a premium on prescribed skill sets and bodies of knowledge, often as compared to adult levels of competency (see Kratus, 1991; 1995), may inadvertently lead to sweeping generalizations of what children are supposedly *incapable* of musically doing and knowing. O'Neill (2007) notes that the historical tendency of psychological studies of child development is to reflect a "deficit model," focusing on unusual or "abnormal" developmental characteristics of individuals and then comparing these to those characteristics considered "normal" or healthy. Studies of musical development have often portrayed a reversal of this approach: "Researchers have focused on identifying 'talented' children or adolescents in terms of their musical ability, precociousness, or skill expertise, and comparing them with young people considered non-musicians or musically 'untrained" (O'Neill, 2007 p. 462). This perspective becomes particularly problematic when dualistic categorizations of children's ability or knowledge serves to define them—either one is "talented" or not, musical or "non-musical." Obviously, such labels could have potentially devastating effects on the assumptions of teachers, parents, and children themselves regarding their musical identities.

It is not my intention to question sequential theories of children's musical development, only to argue that they may, even inadvertently, urge incongruity in music classrooms between activities designed to nurture musical development and the nature of children's musical identities. Welch (2005) clarifies:

> As well as addressing developmental issues, school music education will be more successful if it embraces both the plurality of musical cultures within the wider community and also children's initial individual preferences for certain kinds of music (including songs). Popular music and music practices are often poorly represented in school music, leading to a mismatch between the interests and musical identities of pupils and the curricula that they experience. (p. 119)

If we fail to recognize and celebrate the multitude of abilities and interests that children bring with them, music classrooms in which a consistent developmental course is assumed for all students may potentially limit the available range of music experiences and thus inhibit, or be at odds with, the inherent musical identities of children. And although our curricula have expanded in the past thirty to forty years to include forays into jazz, world, and some popular music, Green (2008, p. 70) notes that these styles are studied with the same emphasis on the development of linguistic concepts, theory and notation as stressed in the music of the "traditional" curriculum (Western classical and/or folk music). In this way, the values of musical worth—authentic rather than commercial expression of time and place; transcendent universal qualities; and/or sufficient formal and harmonic complexity to warrant study—are upheld, "and the music identities of most pupils continue in many cases to be distanced" (Green, 2008, p. 13).

Perhaps because individual musical identities may not fit neatly into generalized developmental theories or traditional classroom curricula, there is a conspicuous lack of research dedicated to exploring "musical identity," particularly as it applies to elementary-aged children. Attention to musical identity requires rethinking children's musicality, not in terms of what they are incapable of, but in terms of who they are as individual music "makers and takers" (Jorgensen, 2003), whose musical worlds are influenced in ever more varied and diverse ways. Indeed, much of what shapes musical identity could be a result of those experiences that take place outside of formal music instruction, resulting in the "mismatch" that Welch (2005) describes. If there is in fact the kind of disconnect between children's musical identities and the experiences of formal music learning as suggested by Green (2008), then it is important to gain greater

understanding of the ways in which children naturally, spontaneously, and organically *live in and live through music.*

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that children *live in and live through music* in order to understand their formation of musical identities. Understanding how music functions both in the daily lives of children and in quasi-formal music learning contexts[1] was key to this research. As part of understanding children's musical identities, it was important to consider not only *what* their musical worlds comprised, but also *how* music contributed to their "individualized musical selves" (Buller Peters, 2004, p. 9). Beyond simply surveying the contents of children's musical worlds, this research sought a deepened understanding of the meaning that music has and the role it plays in children's lives. This required a qualitative approach that investigated both children's lived experiences in music and their perspectives regarding those experiences. These perspectives may provide valuable information for enhancing congruity between formal music education, particularly in schools, and children's musical identity formation. As Buller Peters (2004) writes:

> When we fail to link school music to students' lives beyond the classroom, when we forget that it is the process rather than the products of musical learning that will stay with our students for life (and allow them to become active musical participants in their adult lives), when we do not respect the process of enculturation and the role of informal learning in education music in schools loses its life affirming qualities. Music class, to use what some educators might consider a trite word, is no longer *fun*. (p. 10)

Children's musical identities may be regarded as fluid and dynamic. Multiple influences are not simply absorbed but interact through a constant process of evolution

---

[1] For a definition and detailed description of quasi-formal music learning contexts see Chapter 3.

and reconstruction. This study explored the lived experience of children's musical identity formation within two contexts: from the children's own perspectives on their musical lives, and their participation in quasi-formal learning environments.

Interrogating children's own perspectives of musical identity formation through their descriptions of their musical lives, both in and beyond school, considered the processes, components, and influences that contribute to children's musical identity formation as they *live through* music. This is a way of understanding "music in identities" (Hargreaves, Miell & Macdonald, 2002). The quasi-formal music learning environments, i.e., musical playgroups and experiences with visiting artists, provided the means to explore how children construct musical identities as they actively *live in* music, as a way of understanding "identities in music" (Macdonald et al, 2002). *Living through and living in music* are not discrete categories, but overlap on a continuum. I considered them to be complementary processes and contexts through which I would gain a better understanding and interpretation of children's lived experience of musical identity formation.

Primary Question

In what ways do children's direct participation in music (*living in music*) and music experience in diverse contexts (*living through music*) reveal their musical identities?

Supporting Questions

How do children's musical identities evolve in relation to the range of experiences they have in performing, creating, and understanding music?

How do children experience and perceive the place of quasi-formal music learning in relation to their musical identities?

What processes and components of music experience and learning contribute to children's musical identity formation, both in school and beyond?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature is organized according to the following topic areas: (1) self and identity definitions and methodological approaches; (2) major contributions to self and identity theory and research; and (3) musical identities and music learning. *Part I* explores definitions of self and identity and presents working definitions of these concepts. This section discusses the perennial methodological challenges inherent within this research domain, and offers an overview of current methodologies.

Part II identifies the major works and theories in the self and identity literature. This section introduces the classic and influential approaches to the study of self and identity, and links these antecedents to current theory and research.

Part III surveys the literature relevant to understanding children's musical identity formation. It is divided into three sections. The first section explores definitions of musical identity as situated within a social psychology perspective. The second section examines the literature that describes children's developmental processes related to musical identity formation, and conveys the multiplicity of factors related to these processes. The final section focuses on studies that explore children's musical identity formation in school music learning contexts, with particular attention to the institutional structures and discourses children may encounter in these contexts. This section concludes by suggesting a possible framework for practice, which emphasizes generativity through positive musical engagement (O'Neill, 2007).

Part I: What are Self and Identity and How are they Studied?

Defining Self and Identity

Researchers and authors in a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, and psychology have studied the constructs of self and human identity. Despite a vast body of literature, there is limited agreement as to terminology, theoretical frameworks and methodologies (Finkenauer, Engels, Meeus & Oosterwegel, 2002; Grotevant, Bosma, De Levita & Graafsma, 1994; Leary & Tangney, 2003; Mischel & Morf, 2003; Phinney, 2008). Across the literature, definitional distinctions between "self" and "identity" are by no means clear and can encompass different meanings, as various theorists use these terms interchangeably (Westen & Heim, 2003). In addition, the literature abounds with terminology related to constructs, processes and phenomena of the self, resulting in a plethora of overlapping hyphenated terms: self-concept, self-image, self-esteem, self-worth, self-evaluations, self-efficacy, and so on (Harter, 1999). Even with these semantic challenges, however, it is possible to distinguish threads of commonality across the broad range of scholarly literature on self and identity.

A common theme throughout the literature is that the self is defined as both a cognitive and a social construction. The cognitive aspects of the self refer to the psychological processes and mental functioning that allow one to think consciously about oneself and to take oneself as the object of one's own attention (Leary & Tangney, 2003). The ability the self has for such reflexivity is not just a function of cognition, but also a merger of both individual and social processes. The self has the ability to point out meanings and share meanings with others through language and symbols. The self "works to control meanings to sustain itself, but many of those meanings, including the

meanings of the self, are shared and form the basis of interactions with others and, ultimately, social structures" (Stets & Burke, 2003, p. 132).

Because the self emerges in social interaction with others and in many social contexts, the self is considered complex, organized, and differentiated. In this way, the overall self is organized into multiple parts, or identities, each of which is tied to aspects of social structures (Stets & Burke, 2003). Identity, then, refers to a person's location relative to others in the situation, the community, or the society as a whole, requiring the cooperation and affirmation of at least some other people (Hewitt, 2000). Identity, like the self, is both individual and social in nature. This includes an individual's sense of autonomy and coherence, involving how one understands oneself as unique and differentiated from others based on life histories, future plans, and goals. At the same time, an individual seeks a sense of belonging with others, as an individual assumes situational roles (e.g., student, parent, musician) and claims social memberships (e.g., Christian, feminist, classical music aficionado).

Part of the semantic confusion within the self and identity literature stems from how the constructs of self and identity are closely related and overlapping. There must be a self for an identity to exist, in fact, there must be *multiple* identities because an individual does not exist in a vacuum. It is important to note that the self has not just one but multiple identities, due to 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. In these ways, studies that explore the self and identity face this perennial challenge: there must be a self to "know" and to enact an identity. Epistemological assumptions are entwined with methodological approaches, and researchers should accept

that individual self-reflections along with observable social behaviors are credible methodological pathways toward understanding aspects of identity.

Methodological Approaches to Studying Self and Identity

Methodologies exploring the self and identity include qualitative inductive approaches, quantitative deductive measures, and combinations of both. What many of these studies hold in common are links to William James's (1890) theory of the self and Erik Erikson's (1968) work in identity development. While their theories will be explored in more detail in *Part II,* the following describes the enduring methodological challenges inherent in studying the self and identity, and surveys several recognized approaches utilized in self and identity research.

James (1890) recognized the unique problem of studying the self, noting the blurred distinction between the knower and the known. As Devos and Banaji (2003) explain, "the object of scrutiny, the self, is also the agent doing the scrutinizing" (p. 170). The use of introspection as the primary source of information for understanding the self could be problematic for those who study individuals with psychological disorders, but such studies are beyond the scope of this research. Since the self is understood as the meanings one holds for oneself, reflective appraisals are salient to current research methodologies (Stets & Burke, 2003). Recognizing that the self and its phenomenological realities are experienced subjectively, Mishel and Morf (2003) note that these experiences and self-reflections are indeed consequential for studying the self. In addition, scientific knowledge of the self can be observed through expressions of behavioral action in the social world.

Erikson (1968) also recognized the methodological challenges inherent in studying identity. Erikson understood identity formation as an individual and a social process, therefore "identity is never 'established' as an 'achievement' in the form of a personality armor, or of anything static and unchangeable" (Erikson, p. 24). To Erikson, identity research that utilized psychoanalytic methods did not sufficiently account for environmental contexts, whereas social psychological approaches lacked sophistication in analyzing individual process. As Erikson observed:

> But man, the subject of psychosocial science, will not hold still enough to be divided into categories both measurable and relevant. In reviewing and discussing two decades of [identity research], we cannot present it as a system expected to survive discarded systems, but as a bit of conceptual living both limited and enhanced by what historical relevance and consequence it may possess for a time. (Erikson, p. 43).

As Erikson predicted, researchers today have by no means resolved the methodological puzzle that he faced nearly a half century ago. Any understanding of identity is partial by the very nature of its complexity and fluidity over time. However, research into the self and identity continues to build upon James's theory and Erikson's ideas.

Harter (1999) identifies two methodological strands utilized in research investigations of the self: self-descriptions and self-evaluations. Self-descriptions aim to elicit responses to the question "who am I?" The researcher conducts a textual analysis of the self-descriptions that is then "coded into categories that provide a portrait of the dimensions that are most salient to the individuals' self –representations" (Harter, p. 4). Autobiographic narrative approaches are similarly used in identity research. By utilizing family scripts (Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; Davidson & Burland, 2007) or life stories (McAdams, 2001; Thorne, 2004), researchers explore group and individual narratives to

understand identity formation. Rather than focus on an individual's self-described list of traits, roles, favorite activities, or favorite things, the narrative approach looks to the lived experience that stories reveal in order to achieve a dynamic and contextualized understanding of identity.

Self-evaluations focus on measures of valence, or how positively or negatively respondents view themselves in regard to a certain attribute, such as popular or unpopular, good-looking or unattractive (Harter, 1999). The distinction between self-descriptions and self-evaluations, however, can be arbitrary as each may inherently contain affective components. For example, if a young child says "I can sing my ABCs," she is not only describing an aspect of her musical ability, but is likely evaluating herself in a positive light and considering how others view her in relation to her achievement. Self-evaluative research often utilizes measurement scales, particularly in the area of self-esteem (Westen & Heim, 2003), and to a lesser extent, identity salience and verification (Stets & Burke, 2003).

Such self reports garnered from self-descriptions and self-evaluations have been used to further expand upon James's (1890) theory of the self and Erikson's (1968) model of psychosocial development. Building on James's theory, Damon and Hart (1988) utilized cross-cultural longitudinal interviewing techniques and a scoring process to construct a developmental model of self-understanding. Their model describes aspects of the physical, active, social, and psychological self in relation to development characteristics from early childhood through late adolescence. As informed by Erikson's model, Marcia (1994) utilized semi-structured interviews along with a rating process to classify individuals into four identity statuses. These statuses represent different levels of

identity resolution: identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion. While Damon and Hart's self-understanding model and Marcia's identity status classification system focus on different constructs, both utilize mixed methods research approaches and employ formalized procedures (interview protocols, scoring or rating systems) that can be replicated by other researchers to evaluate individuals against their proposed models.

Summary of Part I

The literature on self and identity spans multiple disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, and a range of methodological approaches is utilized in self and identity research. Through my survey of this literature, I recognize some common threads from which to base my working definitions of self and identity. I understand the self as a cognitive and social construction, within which multiple identities are embodied, distributed and performed. In addition, I recognize that self and identity research calls for a robust methodological approach. Self-descriptions and self-evaluations offer starting points, yet these self-reports need to move beyond lists of traits and preferences and into the realm of contextualized, phenomenological narratives. In addition, observations of authentic behavioral activities will contribute to a deeper understanding of identity as it is embedded and enacted in the social world. Finally, I recognize that even when utilizing a robust methodology, any understanding of identity is partial due to its inherent complexity and fluidity over time.

Part II: Major Contributions to Self and Identity Research and Theory

I continue with an overview of several classic and influential approaches to the study of self and identity that may be viewed as antecedents to current research. These

antecedents include the work of William James and Erik Erikson, symbolic interaction theory, the cognitive revolution, and social identity theory.

The Legacy of William James

William James, Harvard professor, psychologist, philosopher, and trained medical doctor, is credited with the first detailed discussion of the "self" in psychology, setting the precedent for studying the self in relation to human behavior and as a legitimate topic for scholarly investigation (1890). A recurrent theme from James's work (Damon & Hart, 1988; Harter, 1999; Hewitt, 2000) is the self as comprising two distinct but interconnected aspects: the "I-self" and the "me-self," each with its own particular qualities or components.

The I-self is the subject, or the knower. The I-self focuses on events outside oneself through initial awareness of someone or something in the environment and by subsequently directing action toward that someone or something. This explanation emphasizes the subjective awareness of several core features of individuality, including 1) an awareness of one's agency over life events; 2) an awareness of the uniqueness of one's life experience; 3) an awareness of one's personal continuity; and 4) and awareness of one's own awareness (Damon & Hart, 1988). The me-self is the self as object, or the self-as-known, including material characteristics (body, possessions), social characteristics (relations, roles, personality), and spiritual characteristics (consciousness, thoughts, psychological mechanisms). The me-self is able to imagine the perspective of others, allowing the individual to structure a real or imagined response to a situation.

Taken together, the I-self and the me-self represent alternating phases of consciousness whereby the self as a whole is created and recreated. Hewitt (2000)

elucidates this process through an example of a parent showing anger toward a child. When the parent harshly scolds the child, she is acting as the I-self. A moment later, the parent may re-evaluate her reaction by imagining how she looks from the child's perspective, as her me-self decides to apologize and speak less harshly. Again, her I-self re-emerges, this time responding to an image of self rather than to something outside the self, and the alteration between the I-self and the me-self continues.

Beginning with the conceptualization of identity as existing perpetually and concurrently in these states of consciousness, William James is credited with providing a foundation for understanding the self as multidimensional and hierarchical, which developmental psychologists utilize to examine the reciprocal relationships among global and domain-specific self-evaluations, as well as the construction of multiple selves (Damon & Hart, 1988). While the study of identity waned after James's contributions, enduring concepts such as the I-self and the me-self were particularly influential in the development of symbolic interactionist theory.

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Psychological contributions to the study of identity were put on hold in the first half of the 20th century as behaviorism, emphasizing observable and measurable constructs, "virtually killed the self as a legitimate topic for psychological inquiry in mainstream academic research, and banned it as outside of what was then defined as the boundaries of science" (Mischel & Morf, 2003, p. 16). Sociology attempted to fill the void through the development of symbolic interactionist theory prompted by Charles Horton Cooley (1902), George Herbert Mead (1934) and James Mark Baldwin (1897), in

which the self is viewed as a social construction, created through linguistic exchanges, or symbolic interactions, with others.

Harter (1999) points to several themes developed by these original symbolic interactionists that remain relevant to contemporary thought. Beginning in childhood, 1) one engages in the *imitation* of significant others' behaviors, attitudes and values or standards; 2) the developing child adjusts his or her behavior to garner the *approval* of salient socializing agents; and 3) one comes to adopt the *opinions* that significant others are perceived to hold toward the self, and these are integrated into the reflected appraisals one utilizes to define one's sense of self. Baldwin (1897), in particular, recognized the multiplicity of the self-structure, noting that one's attributes can vary both across and within different contexts and relations with others. This laid the foundation for contemporary postmodern thought concerning an individual's need to create multiple identities across a variety of social contexts.

The social nature and contexts of human experience and its relation to individual identity that symbolic interactionist theorists emphasized is also found in certain schools of thought in the field of psychology that emerged in the mid-20th century. Notable contributions to understanding identity and its formation in social contexts can be found in the work of Erik Erikson, as well as in humanist psychology.

Erik Erikson and Psychosocial Development

The neo-Freudian psychoanalyst Erik Erikson made one of the most enduring contributions toward conceptualizing identity in his book *Identity: Youth in Crisis* (1968). In this seminal work, Erikson conceptualized identity as both a highly personal construction as well as a social construction that begins "somewhere in the first true

'meeting' of mother and baby as two persons" (p. 23). The processes of *introjection*, or "the primitive "incorporation of another's image" (p. 159) and *identification* are utilized throughout childhood, as children attempt to identify with the comprehensive hierarchy of roles available to them. These social models are initially drawn primarily from within the family and expand outwardly as a child interacts in an ever widening range of social contexts. Social models provide the individual with a sense of expectations of what one can become, and are utilized for verification throughout one's life. Yet *identifications* are not the same as *identity,* as Erikson explained.

> *Identity formation*, finally, begins where the usefulness of identification ends. It arises from the selective repudiation and mutual assimilation of childhood identifications and their absorption in a new configuration, which, in turn, is dependent on the process by which a society (often through subsocieties) identifies the young individual, recognizing him as somebody who had to become the way he is and who, being the way he is, is taken for granted. (p. 159)

To Erikson, identity formation is a "process 'located' *in the core of an individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture,* a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities" (italics in original, p. 22). Erikson further describes the process as one involving constant change and development through increasing differentiation and inclusion, which take place on all levels of mental functioning, through simultaneous reflection and observation. Identity, then, is the unity of personal and cultural dimensions that form a "*subjective sense* of an *invigorating sameness* and *continuity"* (italics in original, p. 19).

While Erikson's understanding of identity was rooted in a neo-Freudian psychoanalytical perspective, his views on identity formation have remained influential in the field of developmental psychology. Current thought in developmental psychology recognizes identity as both a personal cognitive and a social construction (Damon & Hart,

1988; Harter, 1999). However, there is less agreement among developmental psychologists as to how to interpret and apply Erikson's "eight stages of psychosocial development" (see Erikson, 1968, p. 94). To developmental psychologists, the enduring question remains: when does identity formation begin?

Ryan and Deci (2003) claim that "when human beings emerge in the world, they have no identity" (p. 253), and that identities are *acquired* through developmental processes in cultural contexts. Of particular importance is Erikson's (1968) fifth stage of adolescent identity versus identity confusion that developmental researchers emphasize as a time of "heightened activity" in identity formation (Marcia, 1994; Kroger, 2004). This is the time of potential "crisis" that Erikson spoke of, when adolescents resolve their identities "only in new identifications with age mates and with leader figures outside the family" (Erikson, 1968, p. 87).

Erikson (1968) was clear to point out that this crisis did not "connote a threat of catastrophe, but a turning point, a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential" (p. 96), emphasizing identity formation as a fluid process rather than a fixed or static accomplishment. Current research has interpreted Erikson's ideas somewhat differently. Marcia (1994) considers identity as a developmental achievement: "it has developmental forerunners at previous psychosocial stages, and it reaches its time of ascendancy about middle to late adolescence" (p. 68). According to Kroger (2004), Erikson's writings emphasize the sequential stages of the life cycle that differ qualitatively, "each with its own unique features that will never again exist in the same form" (p. 9). Other researchers (Azmitia, Syed & Radmacher, 2008; Harter, 1999;

Damon & Hart, 1988) read Erikson differently, proposing that identity formation is a lifelong project that begins in infancy and is ongoing throughout adulthood.

Humanistic Psychology

During the 1950s, humanistic psychology ran parallel to symbolic interactionist and neo-Freudian thinking. Manifest in Carl Rogers's (1959) theories of personality and psychotherapy and Abraham Maslow's (1954) work on self-actualization, humanistic psychology protested against the determinism implied in behaviorism and Freudian theories. Rogers and Maslow focused on goal-directed behavior that emphasized an individual's tendency toward fulfillment and actualization, rather than human behavior as sets of reactions that are predicted and held in the chains of "stimulus-response."

The humanistic perspective is decidedly optimistic, highlighting "the human potential for growth and change, to move toward better, more fulfilling individual lives" (Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Goldenberg, 2003, p. 322). At the time, however, there was still an unclear understanding of the source of individuals' motivations, and with behaviorist theory still dominating psychological thought, few were "willing to give the self such extraordinary causal powers" (Mischel & Morf, 2003, p. 17). Lacking empirical research on the self, it was difficult to avoid conceptualizing the self and its motivations as a homunculus—a "little man in the head that performed all sorts of feats" (Mischel & Morf, 2003, p. 17)—that controlled the "me" or the "I." As a result, psychology avoided dealing with the "motivated" self, and instead concentrated on broad trait descriptions of "what people are like" and individual differences in those qualities. The study of self and identity would re-emerge in the 1970's, during a period referred to as the cognitive revolution, which provoked a transformation of psychological thought.

The Cognitive Revolution

The cognitive revolution is recognized by many (Damon & Hart, 1988; Harter, 1999; Leary & Tangney, 2003; Mischel & Morf, 2003) as providing the impetus for again legitimizing the study of self and identity as a cognitive construction. Early cognitive models emerged from developmental psychologists who favored Piagetian or neo-Piagetian frameworks, as well as from social psychologists who favored computer metaphors, or the self as an unmotivated information processing machine (see Harter, 1999). Bruner (1990) decried this shift in the cognitive revolution "for abandoning 'meaning-making' as its central concern, opting for 'information processing' and computation instead" (p. 137). Bruner stressed the importance of meaning-making as taking place in and through culture.

> It is man's participation *in* culture and the realization of his mental powers *through* culture that make it impossible to construct a human psychology on the basis of the individual alone. Human beings do not terminate at their own skins; they are expressions of a culture. To treat the world as an indifferent flow of information to be processed by individuals each on his or her own terms is to lose sight of how individuals are formed and how they function. . .The child does not enter the life of his or her group as a private and autistic sport of primary processes, but rather as a participant in a larger public process in which public meanings are negotiated. And in this process, meanings are not to his own advantage unless he can get them shared by others. (pp. 12-13)

Currently, there is a modicum of consensus within the cognitivist perspective emerging regarding two core features of the self. First, the self can be understood as an organized dynamic cognitive-affective-action system, and second, that the self is an interpersonal self-construction system (Mischel & Morf, 2003, p. 23).

The cognitive revolution forwarded the view of the self as "knower, feeler, and doer," particularly in the area of social cognition, with concepts such as declarative and procedural knowledge coming to the fore. Beyond being simply a knowledge structure,

the self is also understood as a "feeler," as much "driven by affect as guided by cognition" (Mischel & Morf, 2003, p. 23). A cognitive framework also emphasizes the self as an active, "doing" agent, capable of reflective, evaluative processes such as self-evaluation, self-enhancement, self-defense, self-regulation, and self-control (Mischel & Morf, p, 18). Taken in a holistic sense, this cognitive framework facilitates the conceptualization of many complex features of the self, such as the diverse, multiple forms of its expression, that is, its identities, and the seemingly paradoxical co-existence of its stability and malleability. The view that the self is essentially a social product re-emerged with greater appreciation in the cognitive framework, along with the idea that any study of the self must take into consideration the social context and interpersonal behavior. As Mischel and Morf write, "to understand 'who someone is,' then, one needs to understand the person's identity goals through their expression in social interaction: it is within those interactions that the individual's self-theory is constructed, validated, and revealed (p. 23)."

Approaches to identity from both the developmental and cognitive perspectives find some common ground. From both psychological perspectives, identity is analyzed from the individual level and is therefore sometimes referred to somewhat redundantly as "personal identity" (see Stets and Burke, 2003). In addition, these perspectives recognize the important role that social contexts play in identity formation. But it is in the field of social psychology that one finds a deeper exploration of identity in social contexts, with group or social identities as the focus of a large body of contemporary research.

Social Psychology and Social Identity Theory

In addition to the study of personal identity, the field of social psychology in particular has focused on the concept of social identity, through social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 1999; Brewer, 2003; Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999; Hurtado & Silva, 2008; Stets & Burke, 2003; Tajfel, 1981). Within this perspective, social identity "provides a link between the psychology of the individual—the representation of self—and the structure and process of social groups within which the self is embedded" (Brewer, 2003, p. 480). Social identity is the knowledge of being a group member, including knowledge of the social standing or status of the group, and the emotional attachment one places on group membership. Social identity theory seeks to explain intergroup relations in general, as well as social conflict in particular (most robustly in Tafjel's metatheoretical approach: see Hogg & Abrams, 1999). The theory includes three main points: 1) people are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept; 2) the self-concept derives largely from group identification (in addition to personal identification, as stressed by American social psychologists); and thus 3) people establish positive social identities by comparing the ingroup favorably against outgroups. (Operario & Fiske, 1999)

Hurtado and Silva (2008) summarize the three psychological processes involved in social identity construction: social categorization, social comparison, and cognitive and emotional "psychological work. . .that is prompted by what Tafjel claims is a universal motive: the achievement of a positive sense of self" (p. 21). Group membership can have both positive and negative implications. Membership in a group might promote a positive social identity, thereby providing a source for individual self-esteem and sense of belongingness or connectedness to others. However, "membership in a social group can

also promote negative biases toward out-group members, derogation of in-group members who violate group norms, and disengagement from certain areas in which one's group has been negatively stereotyped (for example, women and achievement in mathematics)" (Lurye, Zosuls, & Ruble, 2008, p. 32).

The study of social identity, particularly as it intersects with personal identity, has become increasingly interdisciplinary, drawing on research and theory from social and developmental psychology, sociology, education, feminist studies, and philosophy (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008, p. 4). Phinney (2008) refers to group identity, or one's membership in identified social groups or categories (this being more precise than "social identity" that may refer to both group membership and social relationships) as a "complex, dynamic construct that develops over time as individuals strive to make sense of who they are in terms of the groups they belong to within their immediate and larger social context" (p. 98). Group identities develop based on both cognitive and physical changes that impact how children think about and respond to their environments, in addition to individual differences in personal characteristics and genetic makeup. At the same time, context plays a largee role in development, including "the proximal and distal factors that interact with these changes, providing experiences, opportunities, role models, and limitations that shape identity formation and are themselves changed by the choices the individual makes" (p. 99).

Summary of Part II

Part II summarizes some of the major works and theories of self and identity. The enduring contributions of William James and Erik Erikson continue to frame the understanding of the self as an individual cognitive and a social construction, and

describe the developmental processes involved in identity formation. These classic works remain influential across the range of perspectives through which self and identity are currently studied, including symbolic interactionist theory, humanistic psychology, cognitivist psychology and social identity theory. From these perspectives, the self is understood as a complex and dynamic cognitive structure that emerges through social interaction with others. The self is comprised of multiple stable and malleable identities that are expressed across the range of social contexts and groups one encounters.

Part III: Musical Identity and Music Learning

Music is a fundamentally social construct. With its increasing availability, music plays an ever growing and ubiquitous role in society and in individuals' lives. Through technological advances and globalization, individuals have access to a greater variety of music than ever before. Such advances also provide possibilities for individuals to engage in a wider range of musical experiences in increasingly diverse contexts. From the concert hall to the internet, music plays a progressively greater role in shaping who we are, as Hargreaves, Miell, and Macdonald (2002) point out.

> Music can be used increasingly as a means by which we formulate and express our individual identities. We use it not only to regulate our own everyday moods and behaviors, but also to present ourselves to others in the way we prefer. Our musical tastes and preferences form an important statement of our values and attitudes, and composers and performers use their music to express their own distinctive views of the world. (p. 1)

Is music simply a tool that we use to formulate and express our identities? Or does music somehow become integrated into who we are? And what is the nature of children's development, musical experience, and learning in relation to their musical identities? This section surveys the literature of children's musical identity and its relationship to music learning. I begin by discussing how and why the study of musical

identity is situated within the social psychology perspective of music, and explore the definition of musical identity that is garnered from this perspective. In addition, I will examine the literature that describes children's developmental processes related to musical identity formation, including the interplay of children's musical identities within school music learning contexts and the implicit institutional discourses therein. Finally, a discussion of "positive musical identity" (O'Neill, 2007) suggests a possible framework for practice, which emphasizes generativity through positive musical engagement.

What is Musical Identity and How Has It Been Studied?

A social psychology perspective. Under the broad umbrella of music psychology, there exist a number of overlapping sub-disciplines that focus on understanding the many ways people engage with music through creating, performing, listening, and evaluating. Using cognitive and developmental approaches, music psychologists seek to explain the mental processes and age-related changes at work in various aspects of music behavior and learning. These investigations often take place in scientifically-based settings such as the laboratory. Hargreaves and North (1997, p. 5) suggest that these investigations run the risk of "neglecting the social dimension" of musical experience, including "the effects of the immediate social environment as well as the impact of broader-based cultural norms."

To emphasize the social dimension of music, the social psychology of music takes research out of the laboratory and into everyday situations. "What is music for?" is the central question for the social psychology of music, accentuating the essentially social function of music. These social functions include the management of interpersonal relationships, mood, and self-identity.

Defining musical identity. Hargreaves et al. (2002) suggest that "one of the primary social functions of music lies in establishing and developing an individual's sense of identity, and that the concept of *musical identity* enables us to look at the widespread and varied interactions between music and the individual" (p. 5). They go on to posit that:

> Children's development of musical identities, which have their origins in biological predispositions towards musicality, are shaped by the individual groups and social institutions that they encounter in their everyday lives. These form an integral part of those identities rather than merely providing the framework or context within which they develop, and this perspective enables us to explain identities in music, as well as music in identities. (p. 7)

These authors consider that while children are innately musical, their musical identities develop amongst a multitude of factors that are not simply absorbed, but rather interact in a dynamic, ongoing process.

In addition, this conception of musical identity considers both the individual's *identity in music* (IIM), or the social/cultural roles and practices within music to construct identities, as well as *music in identities* (MII), or how individuals use music as a resource for developing other aspects of their personal identities. In this way, Hargreaves et al. (2002) describe *identities in music* and *music in identities* as a way of understanding an individual's musical behaviors from the inside, that is, the *experience* of the features that define them as individuals, rather than psychometric assessments of musical behaviors.

Hargreaves et al. (2002) propose that *identities in music* are based on social categories and cultural musical practices. These include generic distinctions among broad categories of musical activity, such as composing, performing, or teaching. In addition, identities in music include distinctions such as those based on the instrument one plays or genres of music one prefers (so-called "taste publics"). *Music in identities*

refers to how music is used as a resource that contributes to the development of other aspects of one's identity, such as gender identity, youth identity, national identity, and so on. Just as one's engagement with music can range on a continuum from active to passive, or from virtually no investment to high levels of commitment, so, too, might music play a greater or lesser role in an individual's overall identity. Taken together, *identities in music* and *music in identities* are components of one's overall musical identity, and help "to explain some of the processes and mechanisms by which individuals monitor and conceptualize their own musical development" (p. 7).

O'Neill (2007) makes the distinction between *musician identity* and *musical identity*, while recognizing the intersectionality implicit in an individual's notion of what it means to be a musician. An individual's *musician identity* refers to the thinking, perceptions, feelings and behavior related to a specific musical group membership (e.g., pop musician, classical musician, etc.), which is similar to how Hargreaves et al. (2002) describe *identities in music.* One's *musical identity*, according to O'Neill (2007), refers to the significance and meaning attributed to musical behavior within one's self-concept (e.g., talented, passionate, authentic, etc.). O'Neill further states that "intersections between (musician and musical) identities may be more or less salient based on available cultural discourses and personal histories" (p. 467), in order to emphasize the overlapping and interactive relationship between identity formation and the individual, always occurring within the social world.

It is my assessment that O'Neill's (2007) definitions of musician identity and musical identity focus on the roles, behaviors and self-attributes that individuals hold for themselves in relation to music participation. Neither of these definitions clarifies how

music is used as a resource for formulating identities outside of direct musical participation. More satisfying is Hargreaves et al. (2002) definition of musical identity. This includes *identities in music*, which account for the broader scope of ways an individual may participate in music, from active engagement in music making to personal preferences for specific genres and styles. Concurrently, *music in identities* reflects a wider range of ways individuals utilize music for identity formation beyond how they view themselves as musicians. Music identity, then, includes the roles, behaviors and preferences enacted through one's engagement with music, as well as music's contribution to and interaction with other aspects of one's overall identity.

Developmental Processes in Musical Identity Formation

An understanding of musical identity formation must consider both the individual and the social world within which one interacts and develops. The emphasis here is that musical identity formation is an ongoing, dynamic process, beginning with an infant's innate ability for musical interaction. This process starts with the baby's first socializing agent—usually a parent. As the child's social world expands, so does the range of music materials, experiences, and discourses she comes in contact with, all of which will continue to interact with and reshape her musical identity. Some of the developmental processes in musical identity formation revealed in the literature include communicative musicality and domain differentiation. In addition, a multiplicity of factors is involved in musical identity formation, including the influences of context, gender, and age-related changes.

Communicative Musicality. According to Trevarthen (2002), the dynamic process of musical identity formation begins with "communicative musicality" in the earliest

interactions between infants and their adult caregivers, allowing for coordinated companionship through aural, visual, kinesthetic, and emotional engagement. An infant directs attention to the tone and pitch of a caregiver's voice, is sensitive to rhythmic features of the voice and body, and has the ability to perceive narrative structures in voices and music. Each of these sensory events engages an infant's "intrinsic motive pulse" (p. 25) located within the infant's brain. The intersubjectivity of these experiences results in narratives of mutually constructed meaning and understanding, and forms the foundations of musical self-identity. "Early musical identities are based on learning one's own position and role in relation to the reactions and communications of the other people around, and they are subject to constant development, negotiation and change" (Hargreaves et al. 2002, p. 6).

Domain differentiation. Lamont (2002, p. 43) argues that children should only be able to develop a specific identity as a musician at the stage when they can master the idea of differentiated identity. This view draws extensively from neo-Piagetian developmental perspectives of self-understanding (Damon & Hart, 1988) and self-representations during childhood (Harter, 1999). In early childhood (before age 7), children's self- and self-other understandings emphasize concrete physical, observable features that generalize to every aspect of self-understanding, including the overestimation of one's own abilities. Although children at this age may begin to intercoordinate self-concepts (e.g., good at running, jumping, schoolwork), an "all-or-nothing" type of oppositional thinking from earlier childhood still persists (e.g., good vs. bad, nice vs. mean) (Harter, 1999). In middle childhood to late childhood (ages 7-11), a more balanced view of the self develops, primarily based on trait-like psychological

constructs (e.g., popular, smart, good-looking), as a child begins to coordinate previously differentiated self-representations (e.g., smart in math, poor in science) and develops the ability to experience opposite valence emotional affects simultaneously (e.g., happy and sad) (Harter, 1988). In addition, children begin to increase their social comparative assessments in relation to others, particularly with peers (Damon & Hart, 1988). According to Harter (1988), the ability to make domain-specific as well as global self-representations increases during this time, as children's ability to recognize the opinions and perspectives of others merges with their self-perceptions. Lamont (2002) concludes that children's specific identities as musicians relies on their ability to make such differentiations: "Earlier than (7 years of age), children's personal identities should be influenced by other features of self understanding which do not relate specifically to music" (p. 43).

Other researchers (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold & Blumenfeld, 1993; Marsh, Craven & Debus, 1991) indicate that children's self-concepts in specific learning/activity domains and domain differentiation can occur as early as first grade, or between the ages of 4 to 7. Marsh and colleagues (1985, 1990, 1991) proposed a multi-faceted, hierarchical structural model to explain the reciprocal relationship between global self-concept and various academic and non-academic domains. Vispoel (1995) extended this model to include an examination of the artistic domain (including dance, music, visual art, and drama), proposing a uniqueness of self-concept in each artistic domain. These hierarchical models relate various clusters (academic self-concepts in math, language arts, etc., and social, emotional, and physical self-concepts) of predetermined categories as numerous pathways to global self-esteem.

Such models can be helpful to explicate the complexity of domain-specific judgments related to global self-esteem and view children's ability for differentiation within and between domains as occurring earlier than Lamont (2002) proposes. However, using predetermined categories and predictable pathways toward self-esteem may not necessarily reflect how individuals themselves organize or describe their own self-understanding. As Harter (1999) observes:

> One has to ask whether the *statistical* structure extracted for large samples does, in fact, mirror the psychological structure as it is phenomenologically experienced by individuals. The statistical procedures employed do not directly tap the manner in which individual subjects themselves organize their self-constructs. (italics in original, p. 128)

Rather than attempting to "fit" children's experiences into a priori categories, studies that utilize children's self-reports of experiences and naturalistic observations reveal the multiple influences on children's musical identity formation.

Multiple influences on children's musical identity. In research that examines developmental processes specifically related to musical identity, Lamont (2002) observes:

> Children's musical identities should be based on external and observable activities and experiences, and being a member of a group involved in music will be an important part of musical identity. Moving through middle childhood, peer group comparisons will become increasingly important in children's musical identities, whilst attitudes and feelings towards music will come to dominate adolescents' musical identities. (p. 43).

Lamont (2002) has conducted several surveys with children, ages 7 through 14, in England in order to identify some key features of music identity formation, including factors that are external to the school context and age-related changes.

First, there are several influences on music identity formation that are external to school experiences. Lamont (2002) found that gender plays a role, with girls more likely to hold more positive attitudes toward music and develop more positive musical identities than boys. In addition, the musical environment in one's home also may contribute to the development of positive attitudes towards music, particularly if there are other family members involved in musical activities. Finally, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are "less likely to develop positive attitudes towards music or engage in musical activities, due perhaps to the lack of financial support that such activities require" (p. 54). The age-related changes in children's overall identity formation are revealed in specific ways in regard to their music identities. "Younger children seem to be willing to describe themselves more positively in terms of music than older children" (p. 55). This is related to the ways that younger children often overestimate their own abilities, while older children are more likely to compare themselves to others in terms of what they can do, both in music and also in other areas (sports, academics, etc.). Lamont concludes that children with positive musical identities are those who engage in more extra-curricular music activities, show more positive attitudes towards school music, and like their music teacher, but "at present, the direction of this relationship cannot be established" (p. 56).

Campbell (1998) also considers the important positive contributions music makes in the lives of children, who "recognize—even in their youth and inexperience—that they could not live without it" (p. 175). By combining interviews and naturalistic observations (such as on the playground and school bus, in the school lunchroom and toy stores selling musical products) of children ages 4 through 14, Campbell's ethnography considers the meaning and function of music in children's lives. Music offers an aural

means by which these children come to understand themselves symbolically and emotionally.

> Music is the repository for their varied moods, a means by which they can relate to who they are (or in the process of becoming) at particular times and places. Through music, they reflect upon themselves, their experiences, and the relationships they have with their friends and members of their families . . . Music in general has meaning because no other avenue allows quite these occasions for children's thinking and feeling aloud. Meanwhile, separate songs and styles hold unique meanings based upon who they are—personally, culturally, and as the result of musical experience and training. (p. 175)

Children's uses of music range from "the playful to the serious, and from the solitary to the social" (p. 175), and are categorized by uses such as emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, physical response, continuity and stability of culture, and signifying membership within social groups.

As the literature reveals, developmental processes interact with a multitude of individual and social factors and experiences as children continually formulate their musical identities. As salient to my line of inquiry, I am particularly concerned with understanding children's musical identity formation in relation to school music learning experiences. What role do school music learning experiences play in children's musical identity formation? And how do the institutional structures and discourses that children encounter in school music programs affect their musical identity formation?

Musical Identity Goes To School

School may arguably be the major source of structured music learning for many individuals from childhood through adolescence. But the formal music experiences one has in school may have limited resemblance or relevance to the experiences one has with music outside of school. Could there be a conflict between how music learning is

presented in the school context and children's natural propensities toward musical engagement?

A clash of values? Because of the technological advances of the past century, it is not surprising that "listening to recorded music is one of children's main leisure activities" (Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001, p. 103). However, music's influence on shaping one's personal musical identity cannot be broadly generalized, because "children engage (with music) in different ways and contexts, for different purposes, and with different degrees of involvement" (p. 104). In their study of children aged 9-14 in England and Portugal, Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001) found that children's attitudes toward music listening at home and at school are differentiated and these different activities fulfill different functions: "Home listening was associated with enjoyment, emotional mood, and social relationships, whereas school music was linked with motivation for learning and being active, and particular lesson content" (p. 115).

Throughout adolescence, the selection and use of media (including music, television, movies, etc.) becomes more independent. Arnett (1995) considers the conflict that may occur when adolescents use media in ways that are antithetical to the values and goals of their parents and other adults.

> An adolescent boy may come to believe, through media, that it would be a great thing to devote many hours each day to playing electric guitar so that he might become a rock star like his media heroes, while his family and teachers consider this a disastrously deluded notion and urge him to apply that energy and dedication to his schoolwork. Perhaps these contradictions, this lack of integration, are in part responsible for the alienation and anomie that exist among some members of the current generation of adolescents. (p. 530)

But not all of adolescents' uses of music will necessarily result in such conflict. Larson (1995) conceptualizes a different process at work: "The image of the typical adolescent

as an armed rebel using rock or rap to bludgeon parents is a caricature" (p. 542). Rather, Larson views this increased engagement with music as adolescents' means of seeking a renegotiation of their relationships with parents, as they seek more independence and personal jurisdiction in creating their own cultural and personal spaces. But what of younger children? How do younger children view themselves as musical in school contexts? And are children's musical interests and views of their own musicality at odds with school music programs?

Smithrim and Upitis (2004) offer sobering statistics from their survey of over 7000 Canadian elementary school children. In 1st grade, 60% of students reported that they were happy when they were singing in school, yet playing with puppets (76%) and using a computer (90%) were reported as more enjoyable activities. A significant gender gap exists, with more girls enjoying singing (66%) compared to boys (54%). This gender gap increased with age, and by 4th grade relatively few children agreed with the statements "I am good at music" (27% overall; 33% girls, 20% boys) or "I am good at playing an instrument" (23% overall; 26% girls, 20% boys). Only 21% of these 4th grade students reported wanting more music in school, as opposed to 56% wanting more visual art. As Smithrim and Upitis explain, "this could mean that the students were satisfied with their existing music programs and felt they had sufficient time in music. It is more likely that most of the students don't like the music [classes] they have and don't want any more of the same" (p. 75). While 83% of these 4th-graders reported that they liked listening to music in their spare time, it could be that *school* music experiences are falling short of their needs and expectations.

The research literature in this area raises the question of whether understanding more about children's interests and motivations in music, which according to these studies incorporate activities happening *outside of school,* might encourage school music programs that nurtured and developed those interests. As it stands, music education frequently seems to ignore the musical identities children are forming for themselves, while, as they grow into adolescence, increasing numbers of children ignore music education programs as they currently exist. If children are naturally drawn to music, how do the institutional structures and discourses inherent in school music programs impact children's musical identity formation?

Am I a musician? Lamont's (2002) research considers how children define themselves as "musicians" or "non-musicians," as a reflection of how "musician" is defined through the typical school curriculum, i.e., whether or not a child is an accomplished performer. "As well as providing the arena where the children's musical identities are formed, the school thus also plays a role in reinforcing differences in musical identity" (Lamont, 2002, p. 46). Austin, Renwick and McPherson (2007) believe that children tend to develop fixed conceptions of musical ability, which in turn impacts motivation in music learning. At the same time, they note that judgments of ability are extremely salient in music learning situations in schools, such as in the elementary music classroom where "'learning by doing' is the modus operandi, which results in children demonstrating their abilities in front of one another" (p. 222). As a child continues through school, music ensembles are then further organized to reflect hierarchical "abilities" (such as part assignments, section leaders, etc.), and public performance experiences in concerts, recitals and adjudicated contests may further accentuate

individual differences among peers. "All of these experiences provide information that children use to formulate their self-concept and identity as musicians" (Austin et al., p. 222).

McCormick (2003) posits that musical "performance is arguably the most important image-forming component of an individual's identity as a musician" (p. 48). With a further emphasis on a specific image of professional musicianship, Davidson and Burland (2007) have constructed a tripartite model in order to predict whether the transition through adolescence to being a professional musician will be achieved. Their model stresses an idealized conception of "Western classical musician" as being the epitome of success as a professional musician. These researchers recognize the external factors (family, peers, teachers) involved in musician identity formation, but "ultimately it is the individual's personally attributed values and passions in and for music that drive the formation of a musician identity, consequently motivating him or her to pursue a professional career as a performer" (p. 488). At the same time, Lamont (2002) argues that "children's musical identities are not simple reflections of the adult, or professional, distinction between musicians and non-musicians" (p. 56). It is important to consider the discourses children receive through formal music instruction traditions regarding "who is a musician," which tend to value performance abilities as realized through special, innate gifts. The impact of such discourses on musical identities that are still developing becomes problematic by equating "talent" with an individual's musicality.

These definitions of "musician" or "who counts as musical" are positioned through traditional, Eurocentric conceptions of musicality as "talent." Campbell (1998) argues that this idea of "talent" has had devastating effects on school music curricula, and

in turn, on children themselves, by attempting to label the "talented few" early on and providing them with training that others have little or no access to.

> Children who do not fit the mold of what a gifted musician should possess are then given minimal stimulation in the schools, often not a great deal more than this thing called "exposure" (the result of a half hour's worth of group music instruction given once weekly—about twenty hours of music in an average school year). Thus are many children musically inhibited by society's absence of arrangement for their education, while the talented few are given an imbalance of full and continuous attention. The great majority of children are educationally disadvantaged by the very societies that claim to bring them to a full development of their abilities through the schools they have created. (p. 170)

Clearly, children are receiving mixed messages about what it means to be "a musician" and what it means to be "musical:" "musicians" are the gifted few who possess "talent," while the remainder might be "musical," but this does not count for much and is paid little attention. Meanwhile, as dominant discourses in the social institutions of schools, these messages serve to reproduce the binary distinctions between "musician" and "non-musician," quite possibly having a negative effect on children, who are continuing to formulate their musical identities.

Generativity: A framework for positive musical identity. Whether or not "innate talents" exist, and the extent to which the existence of such talents define individuals as "musical" are matters of ongoing debate (see Howe, Davidson & Sloboda, 1998 and peer commentaries). The implications of recognizing "talented" individuals result in binary identifications: either one is a "musician" or a "non-musician." This binary is reinforced in social structures, particularly in Western classical music training that emphasizes specific performance practices for accurate musical reproduction of printed notation, structured teaching methods delivered by specialists, and often an evaluative achievement component that may be competitive in nature. O'Neill (2007, p. 462) observes that

"these practices have contributed to a sense of musical elitism that evokes a superiority view of formal training and leads to a sense of inadequacy on the part of those who have not received formal instrumental music training"

Instead of alienating young people through this narrow view of what it means to be a musician, O'Neill (2007) calls for positive youth musical engagement through framework of generativity. Based on Erikson's (1968) theory of identity formation, generativity focuses attention on identity formation in terms of its ontology in the development and well-being of the next generation, rather than labeling children's skills, achievements in relation to "talent" or deficits implied therein.

> It is about caring for and educating young people by assuming the role of responsible adult (e.g., parent, guardian, mentor, teacher). It is also about being a responsible citizen, a contributing member of a community, a leader, an enabler. As such, generativity provides a useful framework for building musical competencies and promoting positive life-long musical development, opportunities, and experiences (e.g., a generative music educator), as well as providing a framework for understanding musical development and young people's positive engagement in musical activities. It is a process for both the definition and fulfillment of the self in relation to musical structures and practices. (p. 468-469)

Rather than promoting a binary discourse of "musician/non-musician" based on narrow conceptions of "who is musical," a framework based on generativity considers the multiple and interacting components that contribute to the development of a positive musical identity. These components include motivational sources, personal beliefs and values, and musical behaviors, which contribute to the gradual construction and reconstruction of a positive identity in relation to the development of musical knowledge, skills, and understanding. Motivational sources are derived from both internal and external developmental assets, including attitudes, encouragement, involvement, and

modeling from parents and teachers, as well as the quality of musical activities, and the attention and interests paid to these activities by peer groups and communities.

O'Neill (2007, p. 469) refers to the components of beliefs, values and musical behaviors as "the six C's of confidence, character, commitment, connection, competence, and contribution," all of which are an integral part of positive youth engagement. Beliefs and values include confidence, character, commitment and connection. Confidence is described as the complex, changeable belief in one's ability that is linked to particular situations and contexts—not to be confused with 'self-esteem,' or the relatively stable sense of self-worth. Character relates to the qualities within individuals that guide their decisions and choices, rooted in the values that young people develop in relation to music and musical activities. This is closely related to commitment, which involves taking responsibility for one's actions and meeting obligations that contribute to the greater good of others in the community. Connection is the sense of belonging, developed through the social experience of equitable and respectful engagement in musical activities. The musical behavior components of generative musical development include competence and contribution. Competence not only includes both observable skills and achievements, but also involves the ability to think and reason about musical ideas, to understand other's musical choices, and to make musical decisions. Contribution is finding purpose and meaning of music making in relation to oneself and others, to benefit the common good in communities.

Taken together, these components of motivational sources, personal beliefs and values, and musical behaviors contribute to the ongoing (re)construction of a positive identity in relation to music. O'Neill (2007) defines a positive musical identity as

"having a sense of being or becoming a musical person. A musical identity integrates past, present, and anticipated future musical involvement and at the same time specifies ways in which the individual fits into and distinguishes herself or himself in the social world" (p. 470). The ways in which children view themselves in relation to participation in musical activities, as well as their observations of the roles musicians occupy in the world around them, conveys information that "frames students' sense of musical opportunities in relation to their sense of self-identity" (p. 470).

Summary of Part III

Part III focuses on the literature dedicated to children's musical identity and its relationship to music learning. Musical identity is defined as the roles, behaviors and preferences enacted through one's engagement in music (identities in music), and includes music's contribution to and interaction with other aspects of one's overall identity (music in identities). The developmental processes involved in musical identity begin with infants' natural predispositions toward musical engagement, and their musical identities are continually shaped and formulated based on a variety of internal (gender, age) and external (social environments) factors. In addition, the institutional structures and discourses that children encounter in school music learning contexts may have positive or negative implications for their ongoing formation of musical identities. A framework of generativity is offered that considers the multiple and interacting components that contribute to the development of positive musical identities.

Summary and Limitation of Relevant Literature

Summary

As revealed in *Part I*, the literature on the self and identity spans multiple disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. Because of this diversity, there is seemingly an unwieldy assortment of terminology and definitions of self and identity. In addition, methodologies dedicated to exploring the self and identity face the perennial challenge of how to access that which is known and experienced by the individual through suitable empirical methods. Through my exploration of the literature thus far, I find it difficult to separate the concepts of self and identity, as there must be a self for an identity to exist. Therefore, I understand the self as a cognitive and a social construction, within which multiple identities are embodied, distributed and performed. In addition, a robust methodological approach to the study of identity is warranted that utilizes self-descriptions and self-evaluations that move beyond lists of traits and preferences, and into the realm of phenomenological narratives. Furthermore, observations of authentic behavioral activities in the social world contribute to a richer understanding of identity formation. Finally, even when utilizing a robust methodology, I recognize that any study of identity is partial due to its inherent complexity and fluidity over time.

Part II summarizes some of the major theories of self and identity. The works of William James and Erik Erikson have made enduring contributions to the theoretical understanding of the self as an individual and a social construction, as well as describing the developmental processes involved in identity formation. From cognitive and social identity frameworks, the self is viewed as a complex amalgamation of "knower, feeler and doer" that allows for multiple expressions of identities, both stable and malleable, across the range of social contexts and groups one encounters.

Part III focuses on the literature dedicated to children's musical identity and its relationship to music learning. From a social psychology perspective, one's musical identity includes the roles, behaviors and preferences enacted through one's engagement in music, as well as music's contribution to and interaction with other aspects of one's overall identity. Starting with infants' natural predispositions toward musical behaviors, children's musical identities are continually shaped and formulated based on developmental processes and a multiplicity of individual features and social influences. The institutional structures and discourses implicit in school music learning contexts can lead to a clash of values, as children's natural propensities toward musical engagement and ongoing musical identity formation may not be recognized within the institutional definitions of what it means to be "talented" or a "musician." To move beyond these discourses, a framework of generativity is posited that considers the multiple and interacting components that contribute to the development of positive musical identities.

Limitations

The research presented in this chapter is limited in multiple ways. First, because the body of scholarly literature on self and identity is so sizeable, I chose to delimit my review here to studies and theories within the disciplines of psychology and social psychology. I recognize that there exists a wealth of related literature from other disciplines, particularly in the field of anthropology, some of which is referred to in my theoretical perspective in Chapter 3. However, I placed a priority on exploring those studies and theories that are most closely connected to children's identity formation in relation to development and learning, which is primarily found in the psychology literature. I recognize and reject some of the tendencies within the field of psychology to

create explanatory models that attempt to "measure" identity as if it were a series of predictable stages or outcomes based on a priori determinations of what identities "consist of." These methodological limitations lead to generalizations about identity, rather than explore the depth of any one individual's identity.

Research into children's musical identity can be critiqued for utilizing similarly limited methodologies. In the literature that exists, there are more mixed-method surveys that list children's preferred musical activities or describe general developmental characteristics of children's musicality than there are deep explorations of children's phenomenological experiences of musical identity formation. In addition, the very definition of musical identity found in portions of the literature is limiting, with an over-emphasis on one's performance capabilities in adult and Eurocentric conceptions of the "professional musician." The voices of children themselves are scarcely found in the literature, thereby limiting our understanding of the processes, components, and influences inherent in their musical identities as well as their own perspectives on musical identity.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF INQUIRY

Epistemology and Theoretical Framework

Social Constructionist Epistemology

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) recognize that qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the research and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. In addition, qualitative research involves interpretive paradigms within which the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological premises are framed. These interpretive paradigms enable qualitative researchers to accomplish two aims: first, to clarify assumptions about knowledge and reality that are procedurally embedded in the research; and second, to guide research practice. My research invoked a constructive-interpretist paradigm and a social constructionist epistemology. Positioning my research this way assumes that "knowledge is subjective, constructed and based on the shared signs and symbols which are recognized by members of a culture. Multiple realities are presumed, with different people experiencing these differently" (Grbich, 2007, p. 8).

As defined by Crotty (2003), social constructionism "is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent on human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (p. 42)." This view emphasizes meaning as it is constructed, not discovered, as human beings engage in a social world. Using music as an example, the social constructionist view recognizes that meaning does not exist a priori in music itself, but meaning is constructed as

individuals engage with music. The example of music further reveals the social constructionist emphasis on culture and its role in influencing human behavior and organizing experience. "Culture is best seen as the source rather than the result of human thought and behavior" (Crotty, 2003, p 53). Meaning is not embodied within the cultural object of music itself. Rather, as individuals engage with a symbol such as music, the possibility is afforded for music to be a resource for acquiring knowledge, of inherent knowing, and thus a lens that potentially influences the ways in which one may view the world.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework drew from multiple perspectives, including: a) symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969; Hewitt, 2000; Sandstrom, Martin & Fine 2001); b) Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of development and learning; c) Wenger's (1998) "communities of practice;" and d) Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain's (1998) "figured worlds." Utilizing these multiple perspectives facilitated both my broad conceptualization of identity and the more specific construct of children's musical identity.

Symbolic interaction theory offered an appropriate perspective from which to conceptualize and understand musical identity formation. As Sandstrom, Martin and Fine (2001, p. 218) write: "Symbolic interactionists assume that people acquire distinctively human qualities, and become capable of distinctively human behavior only through associating with others" (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2001, p. 218). This perspective emphasizes that who we are and who we become involves interactions with others in social contexts. Symbolic interactionists view identity as "a person's location relative to

others in the situation, the community, or the society as a whole" (Hewitt, 2000, p. 127). Identity is not a possession, but rather an active expression that requires presence in a social world and confirmation of that identity by others in a social world. Furthermore, identity is not viewed as a fixed or stable object that is somehow "inherited" by the individual through participation in social and cultural practices. Important to this conception is the rejection of an "essentialist" self as an autonomous, bounded and stable entity (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998), and this allows for the consideration of identity as multiple, shifting, and constructed both from within the individual as they interact with the social world around them.

Herbert Blumer (1969, p. 2, *italics added*) is credited with formulating the three basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism.. *The first is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them*. In the context of my research, individuals interacted *with* music in an active sense; music is not simply '"done to" or "absorbed" by people. These interactions with music are the bases for the formation of musical understanding and musical identities as individuals, to a greater or lesser extent, utilize music and engage in musical behaviors to form their musical identities. *The second premise is that the meaning is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows*. In the context of my research, music was considered a social construction, needing both a transmitter (e.g., a composer or a performer) and a receiver (e.g., a listener). No matter which role an individual assumes, musical experiences inherently involve interactions with others. These experiences can be solitary (listening to an iPod) or shared (group music making) events; however, individuals interact with and make meaning from the shared social construct of music in

forming their musical identities. *The third premise is that the meanings people ascribe to things are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters*. Thus, the individual's socially constructed knowledge and meaning of music will be contextually derived. In the context of my research, meaning was not considered to exist a priori in music itself. Rather, an individual actively constructs and reconstructs meaning through the musical experiences one has, in the continuous formation of one's musical understanding and musical identity.

Russian psychologist L. S. Vygotsky was also concerned with the social interactions involved in meaning-making and learning. His theory of sociocultural development informed my research with children, particularly for understanding the social processes relevant to children's development, learning, and identity formation.

Vygotsky was concerned with the social origins of cognitive functioning. To Vygotsky, (1978) human development is not simply a process that takes places within an individual, but is an ongoing process of transformation involving the internalization of the social practices surrounding the individual.

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). . . All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (p. 57)

Penuel and Wertsch (1995) recommend Vygotsky's sociocultural approach as a useful conceptual and methodological tool for understanding the processes that shape identity formation.

> A sociocultural approach to identity formation considers these poles of sociocultural processes and individual functioning as interacting moments in human action, rather than as static processes that exist in isolation. Human action,

> whether by individuals, groups, or institutions, provides the unit of analysis for a consideration of how individual intentions are, moreover, realized by different cultural tools or mediational means used for carrying out action, tools that in turn shape individual functioning. (Penuel & Wertsch, p. 84)

Important to Vygotsky's theory is the idea of semiotic mediation, or the use of cultural tools and signs, recognizing that individuals use these tools to modify their physical environments or mental states. While Vygotsky most frequently referred to the tool of language, music could also be considered a cultural tool that individuals use with agency to shape their own behaviors. Consider the parallels between music and language in the following description of cultural tools: "These [cultural] tools of agency are highly social in several senses: the symbols of mediation are collectively produced, learned in practice, and remain distributed over others for a long period of time" (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998, p. 38).

Wenger (1998) builds on Vygotsky's ideas of the social nature of learning. Wenger focuses on learning as active, social participation in "communities of practice" and considers identity as integrally related to the process of learning and knowing.

> Participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities. . .Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do. (p. 4)

Wenger recognizes that learning is interconnected with the components of community, practice, meaning and identity, as represented in figure 1.

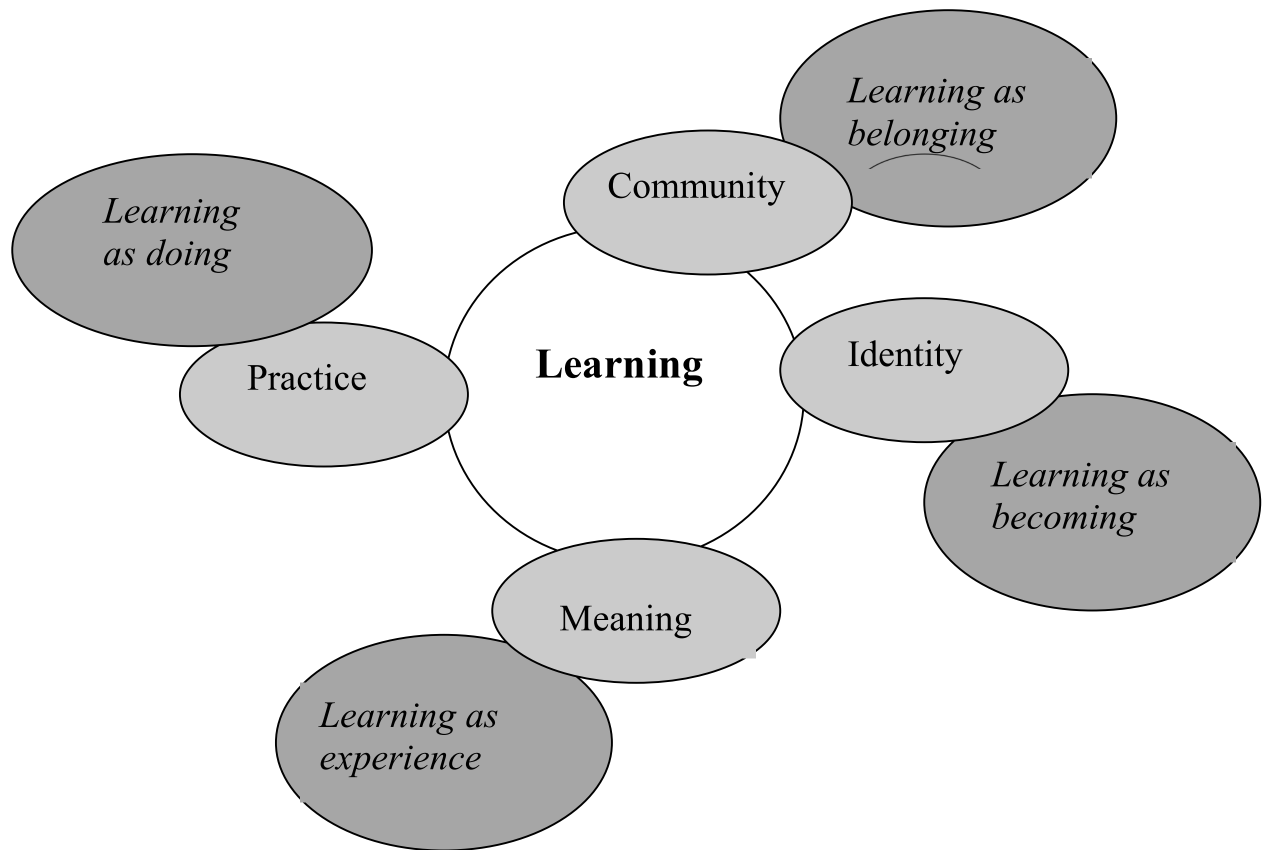


Figure 1: Components of Wenger's (1998) Social Theory of Learning

In Wenger's (1998) model, each of the components is interchangeable, in that any of the four peripheral components can be switched with "learning" by placing it in the center as the primary focus, and the figure will still make logical sense. Through this conceptualization, identity refers to "how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities" (Wenger, p. 5). In the context of my research, this perspective relates to the ways children's music participation and learning formed a community of practice, becoming a site through which children shaped their musical identities.

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) also recognize the situated nature of identity in collectively formed, socially produced, culturally constructed activities, or what they term "figured worlds" (p. 41).

> Figured worlds are historical phenomena: not so much things to be apprehended, but processes or traditions of apprehension which gather us up and give us form as our lives intersect with them. Figured worlds are social encounters in which participants' positions matter. They proceed and are socially instanced and located in times and places, not in the "everywhere" that seems to encompass cultural worlds as they are usually conceived. Figured worlds are socially organized and reproduced; they divide and relate participants and depend on interaction and intersubjectivity for perpetuation. Figured worlds distribute "us," not only by relating actors to landscapes of action and spreading our senses of self across many different fields of activity, but also by giving the landscape human voice and tone.

Each of the perspectives described here contributed to my conceptualization of identity as a holistic, interactive, socially- and culturally-situated process. Identity is neither culturally determined nor situationally bounded, but is continually negotiated in practice with others. In the context of my research, *musical* identity refers to how children *live in and live through* music in an ongoing formation of their musical selves. *Living in* music emphasizes children's active participation and social interaction in musical communities of practice, or figured worlds of musical engagement. *Living through* music emphasizes children's use of the social construction of music as a cultural tool in musical identity formation. For purposes of my investigation, *living in and living through* music were not considered separate processes or contexts, but were conceived as

contributing holistically on a continuum that represented the myriad ways an individual interacts with music in the formation of musical identity. From active to passive engagement, from making music to taking music (Jorgensen, 2003), from highly social to highly solitary contexts, musical identity formation was considered to be individually and socially negotiated through a holistic range of processes, contexts and experiences.

Methods

Influence of a Pilot Study on Inquiry and Research Design

This study was designed to explore the lived experience of children in middle childhood as they *live in and live through* music in order to understand and interpret their formation of musical identities. My research focus and methods evolved, in part, from a pilot study I conducted in Spring 2008. I began that study with a focus on exploring the lived experience of children's music learning primarily in the context of their engagement with professional musicians who visited their school. I was the coordinator of those visits and endeavored to work with the musicians and classroom teachers to play vitally engaging music experiences.

However, from the time of the professional string quartet's first visit to the school, certain tensions affected my research focus and methods. Rather than engaging the children in active music participation and learning, as I had expected them to do, the musicians were very didactic, presenting information *about* music rather than engaging children *in* music. They tended to focus on advanced musical terminology and "facts and dates" about composers and historical eras. Instead of making music with children as a community of music practice, the children typically sat passively—watching, listening, and politely responding as best they could.

I observed the children's initial interest sparked by the qualities and depth of the live sounds. Naturally and spontaneously, they began to move fingers, hands, heads, and bodies to the sounds that enveloped them. But this promising engagement was cut short, quickly giving way to tedium as the musicians lectured and introduced concepts and vocabulary beyond the children's understanding. Instead of building on the children's natural interactions in the musical setting, the musicians resorted to their comfort level of interacting with each other in conversations and comments. This "grown-up" interchange served only to distance them further from the children's inherent musical intrigue and clear desire to be active participants in the musical experience.

This well-intended yet misguided attempt to "enlighten" children's musical understanding initially disappointed me and, I thought, diminished my ability to undertake the line of inquiry I originally planned. However, as I interviewed the three children in my pilot study—Shawna, Carl, and Jalen (all pseudonyms)—the conversations that unfolded revealed much more than I anticipated, including both their reactions to the musicians' visits and the depths of their personal connections to music. When I asked the children about their experiences with the musicians, they were insightful and direct. Shawna noted that the musicians gave "too many irrelevant details that we're not focused on. It's about hearing the music." To Shawna, "music is like words. . .because music can talk for itself." The children were capable, for example, of remembering that the musicians played a tango from Argentina. But what the musicians failed to recognize or encourage was how the *sounds* of a tango excited the imaginations of these children. The children vividly interpreted the feel of the music, comparing it to the sounds of raindrops, lightning, a donkey braying, and the high-pitched voice of a

woman. Most importantly, the children actively constructed their own musical meanings, not based on theoretical musical concepts or historical background or terminology, but from their personal connections with and intuitive understanding of the ways music works.

When Shawna suggested that the musicians might "get to the point," she was not being judgmental, but rather was expressing a need to be recognized as a cognizant and capable musical being. The comments Shawna, Carl, and Jalen shared about their musical visitors began to shift to a more personal level, as the children eagerly and spontaneously led the way on a journey that described aspects of their own musical lives.

I also observed in their daily school lives that they "used" music in a variety of individualized ways. When I realized the authentic and pervasive role music played in their lives, I became increasingly intrigued with who they musically "already are," thus moving beyond the original question of who they were musically in the context of musicians' visits to their school. I became ever more drawn toward the ways they readily and enthusiastically described their own musical lives and demonstrated their own "personalized" varieties of musicality. Shawna, Carl, and Jalen were each uniquely musical individuals.

What occurred to me through my evolving pilot study conversations was that not only did their musical lives exist largely outside the formal learning of the school context, but that their interactions with music were uniquely personalized and individualized. It was this musical "uniqueness" that prompted my interest in further exploring how children *live in and live through music* in their formation of musical identities.

Half way through the series of four interviews that were planned with the children, I had another epiphany. While all the children were drawing from a rich repertoire of cultural and musical influences, including media, family, peers, and eagerly shared these verbally, they also wanted to communicate directly through the shared experience of music itself. As Shawna reminded me, they needed to let their music "talk for itself."

I needed a strategy to transport the children from a purely verbal realm to a place of dynamic musical expression, a place where we could continue our journey of their inherent musicality as it naturally expressed itself. I decided to integrate a new strategy—a musical playgroup—as the nucleus of our remaining meetings. I brought a small collection of musical instruments: an electronic keyboard, a shekere, various shakers, bongos, rhythm eggs, finger cymbals, and slide whistles. The children's faces lit up each time I pulled an instrument from a box, and we quickly discussed the names of each instrument and various ways to play them.

Rather than scripting a formal lesson plan or set of activities, I began by encouraging the children to freely experiment with the instruments. This was in part to avoid the overly-structured nature of school music class that Carl, in particular, voiced his disdain about: "we always have to rotate. . .I just want to play keyboards." In addition, I wanted the musical playgroup to serve as a respite from the children's experience in the professional musicians' visits, by providing a context where their natural musicality and interests would be recognized and celebrated. At first, I found it somewhat difficult not to try to reign in their boundless energy and enthusiasm, as they dashed from one instrument to the next. But my hunch was that they needed and craved

this independence and the choice it afforded them to explore musically on their own terms. The children's individual experimentation quickly became more focused, as they began to invite one another to share and join in each other's musical ideas.

Though group music making seemed somewhat random and haphazard, when I encouraged the children to reflect on their activities, their thoughts were illuminating. Jalen insisted that this was "FUN music," while Carl and Shawna offered ideas for adding musical structure and organization that they utilized in subsequent musical playgroup meetings. The musical playgroups represented a community of practice, within which each child moved fluidly between individual and social musical experience and expression. Moreover, the children found value and meaning within their community of practice: Jalen named the group "The Trio Squad;" Carl wanted me to "deliver our music to Beethoven;" and Shawna hoped they could share their creations during the next musicians' visit.

One of the strengths of qualitative research is emergent design. "The data collection process might change as doors open and close for data collection, and the inquirer learns the best sites at which to learn about the central phenomenon of interest" (Creswell, 2003, pp. 181-182). Adding the musical playgroup developed into an essential component of my pilot study, providing a safe, non-judgmental space for the children's personal and self-selected musical expressions. In addition, the musical playgroup served to further focus this inquiry toward exploring children's musical identity formation, and offered a window into their innate musical impulses.

Phenomenological Methodology

Built from insights gained in the pilot study, I used a phenomenological strategy to explore children's lived experience of musical identity formation. Summarizing Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the study was firmly situated in the qualitative research tradition and contained the five features that they propose as defining qualitative research.

Data collection took place in a *naturalistic* setting of the children's school, with the researcher as the key instrument of analysis. Data are *descriptive* rather than statistical in nature. The study was concerned with *process* rather than simply with outcomes or products. Musical identity was conceptualized as an ongoing process, rather than the result of specific musical experiences. Data were analyzed *inductively* rather than deductively. The participants' perceptions of *meaning* were the central concern of this research, in this case, how musical identity formation was a process of meaning-making.

Within this qualitative approach, this study employed a strategy that "involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experiences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). This required a particular sensitivity to the participants' lived experience, defined as "children's lifeworlds and realities" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 2). By focusing on lived experiences, phenomenological research asks what it is like to have certain experiences, "exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning" (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

As applied to this study, children's lived experiences became the methodological site for a phenomenological exploration of musical identities and their formation. This phenomenological perspective offered insight into how children negotiate and make sense of their musical "lifeworlds," leading toward understanding of how these efforts contribute to and interact with their formation of musical identities. While each child's lived experience of musical identity formation is undoubtedly be unique, as components of his or her own subjective realities, the phenomenological view assumes that certain essences of shared experience will be revealed. These essences are important for applying research findings to practice: findings in regard to children's musical identities may suggest ways in which planned music teaching and learning may realize more appropriate and meaningful relevance to children's musical lives. In this respect, the study fulfills Van Manen's (1990) contention.

> The point of phenomenological research is to "borrow" other people's experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience. *We gather other people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves.* (p. 62)

While "phenomenology is the study of essences" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2003, p. vii), it is important to clarify how the word "essences" is to be construed. A phenomenological inquiry into essences does not correspond to "generalizable findings," nor do essences represent an ultimate core of meaning that is somehow "discovered." According to Van Manen (1990, p. 39), "the term 'essence' may be understood as a linguistic construction, a description of a phenomenon" that reveals anew the significance and nature of a lived experience, a certain way of being in the world.

> The phenomenological inquiry is not unlike an artistic endeavor, a creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life in a linguistic

> description that is both holistic and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and sensitive. (Van Manen, p. 39)

The resulting description is but one possible interpretation of a phenomenon and recognizes that "no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially richer or deeper description" (p. 31).

In this way, phenomenological inquiry is not a search for "facts" about a situation or solutions to a set of problems. Rather, phenomenological questions are always about the meaning and significance of certain phenomena. As Van Manen (1990) explains, "phenomenology is not concerned primarily with the nomological or factual aspects of some state of affairs; rather, it always asks, what is the nature of the phenomenon as meaningfully experienced" (p. 40). In the context of this research, the phenomenological concern is not *why* children possess musical identities, but rather *the nature* of their formation, and the *meaning* they have in children's lives.

The aim of phenomenological research is to "construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 19). This research was designed to explore the specific lifeworlds of children *living in and living through* music as they form musical identities, as "both the source and the object of phenomenological research" (p. 53). In other words, the nature of children's musical identity resides in their experience of musical identity.

Research Site and Music Contexts

Site. Drake Charter School (a pseudonym), located within a major Southeastern city in the United States, was a purposefully selected research site (Creswell, 2003, p.

185). Drake provided a unique setting to observe and engage children in what I termed "quasi-formal music learning environments" (described below). Established in 2000, Drake was the city's first public charter school built in connection with an urban community redevelopment program. This urban renewal project, including the school, has newly-built mixed-income housing, a range of recreational facilities, and access to social programs for the adults living in the community. At the time of my study, Drake served nearly 800 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8, with over 97% being African American. Approximately 80% of Drake's students were in the state's free or reduced lunch program. Under *No Child Left Behind* criteria for Adequately Yearly Progress, Drake had posted positive test score gains for three consecutive years, earning the "Distinguished" school rating.

What Drake lacks in demographic diversity, it makes up for in the enthusiasm and efforts toward providing a vibrant approach to children's education within a previously neglected neighborhood. These efforts include the music education program offered at the school, through partnering with a major southeastern research university and the *Sound Learning* program, which provided my initial entrée into the school in 2006. While the site limited the possibility of a demographically diverse sample of participants, I found through my pilot study that Drake offered a welcoming climate for my own research efforts and a site where I could establish the music learning research environment and context I had formulated from my pilot study findings.

Quasi-formal music learning environment. My conceptualization of "quasi-formal music learning" draws from the work of Lucy Green (2002, 2008), who explored the process of informal music learning within formal music learning contexts. The brief

explanation of formal and informal music learning that follows will clarify how I conceptualized a quasi-formal music learning context, and its relevance to my line of inquiry and research design.

Most western European and American schools, from elementary level through conservatory, typically subscribe to a traditional Western model of formal music education. This well-established model includes vocal and instrumental music instruction, based on written curricula and explicit teaching traditions delivered by "qualified" (i.e., degreed) professionals. Teaching strategies, curriculum content and values are derived from Western classical music pedagogy, emphasizing music "literacy" through the centrality of music notation and an accepted canon, including texts on music and pedagogy, and teaching materials.

Green (2002, 2008) contrasts this kind of formal music education typically found in schools with informal music learning practices. Informal music learning is common in all societies, but might be most easily recognized in the ways "popular" musicians (e.g., garage band musicians) acquire musical skills and knowledge. In informal learning, both the choice of vernacular music and "how to learn" are learner-driven. Music that is stylistically familiar is learned by self-teaching strategies, such as copying by ear and watching live musicians perform, and often takes place in collaborative contexts that include assistance from family or peers. While Green (2002, p. 5) notes that some musicians who have learned through informal practices find it "difficult or impossible to relate to formal music education practices," the two practices should not be considered mutually exclusive.

Quite often, real-world musicians step foot in both worlds. Such real-world practice suggests that blending formal and informal music learning practices in school settings may more closely reflect the ways in which music is authentically learned and practiced. The goal of bridging these practices aims at alleviating the dichotomy between the ways children develop musically outside of school and the formal learning programs that typify school music programs. The relationship between formal and informal learning may be particularly relevant to explore the interest of engaging students who reject formal in-school music education because they do not see its relevance to their musical lives in the world beyond school.

For purposes of my study, I am referring to *Sound Learning* and the musical playgroups as quasi-formal music learning contexts. Both *Sound Learning,* a visiting musicians program I coordinated at Drake, and the musical playgroup provided opportunities to engage in quasi-formal music learning. By blending formal and informal music learning, I endeavored to realize a kind of "middle ground," wherein I engaged and observed children in self-directed music learning opportunities as a kind of window (or, "performance stage") for the expression of their musical identities. Rather than limiting my observations to a "typical" formal music classroom, where children are more likely to be explicitly instructed via teacher-directed music activities, or to participate in learning tied directly to prescribed standards and outcomes, *Sound Learning* and the musical playgroup provided unique experiences that encouraged children's natural and spontaneous involvement.

Sound Learning. Initiated in 1999, *Sound Learning* is a curriculum-based music education program designed to enrich children's music learning, support the role of the

music specialist in the school, and advance the role of music in children's development and interdisciplinary learning. *Sound Learning* places professional and community musicians in local schools to provide four-visit residencies with small groups or classrooms of children in a specific grade level. In addition, students and teachers attend a symphony children's concert. As a site coordinator, I work with teachers and musicians to develop residencies that connect with students' sequential music and classroom learning. Rather than imposing a curriculum, *Sound Learning* emphasizes an organic approach that enhances and enriches the work that teachers and students are doing within their own grade levels. A goal of these collaborative residencies is to establish a community of practice within classrooms that begins with musical engagement and extends to music and academic learning.

As relevant to my research, *Sound Learning* blended formal and informal music learning practices. Live musicians engaged students through a variety of strategies. The visiting musicians shared information about music, its connection to the classroom curriculum, and most importantly, its connections to students' lives, in ways that might more closely resemble formal music teaching practices. This was accomplished in a musically rich environment in which students were able to witness first-hand the high levels of musical thinking and performance utilized by practicing musicians. The children were given opportunities to think and respond musically alongside the professionals in a model that resembles apprenticeship learning and more informal music practices.

The musical playgroup. The musical playgroup was an integral aspect of my data gathering. Its inclusion in my pilot study was informative in several ways. In my pilot

study, I learned that children were eager to talk about music and their musical lives, yet we reached a point of data saturation as our conversations became somewhat repetitive. Simply talking about music imposed constrictive limits to understanding the fullness of their musicality. It became clear that these children desperately needed and wanted time for immersion in active music making so that their musicality would be honored and recognized. Their "showing by doing" released the children from having to verbalize their musical knowledge and provided a space for the authentic expression of their musical selves. Playgroups provided an essential means for observing children's expression of musical identities in an informal music learning context. The musical playgroup was, above all, learner-driven, allowing participants to choose their own paths of musical engagement.

Participants

Consistent with qualitative research design, this study utilized purposeful sampling for selecting participants. My participants were chosen in order to "select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 46). The sample included four children from grade 4 at Drake School. In addition to children I identified as potential participants during the pilot study, the selection of additional participants was a collaborative effort. For the pilot study, I sought the assistance the instructional specialist for grades Pre-K-5 at Drake, who effectively identified participants based on the following criteria. There was an even mix of genders: two males and two females. The children were comfortable talking with an adult about their musical lives and interests. I did not equate interest with "talent," nor was I particularly concerned with including children who are considered "advanced" musically

or academically. Rather, I sought to include children who might reveal a range of responses and viewpoints about music, and who might offer a diversity of perspectives. I elected not to include the children from my pilot study in this research. Their inclusion would have necessitated longitudinal comparisons that were not suited to the shift in my research focus.

Data Collection and Analysis

According to Creswell (2003, p. 181), "qualitative research uses multiple [data collection procedures] that are interactive and humanistic. . . and they increasingly involve active participation by participants and sensitivity to the participants in the study." My methods for data collection were purposefully attuned to these requirements and were designed to provide a range of contexts and activities to explore the ways children *live in and live through* music as they form their musical identities. Participant observation contexts included *Sound Learning* visits, and close observations with individual participants. Group interviews and musical playgroups provided additional data collection contexts. Data collected from these four contexts occurred between February and May 2009. A complete calendar of activities is included in Appendix A, and a record of participant attendance is included in Appendix B. To analyze these findings, I utilized elements of existentialist (Morrisett, 1999; Holyroyd, 2001) and interpretative phenomenological analyses (Smith, 2004).

Participant observation. As DeWalt and DeWalt (2002, p. 2) describe, "the method of participant observation is a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by [qualitative researchers] who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied."

I utilized participant observation in two distinct contexts, aimed at collecting two specific types of data. The first included observations of the *Sound Learning* visits, in order to gain a general sense of content and activities presented, and to provide a basis for topics that were addressed in the interviews. I videotaped visits, using the camera's zoom lens to capture both wide angles of group interaction, as well as various children's specific responses. During the visits, I jotted notes that described the instruments and music presented. I later reviewed the videotapes, writing detailed field notes on the musicians' presentation and performances, and children's musical and verbal responses.

Close Observations. The second observation strategy included spending one full school day with each of the four participants, using Van Manen's (1990) lived experience research method of "close observation." Close observations provided a means for gaining access to children's lived experience, beyond what they sometimes were able to reveal in conversational interviewing.

> The best way to enter a person's lifeworld is to participate in it. Close observation involves an attitude of assuming a relation that is as close as possible while retaining a hermeneutic alertness to situations that allows us to constantly step back and reflect on the meaning of those situations. (p. 69)

From my pilot study, I learned that close observations were a useful method to establish rapport and trust with each individual, demonstrating my deep interest in who the children were and what they were doing in their everyday lives at school.

Close observations were full-day observations of individual participants, during which I spent a school day (8:00 AM-3:30 PM) with each child. The close observations included time in the general classroom setting, as well as in *specials* classes (such as dance, chorus and gifted classes), lunchtime and recess on the school playground. The close observations were spread out to occur between *Sound Learning* visits, interviews,

and musical playgroups. During close observations, I jotted notes throughout the day in regard to each participant's appearance, general personality, and classroom activities. Expanded field notes were written soon after the observations in an effort to retain as much detail as possible. I balanced my role as a researcher, between being an objective observer and being a friendly guest. During classroom activities, I attempted to remain as unobtrusive as possible, sitting a few feet away from the participant. Occasionally, I inquired about schoolwork the child was working on or assisted with a question, but my primary goal was simply to observe the child in the most naturalistic setting possible. During lunchtimes, I relaxed my role as a researcher, chatting and joking with the child and his or her classmates, and taking on a role of a friendly guest at the lunch table. As a participant romped on the playground or worked quietly at his or her desk, I talked with the participant's classroom teacher, seeking a balanced perspective of the child's behavior and personality. I reciprocated with teachers for the time spent in their classes and removing students for interviews and playgroups by offering to teach a music integrated lesson in each of the classrooms.

Close observations provided valuable one-on-one time with each child. Not only was this time well spent in establishing rapport, but it also afforded a balanced perspective that both confirmed and broadened my understanding of each child that might have been overlooked in the group research contexts. Close observations provided extended opportunities to observe and interact with each child, across various dimensions of their typical school-day experiences.

Interviews. O'Reilly (2005) recommends a planned discussion group (PDG) interviewing approach that was particularly suited to my research methods. A PDG is

suited to informal interviewing situations, kept small in order to be more manageable, thereby eliciting a great deal of spontaneous interaction between participants. O'Reilly (p. 136) found that a PDG approach was "faithful to how ideas are formed and shared in interaction," and is particularly effective when talking with young people. I utilized the PDG interviewing model in my pilot study and found it appropriate for not only eliciting individual responses, but also for facilitating interesting group reactions and interactions.

With PDGs as I model, I conducted four semi-structured group interviews, each lasting approximately forty-five minutes. These occurred as closely as possible following *Sound Learning* visits. I scheduled interviews to occur during the last hour of the school day as requested by the classroom teachers, since this was the time least likely to interfere with classroom activities. I videotaped each interview using a camera and tripod, positioning the equipment such that the group fell within the viewfinder. I jotted notes as children talked, often returning to probe topics in depth. Data from videotapes were fully transcribed.

I designed a set of guiding questions (see Appendix C) for each of the four interviews. These questions were purposefully broad, so as to encourage an informal conversational atmosphere with the children. Each interview began with a reflective discussion of the *Sound Learning* visits. I was less concerned about the participants' recalling discrete facts or terminology presented in the visits than about understanding their lived experience of the visits, such as their impressions of the music and the musicians' performance and how they related the *Sound Learning* experiences to their own musical interests and experience.

Our conversations gradually shifted toward exploring the participants' musical lives. During these discussions, I offered a broad topic to explore, such as musical involvement at home or at school, favorite songs or artists, or describing the "ideal" music class. Occasionally, a child talked about something that happened to come to mind, such as a song on a television show and focused in detail on the show itself. Taking a few notes discretetly throughout the interviews allowed me to guide the conversation back to its musical focus, and to return to specific comments or observations that merited probing in more depth.

Musical playgroups. As Van Manen (1990) indicates, art can be a source of lived experience:

> Non-discursive artistic material is also commonly used for phenomenological human science. Of course, each artistic medium (painting, sculpture, music, cinematography, etc.) has its own language of expression. Objects of art are visual, tactile, auditory, kinetic texts—texts consisting of not a verbal language but a language nevertheless, and a language with its own grammar. Because artists are involved in giving shape to their lived experience, the products of art are, in a sense, lived experiences transformed into transcended configurations. (p. 74)

Musical playgroups were an opportunity to engage participants in active musical experiences in order to observe how they gave shape to their lived experience of musical identity formation. While Van Manen focuses more on the artistic *products* as analytic material, I was more interested in the participants' artistic-musical *processes* and *reflections* that then became the analytic source material.

Playgroups lasted approximately forty-five minutes each, occurring as separate research events from interviews, on days following interviews with one exception. The fourth playgroup and interview were combined on the same day, as the close of the school year was quickly approaching. Playgroups were videotaped using the same

method as interviews, using a camera and tripod to frame the entire group. Data from videotape were fully transcribed.

For each of the four musical playgroups, I designed a set of guiding activities (see Appendix D). These guidelines were broad, as the purpose of the playgroups was to establish a quasi-formal music learning setting in which the children chose their approaches for individual and group engagement. I brought the same assortment of musical instruments for each playgroup: a small electronic keyboard, a set of bongo drums, a plastic bucket with drum sticks, slide whistles, rhythm eggs, finger cymbals, and various small shakers. I simply laid the instruments out on the table before the group and asked them "what would you like to do today?" The children self-selected instruments and negotiated between themselves when they wanted turns on other instruments. My role became less that of music educator and more of a musical observer. Sometimes I became a musical assistant if invited by the children, as they determined how to create and refine their own music. Because the children were eager to talk about their favorite pop/hip-hop songs and artist, I also added a "listening" component starting with the second playgroup. Listening was based on song selections requested by each child that I downloaded to my computer.

The children quickly warmed to the loose structure of the interviews and playgroups, as self- and group-negotiating entry points for conversation and musical participation. After the first interview, I sensed a turning point in the nature of the group's interactions. Interviews became more relaxed and conversational, with one child in particular posing his own questions to others in the group. I gave few explicit

instructions during the playgroups, asking the children what *they* wanted to do and offering verbal reinforcement for their accomplishments.

Figure 2 illustrates the data collection contexts in relation to my research questions and the *living in and living through* music continuum.

Supporting research question 1	**Supporting research question 2**	**Supporting research question 3**
How do children's musical identities evolve in relation to the range of experiences they have in performing, creating and understanding music?	How do children experience and perceive the place of quasi-formal music learning in relation to their musical identities?	What processes and components of music experience and learning contribute to children's musical identity formation, both in school and beyond?
Data collection contexts		
SL, musical playgroups, PDGs	*SL*, musical playgroups	PDGs, Close observations
◄ *Living in music*		*Living through music* ►
Primary research question		
In what ways do children's direct participation in music (*living in music*) and music experience in diverse context (*living through music*) reveal their musical identities?		

Figure 2: Data Collection Contexts and Research Questions

Data Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Grbich (2007) identifies three major "streams" of phenomenological inquiry (and their proponents): classical/transcendental (Husserl), existential (Merleau-Ponty) and hermeneutic (Heidegger, van Manen). While my inquiry was more closely aligned with Van Manen's (1990) philosophical and theoretical approach to lived experience research, Grbich (2007) recognizes that a great deal of overlap exists between the three major phenomenological streams. As such, more recent modifications of phenomenological approaches have developed. These modifications give new flexibility to phenomenological approaches. Practices that were once seen as essential in doing classical phenomenology, such as "bracketing" out the researcher's own experiences or disciplinary perspective, "may or may not occur depending on whether the 'essences' are seen as harder to separate out from the human generated discourses that constitute them" (p. 92). As such, postmodern notions such as *bricolage* inform newer phenomenological approaches to data gathering and analysis. I attempted such a *bricolage* in my data analysis procedures, drawing from interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2004; Eatough & Smith, 2006) and from examples of phenomenological analyses from the existentialist school (Morrisette, 1999; Holroyd, 2001; Devenish, 2002).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as advanced by Jonathan A. Smith's (2004) approach to qualitative research in psychology is well suited to phenomenological research that aims to explore in detail participants' personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that experience. IPA utilizes a double hermeneutic, in that "the participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social

world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world" (p. 40).

Three features characterize IPA research: being idiographic, inductive, and interrogative. An idiographic focus "gives primacy to the insider perspective on reality, involving a detailed analysis of one or only a few individual accounts rather than aiming to describe objective reality outside of the lived experience" (Millward, 2006, p. 319). Inductive technique allows for unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during analysis. Being interrogative means that results of in-depth analysis do not stand alone, but become a basis for constructive dialogue with extant literature. An interrogative approach aims to problematize or illuminate the assumptions in extant literature.

Eatough and Smith (2006) describe the data analysis process in IPA as progressing through a number of levels or stages. In addition, Morrisette (1999), Holroyd (2001), and Devenish (2002) use examples from their existential phenomenological research in order to make transparent the series of steps involved in phenomenological data analysis. I drew from these sources to construct a *bricolage* for my data analysis procedures.

In the preliminary stage of data, each of the verbatim transcriptions from interviews and the musical playgroups were read multiple times. As an initial open coding process, key words and significant statements were marked, using a different color highlighter for each participant. I wrote extensive comments within the transcripts, as a way to "converse" with the data and elucidate my initial impressions. I then constructed a table of axial codes, often using *in vivo* terms. Within each code, I indicated the data source (interview or playgroup number and page), participant, and

details to specific statements. The axial codes served as categories to link data from all the transcripts across all four participants.

Analytic and methodological memo writing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 123) began at this stage and continued throughout my data analyses and writing processes. I began with "stream of consciousness" memos for each child (e.g., "Who is Charles?"). I drew from all my data sources—interview and playgroup transcripts, and close observation and *Sound Learning* field notes—to sketch a broad picture of each child. I focused on unique aspects of each child in terms of his or her personality and musical behaviors.

Preliminary themes (Holyroyd, 2001; Morrisette, 1999) for each child emerged from the memos and I began the descriptive writing process on the individual level. I recognized important threads that were common across participants as I reflected on their descriptions and preliminary themes. I returned to memo writing to facilitate within and between person analyses. These memos focused on analyzing "music modalities" of singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating music, first at the individual and then at the group level. I then developed an additional set of preliminary themes called "dimensions." I framed the dimensions in relation to my supporting research questions.

I constructed a table, as recommended by Eatough and Smith (2006) in preparation for my final thematic synthesis. This table linked the important threads to descriptive preliminary themes and analytical dimensions. I wove threads, preliminary themes, and dimensions throughout an interrogative process of thematic reflection vis-à-

vis my primary research question. Figure 3 illustrates each step in my data analysis process and links these steps to the data sources and resultant analytical products.

Analytical stage	**Coding**	**Preliminary themes and threads**	**Dimensions and threads**	**Thematic synthesis**
Analytical process	Multiple readings of transcripts; comments; Open and axial coding	Memo writing: "stream of consciousness" at the individual level	Memo writing: "music modalities" at individual and group levels	Thematic reflection
Data Source	Playgroup and interview transcripts	All data sources	All data sources	All data sources
Analytical product	Table and list of codes	Preliminary sketches of each child; descriptive writing; thematic table	Thematic table	Three themes

Figure 3: Data Analysis Steps, Data Sources, and Analytical Products

Credibility, Quality, Researcher's Role, Ethical Considerations and Representation

Credibility

The paradigm debates between qualitative and quantitative inquiry have resulted in differences of opinion about what constitutes "good"—or, credible and valuable—research (Patton, 2002). Since these paradigms represent different ways of viewing the world, qualitative inquiry necessarily employs evaluative criteria and terminology as appropriate to the paradigm. It still remains the job of the researcher to disclose and implement rigorous, systematic procedural steps—from fieldwork to analysis—to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the work. This shifts the focus from positivistic concepts of generalizability and reliability toward goals such as trustworthiness, contribution to the dialogue, and quality of the text.

Creswell (2003) recommends several strategies to enhance the trustworthiness that were appropriate to my study. *Triangulate* different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. It is important to present *negative* or *discrepant information* that runs counter to themes. Because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account for the reader. The use of *peer debriefing* may enhance the accuracy of the account.

I triangulated my data sources by gathering data through participant observation (*Sound Learning* visit and close observation field notes), interview transcripts, and the participants' active musical processes and reflections (musical playgroup transcriptions). These data sources provided multiple contexts through which to understand children's musical identity formation as they *live in and live through music.* While I conceptualized

children's musical identity formation as a positive aspect of their overall learning and development, it was necessary to include any negative or discrepant perspectives regarding music participation and learning that the participants voiced during the course of my research. Finally, I utilized peer debriefing with *Sound Learning* coordinators and musicians, and teachers at Drake School to ensure the accuracy of my account.

My research aims to make a contribution to the dialogue in the field of music education. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) offer good advice that one's "contribution" should be grounded and contextual, while recognizing that qualitative research is often a blend of descriptive and conceptual writing. In these ways, I hope to contribute to the dialogue through research that is methodologically unique, deeply descriptive (with a particular focus on the voices of children), and adds to a specific place in the discourse of music education.

Methodologically, it was important to bring children's lived experiences to center stage in a way that privileged their voices and views of music: "Children can talk eloquently about their own musical experience when their creativity is cherished and musical beliefs are accepted and respected" (Burnard, 2000, p. 243). I strove for a holistic understanding of their lived experiences, by combining what was learned through conversation with how they enacted their musical identities through active musical engagement. Deeply descriptive writing was required to portray the richness of these lived experiences and the distinctiveness of their musical identities.

Too often, we speak of "the general music class," "the choir," "the band," or "the orchestra," with too little attention paid to understanding the diversity of individual musical identities and how these identities intersect within these socially constructed

groups. As Burnard (2000, p. 229) describes, "in current educational discourse, the lack of emphasis on what is specific to children's musical experience does little to acknowledge the diversity of musical worlds that characterize our classrooms." Adult assumptions of what our students "need" to know and learn in school music programs often overlook the meaning that musical engagement has in the lives of children. In a rush to fill students with musical knowledge and prepare them for the next performance, it is easy to lose sight of how each child is uniquely and individually musical. This research afforded the luxury of pausing, to become more of a learner than a teacher, in order to consider the pedagogical implications of children's musical identities, as Burnard (p. 243) recommends.

> If we truly value children's musical practices it may result in teachers becoming researchers and learners themselves as they observe and engage in the musical worlds of children. One consequence of this approach would be a school music pedagogy, which was transformative in nature because it resonated with the children's view of themselves.

Quality

The end result of phenomenological research is an interpretive description that aims at elucidating some aspect of the lifeworld—it resonates with our sense of lived life.

> A good phenomenological description is something that we can nod to, recognizing it as an experience that we have had or could have had. In other words, *a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience—is validated by lived experience and validates lived experience.* (italics in original, Van Manen, 1990, p. 27)

Van Manen further describes four evaluative criteria for phenomenological texts: these texts need to be *oriented, strong, rich,* and *deep.* First, the text needs to be *oriented*:

> It always needs to be understood as an answer to the question of how an educator stands in life, how an educator needs to think about children, how an educator observes, listens, and relates to children, how an educator practices a form of speaking and writing that is pedagogically contagious. (p. 151)

In addition, the text needs to be *strong* in its pedagogical interpretations of the phenomena, as "an answer to the question of how we should be and act with children" (p. 152). The text needs to be *rich* with thick description that engages, involves, and elicits a response from the reader. Finally, the text needs to be *deep*. "Depth is what gives the phenomenon or lived experience to which we orient ourselves its meaning and its resistance to our fuller understanding" (p. 152). Rich descriptions contribute to this dimension of depth, but depth also suggests an openness is required, as one struggles to overcome the "resistence" to exploring deeper meaning structures beyond the immediate experience. Van Manen proposes that "research and theorizing that simplifies life, without reminding us of its fundamental ambiguity and mystery, thereby distorts and shallows-out life, failing to reveal its depthful character and contours" (pp. 152-153). Rather, what the researcher is striving toward is not just a summative "presentation of findings," but a reflective text that reconciles "our experience of the present with a vision of what should be. . .a text that shows what it teaches" (p. 153).

Researcher's role

Merriam (1998) recommends an *emic* perspective for research concerned with understanding a phenomenon of interest from the participants' rather than from the researcher's perspective. Thus, an emic perspective was appropriate to my line of inquiry as I attempt to understand the participants' formation of musical identities, or how they understand who they musically are. This emic perspective aimed toward highlighting the voices and lived experiences of children's musical interactions, and valued what the participants say and do in relation to music.

At the same time, Patton (2002) recognizes that there is always an inevitable tension between emic and etic perspectives. While I could never completely be an "insider" to my participants' perspectives—I could not "enter into" their musical identities—the goal was to clarify how emic and etic tensions were managed for my audience and myself throughout the research project. Patton (p. 268) uses participant observation as an example to illustrate the balance of perspectives: "The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the setting as an insider while describing it for an outsider." The following discusses my subjectivities related to this research and serves to further acknowledge how my own biases were implicated within this project.

Subjectivities. Patton (2002) recommends that qualitative researchers "carefully reflect on, deal with, and report potential sources of biases and error" (p. 51) in attempts to produce work that is credible about the phenomenon being studied, as well as fair to the participants. Because I have been a music learner all of my life, and a music educator for much of my adult life, I recognize that music participation and learning makes valuable contributions to the social, emotional, and cognitive development of all people throughout their lives. My own background in music learning ranges from experiences in methods that were very formal (classical piano, school band, university chorus, school music teaching) to the more informal (garage band drumming, community music projects). Like Green (2008), I do not believe that one method is inherently superior, but rather that each has its strengths and merits that are complimentary to overall musicality. As such, I believe students benefit from a range of formal and informal learning experiences to support their musical growth and which celebrate their musical identities.

Ethical considerations

Patton (2002) recognizes the highly personal and interpersonal nature of qualitative inquiry. Methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviewing are utilized to bring the researcher in close contact with the "real worlds" of participants. As such, qualitative research "may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches" (Patton, p. 407). While it may be impossible to foresee every instance that could raise ethical questions throughout my study, I took precautionary steps to ensure my study is ethically sound.

Before data gathering began, I received permission from Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board. This included submitting signed letters of consent from the administration of Drake Charter School, parental permission forms, and verbal consent scripts for the children. I described the purpose and procedures of the research project as well as the methods for insuring confidentiality by securing field notes and transcripts on my password-protected computer, and videotapes in locked cabinets. Assurances were made that the data were kept confidential, only being viewed by my dissertation advisor, the *Sound Learning* site coordinators, and myself. The use of pseudonyms furthered the protection of confidentiality. In addition, the participants were informed that they could chose to withdraw from the research project at any time, and were informed of the possible risks and benefits of their participation.

Representation

As this research project was intended to result in my dissertation, the primary audience is my dissertation committee. Because of this, the overall work is represented in the conventional dissertation format. Within the work itself, interpretation involved

the development of themes that emerged from the observation and interview data. These themes, supported and contrasted by the theoretical literature, were represented by a series of portraits of four individuals.

Bringing the students' voices to the forefront was a major goal of this research project, and representation will involve portraying "the informants as they see themselves" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 203). While my own interpretation is necessary, I stayed as close as possible to what Denzin (2004) calls descriptive realism. This is a style of writing in which the author "attempts to stay out of the way and to allow the world being described to speak for itself. . .(in a) multivoiced story" (p. 458).

CHAPTER 4

FOUR CHILDREN AT DRAKE CHARTER SCHOOL

I have been to Drake Charter School countless times. How did I not notice the owl? These were my thoughts as I arrived at the school to begin data collection, parking at the rear of the lot that had been filled much earlier by the cars belonging to full-time teachers and staff, another school day already well on its way. I struggled to carry my gear across the parking lot: a computer bag on one shoulder, a camera bag on the other, a tripod tucked under one arm, and all the while holding a tattered cardboard box full of small musical instruments with a small electronic piano precariously stacked on top. Nearly out of breath from my trek, I crossed the semi-circular bus lane adjacent to the landscaped courtyard in front of the school. A green metal awning covered the straight sidewalk that led to the gleaming glass and metal front doors. *I'm almost there! Don't drop anything!* I glanced up. On the corner of the awning sat something I never noticed before: a small sculpture of an owl, appearing proud and serious, the symbol of wisdom and the keeper of spirits. *If you please, Mr. Owl, could you fly down here and help me carry some of this stuff?*

Perhaps the owl had always been there, quietly watching as I visited Drake Charter School many times before this to conduct my pilot study or serve as the site coordinator for the *Sound Learning* program. But noticing the owl drove home the fact that this was a *new day* in my relationship with Drake and its students. In this chapter, I describe the journey of data gathering that continually opened my eyes to all that was new within an already familiar setting. I begin by introducing the four participants in my study—Landon, Keisha, Charles and Tonya—through general sketches of their

appearances and personalities. Next, I describe the research setting of Drake Charter School and the places within that offered physical space for data collection. I conclude with a description of activities that occurred in *Sound Learning* visits. Those visits are detailed within this chapter, as they provided a basis for music participation, learning, and subsequent discussion points in interviews. However, these visits were not the primary data source. Close observations, interviews, and playgroups provided the bulk of my data vis-à-vis my research questions. The children's active musical engagement in these contexts will be described in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

The Participants

Introducing Landon, Keisha, Charles and Tonya

As described in Chapter 3, purposeful sampling criteria guided my selection of two boys and two girls from the 4th grade. I sought to identify children who were comfortable talking to me as an "adult/teacher," who displayed an interest in music and who might offer a range of responses, viewpoints and perspectives about music. Based on these criteria, participant selection was a collaborative process. During my pilot study and frequent visits to the school as a *Sound Learning* site coordinator, I identified two potential participants: Landon and Keisha. Through conversations with classroom teachers, Charles and Tonya were additionally recommended as participants. Finally, I spoke with the associate principal to confirm the four students' participation. Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the identities of the children.

Landon, Keisha, Charles, and Tonya were all on a first-name basis as passing acquaintances. Landon and Keisha were the only two children who shared the same classroom with "Teacher A," but they seemed no more "friendly" with one another than

with any one else in the group of participants. Charles was from "Teacher B's" classroom and Tonya was from "Teacher C's" classroom. The children shared a familiarity with one another due to being in the 4th grade together, yet there were no pre-established close bonds of friendship between them. The group came together on equal footing: just as I was getting to know them, they too were they getting to know each other a little better throughout the course of my data collection activities. The following sections will introduce Landon, Keisha, Charles, and Tonya by presenting a brief sketch of each child. Using broad strokes, the sketches offer an initial impression of each child's appearance and personality, and illustrate the circumstances under which I first met each one

Meet Landon. Landon was a slender boy, shorter than most of his peers in the 4th grade. Although required to wear the requisite school uniform, Landon often wore an article of clothing that reflected his individuality. For example, one day he wore a sizeable black and silver cross that dangled from a metal beaded chain. This did not appear to be an expensive piece of jewelry, but it seemed conspicuously masculine on his young, lean frame. Landon needed no extra accoutrements: his boyish good looks complimented his friendly but bashful smile and warm, deep-brown eyes. Landon had a beautiful caramel complexion and dark brown hair that he kept neatly buzzed short.

Landon's persona shifted from being quiet and contemplative one moment, then bubbly and talkative the next, as if he had an internal light switch. In the "off position," he sat quietly, listening and watching what happened around him, and waiting to choose the exact moment to engage in a conversation or an activity. In the "on position," he was excited, opinionated, and intensely focused. At these times, he spoke rapidly and with a

great deal of self-assuredness. In fact, he often spoke so fast that I struggled to keep up with what he was saying even after reviewing videotape. I often sensed that his mind clicked along at a rate that far out-paced his ability to clearly articulate his thoughts. Landon's academic achievements placed him in the combined 3rd and 4th grade gifted class, along with about twenty girls and only one other boy. Bright and intuitive, Landon liked to decide for *himself* when he was ready to be meaningfully invested in a specific activity. Like a flash of light, what would first appear as his disinterested detachment often transformed into animated zeal.

Landon and I met completely by chance while I was gathering data on Shawna, a girl who participated in my pilot study. I observed a dance class, trying to remain inconspicuous by sitting on the floor of the room next to the door. Landon happened to be sitting next to me, waiting to make his entrance into the dance yet fully engaged in watching his peers. I initiated a casual conversation with him, from which he offered an in-depth description of the dance that unfolded before us. Suddenly, he bolted to the center of the dance space to take his turn, leaving me impressed by both his intense focus and candor in conversation.

Meet Keisha. Keisha was a sizable girl in both height and weight. She towered above most of her peers, perhaps a reflection of her physically developing ahead of her classmates. Keisha had a round face and full cheeks, with a glowing deep brown complexion. Her dark eyes flashed, and I sometimes wondered if they held a bit of mischievousness behind their warmth. She often wore her hair neatly pulled into a ponytail and tied with a perfectly pressed plaid ribbon that matched her school uniform

colors of green and tan. Small gold hoop earrings and a petite silver and pink purse contrasted her otherwise schoolgirl-styled attire.

I first noticed Keisha—or did she first notice me?—during my pilot study data gathering. As I made my intermittent visits to the school, Keisha always made a point to say a few cordial words. She invariably walked up to greet me with a smile and a pleasant "hello," and often asked a few questions about what I was doing at the school. As with Landon, I was both impressed and curious as to learn more about this polite and affable girl. But unlike Landon, Keisha seemed to go out of her way to interact with me. Her demeanor was less of one craving my attention, and more a quiet model of impeccable manners and genuine inquisitiveness.

Throughout the course of dissertation data collection, the contrasts I began to notice in Keisha became all the more vivid. As we interacted, she continued to be gracious and polite, appearing mature beyond her years with her ladylike purse never far from reach. But in the blink of an eye, Keisha shifted from her persona as a demure young lady to that of a giggling, teasing young girl as she tickled a classmate or played "Rock, Paper, Scissors" with a friend. On the cusp of adolescence, yet not ready to abandon the enchantments of childhood, Keisha delicately balanced the dualities of her emerging maturity with what I perceived as an ostensible ease.

Meet Charles. Charles was a tall and stout though not overweight. With his broad and developing frame, his appearance elicited imagines of a future football player. He appeared as a rough-and-tumble boy, wearing baggy cuffed shorts and loosely laced high-top sneakers with no socks. His shoes were well broken-in, as though he spent many days running and playing in them. His complexion was soft and velvety, much like

the color of coffee after it is drenched in cream. His full and round cheeks blushed with a rosy glow. With intensely focused dark brown eyes, his countenance often appeared serious and stoic.

Charles's dark brown hair was always clipped close, buzzed with patterns that changed every few weeks. The designs were variations on a zigzag pattern, consisting of thin, angular lines, always precise and neat. I noticed a certainly subtlety to the designs: unique enough to catch the eye, but not overly flashy, much like Charles's personality. Charles presented himself to his peers, teachers and me in a calm and measured manner. He rarely smiled or burst into laughter, seemingly guarding himself from saying or doing anything that might be disruptive.

Charles was a new student at Drake. When I approached his classroom teacher, Teacher B, for a participant recommendation, we discussed my research and the participant criteria. Looking over her roomful of students busy at their desks, she considered carefully and then focused on Charles. "He's a really nice boy," she said. "He'll do whatever you ask." Somewhat puzzled, I wondered how a boy who "did whatever I asked" might function within the quasi-formal contexts of the data collection activities. I took a few moments to chat with Charles, attempting to gauge his interest in being in the study. He listened intently, and in his calm and measured way, he showed neither excitement nor aversion to being a participant. Given this neutral stance, I determined that his reserve would offer both personality contrast and balance to the more candid demeanors of Landon and Keisha.

Meet Tonya. Lean and tall, standing a head above most of her classmates, Tonya had long, slender arms and legs, and the physique of a long-distance runner or a dancer.

She moved with free and easy grace, bursting with an energy that suited her age. Her deep complexion was the color of French roast coffee. Tonya's facial expressions were dramatic and vividly animated. Her eyes widened with intensity to emphasize her opinion, and she deeply furrowed her brow to show her disagreement. Her frequent smiles lit up her face, her eyes twinkling brightly. She wore her hair in tidy, intricate cornrows that hugged the top of her head, with short lengths of tiny braids extending down the nape of her neck.

Tonya was bubbly and outgoing. She enthusiastically participated in classroom activities, often blurting out answers, eager to be involved. She collaborated with her table of classmates, encouraging them to solve problems quickly and as a team. Her quick smile and carefree giggle made her appear perpetually happy and content. Her childlike demeanor turned on a dime when she discussed topics of African-American history, emerging as a serious orator on subjects such as Harriet Tubman and "the days of slavery."

Unlike Charles, Tonya was not new student to the school, but I had not seen her in my previous work there. When I approached her teacher, Teacher C, in the same way I approached Charles's teacher, the teacher immediately recommended Tonya: "Tonya would be great. She *loves* music!" I was uncertain if this meant Tonya had extensive musical training or if she was simply enthusiastic about music. Either way, I was excited to meet her and discover more. As I walked over to Tonya's desk, she slowly raised her head above the book she was reading and focused her eyes on me. Her smile started faintly and continued to grow when I asked if she might like to be included in our group

of music-makers. Tonya nodded repeatedly, seeming to want me to realize her excitement about being asked to participate.

Concluding Participant Selection

With participant selection complete, I checked with the associate principal for final approval before distributing parent permission letters and verbal assent procedures. Although I began data collection barely acquainted with Landon, Keisha, Charles and Tonya, I felt excited to move forward and confident that each child's distinct personality held the potential for dynamic group interaction.

The Research Settings

Drake Charter School

"Good morning, it's a beautiful day at Drake Charter School. How may I help you?" The administrative assistants at front desk used this friendly greeting to answer the phones, and they often greeted me similarly, being the first people I saw as I entered the school. Having worked with many of the teachers and students through *Sound Learning* since 2006, I was a familiar face. After signing in on the "visitors" log, I was free to pursue my tasks for the day. This section of the chapter begins with a panoramic view of the school and its surroundings. It then focuses on *finding a space within the space,* describing the specific areas that I used for data collection.

Drake Charter School is situated within a nook of impeccably maintained green space, tucked inside the city's oldest and historically notable golf course. The surrounding area was a formerly impoverished urban neighborhood with bleak public housing complexes, now dotted with new apartments and town homes. This new construction is considered "mixed income" combining subsidized housing and market

rate rentals. With their Colonial-style architecture, these new brick and wood dwellings are a natural counterpart to their setting within the ambling hills of the golf course. In the mornings, large groups of children walk on the sidewalks leading from their homes, passing the early-bird golfers teeing off, making their way toward Drake Charter School.

Drake Charter School is a stunning example of modern architecture, far removed from the looks of the traditional "little red school house." A lofty atrium with an arching span of glass and stainless steel trimmed in clean white lines anchors the entryway. This central space seems to float between the wings of two-story, white stone classroom complexes extending on either side. The layout of the school is a square, and one can walk from the central entryway all the way around the building. A central courtyard is accessible through various doors on the main level. In the center of the courtyard is a curving concrete amphitheater-like basin surrounded by grass, shrubbery and small trees. At the far end of the courtyard sit several raised-bed vegetable gardens holding the springtime starts of lettuce, carrot and bean plants.

Drake is a Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade school. All students enter through the main entry on the south side of the building and eat their lunches in the cafetorium situated in the southwest corner of the school. Middle school students, dressed in the school uniform, either pale blue or vivid red golf shirts and khaki slacks or skirts, find their lockers and classrooms on the west wing of the school. The east wing of the building holds classrooms for Pre-K through 5th grade students, who wear a school uniform of deep evergreen golf shirts and khaki slacks or skirts. A playground for these younger students is accessible from the main level of the east wing. The playground is surrounded by a high metal fence and includes large, grassy areas as well as modern

playground equipment for climbing and sliding. All grade-levels of students attend general music, band, chorus, dance, and gifted education classes in the dedicated classrooms in the north wing, where a large computer lab is also located. A public fitness center that includes a swimming pool and small gymnasium is accessible via the south wing and is used by Drake students for their physical education classes.

Finding a Space Within the Space

Drake Charter School is a modern school facility, but like many schools, it is bursting at the seams with students: thus, simply finding a suitable space for interviews and playgroups presented a constant challenge. Our group needed a space that was separate from a classroom, where we would neither be distracted by, nor be a distraction to, others in the school. There were few available places within the school for one-on-one or small group interaction, and potentially suitable places were generally dedicated to other uses. As I arrived at the school for each of the scheduled interviews and playgroups, I quickly gathered the children from their respective classrooms and together we sought out a space happened to be available that day. These various spaces included the media center, the media center conference room and the teacher workroom.

The media center. Though the media center was reserved and utilized for all *Sound Learning* visits, I also used this space for the first interview and the first playgroup. The media center is an architecturally dramatic space, with its arching blonde wood ceiling and exposed metal support structures. It is a centrally located space that flows from the main foyer and hallway. A series of glass panels demarcate the main hallway from the media center, lending airiness and openness to the two spaces. The media center's back wall is a series of glass panels that look out to the central courtyard.

All of the glass and openness help flood the media center with natural light, even on overcast days.

Blonde wooden bookshelves sit a few feet within the glass walls, creating a maze in which children sometime chase each other up and down the rows in quick games of tag or hide-and-seek. Light brown carpet covers the floor, helping to deaden the sound in the vast space. In the central space between the bookshelves there are two rows of large, round wooden tables and chairs. One corner of the room is dedicated to smaller children, with shorter tables, chairs and bookshelves filled with picture books. We utilized one of the large table and chair sets for our first interview and the children's corner for our first playgroup.

The media center conference room. Acutely aware that the children's active music making in the playgroups might disturb media center visitors, I asked the center specialist about a small conference room. With her permission, I utilized this room for the third interview and the third playgroup. Self-contained and sound proof, the room is entered through a door from the media center and has two windows—one facing out into the media center and one facing into the school's main hallway. On days of *Sound Learning* visits, the children were delighted to observe their *Sound Learning* musicians packing up in the media center, as we talked about their experiences during that day's visit.

A large rectangular conference table occupies the center of the conference room, with bookshelves along one wall and a white board mounted to the other. The table fills the bulk of the room's space, with barely more than a foot or two of space to maneuver around it. Lacking space for locomotor movement, the children remained seated around

the table during our activities in this room. As they listened to or created music in this space, the children bounced in their chairs, rhythmically moving their bodies or nodding their heads.

The teacher workroom. When the above spaces were not available, we utilized an upstairs teacher workroom. This space was used for the second and fourth interviews as well as the second and fourth playgroups. This space is self-contained, situated off one end of the long hallway near the children's classrooms. A modicum of natural light spills in from large windows along one end that looks out into the media center. The room is stuffed to overflowing with several rows of tall metal bookshelves, brimming with instructional materials. A long countertop and shelves line one wall and a large copying machine sits in the corner, frequently used by students and teachers.

A low rectangular table and short chairs are squeezed between the bookshelves and countertop. This table afforded enough space to spread out the assortment of musical instruments I provided for the playgroups. Much like the media center conference room, the teacher workroom offered limited space for locomotor movement. During musical activities, the children primarily moved while seated. In the fourth playgroup, Tonya and Keisha managed to find enough space at the end of the table for spontaneous dancing.

Summary of Research Settings

Whether it was the media center, the media center conference room, or the teacher workroom, all the children eagerly began the tasks at hand. The space itself seemed of little concern, as the children quickly focused on making, creating, listening to, and talking about music during the interviews and playgroups.

Sound Learning Visits

Landon, Keisha, Charles, and Tonya attended *Sound Learning* visits along with their classmates and classroom teachers. The classroom teachers scheduled *Sound Learning* visit dates in collaboration with the visiting musicians and me. *Sound Learning* visits were scheduled during two-hour blocks of instructional time, and two classes were paired for attendance purposes, resulting in groups of about forty students each. The visits were formatted such that two classes attended a visit lasting approximately forty-five minutes, and after a short musicians' break, the next two classes attended a repeat presentation of the same program. This format insured that all 4th grade students were engaged with the same music and concepts, and splitting the classes into two smaller groups provided a more intimate performance setting for interactions between children and the visiting musicians, a percussion trio.

The following subsections begin with a descriptive snapshot of a *Sound Learning* visit, contextualizing the larger residency goals and my role as participant observer. I then turn my focus to characteristic features of the visits, including descriptions of the instruments, the music, the musicians' rapport and musicianship, and the qualities of musical engagement.

Snapshot of a visit. The media center is cleared of its large tables and chairs, and students find spaces to sit on the carpeted floor. Beyond the rows of bookshelves, the far end of the space is packed with percussion instruments, with larger instruments resting on the floor and smaller instruments piled atop tables. The three musicians, John, Scott and Karen, position themselves around the group of eagerly awaiting students who talk softly to each other and point to various instruments placed just inches away from where they sit. John stands facing the students at the top of the space, with Karen and Scott

positioned to the right and the left sides of the rows of students. A plastic 5-gallon bucket sits in front of each musician, turned bottom-side-up and attached to a metal stand. The musicians stand poised and serious behind their drums, with their arms thrust out rigidly in front of their bodies and their hands firmly grasping pairs of drum sticks. John lets out a few shrill whoops, and the drumming begins.

At first, all three drummers are synchronized, playing rapid and thunderous patterns that evoke the sounds of military drumming. Suddenly, the patterns seem to ricochet around the room, as each musician passes around a quick pattern and the music moves from the front to left to right of the space. This echoing affect starts slowly and gains momentum. When the rebounding pattern hits top speed, the students' heads are whirling as they focus their eyes and ears on the ever-shifting source of sound. The students are enveloped within a flurry of sound that circulates faster and faster around them, and the whole of the space is alive as the drumming reaches a dizzying crescendo. After unleashing a few raucous shouts, John performs several high leaps in the air with his knees nearly touching his chest and signals the next drumming pattern. The musicians are back in sync again, this time playing a quieter, jumpy rhythm by tapping their sticks on the outer rims of their makeshift drums. The pattern grows even softer, until all three musicians stop together, grasping their sticks with their arms crossed over their chests. Each musician bows deeply, and the students erupt in giggles and applause. The students become hushed and focused as Scott begins to explain that what they just heard was Japanese Taiko drumming. While Scott described this style of drumming as a traditional means of communication, Karen and John demonstrated short patterns that were used to alert villagers of a fire or to warn them of an approaching army's attack.

Scott summarized this segment of the visit by saying, "in these ways, drums were used to tell the story."

This introduction to Japanese Taiko drumming as a traditional means of communication was a short segment within a larger *Sound Learning* residency. The multi-curricular foci of the residency were a collaborative effort, with ideas exchanged between the visiting musicians, the classroom teachers, and myself as the program's site coordinator. Planning for the residency began by discussing the various curricular areas the students would be studying and designing a broad focus question: "How can the expressive and illustrative qualities of music and sound be used to tell stories?" This question was explored in the classroom curricula in relation to Social Studies (U.S. History from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War), Language Arts (descriptive writing), and Science (the science of sound waves and vibrations). Throughout the series of four *Sound Learning* visits, the trio of musicians explored these areas of curricula through a range of musical examples.

I maintained a participant observer role, balancing my dual positions as both site coordinator for the program and researcher. As a site coordinator, I coordinated scheduling of visits and worked with teachers and musicians on learning goals. During visits, I sat alongside students and teachers, offering comments and observations regarding the music and material being shared, asking the musicians to repeat a salient point or posing my own question to the students to assess their understanding. Both in preparation and during visits, the site coordinator functions as a liaison among teachers, musicians, and children, to assure focus on standards-related learning objectives. Immediately following each visit, I wrote fieldnotes to use as reference points during the

planned discussion group interviews. I observed Landon, Keisha, Charles, and Tonya during the visits, but I did not interact any differently with them at this time than with the other children in attendance.

Although each visit is unique, several features are characteristic of a typical visit. The following subsections provide descriptions of the prominent features that were consistent throughout all of the visits incorporated into my research study, including the instruments, the music, the musicians' rapport and musicianship, and the qualities of student engagement.

The instruments. For each visit, the three musicians brought a stunning array of instruments that provided a visual feast for the eyes. The musicians varied the assortment of instruments from visit to visit, offering students something new to pique their interests. The central focal point of the semi-circular arrangement consisted of a larger piece of equipment, such as a standard trap set. An electronic keyboard sat to one side, providing a melodic element for much of the music presented. Over the course of the four visits, the musicians used a variety of multicultural instruments, including Chinese drums, gongs and temple blocks, Trinidadian steel pan drum, African djembes, shekeres and thumb pianos, a trapezoid-shaped hammered dulcimer, Irish drums and spoons, Native American flutes and drums, and brightly painted Australian didgeridoos and click sticks.

The musicians also provided a hodgepodge of instruments for the students to play. These smaller instruments were spread out on tables that the musicians covered with bright cloths featuring African motifs or batik prints. Some instruments were more traditional, such as various sizes of wooden tambourines and jingle bells. Other "instruments" were less traditional, as the musicians collected all manner of kitchen

implements to use for rhythm activities. These recycled goods include metal cheese graters, egg beaters, small frying pans, pairs of spoons taped together, and old-fashioned washboards. Assorted drum sticks, small wooden beaters, metal brushes and spoons were provided so students could scrape and strike the instruments. All of the instruments showed years of use: some tambourines are missing a few jingles or had torn heads, and the kitchen implements were worn with scratches and dents. Though these were neither expensive nor elaborate instruments, the students became excited the moment the musicians handed them musicmakers, and they immediately began shaking, tapping, or scraping.

The music. With their large assemblage of instruments, the musicians performed a diverse range of primarily instrumental music. From Dixieland jazz to multicultural folk tunes to Caribbean Calypso, each visit included eight to ten short songs and medleys, each piece lasting no longer than a minute or two. Some selections were purely percussive, as when the musicians rotated through a variety of African instruments. Other selections combined percussive with melodic instruments such as the keyboard, hammered dulcimer or steel pan drum. Classical music was re-imagined in unusual ways, such as an arrangement of Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* played on the steel pan drum or a segment of Handel's *Water Music* played on the glass harmonica. Most often, the music highlighted folk tunes of various cultures played on authentic instruments. The visits often had a travelogue feel, as the musicians discussed an instrument's country of origin or the cultural background of a particular piece of music. Overall, the musicians balanced verbal information with musical performance in fast-paced yet engaging presentations.

Each visit featured two to three musician-led activities that involved the students in active music making. These ranged from simplistic "play-along" activities to more guided experiences such as creating a rainforest soundscape. For example, children were given tambourines to "play along" with the musicians during an Italian *Tarantella*, and the kitchen implements were used to recreate the characteristic "engine room" sound during a Calypso piece. During these "play along" activities, the musicians give few explicit instructions regarding what to play beyond perhaps accenting a certain beat or following a short rhythm pattern.

At times, I observed the student participation activities taking on a free-for-all quality, as students would bang, rattle or shake their instruments with complete abandon, paying little attention to what the musicians were playing. Other times, I observed small groups of students synchronize their playing with one another, by swaying together on a steady beat or improvising a matching rhythm pattern. This spontaneous creativity was particularly apparent in visit two, when a group of four boys developed a "tap, tap, scrape" pattern that was rhythmically appropriate to the "engine room" feel of the Calypso. The students' attention was more focused during the guided experiences, as the musicians led the creation of soundscapes by providing narration and cueing the students' instrumental contributions. Overall, I observed these hands-on activities as an exuberant release for the students: attention to musical detail was less apparent than making a fervent musical contribution, for a few brief moments, in the manner of each student's choosing.

Musicians' rapport and modeling musicianship. Each of the musicians, Scott, Karen and John were highly skilled, with many years of performing and teaching

experience. Throughout the four visits, each musician modeled his or her unique style of musicianship and revealed personal interests in and connections to music while interacting with the children. Scott modeled his musicianship by sharing his interests in musical terminology and knowledge of multicultural musics; Karen modeled her musicianship by encouraging musical curiosity; and John modeled his musicianship through sheer enthusiasm for the act of making music.

Scott had an encyclopedic knowledge of music, instruments and terminology. Much of the material presented in the visits was the result of his extensive travels and reflected his personal interest and training in playing music from diverse cultures. His earnest teaching approach focused on the informative aspects of the music and instruments. For example, during visit one, he offered the name of the hammered dulcimer in several languages and asked the students to repeat the names in each language. The students politely obliged, yet seemed more interested in hearing and watching Scott masterfully play the instrument.

Karen had a more “teacherly” personality. She offered less verbal input than Scott or John, but when she talked with the students, she was purposeful and direct. She often engaged the students with a question or asked them to make a prediction. In visit three, Karen challenged the students to “think like scientists doing an experiment,” asking the students to make aural predictions regarding how the sound of the talking drum might change when she squeezed the outer strings. While Karen’s teaching approach often seemed serious, she still managed to reveal a fun or unexpected side of her personality when she jammed on a boogie-woogie beat on the trap drum set.

John's larger-than-life personality was reflected in his engaging performance style. A vividly animated performer, he smiled, laughed and danced about the space, making his skillful musicianship look easy. John's unique rapport with the students built upon the ways he related his personal connection to music. He often introduced an instrument with an anecdote that included a child's perspective. In visit three, John introduced the kalimba (thumb piano) with an analogy:

> You know how sometimes when you are riding in a car and pass the time by playing your hand held video game? Children in Africa do this with the kalimba. They carry it with them as they walk to school and play music to pass the time.

John's joyous approach to music making brought to life a musician's relationship with music that extended far beyond the notes on the page. John demonstrated that music is accessible, rather than a complex set of skills that are beyond a child's ability or understanding.

Scott, Karen and John each had unique approaches to interacting with the students, bringing a natural sense of rapport that reflected on them as individuals, musicians and teachers. Their individual strengths and personalities complemented each other as they meshed as a performing group. Despite the fact that they have years of experience presenting similar material hundreds of times, they approached each visit with fresh excitement and enthusiasm, so as to never seem stale or over-rehearsed.

Student engagement. Students remained engaged throughout each of the visits as the musicians balanced enough verbal information with plenty of music. The musicians maintained a lively pace, switching to different instruments and music for segments lasting about ten minutes. Students were attentive and focused, eagerly anticipating each new sight and sound. Music often elicited a physical response from the students:

nodding their heads as a tempo increased to Native American flutes and drums; patting, clapping and bobbing to African drums; and wide-eyed amazement as the sound of a Chinese gong gently wafted through the room.

To maintain momentum, the musicians asked students to save most of their questions and comments for the end of the visits. Often, the students asked to hear specific instruments again, as if they wished to linger a little longer with the musicians and their instruments:

> "Could we hear the biggest rain stick you have?"
>
> "I want to hear the monkey drum again!"

Students also sought a deeper understanding about the instruments and how they were played:

> "In West Africa, do they have any more instruments than just the drums?"
>
> "Why is there a string on the talking drum's beater stick?"
>
> "Can *Chopsticks* be played on the steel pan drum?"
>
> "Your hand moved so fast when you played the bouron. Were you really hitting it?"

Most intriguing were the student comments that made connections between what was presented in the visits to something in their own musical lives:

> "I played the cymbal in band on that second-to-last song you played (*When the Saints Go Marching In*)!"
>
> "I watched a show about China and someone played the trapezoid-shaped instrument with his fingers. Do you ever do that?"

> "I played the recorder at my old school. What were the instruments you played that were like that (penny whistles)?"

Even after each visit concluded with one final song, the students and teachers continued to converse with the musicians, asking more questions and observing the instruments up close.

CHAPTER 5

MUSICAL PORTRAITS:

LANDON, KEISHA, CHARLES, AND TONYA

> Some of my favorite songs are my own songs. The songs I make up myself.—Tonya

In the first interview, Tonya sang one her favorite songs *a cappella.* It was an original creation entitled "Whammy Award Liar," a love song about a girl's infatuation with a dishonest boy. As she lingered within the smooth, melodic phrases of the song's verse, her voice suddenly shifted to strong, declamatory staccato notes for the chorus. For a few fleeting moments, I was no longer in the media center at Drake Charter School. Tonya had invited me into her musical world by singing one of her favorite songs, her *own* song.

This chapter presents musical portraits of Landon, Keisha, Charles, and Tonya, four unique children who shared portions of their musical worlds with me. Musical playgroups provided contexts for observing their active musical engagement, and interviews served as settings for children to reflect on *Sound Learning* visits and describe their musical lives within and beyond school. Close observations offered glimpses into the children's everyday lives at school. I begin each portrait with poem that resonates with how I grew to understand each child, as a reflective device recommended for phenomenological writers by Van Manen (1990).

Landon: The Musical Nomad

When you turn the corner
And you run into *yourself*
Then you know you have turned
All the corners that are left.

Langston Hughes's (1994) poem "Final Curve" describes the ongoing journey of self-discovery. Each turn around every corner contributes to one's construction of self. As I grew to understand Landon, I felt as though he was on such a journey, guided by an innate curiosity to "turn the corners" of the musical landscape that surrounded him. I began to think of Landon as a musical nomad who independently explored how music is constructed, inquired about others' musicality, and thought in complex ways in and about music. While the term "nomad" might imply a sense of haphazard wandering, Landon blazed a path of musical exploration with thoughtful purpose that resonated with his ever-developing sense of self.

Landon missed our first scheduled interview because of a quiz his classroom teacher would not allow him to miss. As I began my second scheduled but first actual interview with Landon, he spoke to me in a confident, matter-of-fact voice about his "future" in music.

> Landon: I could make a living. . .doing piano or drums.
> Michelle: Is that what you want to do for your job when you grow up?
> Landon: Maybe, it's like, my second choice.
> Michelle: What's your first choice?
> Landon: An architect. Or a basketball player.

Landon impressed me with both his mature sense of self-assuredness and his childlike dreams for the future. But I admit to a tinge of sadness when Landon added that music was his second career choice. I found myself musing over how this child was thinking about himself musically, about the place of music in his life as he matured, about how various influences might be playing into his current thoughts about his life as an adult. I also felt concerned that Landon's music education program at school consisted only of

the four *Sound Learning* visits he attended. The school offered no general music classes for his 4th grade class and he did not participate in any of the school's select ensembles.

As a musical nomad, Landon vicariously surveyed the school music landscape through his peers' descriptions of their experiences. With genuine curiosity, Landon listened to Keisha describe how her chorus group practiced singing in the school's stairwell. Landon avidly exclaimed "Oh! There's an echo in there!" as though he actually heard what all those voices sounded like within the windowed and cinderblock chamber. Landon was equally impressed when Keisha sang a snippet of her chorus piece "Ode to Composers" during the third musical playgroup. Keisha stumbled over the lyrics, consisting of reciting a series of classical composer's names set to the melody of "Ode to Joy," and stopped singing. Landon encouraged her to keep going. "Sing it! Sing it! That was really good. How did you memorize all that?"

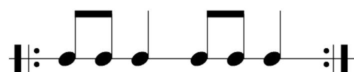
The Musical Nomad Exploring a World of Sound

When Landon first professed his confidence in playing the keyboard, he confirmed my expectations by frequently gravitating toward the keyboard during our musical playgroups. With my own experience stemming from years of formal piano training, I eagerly waited to hear what Landon might play on the small electronic keyboard I provided. What he actually played caught me off-guard. Landon did not play—or perhaps had no use for—the simple and familiar melodies a beginning piano student typically learns. Rather, he experimented in a world of sound, a world of his own creation: exploring high and low pitch contrasts; stepping up and down on the white keys; testing each programmed rhythm function and every "instrument" sound; and pressing clusters of notes using all the fingers on one hand simultaneously.

His nomadic exploration on the keyboard began immediately in the first playgroup. Landon initially concentrated on exploring and sampling the keyboard sounds on his own before joining together with one of the other children. At first, the other children busily bounded from one small percussion instrument to the next, while Landon stood off to one side with the keyboard, pressing one button and then another, listening to all of the pre-programmed rhythms and instrument sounds. He settled on a moderately paced rhythm pattern, and as the looped pattern played incessantly, he plucked a few random notes in the middle of the keyboard, aligning his notes to beats two and four of the pattern. He explored how the "tempo" buttons, with arrows pointing up and down, could change the rhythm functions, listening to the fastest and slowest tempi possible. He randomly tapped notes at the high and low extremes of the keyboard, disregarding the programmed rhythm that played in the background. Suddenly, Landon focused on Keisha: "It's like an ambulance siren," Keisha demonstrated, as she blew a long breath into the slide whistle and moved the slide quickly up and down. Intrigued, Landon said, "let me see if I can copy you." He tapped rapidly on a single key, then switched to alternating between neighboring keys.

Sometimes, Landon ventured down a musical pathway and invited another child to join his travels. One such example occurred in the third playgroup. As Tonya monopolized the conversation by talking at length about a book she was reading, Landon initiated this interchange.

> *Landon and Keisha are in a world of their own. Landon presses both hands on the keyboard, holding the clusters of notes for a few seconds. Keisha answers by playing quickly and loudly on the bongos with both hands.*
>
> *Landon switches to playing single notes in an ascending scale using the following rhythm:*



Keisha moves closer to the keyboard, playing clusters of notes, alternating hands and imitating Landon's rhythm, each cluster ascending with each note of the rhythm.

Landon immediately tries to copy the pattern, but frowns slightly as he hears that his clusters do not match the pitches that Keisha played. Keisha repeats her ascending cluster pattern as Landon watches. Now he repeats the cluster pattern rhythm, but chooses to start his pattern higher on the keyboard. Keisha answers by playing clusters with both hands simultaneously, letting the sound ring out for several seconds.

The interchange was entirely non-verbal. Landon started a musical conversation with Keisha, without the need to use actual words, only the sharing of purely musical ideas. When Tonya realized that the two musical conversationalists were not listening to her story, she glared disapprovingly at Landon. He paused and said, "I'll stop when you get to something deeper."

Landon's nomadic exploration on the keyboard represented more than lackadaisical "goofing around." His intrepid journeys exemplified his natural inquisitiveness about musical sounds and provided an outlet for his creative impulses. Instead of reproducing songs, he explored sound through improvisation and constructed ideas in response to his peers.

The Musical Nomad Explores His Favorite Songs

In our final interview, Landon chose Soulja Boy's "Hey, You There" (ColliPark/Interscope, 2008) as his listening selection. With a huge smile on his face, he rapped along with the ostinato of "hey, *you* there," and he exploded in laughter during the line "I think that you're a dummy." His laughter soon gave way to unrestrained physical

engagement with the music. He held two drum sticks in his hands, thrusting them out and towards his body that swayed along with the steady, pulsating beat. With a more serious and concentrated look on his face, he picked up the sampling microphone from the keyboard. He held the microphone close to his mouth and continued to rap "hey, *you* there," even as the recording faded to a close.

"Hey, You There" features a recurring vocal ostinato, fluctuating from whispers to unusual vocal inflections, peppered within a light-hearted storyline. As the story unfolds, Soulja Boy raps about a trip to the mall where he is hassled by a security guard. A completely stripped down rhythm track weaves throughout the song, devoid of instrumentation beyond the sparse use of drums, cymbals, claps and finger snaps.

I immediately liked "Hey, You There," and asked Landon to describe why he enjoyed the song.

> Michelle: I really liked that song. Landon, why do you like it so much?
> Landon: Because it's funny! Do you know how Soulja Boy makes his songs?
> Michelle: Well, I have an idea, but I'd like you to tell me.
> Landon: He said it himself, on the internet. He went to the mall with his friend. And there was this policeman there, and he said, "Hey, you there. Is that Soulja Boy? Hey, *you* there!" And he kept saying it! And that's how Soulja Boy came up with the song!

Landon did not need to talk about the compositional features of the music and instead outwardly showed his enjoyment of the song through physically engaging with its rhythmic aspects. Landon's focus was on the fact that Soulja Boy told a personal story through a song, using the relatable experience of a trip to the mall. What drew Landon to the song goes was his curiosity about the source of an artist's musical inspiration. Landon pondered how music is constructed: that out of a simple idea, an artist created a captivating musical story.

The Musical Nomad as Analyzer of His Musical World

Landon's engagement with a favorite song compelled him to think about how music may be inspired. His ability to think analytically about his musical world often caught me by surprise. Examples of Landon's analytical approach to music included his unique observations of and reactions to, the *Sound Learning* visits, and his uncanny ability to pose epistemological challenges to the other children in our group.

"Their music was very organized." In the third interview, Landon easily described in global terms what he liked about the *Sound Learning* visits. "They were great. They were funny and their music was good. They taught us about where the music came from, the different cultures, and how the instruments were made." The musicians' skillful performances impressed him as he explained, "their music was very organized," yet he reasoned that it "maybe took a couple of months" for the musicians to learn how to play that well. One of his most striking observations focused on the simplistic, when the musicians utilized 5-gallon plastic buckets for a Japanese Taiko drumming segment. "That was cool," he mused, "because it was just. . .a bucket! So, you don't have to go make some drums or go buy some big expensive set of drums. I do that all the time at home. If I want different sounds, I use bigger or smaller buckets."

In addition to connecting experiences during the visits to his own explorations of music at home, Landon also made astute connections between the visits and our activities in our playgroups. As I tapped a steady beat on wooden Brazilian claves during a call and response activity the children created, Landon noticed, "oh! Those are like the Australian click sticks we saw in the visit the other day!" Beyond focusing on the instruments, Landon evaluated the roles musicians played within an ensemble. In our

first playgroup, after experimenting individually on all the instruments for about fifteen minutes, I gently encouraged the children to coalesce as a group. Landon immediately struck upon the group music-making strategy the visiting musicians used and applied it to our situation.

> Michelle: What could we do next? Maybe, make a song together?
> Landon: We could make a big band and organize it with a (programmed) beat from the keyboard.
> Charles: I think we need extra people to play all these different instruments we have.
> Tonya: I think we need more instruments.
> Charles: I think we need more *participants* to help out.
> Michelle: Well (laughing), we've only got you four children and these I instruments!
> Landon: I know! We can just start with whatever instrument we're going to play, and then switch instruments real fast, and keep playing just like the group of musicians did! Okay, I'm going to cue it. What kind of beat do you all want?

When Charles and Tonya focused on supposed limitations, Landon analyzed how the visiting musicians approached a similar situation. Landon applied what he saw in the visits and felt certain that our group could make music the same way.

Landon the epistemologist. While Landon initiated the group's first attempt to come together as an ensemble, he tended to hang back during the interviews, listening to the other children's comments and opinions before jumping into the conversation. Landon often tested the waters by posing his own questions to the other children, and the nature of his questions often startled me. The nature of the questions he posed held epistemological underpinnings, as he challenged the other children to justify *how they knew* their statements held accuracy and truth. Landon had missed our first interview when Tonya initially sang her original song, but when I mentioned her song in our second interview, Landon challenged her.

Michelle: I want to know what inspires each of you to make music. Tonya has already shared one of her songs with me that she made up with a friend. . .
Landon: Did you sing it?
Tonya: Yes. I have a beautiful voice.
Landon: How do you *know*?
Tonya: Because I sang it to Ms. Mercier!

A few moments later, I encouraged the ever-stoic Charles to open up about what inspires him to engage with his favorite music. Again, Landon turned the tables, asking Charles directly about his preference for rock and roll.

Michelle: So Charles, you were saying that your dad said you did the "Charlie Brown" dance to your favorite Maroon 5 song. So *that* music inspires you to dance?
Charles: (*nodding his head, "yes")*
Michelle: So, can you tell me other things you might be thinking when you're listening to music, or is the music just kind of *there* and you enjoy hearing it?
Landon: I do! I enjoy hearing it!
Charles: I just like listening to rock and roll.
Landon: Where do you get "rock and roll" from?

Charles squirmed in his chair, perhaps uncertain of what Landon meant or too timid to defend his preference for rock and roll music. Charles softly yet curtly professed, "I don't like hip-hop." Keisha eagerly seized the opportunity to talk about the music she liked. Once again, Landon pressed her to move beyond sweeping generalizations.

Keisha: I listen to pretty much all music, except old school music and gospel.
Landon: Have you ever listened to many gospel tunes? Or old school tunes? To really *know* what you like or don't like? Or are you just saying that you don't like ALL old school songs?

Keisha realized that perhaps she overstated her claim, clarifying, "I listen to some old school songs and I like them."

Landon's analytical explorations revealed his innate curiosity about how music is organized and how musicians realize their craft. His curiosity extended beyond his own

thoughts and toward understanding how his peers thought and formed opinions about music.

The Independent Musical Nomad

Landon's need for autonomy in both musical thought and action continued to emerge in several ways. These included his willingness to explore unfamiliar music, his predilection to make his own choices in the playgroups, and his ruminations on imagining a school music class that might suit his needs.

"I'm willing to take a chance." After Landon challenged the other children to defend their musical opinions, he described how he chose the songs he liked and his willingness to venture into the unknown.

> Landon: Some old school songs are *funny.* They have stuff about monsters and stuff. One time, I was listening to this old school song with my dad and it said "there's a monster in my house!" And there were all these growling noises. And my dad was rapping with it, he kept rapping "there's a monster in my house!" And it was so *funny!*
> Michelle: (*laughing*) And was that an old school rap song?
> Landon: Well, it wasn't really like *rap*, not like rap is today.
> Michelle: So you could tell the difference, that it was more like old school because it sounds. . .different?
> Landon: Yes. *Much* different.

It is problematic to determine whether Landon's lived experience of listening to the song excited him because of the social interaction he enjoyed with his father, or if it was purely the song itself that piqued his interest. However, Landon related his personal experience to make a larger, cautionary point to the other children: *by closing yourself off to certain music, you may miss something you actually enjoy*. As such, Landon displayed a mature independence from making rash judgments, a willingness to explore unfamiliar terrain and a self-certainty to take risks when faced with the unknown.

Even his favorite song, "Hey, You There" was a song that Landon arrived at serendipitously, beginning with his cousin's suggestion:

> My cousin was listening to that song, and I asked him, "what is that?" He told me it was a Soulja Boy song. And I was willing to *take a chance*, because I like most his songs. So I went on You Tube and listened to it. And I found out I really liked it!

Here, Landon learned about a song in a social situation, but then independently sought it out on his own to decide if he "really liked it." Although familiar with the artist and style, Landon kept an open mind when entering unfamiliar territory. And because he was "willing to take a chance," he discovered a song he deeply enjoyed.

"I got it. I got it. It got it." Landon's independent nature emerged with increasing conviction, particularly in the third and fourth musical playgroups. What began in the third musical playgroup as his need to thoughtfully survey the musical landscape led to more and more clashes with Tonya's assertive leadership in the fourth playgroup.

When Landon said, "I'll stop when you get to something deeper" in the third playgroup, he brashly urged Tonya to stop *talking* about the book her song was based on and simply show the group her song. When Tonya finally performed the song, Keisha jumped in and quietly improvised a pattern on the bongos. Keisha's pattern fit the rhythm of the words, which were simply "Roll of thunder, hear my cry" repeated four times. Landon waited, watched and listened to the two girls repeat the four repetitive lines several times. When he decided to join in, he sampled several instrument sounds, first trying the shekere, then a wooden rattle, and finally settled on playing the bucket drum. Landon accommodated Tonya's insistence that he only play on beats one and three of the pattern and again complied when she asked him to switch to Keisha's more

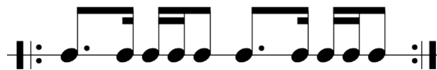
rhythmically complex pattern. Perhaps less spontaneous than the two girls, Landon needed time to decide if their musical ideas merited his attention and to carefully consider his own musical choices before politely conceding to Tonya's suggestions.

Landon grew less accepting of Tonya's assertive leadership by the fourth playgroup. As Tonya attempted to "teach" the other children her original song entitled "Whammy award liar," she stopped the song to re-emphasize the conducting cues she used in previous playgroups. Landon made it clear he did not need her reminders.

> Tonya: When I do THIS (*making a circular motion in the air*) it means I'll be making a circle, I'll be saying GO! And this means STOP (*making an "L" shape in the air*) and I'll make an "L."
> Landon: We KNOW! We KNOW!

Landon's frustration reached a boiling point when Tonya demanded he play the bucket drum only on beats one and three, even though he and Keisha created a more complex and interesting rhythm pattern.

> Landon: (*playing*):



> Tonya: No, Landon. Scooch over, give me those drumsticks. Play it again, Keisha. Landon, your part is slow. Look, I can show you (*plays on beats 1 and 3*).
> Landon: I got it, I got it, I got it.
> Michelle: Okay, Tonya, leave him alone now.

Landon complied with Tonya's demands, but he glared at her with an annoyed look as he played the simplified rhythm. Landon did not need Tonya hovering over his every move and he wanted more independence in deciding when and how to musically contribute.

"If it was my own music class. . ." As we reached our final interview, I wanted to gain insight into the children's reactions to the quasi-formal structure of our playgroups.

I challenged them to imagine themselves as designers of “the ideal music class” in which they might make all the decisions in regard to musical activities. Landon listened to Keisha’s and Tonya’s ideas, as the two girls imagined themselves in the role of the teacher. Keisha suggested that the students practice singing from her assigned sheet music, while Tonya described worksheet-based activities that taught note-reading skills. Landon realized “those are like the things you do in chorus,” and then detailed his picture of a very different type of music class.

> Michelle: Okay, Landon, what would be your ideas for the best music class?
> Landon: All right. If I were *in* a class, I would play the drums. But if it was my *own* class, I would want the children to have fun, they could do basically anything that was music, but they would have to try and make it like a symphony. Make it like, all the music goes together. And then, every Friday, we’ll have a student present his own song that he makes up.
> Michelle: Cool!
> Landon: And then, everyone else is invited to add on to it, and put some more music or beats into it.

Landon took an independent approach from the others when describing his ideal music class as one that was filled with student-centered activities and opportunities for making choices and making music. At the same time, his need for independence in making musical choices and presenting musical ideas did not ignore the social aspects of group music making, as he “invited” his peers to contribute their ideas to his “symphony.”

As Landon continued to describe a music class that honored his independent nature, I encouraged him to focus on the music itself. Moving beyond the status quo of the “typical” school music program, Landon’s analytical nature allowed him to apply our own quasi-formal music-making approach to his conception of the ideal music class:

> Michelle: So in *your* music class, you would get to make up a lot of your own music, using different instruments?
> Landon: Yeah, oh yeah.
> Michelle: And what about the music—what would that be?

> Landon: I would do it like *you* do it. The students pick out songs, or other music that they like. And they could listen to it, and they could try to make the same kind of music.
> Tonya: Well, that's *illegal*, copying off people!
> Landon: No, we're not copying!

Whereas Landon saw possibilities for student choice and self-guided musical engagement, Tonya focused on the "illegal" ramifications of "copying" someone else's music. I originally intended the music listening segments as a means to elicit conversations aimed toward discovering more about the children's lived experiences of their musical worlds. However, in the second musical playgroup the children took it upon themselves to actively play instruments as they listened to their recorded song selections. Perhaps this is what makes Landon's story so compelling: he intuitively connected our listening activities to his conception of a music class that reflected his own interests and abilities.

Keisha: Through the Musical Looking-glass

Each to each a looking glass
Reflects the other that doth pass.

In Cooley's (1902) tradition of symbolic interactionism, he used the metaphor of the "looking glass self" to illustrate the development of self and identity. Throughout the process, we look to both the people and the symbols in our culture to make sense of our world and who we are. As I reflected on how Keisha described the important role that music played in her life, I thought about the ways Cooley's metaphor might be expanded to a *musical* looking-glass. The clearest example of this emerged in our fourth interview. With a mischievous twinkle in her eye, Keisha laughed about "getting out of Spanish class" as one of the benefits for participating in the school's chorus. In a flash, she took a

more serious and measured tone, explaining why “having fun with music” was so important to her.

> Michelle: So, Keisha, you think the most important thing about being in a music class is that the students have *fun*. Tell me more about what you mean by that.
> Keisha: I mean, like when you’re playing a specific instrument, it doesn’t mean you can’t have fun, and it doesn’t mean that you can just sit there and do nothing. Because, music is something out there waiting *for* you, and you can have fun with it.

As I reflected on her powerful statement, “music is something out there waiting *for* you,” I considered the ways Keisha turned to a musical looking glass to explore both her own musicality and her larger sense of self. In a delicate balancing act between childhood and young adulthood, Keisha actively engaged in music with childlike delight and reflected upon music to make sense of her maturing understanding of the world around her. For Keisha, the musical looking glass provided a myriad of pathways for self-discovery.

An Active Gaze Into the Musical Looking-glass

“I’m having such a good time in the music!” The children just completed their initial attempt at group music making in the first musical playgroup, when seemingly out of nowhere and with childlike zeal, Keisha proclaimed her joy in the act of music-making. Their simple musical endeavor began with Keisha’s tapping the bongos and Tonya’s scraping the frog, synchronized to the repeated rhythm:

Landon and Charles picked up on the girls’ rhythm and plucked random notes on the keyboard, matching the three eighth notes of each phrase. Keisha not only delighted in the group’s musical creation, but she also felt compelled to announce her joy of being “in” the music. As though she became Alice herself and traveled *Through The Looking-*

Glass (Carroll, 1871/2004), Keisha's active gaze into the musical looking glass enveloped her in a musical world with dimensions of time, place, and space—or as Heidegger said, fully alive and enveloped in *Dasein*, or being-in-the-world (Macann, 1993).

With her easygoing yet attentive demeanor, Keisha was prone neither to excessive chatter with her classmates nor to rambling off-topic during our interviews. This made it all the more surprising, when in a flash, Keisha again paused momentarily to announce in our second musical playgroup, "I love my bongos!" Later on, as the children switched instruments between activities, she squealed, "I'm so happy!" Her very public proclamations were not directed at anyone in particular: she simply made it known that she was fully engaged and thrilled with the opportunity to make music. Keisha valued the opportunity for active musical engagement, as she described what she liked about chorus class during our fourth interview.

> Michelle: So tell us, Keisha, some of the most favorite things you do in chorus.
> Keisha: The most important thing that we do in chorus is *sing.* Sometimes we practice our combined songs with the 6th graders, or go in the stairwell and sing. And other times we watch movies, mostly on Friday's, when our teacher opens up the store and we can buy things with our reward tickets.
> Michelle: Is there anything you don't enjoy, like, what would be your least favorite thing?
> Keisha: I don't have a least favorite thing!

Keisha pointed to her active involvement with *singing* as the most important thing about chorus. Even though she went on to describe additional fun but non-musical activities, she found purpose and value in singing, calling it "important."

Keisha the musical "doodler." Keisha's happy-go-lucky personality emerged in the musical playgroups, a side of her that I also observed as she giggled and played "rock, paper, scissors" with classmates at the lunch table on the day of her close observation.

As the other children negotiated group music-making activities, Keisha tapped away on the bongos, sometimes randomly and other times with more purpose. “I’m just testing something,” she said in the first playgroup, as the children sampled sounds from the keyboard rhythm functions. I began to note her nearly constant tactile activity as “musical doodling.” In the second playgroup, Tonya and Landon discussed a complex call and response pattern, in which the girls played a single beat, the boys echoed with two beats, the girls answered with three beats, and so on. Their initial verbal description bewildered me, and I was certain Keisha had not heard or understood it either, as she again was randomly doodling on the bongos as the others talked.

> Michelle: All right, we’re going to try this. Keisha, do you know what were doing?
> Keisha: Sure! We’re doing a pattern. Tonya and I do one beat, and the boys do two, and on and on until we reach eight beats.

Keisha’s constant tactile doodling on an instrument did not preclude her ability to process verbal information concurrently. In fact, the doodling seemed to help her bridge her thoughts between the verbal and the musical ideas that were set forth. In the third playgroup, Tonya introduced her song “Roll of thunder, hear my cry” as Keisha doodled with musical awareness.

> *Keisha is doodling on the bongos.*
> Tonya: We were reading the book *Roll Of Thunder, Hear My Cry* in my class, so I made up a song about it. It’s a slow song.
> *Keisha immediately switches to playing a slow beat, alternating two even and steady beats on each drum.*

Tonya continued with the song, using the cowbell to demonstrate a pattern that emphasized the rhythm of the words by accenting beats one, two, and four. When the line “roll of thunder hear my cry” was repeated a fourth time, a slight pause was added to create syncopation on the word “roll.” Just as the other children joined in, Tonya stopped

the song and described the plot of the book. Keisha picked up on the syncopated rhythm, and doodled a repeated pattern of as Tonya continued to talk:

Musical doodling kept Keisha actively involved in musical thinking, as though her musical ideas bubbled just below the surface, waiting for the proper time to take flight. Keisha valued active musical engagement, whether simply doodling with the joy of having her favorite instrument in her hands, or participating in her more structured choral ensemble.

Keisha's Reflections in Her Musical Looking-glass

Whether in the structured setting of her chorus class or the quasi-formal setting of the musical playgroups, Keisha enthusiastically savored the opportunities to make music. Keisha participated with enthusiasm, both in chorus and in the playgroups, even as the nature of the two contexts differed greatly. No matter the musical setting, Keisha was a consummate musical contributor. She conformed to the demands of a precise choral director while still singing her heart out. At the same time, she jumped in with both feet during the musical playgroups, perhaps more comfortable in the role of musical contributor as she acquiesced to Tonya's incessant demands to serve as musical leader.

Keisha's reflection in the chorus mirror. With a bounce in her step, Keisha eagerly escorted me to the chorus room on the day of my close observation. Our footsteps became muffled on the room's carpeted floor as Keisha led me past rows of neatly aligned chairs and took her assigned seat in the last row. The other children entered quickly and quietly, finding their seats and sitting at the ready.

The teacher faced the side of the raised podium. He paused for a moment before briskly stepping onto the podium and the children snapped to "singing posture," sitting rigidly straight on the very edges of their chairs. They started with a few vocal warm-ups, singing up and down the fifth on various vowel sounds, such as "ooo" and "lee." Next, the teacher used Curwen hand signs to practice sight-singing with the group. The students mastered the "do re mi" pattern, but struggled with "do re do do do," with most students singing "do re mi mi mi." The teacher apologized to me, saying, "they haven't done this in a while."

As they rehearsed several pieces of repertoire, Keisha focused intensely on the music at hand and followed the teacher's directions to the letter. She sang with a clear and energetic voice, not overpowering the other singers, but blending her voice with the group. She put her all into the rehearsal, snapping to attention each time the teacher commanded it, her eyes intently concentrating on his every conducting move as he waved his baton. Between songs, Keisha and the other students eased back into their chairs, as the teacher commented, "remember, it is very important that you watch my hands, *all the time.*" The students listened silently, looking straight ahead and awaiting their next instructions.

Keisha masterfully reflected back the image of a choral student based on her teacher's clear and precise expectations. Keisha's reflection in the chorus looking glass was not a static image, but one in which she savored her part within a fine-tuned machine. She did so with enthusiasm, fully invested in the experience, as though this day's rehearsal was the performance of a lifetime.

Keisha's reflection as the musical contributor. After observing Keisha in chorus class, so full of confidence and commitment, she surprised me with a comment she made a few days later. Keisha, Landon, and Charles helped unpack the instruments for our second musical playgroup. Tonya arrived a few minutes late, still finishing her work in the classroom. I used the opportunity to see how the others might initiate their musical ideas in the absence of Tonya's assertive leadership.

> Michelle: So, Keisha, what would you like to work on today? Maybe some of "Ode to Composers," or another song you know?
> Keisha: No, the only songs I know are from chorus, and I wouldn't want to do any of those.

Perhaps Keisha felt that her chorus songs were somehow out of place in our less structured playgroup activities, or perhaps she felt uncomfortably put on the spot when I asked her to initiate an activity. Never one to demand the spot light, Keisha readily contributed to the musical activities of our group.

Keisha maintained her effervescent attitude toward music making during the playgroups, determined and earnest in her role as a musical contributor. While not the first to offer original ideas, Keisha quickly joined in with a rhythm pattern once the music began. Keisha waited until the group rehearsed an idea before asking for clarification or offering suggestions for fine-tuning their music. In the fourth playgroup, Keisha asked for approval for a rhythm pattern to Tonya's original song:

> Tonya: It's like THIS. THIS is the beat.
> (*singing*) Whammy award liar
> Whammy---award---(*spoken)* then *liar*
> *While she sings, Tonya reaches over to play the bongos that are placed in front of Keisha.*
> *Tonya plays:*

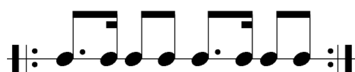
Keisha: Okay. Is this it?
As Tonya softly hums the melody, Keisha plays the following pattern:

Keisha plays the pattern four times as Tonya listens intently. Tonya nods her head.
Tonya: Yeah. That's it!

Keisha added rhythmic interest to Tonya's original pattern, but still sought Tonya's approval if she was playing it "right."

Once Keisha settled in to a rhythm pattern, she offered ideas for fine-tuning the song as the group rehearsed. When the group practiced "Roll of thunder, hear my cry" during the third musical playgroup, Tonya struggled to enter with her vocal line that followed Keisha's and Landon's introduction on the drums:

Landon is playing a steady beat on the bucket drum, and Keisha is playing the following pattern on the bongos during the introduction:



Tonya is nodding her head to the steady beat, yet uncertain when to begin singing. She begins shaking her head.
Tonya: Wait, wait, wait.
Michelle: When are you going to start singing?
Tonya: Well, they're going to keep going. . .
Keisha: Maybe we should play it softer. Would that help?
Tonya: Yes! And Landon, you play the same thing Keisha is playing.

Keisha's idea to "play it softer" not only added dynamic contrast for the introduction, but also assisted Tonya in finding an appropriate entrance for her lyrics. This example highlights Keisha's role as a musical contributor as she utilized her musical looking glass

to both evaluate the group's efforts and to offer suggestions that might assure the success of the group.

Learning About Her World Through a Musical Looking-glass

"In general, I like to listen to music, and all the CDs I have at home. And I can just listen to music and it makes me feel good." With an air of contended bliss, Keisha explained in the second interview how listening to music at home was something she enjoyed simply because it made her "feel good." As Keisha reflected on her experiences in the *Sound Learning* visits or spoke about her favorite pop songs, she gradually revealed the ways she engaged with music for much more than pure enjoyment or entertainment. With her musical looking glass always close at hand, Keisha turned to music as a way to feel connected to the world around her and to learn about herself.

"Their music makes a connection." Keisha described her lived experience of the *Sound Learning* visits as though the music transported her to another place. In our second interview, Keisha described the performance of Chinese music as if she literally "went to China."

> Keisha: I liked it when we went to China, and they played the trapezoid instrument and they beat on the drums really hard. That was fun!
> Michelle: Why was it so much fun?
> Keisha: Because the musicians were so full of energy, and their energy went with the music.

As Keisha gazed into the musical looking glass, the sounds engaged Keisha in such a way that she traveled outside the here-and-now. At the same time, she felt fully present within the "energy" of the musicians' performances. In the third interview, Keisha watched the musicians packing up their instruments after the visit and wistfully longed for the musical experience to continue.

> Keisha: Wouldn't it just be so tragic if the musicians left, and their music left with them?
> Michelle: That's such an interesting thing to say. What do you mean by that?
> Keisha: I mean, I want their music to still be with us, like, we can still be able to listen to it like they were still here. I don't want them to go!

Here, Keisha craved a sense of permanence, not only that the musicians themselves would stay, but also that she could remain enveloped in the musical world into which she felt transported.

Even as Keisha felt transported through the visits, she also described feeling a "connection" during the visits. This connection began with a bond she felt during the musical performance, and extended to how the experience enriched her understanding in areas beyond music.

> Keisha: Well, I don't really want them to leave, because when they're playing music, it makes a connection between us and them.
> Michelle: That's really cool. Describe in more detail what you mean by "make a connection."
> Keisha: By "make a connection" I mean it explains—like it describes the different cultures through the music from that place.
> Michelle: So it makes a connection to things you are learning about?
> Keisha: Yes. Well, it should. Or, things that I'm *going* to be learning about.

Keisha used her musical looking glass on multiple levels here. Through its reflection, she felt a connection to the musicians in the present tense. She also used its reflection to glimpse into her future and how the visits connected to "things I'm *going* to be learning about." I continued to probe Keisha, hoping to discover more about her idea of "connectedness."

> Michelle: So it connects to things you'll learn about in the future, too. Does it make a connection to *who you are*, Keisha?
> Keisha: Yes.
> Michelle: In what way?
> Keisha: When I hear their music, it just sounds so *good.* So I don't want them to leave.

> Michelle: So, is it like you've become friends with the musicians? Why do you think that is?
> Keisha: They understand us. They understand our feelings, and how long our day has been!

Even though Keisha never had a one-on-one conversation with the musicians, she sensed an emotional connection with them, saying "they understand our feelings." She also felt a personal connection when she said, "they understand how long our day has been" and shortly later exclaimed "I stay at school until six p.m.! Every day!" For Keisha, musical engagement offered a pleasant respite from her lengthy school day. That Keisha's lived experience of the *Sound Learning* visits included such emotional and personal connections speaks to the power of music to communicate.

Learning who she is through the musical looking glass. While Keisha felt transported and connected in the *Sound Learning* visits, she also turned to music to explore the world around her. In our second interview, Keisha shared her daily ritual of listening to music at home.

> Keisha: I have 132 songs on my iPod, and I know every one of them!
> Michelle: What do you mean by you "know" the songs?
> Keisha: Because I can sing them all.
> Michelle: So you must listen to your iPod a lot to learn all those songs?
> Keisha: Yes, I listen to it a lot. As soon as I get home, I rush to the computer and put my iPod on so I can listen to it.

While Keisha did not categorize the music she liked into specific genres, she described a range of artists she enjoyed. Keisha listed her favorites that spanned from lighter "bubble gum" pop, such as Hannah Montana and Katy Perry, to the more sophisticated hip-hop/R-and-B of Keisha Coles and Beyonce. She described her room as being decorated with "everything Hannah Montana: a giant poster, an alarm clock, a pencil, just everything!" In the next breath, she noted how much she liked Whitney Houston's song

"I'm Every Woman" (Arista, 1992), "because it talks about ladies' independence." Poised between childhood and adolescence, Keisha collected the trinkets of her favorite "tween" star, yet also was beginning to explore the more emotionally mature themes embedded within songs she enjoyed.

Beyond knowing and singing all the lyrics, Keisha explored the meaning in her favorite songs on much deeper levels. Even her favorite Hannah Montana song resonated with Keisha for the message it portrayed.

> Michelle: So you have a lot of Hannah Montana "things." What about her *music*?
> Keisha: I have two of her CDs. And I really like that song "The Climb." It's very inspirational.
> Michelle: *Inspirational.* What a great word. Describe to me what you mean by that.
> Keisha: It's like, if you're in the midst of going up a mountain, just to come back down again, to see what you've already seen. And to do what you've already done.

Being unfamiliar with the song myself, I sensed that Keisha paraphrased the general message of the song. A quick on-line search of the song's lyrics confirmed this, as the song's chorus reads (Walt Disney Records, 2009):

> There's always going to be another mountain
> I'm always gonna wanna make it move
> Always gonna be an uphill battle
> Sometimes I'm gonna have to lose
> Ain't about how fast I get there
> Ain't about what's waiting on the other side
> It's the climb

Beyond her rather literal paraphrase, Keisha seemed to grasp the essence of the song's inspirational message: despite the challenges one faces in life, what matters most is the journey itself. The message in "The Climb" echoed Keisha's appreciation for musical

engagement in her own life, when she said, "music is something out there waiting *for* you."

Though inspirational lyrics resonated with Keisha's sense of self, she also pointed to the purely musical aspects of her favorite songs. She chose Beyonce's "Beautiful Liar" (Sony BMG, 2006) for the fourth playgroup and explained why she liked the song.

> Keisha: I chose that song because it's Beyonce and I like her music. Sometimes I play the video on YouTube and dance along with it.
> Michelle: Is there anything else you could describe about why you like the song?
> Keisha: Yes. The rhythm. It has a really good rhythm.

Lacking the musical vocabulary to describe the middle-eastern styled rhythms and melodic ostinati, Keisha simply referred to the song's "rhythm." As the recording played, Keisha snapped her fingers and swayed her upper body as she softly sang the lyrics of the song. At the same time, Keisha looked to the meaning of the song's lyrics to explore the complexities of relationships.

> Keisha: It's a good song to learn about relationships. Because, the guy might be beautiful, but he also might be a liar.
> Michelle: So that phrase "beautiful liar" would describe someone who. . .
> Landon: He's cute, but a liar.
> Keisha: Because in the song, she's telling a story of her man going out with other women.
> Landon: I thought that was called *cheating.*
> Michelle: That's another way to put it.
> Keisha: And it's probably like, the guy said he was going out with his *friends,* but he went to the club to find another *lady.*

As Keisha listened to and talked about "Beautiful Liar," she used her musical looking glass to construct meaning from two distinct but related aspects of the music, or what Green (2008) refers to as inter-sonic and delineated meanings. When she sang and grooved along to the song's "rhythm," Keisha engaged with inter-sonic properties of the music, or her understanding of the interrelationships between actual musical materials

such as rhythm, melody and style. Keisha also engaged with the song's delineated meanings, or the extra-musical cultural associations and connotations embedded within the music, as she reflected on the song as a pathway to "learn about relationships."

Charles and His Musical "Block City"

What are you able to build with your blocks?
Castles and palaces, temples and docks.
Rain may keep raining, and others go roam,
But I can be happy and building at home.

In *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1957), Robert Louis Stevenson dedicated a section to "The Child Alone," capturing a sense of the magical worlds children construct when left seemingly solitary, yet fearlessly armed with their own powerful creativity. The sixth poem in this series, entitled "Block City" resonated with my observations of and conversations with Charles. I thought about the ways Charles constructed meaning as he explored the musical building blocks of his world. At times, Charles took a rough-and-tumble, childlike approach to music-making, as he playfully toyed with his musical building blocks. Other times, his musical behaviors and closely guarded opinions about music became restrained and taciturn, like a sentry keeping careful watch over his castle of musical building blocks.

Late in our first interview, Charles described some of the ways his childlike curiosity led him to explore a world of sound.

> Charles: Sometimes I'll just get a pen and I can blow through the lid. I can hear different sounds coming through it.
> Michelle: So you like to try different things to make music?
> Charles: Yes. Sometimes when I get bored, I just start making music. I just do stuff like crack my neck like this and hear different sounds. It goes "crrrr," but it doesn't hurt. But, I'm a daredevil. I like to do daredevilish things.

Charles demonstrated his “daredevil” side, as he draped one arm over his head and tilted his neck to one side until his bones cracked. I smiled and breathed a sigh of relief, hoping this signaled a turning point for Charles. Up to this point, I struggled to build rapport with Charles, who hesitated to share his thoughts about himself or about music. Rather than joining in the conversation, Charles haltingly spoke only when I asked him a question directly and tersely indicated when he wished to say no more: “I play the drums. And that’s all;” “The musicians were perfect. And that’s it.”

Coaxing more than a few words from the ever-quiet Charles remained a constant challenge, so his “daredevil” claim excited me. Images of a “daredevil” ran through my mind: a swashbuckling hero, a thrill-seeker or a courageous adventurer. I thought Charles confirmed my initial assumptions with his list of intrepid career choices: professional wrestler; policeman; and FBI agent. I eagerly anticipated our first musical playgroup, where I assumed his daredevil persona might be more suited to actions rather than words. After all, here was an inventive boy who explored music through the found sound of a pen cap and demonstrated his personal musical bravado by cracking the bones in his neck, naming this “music.”

Rather than expecting Charles to emerge as a cartoon-like superhero, I needed to move beyond my own assumptions of what I though he meant by “daredevilsh” and consider the more subtle ways Charles lived his “daredevil” identity in relation to his musicality. Like the child depicted in “Block City,” Charles actively engaged with his multi-faceted musical world, block by block. And as I learned more about Charles, including my serendipitous discovery about his family’s rich musical background, I

began to notice how he selected specific musical personae and behaviors according to the situation.

Charles and His Musical Building Blocks

Charles's explorations with the musical building blocks of own his world ranged from playful experimentation to thoughtful reflection on his musical creations. Beyond his own music making, Charles considered the musical building blocks used by musicians in the world around him, as he identified the essential features of his favorite musical style and contemplated how musicians learned their craft.

In the first playgroup, Charles spent most of his time eagerly testing each and every instrument, and paying little attention to the other children's activities. "I've got a good idea how I can play these," he said to no one in particular as he juggled two rhythm eggs, tossing them higher and higher into the air. In a moment of reflection, he turned to me and noted, "I let the purple one go first, and then the green one, and I made a beat!"

In the second playgroup, Charles took charge of a call-and-response activity, suggesting the group use his choice of musical building blocks: "the girls do eight beats and the boys do four beats." Keisha and Tonya established their set of eight beats by playing the following rhythm on drums:

The boys answered with four steady beats: Landon changed instruments each time, while Charles played four repeated notes on the keyboard, moving up a step on the white keys with each iteration of the four beats. Once again, Charles reflected aloud upon the musical structure he built, saying, "I was going from this key, to that key, to this key," step-by-step, block-by-block.

Beyond Charles's self-awareness of his own musical building blocks, he understood the basic building blocks of his favorite musical style: rock and roll. Late in the first playgroup, the children attempted to create a "rock and roll beat" as a group:

> Michelle: Okay, what's one more thing we could do together today?
> Tonya: We can make a beat that sounds like rock and roll, since Charles likes rock and roll.
> Michelle: Charles, could you lead us in a rock and roll beat?
> Tonya: Yeah, like *dah dah dah dah dah dah dah!* (*shaking her head up and down*)
> Landon: I don't understand. What would be a "rock and roll beat"?
> Charles: It's *guitars*. You have to have *guitars*.
> *Landon presses the "guitar" button on the keyboard and plucks a few notes that sound high and tinny.*
> Charles: (*frowning*) That's the guitar?
> Michelle: That's what the label says, but I never thought it sounded much like a guitar. Here, try this one instead.
> *I press the "funk synthesizer" button and play a few notes that have more of a wah wah sound, similar to the sound of an electric guitar played by bending the strings.*
> Charles: Yes! There you go. *That's* the sound.

Throughout our interviews and playgroups, all of the children utilized "the beat" as a catchall phrase. They spoke of "the beat" as a way to describe a song's salient musical feature, whether it was a vocal melody, a rhythmic pattern, or specific musical style. With stunning clarity, Charles used his ears in this instance to pinpoint the essence of his favorite musical style. Charles identified the essential musical building block needed to create "a rock and roll beat" as one not based on rhythm, but on the sound of electric guitars.

"They went step-by-step." Drawing on his experiences in the *Sound Learning* visits, Charles literally "built" his own instrument, and figuratively understood how musicianship is built, block-by-block, "step-by-step." During the *Sound Learning* visits, Charles unfailingly made his way to the front row, sitting silently and motionless, but

nonetheless wide-eyed and captivated. When the musicians played Irish spoons in the first visit, Charles went home and fashioned a pair of his own out of two teaspoons and plenty of black plastic tape. He proudly brought his creation to the first playgroup and allowed the other children to take turns playing his spoons. Charles struggled to describe why he enjoyed the musicians' "perfect" performance, but he thoughtfully explained how he thought they achieved their musical skills.

> Michelle: So how do you think the musicians learned how to play so well?
> Tonya: They went to a music store and took lessons.
> Charles: They probably got trained. They went step by step, and each day they got better and better.
> Michelle: Right. That's a good point. How old do you think they were when they started?
> Tonya: They probably started about two years ago.
> Charles: No, they probably started when they were in their twenties.

Charles understood musical "training" as process, accomplished in a logical and orderly manner, step-by-step, block-by-block. Even in his most playful moments as he cracked his bones or juggled rhythm eggs, I often noticed a sense of focused and serious determination with Charles, particularly when he paused afterwards to reflect on his own music making. I soon learned that Charles's sensible and informed approach to music had roots in an impressive musical family.

Charles's "Block City" at Home

Charles began our first interview by hinting at his family's musical backgrounds: his father, uncle and grandmother played in a blues band that auditioned for a television talent show; his sister worked at a music store where he took drum lessons. Charles hesitated to offer details, but a serendipitous conversation I had with his father revealed the depths of this musical family.

On the day of Charles's close observation, his father arrived to pick up Charles an hour before the usual school dismissal time. As Charles and I walked to the front of the school, he explained that his father was playing an outdoor concert that afternoon and they were leaving to go pick up his bass guitar. I introduced myself to his father, as Charles detached himself from our "grown-up" conversation and wandered about the hallway, quietly looking at the posters displayed outside the media center. His father chuckled when I characterized Charles as "a boy of few words." His father described the contrasts he saw in Charles: a carefree boy who liked to sing and dance at home, but became quiet and reserved in public settings.

His father continued to fill in the details of this very musical family, showing me numerous pictures of the family band that were stored on his cell phone. He proudly explained that the family's matriarch and leader of the band was an award-winning blues singer and guitarist, whose name I immediately recognized. We were both perplexed as to why Charles was so reticent to talk about his famous grandmother and his musical family. As I learned later, Charles never shared the particulars of his musical roots with his classroom teacher or his chorus teacher. Charles kept these aspects of his musical life safely tucked away at home, as though his "Block City" consisted of disparate musical worlds.

"I want you to play a song by my grandmother," Charles said when I spoke to him about his listening choice for our final playgroup. After talking with his father, I thought perhaps Charles felt more comfortable discussing his family's musical life. However, Charles left school early again on the days of our remaining interviews and playgroups, thereby being absent for the third playgroup, and the fourth and final combined interview

and playgroup. I continued to wonder about the impact that such a musical family had on Charles. When I asked Charles *which* song by his grandmother he wanted to hear, he could not name one. What appeared to me as Charles's ambivalence toward his family's musical background might have been a child's perspective, and his absences from the remaining playgroups and interview precluded my chances for probing in depth.

Charles Stands Guard at His Palace

Great is the palace with pillar and wall,
A sort of a tower on the top of it all,
And steps coming down in an orderly way
To where my toy vessels lie safe in the bay.

In the third stanza of Stevenson's poem, a child proudly gazes upon the impressive and tidy palace he built, the ultimate guardian of the "Block City." Charles, too, played the role of the guard of his palace, ever protective of his own high standards for "proper" school behavior and his musical preferences.

"And steps coming down in an orderly way." As I arrived on the day of Charles's close observation, his teacher greeted me with her usual warm and inviting smile. With a hushed voice, she commented, "he was so nervous that you were coming today! I don't understand why." As we glanced in his direction, Charles appeared rigid and serious sitting at his desk. Charles was not the type of boy to run up and hug a teacher, nor was he a boy who giggled and joked with classmates during instructional class time. Throughout the day, Charles maintained his self-conscious demeanor, relaxing only momentarily to chat with friends during lunch or sprint across the playground during recess. But when it came time for language arts or chorus class, Charles quickly and quietly got down to the serious business at hand, guarding himself carefully against any behavioral missteps. Certainly my researcher's presence affected Charles to some extent,

yet his own high standards of behavior extended to all aspects of his school experiences, including our interviews and playgroups.

I noted an example of Charles's serious behavior in my field notes when I observed his language arts class.

> *The class read a folk tale and worked in small groups to answer a reading comprehension worksheet: "What words were used to describe the sunlight? Why were these words used?"*
>
> *Charles's group is struggling: one boy plays with a toy in his desk, while another boy fiddles with his pencil and stares off into space. "Come on! We've got to finish this," Charles implores, to no avail. He sets off on his own to fill out the worksheet. His teacher notices and asks, "are you going to work independently? I asked you to collaborate." Begrudgingly, the other two boys offer a few ideas, but Charles ignores them and continues to write his own answers.*

After language arts class, Charles silently led me down the hall to the chorus room. I hoped that Charles might relax once we arrived. After all, he shared his positive appraisal of chorus class in our first interview: "It's fun. We play games and we sing. Sometimes we even go on trips. Our teacher said when we get better, he might take us to New York to sing." Yet throughout the rehearsal, Charles remained uncomfortably self-conscious, as I recorded in my field notes:

> *The class is rehearsing repertoire for a performance that is two weeks away. The group of about 15 students consists only of boys, selected from the 3rd and 4th grades. Later, they will combine with singers from the upper grades and of both sexes. After a brief set of vocal warm-ups, the chorus teacher plays a short passage on the piano: "I want to make sure you know your words. One, two, sit up, go."*
>
> *And they were off. They began singing the traditional spiritual, "Get on board, little children." I think Charles is singing, but I certainly cannot hear his voice, even though I am sitting just a foot or two away from him. For all I know, he could just be mouthing the words. Charles is so quiet!*
>
> *The boys sing with clear tone, accurate pitches and quite a bit of energy. However, there's a stiffness about the performance: over-enunciation of consonants and rhythmically robotic. For example, when they sing "lit-tle child-*

> *ren," the pronunciation and rhythm are so exactingly precise that it sounds stiff, unnatural. There is no looseness, swing or gospel feel to their singing. It sounds strange to my ears, forced and rigid.*

As the chorus teacher momentarily left the room to gather some of the older students, Charles sat silently, while the other boys chatted quietly with one another. One of the boys excitedly told me that Charles had amassed the most reward tickets for good behavior of anyone in the class. Charles nodded in recognition of his accomplishment, but said nothing. I started to wonder why Charles described chorus as "fun," but then realized that he thrived in such an exacting and controlled environment, where clear expectations and subsequent rewards were the orders of the day.

Charles's obedience extended to our interviews and musical playgroups, as he constantly reminded the others in our group to respect his tacit understanding of the traditional teacher-student hierarchy. As Tonya and Landon playfully teased one another over whose turn it was to play the bongos in the second musical playgroup, Charles's frustration boiled over. "Just give the drums to Landon," he urged, "and listen to Ms. Mercier!" The sometimes-messy nature of our quasi-formal musical playgroups often clashed with Charles's comfort for "steps coming down in an orderly way."

"To where my toy vessels lie safe in the bay." Charles not only stood guard over his own "proper" behavior, but he was particularly sensitive about protecting his preference for his favorite musical style: rock and roll. In our first interview, Charles shared his affinity for rock and roll and its connection to his enjoyment of watching professional wrestling on television.

> Charles: I don't really like hip hop. I just like rock and roll.
> Michelle: Any particular songs you can think of?
> Charles. I just like rock and roll. Like, when I watch wrestling on television. I like the rock and roll music that plays when they come out.

> Michelle: Oh, I see. And you don't like hip hop. Can you explain why?
> Charles: Because in hip-hop, there's too much *violence* in it. That's why I listen to rock and roll.
> Tonya: Have you seen the wrestler who puts worms on his face?
> Charles: Yes! That's the guy who puts a sock on his hand and punches people!
> Michelle: And that's not violent?
> Charles. No. It's not all real. It's fake.

With emphatic certainty, Charles differentiated between a perceived violence in hip-hop music, as opposed to the "fake" violence in professional wrestling. He continued to express his aversion for hip-hop throughout our interviews and playgroups.

In our second interview, the children chose listening selections for our upcoming playgroup and excitedly listed some of their favorite artists: Keri Hilson, Lil Wayne, Chris Brown, and T. I. Charles frowned at their choices, again emphasizing, "I only listen to rock and roll."

> Charles: You all better hope that none of those songs have bad words in them!
> Tonya: No, my song doesn't!
> Michelle: Is that why you don't like the song?
> Charles: Well, some of the songs they pick, *some* of them have bad words.
> Michelle: Yes, some of them do. And that makes you not like the song?
> Charles: That's why I won't listen to hip-hop.

Charles outwardly showed his distaste for Landon's listening selection in our second musical playgroup. The moment the thumping bass line of Soulja Boy's "Turn My Swag On" (ColliPark/Interscope, 2008) started, Charles propped his elbows on the table and covered his ears with his hands. Charles continued to frown with disapproval as Landon sang the lyrics and Keisha and Tonya used drums to match the rhythm of the bass line. He dared to set himself apart from the other children, bravely standing by his opinions without flinching.

Tonya and Her "Danse Africaine"

The low beating of the tom-toms,

The slow beating of the tom-toms,
Low. . .slow
Slow. . .low—
Stirs your blood.
Dance!
A night-veiled girl
Whirls softly into a
Circle of light.
Whirls softly. . .slowly
Like a wisp of smoke around the fire—
And the tom-toms beat,
And the tom-toms beat,
And the low beating of the tom-toms
Stirs your blood.

In “Danse Africaine,” Langston Hughes (1925/1994) captured the pulsating rhythms of African drums and the graceful dancing of a “night-veiled” African girl. Although Hughes described an ancient musical tradition of drumming and dancing, he placed the reader amidst the performance by utilizing the present tense. This gives the poem both timeless and immediate qualities, with music and dance, musician and dancer so innately connected that they are always already there, “like a wisp of smoke around the fire.”

Tonya lived in a musical present tense, with a musicality that was always already there. I watched and listened with amazement as her constantly evolving musicality unfolded before me, a musicality layered within multifaceted roles and imbued with confidence. As Tonya invited me into her musical world, she also emphasized “her color.” Through story and song, Tonya conspicuously intertwined and voiced her musicality in tandem with her African-American identity. A comparison of the original songs she shared in the final two musical playgroups revealed not only Tonya’s emergence as a musical leader, but also provided a window into the richly diverse aspects of this naturally creative musical child.

Always Already Musical

At the close of our first interview, I asked Tonya and Charles to offer their thoughts about music.

> Michelle: Anything else you want to say about music today? Something you like about music?
> Charles: Hmmm. Music is very fascinating. I just like it because of the beats and stuff. That's it.
> Tonya: What I like about music is that I'm happy it was invented. I would like to ask you something. Do you know the first person that invented music?
> Michelle: The very first person? I don't know. Do you know?
> Tonya: Well, I would *like* to know, because I would like to see what inspired that man or woman or boy or girl who invented it. And I want to know what inspired them to make music. I wonder if they were bored and wanted something to do? But, I like that music has been invented, because now, instead of just watching TV or doing homework or being bored, I can actually play music instead!

While Charles answered in his usual direct manner, Tonya dreamily pondered the very origins of music. She placed a child's capability on equal footing with that of an adult's when she imagined who "invented" music. Drawing on her own lived experience, Tonya's inspiration to engage with music filled the hours of her everyday life. Tonya's musicality was always already there, at her fingertips like a constant companion and a trusted friend that she called upon to fill her time. Throughout our interviews and musical playgroups, Tonya expressed her sense of self through music as she navigated through multiple musical roles with an ever-present confidence.

Music close at hand. Tonya moved fluidly and effortlessly through her musical world, as though her musicality were as natural as the breaths she took. Whether she sang her favorite songs or played African drums in dance class, Tonya's musicality was always close at hand. She described feeling stifled in chorus class the previous year, perhaps now more content to savor the richness of her musical world under less exacting

circumstances. With a nurturing hand and an evaluative ear, Tonya delighted in her inherent musicality.

From the first interview, Tonya did not hesitate to sing her favorite songs. Demonstrating her vocal and compositional prowess, she sang her original creation, "Whammy Award Liar," a cute pop song confection to be described in a later section. A few moments later, she launched into Rhianna's "Shut Up and Drive" (Island Def Jam, 2007). With a coy smile and a lilting voice, Tonya maintained an even and steady rhythm as she unhurriedly relished in two full verses and a chorus of the song, mimicking every vocal nuance of her favorite pop star. Tonya hesitated only once to showcase her clear and melodic singing voice. In the first playgroup, Tonya proudly showed me the lyrics to "Whammy Award Liar" that she printed neatly in pencil inside a spiral notebook. But her eyes widened with anticipation as we began unpacking the boxes full of instruments I brought and she claimed, "I'm too shy to sing my song today." On that day, Tonya preferred to experiment playfully with the instruments alongside the other children, saving her songs for another day.

On the day of Tonya's close observation a few days later, I accompanied her to "specials" dance class. She hinted that she "plays drums sometimes" in dance class, but I had no idea what was about to unfold. I described Tonya's drumming in my field notes:

> *Tonya and her classmates are bubbling with energy as they enter the dance room, yet quickly follow a set routine by taking off their shoes and storing them in the wooden cubby boxes in the back corner of the room. The dance space consists of a slightly elevated, blonde wooden floor and a far wall lined with mirrors. Large, colorful construction paper cut-outs hang above the mirrors and proclaim "D-A-N-C-E!"*
>
> *After a series of student-led warm-ups and a class-created dance set to James Brown's "Say it loud," the class focuses on a traditional dance from Guinea called "Kuku" that they are learning. After reviewing a series of steps, the*

teacher calls out "where's my drummer?" Tonya sprints to the back of the room and takes her place behind two large djembe drums. The teacher joins her, sitting behind three large drums and reviews a series of calls and responses as the rest of the class practice the dance steps.

The teacher verbalizes and plays the call, while Tonya plays the response:

Teacher: Ta ka ti kit a ka
Tonya: Doo DOOM doo

The pattern shifts to a new rhythm that the teacher and Tonya play in synchronization. Some of the dancers forget the newly learned steps, so the teacher stops and asks, "what happened? Do we need to review this again?" She moves to the front of the room to verbalize and review the dance steps, while Tonya remains at the drums and plays the rhythm:

DAH ked ah kah dee dah, kee dah kah dee DAH

The teacher remains at the front of the room and leads the dancers as the whole piece starts again. The teacher verbally performs the calls and Tonya answers on the drums. Tonya continues into the new rhythm pattern without missing a beat, fully leading the class as solo accompanist.

Tonya's drumming is extremely accurate, with a steady, flowing beat and perfectly timed responses. She enlivens the syncopated rhythm with forceful accents. Tonya plays with energy, appropriate volume and natural confidence.

I watched with fascination as Tonya served as drumming leader for her dance class. Tonya not only mastered complex rhythms, but she enlivened her drumming with brio and vivacity that matched the energy of the dancers. Her dance teacher, also a master drummer, offered just the right amount of modeling, then stepped away to allow Tonya's natural musicality to emerge. Tonya thrived in such an environment where her capabilities and independence were allowed to flourish.

In stark contrast to the expressive and flowing musicality I observed in dance class, Tonya described a very different type of musical experience when she participated in chorus class the previous year. During our final interview, Tonya detailed a vivid memory.

> Tonya: I'll tell you what I hated about chorus. The thing I hated the most was when we had to stand up, *the whole time*, and then sing. You can't sit down, you can't move your head, you just have to stand straight up just like this (*demonstrates by standing exaggeratingly stiff, her arms straight down at her sides*).
> Michelle: Oh, like perfectly still?
> Tonya: If you just lean a little bit, he would catch you and take you out of the room!

In her pejorative assessment of chorus, Tonya expressed her distaste for a musical environment that stressed posture over singing. Tonya never explained whether she chose to no longer participate in chorus, or if her teacher did not invite her back to this "select ensemble." Whatever the reason, Tonya's natural and unrestrained musicality found a more suitable home as drumming leader for her dance class.

Far from being self-absorbed within her own musicality, Tonya enveloped those around her, acting as a guide and a nurturer within her musical landscape. During the second playgroup, Tonya revisited "Shut Up and Drive" as her listening selection. As the recording played, Landon, Keisha and Charles used instruments to perform rhythms as Tonya sang. At several points in the recording, the instrumentation drops out to emphasize the vocal line. Tonya guided the group during each of these breaks, signaling the others to stop playing by leaning forward and swiping her hands across the table. As the instrumentation returned at full volume, Tonya nodded her head as a cue to the others to resume playing.

Tonya's non-verbal cues served to guide the group, and she also used modeling and verbal praise to nurture group music making. Tonya welcomed the other children into her musical world, sharing her original songs, "Whammy Award Liar" and "Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry" with the other children during our playgroups. Much like her own dance and drumming teacher, Tonya briefly modeled a rhythm pattern for the other

children to play and then stepped aside. Despite making a few demands toward Landon, Tonya generally allowed the others to contribute as they saw fit. As long as the group moved forward with their music making, Tonya was pleased. As the group practiced and mastered "Roll of Thunder," Tonya praised the group by joyfully announcing, "that was great! Give everybody a big clap! A big hand!"

Just as Tonya evaluated the music making in our playgroups, her ears were finely tuned to the musical world around her. In our second interview, Tonya described her process for choosing her favorite songs:

> Tonya: I go to music websites like YouTube, Music.com and BET.com and I look at videos, but I *hear* it first. Then, I choose the music I like by listening to the beat and how people reflect *on* the beat. Like if the beat was *(thumps the table with the heel of her hand):*
>
>
>
> Then they'll say, keep it with the beat.
> Michelle: Keep *what* with the beat?
> Tonya: Like, keep *up* with the beat. Like, someone might be singing *(chants, using same rhythm with heel of her hand):*
> "I don't like this boy"
> They're keeping with the beat, and that tells me that I like the song.

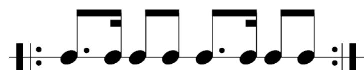
With her ears as her guide, Tonya used deep listening to evaluate her favorite songs. While she turned to a multi-media environment to search for songs, she focused on rhythmic and vocal performances over video imagery: "I look at videos, but I *hear* it first." While she attempted to describe "the beat," Tonya immediately turned to improvised chanting and tapping to demonstrate what she meant by "keeping with the beat."

Musically confident. No matter the musical role, Tonya indulged in her musicality with supreme confidence. When she announced on several occasions, "I have

a beautiful voice," her certitude outweighed her facetiousness. In our third playgroup, she took on a more boastful tone as she asserted "people get jealous of me because of my beautiful singing." She did not clarify who these "people" were, yet whether "they" are real or imagined is less important than how she saw herself as distinctly endowed with a beautiful singing voice.

Tonya's musical confidence meshed easily within our playgroups. I led a series of rhythmic call-and-response activities in the second playgroup, starting with a pattern of four "call" beats to which the children answered within four "response" beats. With this exercise easily mastered, I expanded the pattern to eight calls and eight responses.

> Michelle: Okay, this time I'm going to do eight beats and you all will answer with eight beats. Four is too short, don't you think?
> *Tonya is softly counting out eight beats, waving her mallet back and forth.*
> Michelle: I'll do eight, and you do eight, however you want to play them. So its:
> *I play eight beats on the claves, without counting aloud.*
>
> *Tonya and Charles play a repeated pattern on the drums:*



> *Keisha glissades up and down on the slide whistle; Landon alternates high and low notes on the keyboard, matching the steady beat. A teacher walks in as they are playing and the phrase is interrupted.*
> Teacher: I'm sorry I interrupted. I was just so amazed watching them!
> *Children giggle and smile at the teacher.*
> Michelle: I know! They're great musicians! Let's try it again. Remember, you should try to fill up all eight beats. Do I need to count out loud?
> Tonya: No. We've got it in our minds.

Deeply engaged with her own musical thinking, Tonya began by physically feeling the eight beats as she softly counted and tapped out the beats with her mallet. She then internalized the eight-beat segment, confident that both she and the others had it "in our minds."

The ease with which Tonya tapped in to her own musicality was a source of empowerment. During the third interview, the children commiserated that the *Sound Learning* musicians concluded their series of visits.

> Keisha: I mean, I want their music to still be with us, like, we can still be able to listen to it like they were still here. I don't want them to go!
> Michelle: So, Tonya, you were asking if the percussion trio had a place where they rehearse because you want to go watch them there?
> Tonya: Well, I thought the four of us could go there with you in your car. Then, the four of us could practice *with* them and make up our own song. You know, make up our own little song together and play it *with* them.

While both girls craved a sense of permanence and continued musical engagement with the musicians, Keisha spoke from her perspective as a listening audience member. Tonya, however, considered herself as a musical equal to the professional musicians. Rather than simply remaining an audience member, Tonya envisioned herself as a fully capable musician, confident to play and compose *with* the musicians. Tonya embraced her own musicality, so much a part of who she was and so eager to share it with others.

"A Night-veiled Girl"

In "Danse Africaine," Hughes draws the reader in with the "low beating of the tom-toms" to focus on a graceful, whirling dance of an African girl. The undercurrent of drums' rhythmic pulses is punctuated by the "Dance!" of an African girl as she explodes upon the scene. Just as Tonya embraced her musicality, so, too, she embraced her African-American identity. At times, Tonya spoke of her African-American identity in stark dialectics based on color. Yet she lived her musicality and African-American identity such that the two converged within an intricate "dance" of self-discovery and anchored her sense of family and place.

Tonya's African-American identity was at the forefront of her consciousness. She often used skin color as a point of differentiation, such as when she referred to pop star Katy Perry as "that white girl." More often, she indicated racial differences in terms of "my (Tonya's) color" versus "Ms. Mercier's color," as she did in our third interview when the children selected their songs to listen to in our upcoming musical playgroup.

> Keisha: I want my song for tomorrow to be "Like Whoa" by Ally and A.J.
> Landon: What is that? Who are Ally and A.J.?
> Tonya: They're sisters that are in a band together. They're Ms. Mercier's color.

This was not the first time Tonya referred to me in this way. As I walked the children back to their classrooms after our second interview, Tonya talked about a teacher in the school. She explained to me, "she's your color." When I told Tonya "it's okay to call me white," Tonya frowned and said, "no. It's rude to call people that."

Tonya's talk of music and her African-American identity frequently overlapped, as if these aspects of her identity were two sides of the same coin. In our third interview, Tonya began humming the melody of a spiritual she knew and then used the song as a prelude to a discussion of African-American history.

> Tonya: There's this Christian song, and I used to listen to it all the time. It kind of goes like this (*humming very low*) "Mmmmhmmm, mmmhmm," and it keeps going. This lady sings it, about a child that lived during the time when there was sharecropping. Do you know about that? About the times when there was sharecropping?
> Michelle: Yes. Yes I do.
> Tonya: And these people made this little statue of God and some people thought it was really real. But this lady knew it was just a statue. People thought just because she was black, it meant that she was dumb.

Beyond dialects of race based solely on color, Tonya seemed intent to test my understanding of the African-American diaspora, perhaps attempting to determine where I stood in relation to her blackness. In our third musical playgroup, Tonya suggested the

group use the title to the book *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976) as the basis for a musical activity. She first gauged my awareness of the book.

> Tonya: I've got an idea for a song! It's a book title, called *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Have you heard of it?
> Michelle: Yes, I have.
> Tonya: Have you read it?
> Michelle: Yes, but it was a long time ago.
> Tonya: It took place during slavery, but (the black family) owned land. They let white people, they *told* white people to work for them, so they'll hate *them* (the white landowners) instead of *us*. Other people were trying to kill the family, but they didn't kill them because Harriet Tubman was still alive then.

Tonya not only tested my knowledge of the book, but also emphasized the importance of her own connection to the story. By using the plural pronoun "us," Tonya inserted herself into the plot of the book as though she was describing her own lived experience: "so they'll hate *them* instead of *us*." As Landon and Keisha sat off to one side and doodled with the instruments, Tonya made certain that everyone understood how important the story was to her. Her description of the book soon merged into a synopsis of a television program she watched about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. Suddenly, Tonya's storytelling hit a loud and fervent pitch.

> THEN! The slaves went up north. But they had some places in the north—THEY HAD SOME PLACES IN THE NORTH that still had slavery going on! Now Keisha needs to STOP! And Landon needs to STOP!

Frustrated that the other two children were busy playing the instruments and not listening to her, Tonya ordered Keisha and Landon to stop and listen to the histories of the African-American struggle that were so meaningful to her.

Even as Tonya eagerly shared her knowledge of historical persons and events, her African-American identity was equally rooted in the here-and-now, with current hip-hop

songs serving as a musical backdrop to her construction of self. In our second interview, Tonya described her connection to hip-hop music.

> Michelle: One last question for today. We were talking about where we get our songs from to put on our iPods. Do you ever learn about songs from your friends? Or maybe your mom or dad shares a song with you?
> Tonya: My brothers, they inspire me. They like this one song and they listen to it all the time. It's called "Do it Big" by J. Money. They play it really loud, and my mamma says "ya'll turn that music down!" And she gets so frustrated when she hears that song, because she don't like it.
> Michelle: Why do you think that is?
> Tonya: Well, there's no bad words in it. She don't like it because every time they play it, they sing along with it really loud. And they're *horrible* singers!
> Michelle: So you listen to a lot of hip hop and rap, don't you?
> Tonya: Yes. That's where my family's from.

Tonya humorously described a generational divide between family members based on playing music "really loud." Moreover, listening to hip-hop and rap grounded Tonya with a sense of family and space as she revealed, "that's where my family's from."

"I have my own band:" Tonya's Original Compositions

In our first interview Tonya eagerly announced, "I have my own band!" She went on to describe how she and a neighbor friend composed "Whammy Award Liar" together after school and videotaped their performance to show their family members. Tonya's affinity for composing songs surfaced again in our third playgroup with "Roll of Thunder, Hear my cry." A comparison of these songs reveals two very different aspects of Tonya's musicality: "Whammy Award Liar" conveys the melodic, pop song musings of a pre-adolescent girl, while "Roll of Thunder" channels a powerful expression of her African-American identity.

"Whammy Award Liar.." "My own song, "Whammy Award Liar," is one of my favorite songs," Tonya explained after she sang the song *a cappella* in the first interview. When she revisited the song in the fourth playgroup, she added, "the song is about a guy

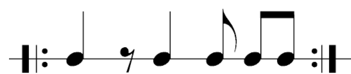
who gets an award for lying." With a verse-chorus structure, the lyrics to her song were as follows:

> I have dreamt of a place with your face in my eyes
> I have a guy, 'cause you've been around a couple times
> I had you, but when we had the fight
> I moved on
>
> 'Cause you're a whammy award liar
> Whammy award liar
> Whammy award—liar

For the verse, Tonya created a melody that ascended by step, resulting in a series of sequences. She sang each line of the verse with a smooth, lilting voice, adding a detached pause between each line. She contrasted the chorus by using repetitive pitches, spiced with declamatory staccato and a large pause before the final iteration of "liar."

Tonya revisited the song in the fourth playgroup with Keisha and Landon. As the group began, Keisha offered, "do you want us to give you a beat?" With consummate confidence, Tonya replied, "no, I've got the beat in my head. It's a slow song, but it gets fast in the middle." Tonya proceeded to sing the verse and chorus while Keisha and Landon played the drums:

"No, *this* is the beat," Tonya countered as she sang the chorus again, leaned over to play Keisha's bongos and demonstrated precisely what she had in mind:



As the group continued to practice the song, Tonya assumed multiple musical roles: teacher, conductor, arranger, and improviser. She advised the others to punctuate the chorus with rests.

> You should do it like this: (*singing*)
> Whammy award liar
> Whammy award liar, PAUSE!
> Whammy—wait one second—award liar.

As a conductor, Tonya first signaled the start of the song using a "five, six, seven, eight" count down and switched to using a scraping stick in a circular motion as a cue to begin. Tonya tinkered with the song's arrangement, deciding that she alone should scrape the frog during the verse. She instructed and cued Keisha and Landon to start the drum pattern during the chorus. In the final performance, Keisha and Landon continued to groove on the drum pattern after the chorus as Tonya added a coda with her pulsating vocal improvisation.

> We ARE—got THESE—she NAW—gah MEE—my MAN—AUSTRALIA!

"Whammy Award Liar" revealed aspects of Tonya's musical world and her emotional development. Tonya drew from her tacit knowledge of pop music conventions to construct her own musical creation. With a contrasting verse-chorus structure, her lyrical content explored the familiar pop song theme of a romantic relationship gone wrong. Written in the first person, Tonya's lyrics portrayed her lived experience of being a pre-adolescent girl, who is perhaps interested in, but not completely trusting of, the opposite sex. Through this song, Tonya journeyed through her musical world and her emotional world, and the two worlds converged through her original song.

"Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry." "Our whole class is reading the book. We're about to start chapter two. So I made up a song about it." This is how Tonya introduced

her idea to use the book's title as the basis for a group activity in the third playgroup. With Tonya's deep-felt connection to her African-American identity, it was certainly no coincidence that she chose this particular book as the basis for musical expression. Yet "Roll of Thunder" contrasted greatly with "Whammy Award Liar," both in terms of how Tonya expressed her ideas musically and how she expressed a very different sense of self.

Musically, this song was more improvised than composed, consisting of the line "roll of thunder, hear my cry" repeated four times. Tonya improvised a rhythmic accompaniment that evolved over each repetition of the four lines. She began by simply scraping her mallet across the table on each line of the lyrics, and then tapped the table to emphasize the words "roll," "thun-der" and "cry." She switched to tapping the cowbell and arrived at a set rhythmic pattern:

In a unique moment, Tonya assumed the role of the teacher by verbalizing the pattern for the other children: "Bom, ba bom bom, mmm bom bom." With the rhythmic pattern established, Keisha and Landon joined in as Tonya chanted the words. Keisha reproduced the rhythm pattern on the bongos, while Tonya directed Landon to play the bucket drum on beats one and three. Tonya continued to add flourishes of improvisation as the group practiced the song. She added melodic material to the first two lines, using the pitches:

Tonya caught us all by surprise when she spontaneously changed the final line to "roll of thunder, I'm so fly!"

Tonya's performance of "Roll of Thunder" was powerful in its simplicity. In contrast to the lilting melodies and pop song confection of "Whammy Award Liar," Tonya relied primarily on chanting to perform "Roll of Thunder." Tonya gave rhythmic life to the repetitive words of "Roll of Thunder," adding an occasional pause of syncopation at the beginning of a line and emphasizing "hear my cry" with forceful accents. Her rhythmic chanting imbued the song with a sense of strength and power. When she added "I'm so fly," this seemed to be less of a humorous twist and more of a proud proclamation of her musicality and perhaps even her own blackness.

"My songs are just like their songs." Like the other children, Tonya revealed a long list of current hip-hop artists she listened to, including Chris Brown, Rhianna, T. I., Beyonce, and Keri Hilson. Yet Tonya went one step further with her musical preferences, citing specific artists or songs as source material for her own original works. As she introduced her version of "Roll of Thunder," she explained, "it's just like that Busta Rhymes song," as she thumped her fist on the table to demonstrate the rhythm. She referenced another hip-hop song and artist before she sang her original pop song: "I'm going to sing my song called "Whammy award liar." It's just like the song "Hold Up" by Chris Brown." I remained uncertain if Tonya adapted actual musical material such as rhythm or melody from her favorite songs. Tonya composed lyrics, rhythms and melodies for her original songs and added improvisational flourishes throughout her performances, so it seemed more likely that she referenced her favorite hip-hop artists and songs in more abstract terms of style or genre. Nonetheless, her self-comparisons

revealed that the music she listened to became integrated in to expressions of her own musicality.

Chapter Summary

Landon, Keisha, Charles, and Tonya were unique musical individuals. Landon was innately curious about his musical world, exploring how to create sounds, alone and with others, on instruments through improvisation in the playgroups. He took an analytical approach to understanding music, contemplating the inspiration for his favorite hip-hop song, and pondering the performances of the *Sound Learning* musicians. His curiosity extended toward understanding how his peers thought and formed opinions about music. At times fiercely independent, Landon sought out unfamiliar music on his own at home and imagined a music class that might honor his autonomy.

Keisha gazed into her musical looking-glass to explore her own musicality and the world around her. She valued active musical engagement, whether joyously doodling on the bongos in the playgroups or enthusiastically singing in chorus. She spoke of feelings of connection in the *Sound Learning* visits, both in terms of understanding music as a vehicle for learning about the world, as well as sensing personal connections to the musicians. Keisha explored her emotional world through music, using her musical looking-glass to learn about who she is through lyrics in her favorite songs.

Charles subtly lived his self-described "daredevil" persona in relation to his musicality. In the playgroups, he explored the instruments with carefree abandon. In chorus and the classroom, Charles was focused and serious, guarding himself carefully against behavioral missteps. He shared few details about his rich musical family background, the depths of which I learned through a conversation with his father.

Charles bravely set himself apart from the other children, standing firm in his strong preference for rock and roll music.

Tonya shared her musicality with confidence and ease, always eager to sing, share her musical compositions, and lead music making activities in the playgroups. Her natural musicality flourished in dance class where she skillfully served as drumming leader. Tonya's African-American identity overlapped with her musicality, expressed through her original composition and anchored her sense of family and place through musical preferences for hip-hop and rap.

CHAPTER 6

CHILDREN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MUSICAL IDENTITY

Throughout this study, I sought to understand and interpret the lived experience of children's musical identity formation in relation to music participation and learning. In Chapter 5, I presented individual descriptions of the four participants' lived musical worlds and developed preliminary themes (Holyroyd, 2001; Morrisette, 1999) to elucidate the children's perspectives. Even as each child's lived experience of musical identity formation was highly individualized, I recognized significant threads (or "clusters" as defined by Eatough & Smith, 2006) that emerged as I reflected on their descriptions. These threads included the impulses to *explore* musical sounds, the ability to *evaluate* their own performances and the music of others, the urge to *express* musical ideas and conceptions of self, the self-selective pathways for musical *engagement*, and the individualized *ownership* of musicality.

In this chapter, I returned to my research questions, keeping in mind Van Manen's (1990) approach to phenomenological interpretation that challenges the researcher to move beyond factual description: "(phenomenology) always asks, what is the nature of the phenomenon as meaningfully experienced (p. 40)?" The first portion of this chapter consists of within and between person analyses as framed by my supporting questions, and explores musical identities across musical modalities. The second portion of this chapter synthesizes my findings through thematic reflections on my primary research question.

Part I: Musical Identities Across Musical Modalities

My supporting research questions provided the framework for initial within and between person analyses.

Supporting Research Questions:

How do children's musical identities evolve in relation to the range of experiences they have in performing, creating and understanding music?

How do children experience and perceive the place of quasi-formal music learning in relation to their musical identities?

What processes and components of music experience and learning contribute to children's musical identity formation, both in school and beyond?

To explore relevant data, I interrogated children's musical modalities in four areas: singing, listening, performing on instruments and creating music. I considered both their self-descriptions of and their active engagement within the modalities as windows into their lived experience of musical identity formation. I shifted my analytical lenses during this process, focusing alternately between individual and group interpretations. Each modality is presented with an overview, followed by within person analysis of each child and how he or she utilized the modality in relation to self. Between person analysis resulted in "dimensions" of each modality (or "second order thematic clusters" as defined by Morrisette, 1999), in which additional preliminary themes were developed to explore convergence and divergence across the lived experiences of the participants. I continued to weave the significant threads of *exploration, evaluation, expression, engagement,* and *ownership* throughout my analysis in preparation for my final thematic synthesis.

The quasi-formal music learning structure of the musical playgroups (and the *Sound Learning* visits to a lesser extent) provided participant-driven settings that

highlighted individual choice within the musical modalities of singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating music. As such, personal choices of musical behaviors and roles within the group were highly individualized as, for example, some participants rarely chose to sing or opted to replicate rather than create musical material. The musical modalities of performing on instruments and creating music within the musical playgroups naturally lent themselves to increased group interaction that necessitated a detailed analysis regarding the nature and trajectory of these activities.

Overview: Each Child Sings

Among musical modalities, the children approached singing in highly individualized ways. While Tonya consistently used her voice as the focal point for musical playgroup activities, Landon, Keisha, and Charles were less vocally focused. These three sang along to favorite recordings at home and occasionally during our listening sessions but chose not to use their voices as spontaneous soloists, nor to join in when Tonya sang. Though Keisha and Charles professed pride in and enjoyment of their participation in chorus, I witnessed two very different types of singing behaviors between them during my close observations in that setting.

Landon sings. Instead of singing spontaneous melodies, Landon used his voice primarily in tandem with his listening selections. He was particularly draw to the music of rapper Soulja Boy, selecting two different tracks for our listening sessions. Landon sprang into action as soon as he heard a Soulja Boy song, moving his arms to the beat or using a drumstick as an improvised microphone. He precisely imitated Soulja Boy's vocal style that combined inflected rapping and repetitive pitches. Landon's voice swooped high and low as he rapped along to a chorus of "Hey, YOU there." He matched

the repetitive pitches in the chorus of "Turn my swag on," switching back to his rap voice for the tag line "I said what's up." Landon emulated his favorite rapper's half-chanted, half-sang vocal style throughout the entire length of a recording, his body fully engaged with the pulsating rhythms.

While Landon's vocal performances simulated his favorite rapper, he also listened with genuine intrigue when singing became a focal point within our group. His eyes grew wide with wonder at Keisha's description of her chorus group singing in the school's stairwell as he imagined the sound and mused aloud, "oh! There's an echo!" Landon smiled as he listened to Keisha sing a snippet of a chorus song "Ode To Composers" and complimented her performance, saying, "that was great. How did you memorize all that?" He took a more critical tone when Tonya claimed to have a "beautiful" singing voice, asking her, "but how do you *know*?" He seemed satisfied with her answer: "Because I sang for Ms. Mercier!"

Landon sings as expression of self. Landon explored singing cautiously, quick to imitate his favorite rapper and equally quick to step aside as his peers sang. Even though Landon never self-identified as a singer per se, he re-created the vocal nuances in his favorite songs with accurate and expressive detail. Movement was integral to these performances as he bounced in his chair, moved his arms and shoulders to the beat, and mimicked the posturing of his favorite rap star. In these ways, Landon explored his musical identity by experimenting with the persona of being a rap star. However, when his peers' singing became the focus, Landon recognized the singing abilities of others, but seemed to question his own self-efficacy as a singer. Landon seemed to sense a

qualitative difference between his own playful vocal imitations and Keisha's "proper" singing of her chorus song.

Keisha sings. "The most important thing we do in chorus is *sing,*" Keisha proudly proclaimed as she described her love of chorus and singing in our fourth interview. When I observed a chorus rehearsal on the day of her close observation, Keisha sang with a clear and melodic voice, her enthusiasm and energy befitting the fine-tuned ensemble. For Keisha, singing was analogous to "knowing" or understanding music. She did not simply listen to songs at home on a daily basis, but as she described it, "I have 132 songs on my iPod and I know every one of them. . .because I can sing them all!" In these contexts—in chorus and at home—Keisha exuded confidence in regard to her singing and "knowing" music.

Despite Keisha's avowed affinity for singing in chorus and at home, she hesitated to sing in the context of our musical playgroups. She briefly sang a few lines of "Ode To Composers" in our second playgroup, but quickly abandoned the song when I asked if she wanted to focus on it that day. "No," she explained, "the only songs I know are from chorus, and I wouldn't want to do any of those." During our listening sessions, Keisha gazed off into the distance and quietly hummed along to her selections, engaging with the songs more through movements of rhythmic swaying and finger snapping and less with her voice. Afterwards, Keisha spoke in earnest about the rhythms and lyrics in her favorite songs. During our playgroups, she chose to play bongos rather than sing, and stepped aside in deference to Tonya's increasing role as vocal soloist.

Keisha sings as expression of self. Keisha revealed herself as a singer in a series of contrasts: confident and determined in chorus, yet hesitant and hushed in the musical

playgroups. She selectively chose to sing based on context, comfortable and proud to participate in her large school ensemble, but uncertain of how to reconcile her singing with the playgroup's quasi-formal setting. Keisha may have felt exposed and uncomfortably self-aware in our small group, her reluctance to sing further influenced by Tonya's eagerness to share original songs. Or perhaps Keisha recognized the playgroups more as a unique opportunity to explore and experiment with instruments. Keisha's decisions of when and where to sing ran parallel to her understanding of the musical material, as she described "knowing" the songs she learned in chorus and the songs on her iPod. The act of singing presented a pathway for self-discovery. "Music is something out there waiting *for* you," she explained of singing in chorus. Keisha's eloquent statement points to her relationship with music, with singing representing a singular but variable facet of her personal musical journey.

Charles sings. I struggled to understand Charles as a singer, his persistently quiet and guarded nature extending across all aspects of his presentation of self. In our second interview, Charles burst out singing "'cause this is thriller, thriller" from the chorus of the Michael Jackson song, offering me a fleeting glimpse of the boy his father later described. "He sings and dances all the time at home," his father told me, "but he's quiet in public. I don't understand that."

Like Keisha, Charles also participated in the school chorus and tersely described his experiences of singing, playing games, and going on trips as "fun." My observations of Charles in chorus greatly contrasted with those of Keisha's confident and enthusiastic singing. During the rehearsal I observed, Charles sat nervously hunched over in his seat and acutely aware of my researcher's presence. I strained to hear if he actually sang or

just mouthed the words as the other members of the all-boy group sang with energy and clear, accurate pitches. I later learned from a classmate that Charles accumulated the highest number of reward tickets for good behavior, which he could use in exchange for snacks. My focus shifted to understanding Charles's motivation for participating in chorus as perhaps driven more by extrinsic rewards and less from the enjoyment of musical experience itself. Charles's typical behavior of responding to expectations within orderly, rules-based school environments fit well with the highly structured chorus ensemble, affording him a space to be successful on terms consistent with his behavior in other settings.

Charles sings as expression of self. Understanding Charles as a singer proved to be a daunting task, leaving me with more questions than answers. What factors compelled him to sing and dance at home, but constrained these behaviors in school settings? Why did he describe chorus as fun, yet appeared to mostly to be going through the motions? After Charles's father described their family's rich musical background, I wondered if Charles participated in chorus out of a sense of obligation rather than choice. Just as Charles began to somewhat relax around me, his absences from our third and fourth musical playgroups further complicated my ability to understand him as a singer. Even with these limited data, however, I found that Charles made choices in regards to singing based on context, singing playfully at home, while rigidly conforming more to behavior than singing standards in chorus.

Tonya sings. "People get jealous of me because of my beautiful singing," Tonya said in the third musical playgroup. I noted the tone in her voice in my transcripts as *half-serious, half-facetious, and fully confident*. Tonya frequently referred to her voice

with pride, rarely hesitating to sing, and equally comfortable singing *a cappella* or along with recordings. Whether singing her favorite song by hip-hop star Rhianna or a self-composed original, Tonya sang with pitch-perfect accuracy and emotional expressivity. She seemed to view herself as a singer through and through, seizing the opportunity to sing in our interviews and musical playgroups with natural and spontaneous ease.

Despite her aptitude for singing, Tonya expressed a strong distaste for her previous year's participation in chorus. Her comments indicated she chafed under expectations for rigid singing posture, sensing a mismatch between her own expressive self-confidence as a singer and the exacting structure of chorus. In comparison, Tonya thrived in our quasi-formal settings, free to use her voice without inhibitions. Her eagerness to sing often placed her at the center of the musical playgroups with the other children functioning as accompanists. The others neither confirmed nor denied being intimidated by or "jealous" of Tonya's predominance as a singer, yet their willingness to relinquish singing to her seemed to indicate tacit self-comparisons and recognition of musical ownership. Tonya often presented her original songs and the group negotiated musical roles accordingly, with Tonya emerging as vocal soloist to the group's instrumental accompaniments.

Tonya sings as expression of self. Tonya's lived experience of singing was rich and multifaceted. Carefree and confident, her natural impulses to sing revealed not only the tuneful and well-pitched quality of her voice but also how she chose to use it. She replicated pop songs with ease, capturing the vocal nuances of her favorite singers with accuracy and expressiveness.

Tonya expressed her lived musical identity through her original songs. She sang "Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry" with focused determination, her voice saturated with emotion. This song represented the fluid intersection of Tonya's lived identities as she expressed her blackness through singing. She proudly shared "Whammy Award Liar" on two occasions, singing her original song *a cappella* in the first interview and guiding the others' instrumental accompaniments in the fourth playgroup. Composed in typical pop song structure, she sang the chorus with a smooth and melodic voice and contrasted the verse by singing repetitive staccato pitches. Her lyrics portrayed a cautionary tale of romance and her range of stylistic and expressive choices revealed that singing was a key component of expressing her own self-understanding.

Dimensions of Singing

Children in this study utilized singing in individualized ways, more than other musical modalities. They selectively engaged with singing based on situational factors, including familiarity with the musical material and contextual circumstances. Singing behaviors fluctuated within musical playgroups, suggesting that both social comparisons and gender may influence musical identities in singing.

Situational singers. In terms of participation, I found the children revealed themselves as situational singers. Each child tacitly negotiated a comfort zone for singing, based on *familiarity of material* and *contextual circumstances*. During musical playgroups, Landon mixed rapping with chanting, but only while listening to recordings of his favorite songs. Charles and Keisha sang in short musical outbursts, such as Charles singing a snippet of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" or Keisha's brief rendition of

"Ode To Composers." These episodes represented familiarity with the music and captured glimpses of the three at their most relaxed in the playgroup context.

Keisha claimed that she sang at home "all the time" because she "knows all the songs" on her iPod, and thus was both familiar with the material and comfortable in the context of home. Keisha and presumably Charles were also comfortable singing in chorus, responding well to the structure and expectations. In the second playgroup, Keisha spoke clearly to the importance of context: "the only songs I know are from chorus, and I wouldn't want to do any of those." By contrast, Tonya rejected the structure of chorus, but thrived in the quasi-formal context of our playgroups where she freely sang her own songs and her favorite pop tunes.

Social comparisons and gender. The children in my study were at the developmental cusp when social comparisons may begin to influence musical identities. Lamont (2002) hypothesized: "Moving through middle childhood, peer group comparisons will become increasingly important in children's musical identities, whilst attitudes and feelings towards music will come to dominate adolescents' musical identities (p. 43)." "People get jealous of me because of my beautiful singing," Tonya noted. In the playgroups, children made tacit social comparisons around singing. When Tonya eagerly assumed the role of leader in our musical playgroups, Keisha and Charles relegated themselves to chorus-only singers, and Landon to being a non-school singer. Such comparisons seemed more apparent with singing than with other musical modalities, perhaps because singing is such a personalized form of musical self-expression. Singing may produce a heightened awareness of self in relation to others, particularly within a small group context.

My data in regard to singing and gender seem to indicate a divide, with Tonya and Keisha more inclined to singing than Landon and Charles. According to Green (2008), the role of gender in relation to singing is apparent in school ensembles, with girls showing an interest in and populating choirs more than boys. However, her research into informal music learning revealed a different situation, with both boys and girls willing to sing popular music of their choosing.

> However, there is some evidence that (the gender divide) does not necessarily apply to the singing of popular music, which is an area that boys are indeed willing to associate themselves with. . .Some teachers expressed surprise and pleasure that some boys, particularly ones whom they had never seen participating well in music before, were willing to 'stand up and sing in front of the whole class'" (p. 46-47).

While Charles and his singing remained an enigma to me, this might explain Landon's willingness to sing along with his favorite recordings in the playgroups. Landon may never join a choir, yet he expressed himself through singing when given the opportunity to choose his own music and vocal performance style.

Overview: Each Child Listens to Music

When I decided to include listening sessions as part of our musical playgroups, I anticipated the children would select current popular hits and offer a few ideas as to why they liked these songs. However, I discovered that listening held a much more prominent place in the children's lives, and that they engaged with music in much deeper and multifaceted ways than I expected. They responded enthusiastically to the listening sessions, with each child permitted to choose one listening selection per playgroup. They often listed several favorite songs before carefully deciding on which one they wanted to hear, revealing the importance they placed on having the opportunity for personal choice.

Listening to music provide opportunities for exploration of self, as the children described listening in terms of musical, emotional, and intellectual engagement.

Landon listens to music. Even though Landon did not participate in school music programs, listening to music held a prominent place in his life outside of school. Landon described listening to music at home as a frequent activity, both as a solitary activity and in social settings with his younger and older family members (siblings, cousins, father). Landon's initial interest in music by his favorite artist Soulja Boy led him to seek out an unfamiliar track independently ("Hey, You There"). He not only found this song humorously entertaining, but was intrigued by how his favorite artist realized a biographic storyline through music. In the fourth interview, Landon drew a direct connection between our listening sessions and his conception of an ideal music classroom: "I would do it like YOU do it. Students pick out songs that they like. And they could listen to it and try to make the same kind of music." Landon envisioned a student-centered music class where personal listening choices might provide the impetus for group music making.

Landon listens as exploration of self. Listening to music provided the primary means of musical engagement for Landon, with his favorite songs serving as a backdrop to his life at home. He described listening to music as a shared experience amongst family members, yet he also turned to the Internet to seek out songs on his own. Thus, Landon played an active role in shaping his musical preferences, navigating a dynamic interchange between familial influences and independent exploration. He engaged with listening for pure entertainment, yet also constructed meaning in music from an analytical perspective, drawn to both the humor and the narrative in his favorite Soulja Boy song.

He described the music he heard in the *Sound Learning* visits in terms of both simplicity and complexity: amazed that musicians used "just a bucket" for a drum and impressed that the ensemble's "music was very good, very organized." Listening provided Landon with an accessible means for active musical involvement. In the playgroups, he actively engaged with his listening selections through animated physical movement and imitative singing.

Keisha listens to music. Keisha was a multi-faceted listener, articulating a range of musical, emotional, and intellectual connections with music through listening. At times, she focused on the rhythm and melody of Beyonce's "Beautiful Liar," while at other times sought meaning through lyrical content. Music listening functioned as an emotional tutor, through which Keisha vicariously celebrated women's empowerment with Whitney Houston's "I'm Every Woman," or heeded the warnings of pursing a relationship with a duplicitous man in "Beautiful Liar." Though Keisha's interpretations tended only to scratch the surface or literal meaning of a song as in Hannah Montana's "The Climb," she began to push her own developmental boundaries, listening for pieces of advice or cautionary tales to help her understand the complexities of her emotional world. Keisha's intellectual responses were particularly evident during the *Sound Learning* visits. Experiencing music from China, for example, represented a way to "learn about that culture," and she verbally expressed appreciation for ways in which the visiting musicians connected music to what she was learning in school.

Keisha listens to music as exploration of self. "As soon as I get home from school, I rush to the computer and put my iPod on so I can listen to it," Keisha explained in our second interview. She described music listening as a frequent and trusted

companion, with her favorite songs providing the roadmap by which she explored her world. Whether she “learned about relationships” with Beyonce or “went to China” in the *Sound Learning* visits, Keisha’s engagement with music listening seemed to be a way of endeavoring to understand herself and the world around her. The rather mature themes of “ladies independence” and “cheating” that Keisha drew from songs often surprised me, yet exemplified how she explored lyrics to understand her developing sense of self.

Charles listens to music. Charles professed the most focused preference of genre for listening, emphasizing repeatedly that he *only* listened to rock and roll. He repeatedly expressed his distaste for hip-hop, citing the “violence” and “bad words.” Charles struggled to name specific rock and roll songs he liked, but he was drawn to the “theme songs” that played during the entrances of his favorite professional wrestlers that he watched on television. Most importantly, Charles knew that the sound of electric guitars was an essential element of his favorite music.

Charles listens to music as exploration of self. In his usual terse manner of speaking, Charles offered scant information as to the music he listened to. He spoke in binary distinctions between music he deemed acceptable and not, *only* listening to rock and roll set against a strong distaste for hip-hop. Even though he revealed little in regard to his family’s rich musical background as blues musicians, I wondered about the extent to which his musical preferences were shaped by their influences. What became clear was that Charles listened to music based on strong and strict boundaries, and unflinchingly defended his preferences in comparison to those of his peers.

Tonya listens to music. For Tonya, listening to music provided the backdrop for active engagement and creative expression. During listening sessions, Tonya moved and

sang throughout as the recordings played. In the second playgroup, she guided the others on instruments, signaling them when to play and when to drop out. Tonya cited favorite hip hop artists' songs she listened to that then served as models for her own original compositions. Her descriptions of listening tended to be holistic, as in listening for a pleasing confluence of voices and beats, because "it tells me if I like a song."

Tonya listens to music as exploration of self. "I listen to a lot of hip hop and rap, because that's where my family's from." In the second interview, Tonya revealed how the musical genres she listened to resonated with her sense of family and place. Yet listening represented more than unidirectional exposure to music, as Tonya seemed to live in her favorite songs, viewing herself as a musical equal with her favorite singers. Her *a cappella* performance of Rhianna's "Shut Up and Drive" was notable both for musical accuracy of pitches and rhythm and for the ways she captured the expressive vocal nuances of her favorite hip hop star. Tonya went beyond imitating her favorite artists by citing them as influences on her own musical creations. She confidently introduced her original songs as sounding "just like" the music of Busta Rhymes and Chris Brown, positioning her songs as having equivalent worth to those of her musical heroes. For Tonya, listening to music was a starting point from which she actively explored and expressed her musical self.

Dimensions of Listening

Listening to music was a common and frequent activity for the children in my study. They accessed music with ease in today's digital world. They engaged with their musical landscapes with an individualized sense of purpose, whether for pure enjoyment,

to learn about themselves or their worlds, for creative musical inspiration, or some mixture of all of these.

Music at their fingertips. Listening to music at home was a common activity for all four children. They self-selected music largely through digital access points: Mp3 players, iPods, CDs and websites that featured music videos such as YouTube.com and BET.com. They navigated the ubiquitous gadgetry of their digital worlds with ease, quicker to point out the "how" of downloading music while sometimes struggling to describe the "why" that drove their decision-making processes. The children listened to music at home in a mix of both solitary and social settings.

Keisha described singing and dancing alone in her room while listening to favorite songs on her iPod, whereas Landon enjoyed listening to music with both younger and older family members. Though I did not design my research to quantify hours spent listening to music, all of the children spoke of listening to music as a frequent, often daily activity. They spoke of music listening as a trusted companion: a reliable activity to stave off boredom or a mood-altering way to lift their spirits. Whether alone or with others, the children swiftly accessed their musical libraries and wished that their *Sound Learning* group might post their music on YouTube. As such, their intuitive enjoyment of the music in *Sound Learning* visits—ranging from multicultural to jazz to classical music—may suggest that their preferences were more malleable, despite their tendencies to narrowly describe preferences within rock or hip-hop genres. Growing up in a world with music at their fingertips, these children hoped to relive their live music listening experiences in the digital world that has become so familiar and accessible to them.

Engaging with their musical landscapes. Despite the ubiquitous gadgetry and instantaneous accessibility, the children in my study showed capacity for listening choices beyond an artist's popularity or socially driven favorite genre or style. Serving extra-musical purposes, these children listened to pass the time, to lift the spirits, or as social engagement. The children also listened with focused attention to both *lyric and text* and *musical* details. In fact, details of lyrics and text often provided an initial access point for the children to understand and describe their favorite songs. Their interpretations tended to focus on broad and often mature themes or overarching storylines. The children easily paraphrased sections of a verse or chorus that initially struck me as surface-level descriptions.

Upon further reflection however, I considered the nature of pop-song lyrics that often present clear and focused themes such as romance and relationships, intended to be easily understood both by adults and adolescents. Keisha knew the song "Beautiful Liar," for example, was about a woman's boyfriend "going out with other women" to which Landon responded "I thought that was called cheating." They both interpreted this rather mature theme correctly, indicating their understanding that went beyond the literal text of the song. I was struck that these pre-teenage children discussed such a mature theme with seemingly casual sophistication that belied their ages. I was careful not to pry into how they learned about "cheating," yet their conversation revealed that they turned to music as a source for understanding complex emotional themes.

The children also noted *musical* details, primarily through actively singing, moving, and playing instruments while listening. They described singing and moving with their favorite music at home, behaviors they also exhibited in our musical

playgroups. In the second musical playgroup, the children spontaneously, without directions or instruction, improvised instrumental playing that reflected the salient musical details of their selected songs. In particular, they were quick to match rhythm patterns of drums or a bass line with considerable accuracy, referring to various musical details as "the beat." Though their verbal skills about music were insufficient to describe what they were intuitively doing, their performance evidenced an aural and kinesthetic awareness of music, or comprehension of music, that exceeded their verbal descriptive and labeling skills. This process vividly illustrated the importance of observing and assessing musical development in terms of children's musical engagement rather than relying on their verbal descriptors.

As these children engaged with their musical landscapes through listening, they made value-based choices and evaluations based on both intra- and extra-musical qualities. Green (2008) referred to the inter-sonic and delineated meanings that listeners derive from music. Inter-sonic meanings are drawn from the sounds and patterns that the listener conceptualizes as music. When the children copied a drum or bass line pattern, they attended to the inter-sonic meaning in the music. Delineated meanings are drawn from cultural associations and connotations that the listener connects to music. Keisha and Landon spoke to the delineated meanings portrayed in "Beautiful Liar," connecting their understanding of "cheating" to musical setting of the text.

Overview: Each Child Performs on Instruments

Over the course of the four musical playgroups, the children embarked on a trajectory of musical engagement as they performed on instruments. What began as experimentation with musical sounds became increasingly organized around a central

activity or song. They developed basic rhythm patterns for songs that allowed for individual flexibility, with improvisational flourishes added in subsequent performances. Figure 4 illustrates the progression of instrumental performing in the musical playgroups, indicating the main activities, the nature of instrumental performing, and the trajectory of the group's performances.

	Playgroup 1	Playgroup 2	Playgroup 3	Playgroup 4
Main activities	Experimentation, both individually and in pairs	Spontaneously played instruments during listening session; Rhythmic Call and Response (C/R)	Tonya presented "Roll of thunder, hear my cry;" Landon and Keisha accompany on drums; Landon's and Keisha's musical dialogue on keyboard; (Charles absent)	Tonya presented "Whammy award liar;" Landon and Keisha accompany on drums; (Charles absent)
Nature of performing	First attempt at group music making, by combining layered "sound bursts" rather than motifs/patterns	I modeled C/R rhythms; children generated original ideas within C/R structure	Flexibility within repeated rhythm patterns; added introduction and some melodic material	Flexibility within repeated rhythm patterns; added introduction and chanted coda; timbral and rhythmic contrasts for verses and chorus.
Trajectory of group performance	No adherence to fixed beat or tempo	Adherence to beat and tempo; C/R choices based on number counts	A "Whole" approach, adding introduction and timbral contrasts; always restarted from the beginning	A "Whole-to-parts" approach, able to trouble-shoot specific sections rather than start from beginning

Figure 4: Performing on instruments: activities, nature of performing, and group trajectory across four musical playgroups.

Landon performs on instruments. In the first playgroup, Landon experimented with each of the instruments. He divided his time between playfully sampling the small percussion instruments with the other children and then splitting from the group, shifting his focus intently to the keyboard. On the keyboard, he explored contrasts of high and low pitches, sampling multiple electronic instrument sounds, and altering the tempo of pre-programmed rhythm patterns as he independently journeyed through a self-constructed landscape of sound. In a musical dialogue with Keisha in the third playgroup, he imitated her musical material as the two of them used their entire hands to press clusters of keys, echoing each other's high and low contrasts. Landon surveyed the keyboard, not by constructing melodies, but by exploring the timbral possibilities the instrument offered. He approached the call-and-response activities during the second playgroup with similar creativity and experimentation, selecting a different hand-held percussion instrument each time he played his four-beat response. For Landon, instruments provided a pathway for exploring the richness and variety of sound qualities. He eagerly experimented with the array of these possibilities before joining the others' more structured ideas for group music making.

When Tonya presented her original songs in the third and fourth playgroups, Landon focused on playing the bucket drum with drumsticks. Having heard *Sound Learning* musicians play similar plastic buckets intrigued him, as he noted in the second interview. He liked the simplicity of using "just a bucket" for making music, rather than having to "go buy some big old set of drums." Landon positioned the bucket in a variety of ways, sometimes holding it between his knees, at other times placing it on a table top as he played while standing. To create a variety of timbres, he tapped both the side and

top surfaces of the bucket using the shafts, shoulders, and tips of the drumsticks. Landon first watched and listened before joining Tonya's and Keisha's paying, then sampled the crisp timbres of a shekere and wooden rattle before opting for the deeper tones of the bucket drum. Having decided on the timbre, he then settled into a drum rhythm that complemented Keisha's pattern. Somewhat reluctantly, he adhered to Tonya's instructions to play only on beats one and three.

Landon performs on instruments as an exploration of self. Landon maneuvered between moments of free and spontaneous exploration in sound materials and thoughtful consideration of Tonya's more structured musical ideas. Reflecting innate curiosity, Landon savored the time he spent sampling programmed instrument sounds and rhythms on the keyboard. He explored unorthodox ways to play instruments, such as using his whole hand to play clusters on the keyboard or tapping both the sides and top of the bucket drum. When he merged his playing with the group, he often scrutinized the sounds of several instruments before settling in on his choice.

I initially viewed Landon's activities as rather directionless and arbitrary. I wondered why Landon never played a "song" on the keyboard, which in my conception consists of musical material with a discernable melody and rhythm. At the same time, I noted how engrossed he was, serious and determined. Upon further reflection I surmised that Landon's explorations revealed his initial steps in thinking critically in and about music. According to Younker (2009), facilitating critical musical thinking begins with "an environment in which students are given the freedom to explore and experiment—an environment that creates *a need to know* how sounds can be organized, how they can be

layered into multiple colors and textures, and how sounds just sound" (p. 160, italics in original).

It turned out that my ideas of what constitutes a "song" were irrelevant. Landon's natural musical impulses drove his need to know how music works, aligning with his intuitive exploration. This persistent musical curiosity clashed at times with Tonya's increasing assertiveness in wanting to be the group leader. Even as Landon obliged to Tonya's directives in the third and fourth playgroups, he played the bucket drum grudgingly as she directed—only on the downbeats. Each time she requested him to play, I noticed a disappointed look on his face. He seemed to subjugate his exploratory freedom in order to ensure that the group continued to move forward.

Keisha performs on instruments. "I love my bongos!" These were Keisha's words in the second musical playgroup, where her unbridled joy in exploring instruments first surfaced as a repeating theme. Whether pursuing free exploration or adding ideas to Tonya's songs, she was quick to pronounce, as also happened in the second playgroup, "I'm so happy," or, as she proclaimed in the first playgroup, "I'm having such a good time in the music!" With her face aglow and her body bouncing in delight, I wondered why Keisha also felt compelled to utter these verbal declarations. The fullness of her engagement reminded me of Small's (1998) conception of musicking: "Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. The apparent thing "music" is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it all too closely (p. 2)." Keisha's having "such a good time *in* the music" captured Small's notion of musicking: the idea of an objective outcome of playing as the "thing" to be

produced gave way to the importance of the act of musical doing, or "being in" the music.

In addition to her public pronouncements, I noted Keisha's nearly constant "doodling," particularly on the bongos, quietly tapping away as the group discussed ideas or fine-tuned their music. Distracting only to me, Keisha's doodling provided tactile engagement within the group's musical activity. Her doodling reflected immediate musical expression of the group's verbal ideas about changes in tempo or dynamics. As Tonya sang her songs, Keisha settled in to a syncopated rhythm pattern that aligned with the rhythms of the words. While not the first to initiate group music making, Keisha was more comfortable contributing a suitable rhythm pattern that blended with Tonya's original creations. Although Keisha tended to play a single repetitive pattern for any given song, she performed with an improvisatorial flexibility that allowed for slight alterations to suit the mood or feeling of a particular song. As the group continued to rehearse a song, Keisha added very slight pauses or accents to her patterns to further complement Tonya's vocal lines.

Keisha performs on instruments as an expression of self. At first listen, it might not seem that Keisha's instrumental performances reflected much musical complexity. However, for Keisha, musicking in the form of performing on instruments appeared to hold profound meaning. Her spontaneous joy and happiness, expressed as having "such a good time *in* the music," appeared to parallel what Small (1998) referred to as the socially constructed meanings embedded within musical performance:

> Those taking part in a musical performance are in effect saying—to themselves, to one another, and to anyone else who may be watching or listening—*This is who we are. . .*But on the other hand, "who we are" is at the same time composed of any number of individual "who I am's". . .The "who I am" is not as

> determinate as one might at first sight expect; in the context of the performance, who an individual is, is to a large extent who he or she chooses to be or imagines him or herself to be. Who we are is how we relate, and the relationships articulated by a musical performance are not so much those that actually exist as they are the relations that those taking part desire to exist (p. 134).

Keisha's desire to exist in the musical realm revealed both the social "who we are" and the individual "who I am" of her unfolding construction of her musical self. Through the avenue of active performance engagement, Keisha was powerfully attuned to exploring her musical self, concurrently on social and individual levels.

Charles performs on instruments. Charles was absent for the final two musical playgroups because he left school early on those days. However, I witnessed a very different side of him in the first two musical playgroups from his usually quiet and reserved demeanor in school. He sprang into action during free exploration time in the first playgroup. He repeated the phrase "let me try this" as he playfully scrambled to sample each instrument, briefly shaking or tapping an instrument before dashing off to the next. As he juggled two rhythm eggs, he turned to me and pointed out, "I made a beat!" Occasionally, he turned to listen to the sounds the other children created. When Keisha made a siren-like sound with the slide whistle, Charles briefly paused to acknowledge her unusual sound with an amused smile, then bounded off on his own again. I felt energized by this free-spirited and playful behavior, a side he seemed reluctant to reveal during most of our interactions.

After I demonstrated a few call-and-response patterns during the second playgroup, Charles was the first to offer a new pattern for the group. "The girls do eight beats and the boys do four beats," he suggested, deciding to play four repeated notes on the keyboard. He stepped up on a neighboring white key for each iteration, carefully

plucking the key with his forefinger and matching the steady beat I maintained on the claves. Charles's countenance shifted during this seemingly simple musical exercise from one of deep concentration, to a bright, beaming smile after he finished the musical activity.

Charles performs on instruments as an expression of self. Though my time observing Charles playing instruments was limited due to his absences, the opportunity afforded a lens into his musicality that I witnessed at no other time. Always acutely self-aware of proper school behavior, Charles guarded himself against any perceived behavioral missteps in chorus, in the classroom, and in our interviews. Yet when I presented the instruments, Charles set aside his usual staid demeanor and revealed an unfettered enthusiasm that more closely matched his self-described "daredevil" nature. For a few brief moments, rules and restrictions went by the wayside as he freely explored the instruments with a mixture of curiosity and pure delight. When Charles picked up an instrument and said "let me try this," he was not just exploring, he was engrossed in *play*. Bergen and Fromberg (2009) describe this differentiation and the importance of play in children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development: "Play differs from exploring an object because such exploration answers the question: "What can it do?" In contrast, play answers the question: "What can *I* do with *it*? [italics added] (p. 427)"

Charles approached the call-and-response activity with unprecedented assertiveness and freedom, jumping at the chance to offer his idea for a new arrangement. I wondered whether his ease was due to the nature of this musical activity, one that allowed him to be cautiously creative within an unambiguous structure. The structure, perhaps, connected with his tendency toward rule conformity, while the exploratory

nature of the activity permitted freedom within that structure. Several aspects of Charles's musical self emerged through this activity: his eagerness to be the first to challenge his peers; his purposeful and dedicated intentionality while playing they keyboard; and his positive self-assessment upon successful completion of his musical ideas. Both surprised and proud, Charles beamed as he reflected on his opus, his voice trailing off as he confirmed, "I was going from this key, to this key, to this key. . ."

Tonya performs on instruments. Tonya spent the first playgroup experimenting, sprinting from one instrument to the next in an effort to sample each. Like the other children, she played in short sound bursts rather than repetitive rhythmic patterns, exploring the variety of instruments and the timbres she might produce with them. Although Tonya proudly revealed the neatly printed lyrics to her original song "Whammy award liar" at the beginning of the playgroup, she claimed to be "too shy to sing today" when I suggested the group try to add instruments to her song. On this day, Tonya preferred to experiment with the instruments and took turns with Landon in leading the others through a series of arrhythmic, layered soundscapes (detailed in the following *"Create"* section). This playful, exploratory nature of Tonya's instrumental playing differed greatly from her performance as drumming leader during her dance class. She served as solo accompanist for the dance group, masterfully playing a complex series of syncopated call-and-response rhythm patterns on the African drums. Intensely focused, Tonya accurately maintained a steady and forward-flowing beat, drumming with expressivity and liveliness that matched the energy of the dance.

By the third and fourth musical playgroups, Tonya eagerly shared her original songs as the basis for group music making. In each session, she sang a song in its

entirety while quietly tapping the cowbell or lightly scraping the frog as the other children listened. While the other children began to add rhythmic instrumental accompaniments, Tonya maintained the steady beat for the group by waving a mallet back and forth in front of her or gently scraping the frog on downbeats. As she simplified her own instrumental contributions, her position as teacher and leader for the group became more complex. She guided the other children on their rhythmic accompaniments, verbalizing a bongo pattern for Keisha ("Bom ba BOM bom") and physically demonstrating "a slow beat" for Landon to play on beats one and three on the bucket drum. Tonya assumed multiple musical roles with ease, fine-tuning the instrumental arrangements, offering conducting cues to the other children, and serving as solo vocalist for her songs.

Tonya performs on instruments as an expression of self. Performing on instruments was a means to an end for Tonya, representing but a single color on the multihued palette of her musicality. In dance class, she mastered complex African drumming patterns that highlighted her natural musicianship and leadership abilities. In the musical playgroups, she utilized instruments to embellish the original songs that swirled in her mind. For Tonya, performing on instruments served as a complement to musical engagement and expression rather than the central focus of her musical activities.

Though Tonya experimented on instruments with the others in the first playgroup, she chose to explore multiple musical roles beyond performing on instruments in subsequent playgroups. Her peers' eagerness to play instruments provided her with a ready-made "band" to accompany her original songs. She eagerly sang and guided the others' rhythm patterns, using mallets as a conducting baton or to tap the steady beat.

Tonya recognized the playgroups as unique opportunities to share and develop her songs, opting to lead the group rather than solely focusing on instrumental performance.

Dimensions of performing on instruments

The time spent exploring and performing on instruments was often the highlight of the music playgroups for the children, as they eagerly jumped upon the opportunity to play without my instructing or persuading them. Performing on instruments offered immediate musical engagement, particularly for those children less inclined to sing, and allowed them to explore their musicality on both individual and group levels. As the children engaged in a world of musical sounds, they traveled along a trajectory that began with experimentation and led to increased intentionality of musical performance.

Performing on instruments as immediate engagement. From the first musical playgroup, I saw the excitement in the children's eyes as they eagerly surveyed the simple assortment of classroom instruments I brought for them to play. Performing on instruments afforded immediate musical engagement, particularly for Landon, Keisha, and Charles who were less eager than Tonya to sing in the musical playgroup settings. Campbell (1998) described the visual, kinesthetic, and personal advantages that performing on instruments offers children:

> Children seem to appreciate that they can see as well as hear their sound production while playing an instrument (as opposed to the more "covert," nonvisual activity of singing), and their active fingers, hands, and arms have them involved in more pronounced physical activity than does singing. Instruments are also viewed as less personal to children than their voices; as extensions of the children, instruments may be considered less likely to bring exposure and possible humiliation. (p. 198)

The simplicity of the classroom instruments—drums, shakers and rattles, slide whistles, a small keyboard—facilitated immediate musical engagement, since no special

performance skills or techniques were required. The tactile engagement, particularly evidenced by Keisha's continual doodling on instruments, allowed the children to focus on group cohesion and sharing musical ideas rather than passing judgments on peers' performances.

The children often verbalized about their mistakes if they lost the beat or stumbled over a rhythm pattern with the common refrain of, "oh, I messed that up." These public declarations revealed both self- and social-awareness as the children recognized individual missteps within the context of group music making. I never heard a child say, "I can't play that," but rather, observed the group's trouble-shooting processes. Occasionally, Tonya assisted Keisha by leaning over the bongos and reviewing the rhythm pattern. More often, the group simply started over and continued to practice for individual and group mastery.

Engaging in a world of musical sounds. A primary goal of the musical playgroups was to provide a context to observe and understand children's natural musical impulses as windows into their musical identities. Though each child performed on instruments in individualized ways, they all traveled a similar trajectory together as they engaged in a world of musical sounds. What began as a need to explore *how* to make musical sounds on the instruments became increasing focused on *what* specific instruments and patterns fit in a particular piece. As such, this trajectory began as experimentation and grew toward intentionality of realizing musical ideas.

All of the children spent much of the first musical playgroup exploring how they could play each instrument. As they dashed from one instrument to the next, they tended to play in loud, arrhythmic "sound bursts," exploring the possibilities of each instrument.

This experimentation was a necessary step before they began converging as a group, with each child exploring for him/herself *how* an instrumented sounded and *how* to create those sounds. My observations reinforced the idea that what at first might appear to be random and unfocused musical behaviors may actually reveal how children are naturally driven to understand and create music. Green (2008) observed similar behaviors and noted the value that experimentation has for the music learner.

> What we as educators count as being on task does not necessarily correspond with the musical aims that pupils identify for themselves, nor the paths which lead most directly to the achievement of those aims. For example, a collection of apparently random notes heard on entering a room might suggest that a pupil is 'mucking around.' But the notes may in fact represent an experimental stage of musical play prior to the beginnings of a riff. (pp. 116-177)

In subsequent playgroups, the children's choices became increasingly more selective, opting for instruments and patterns they found suitable for a particular piece. The children progressed from exploration to expression of musical ideas, converging on short, repetitive rhythm patterns that blended with Tonya's songs. The intentionality of instrumental performing was most apparent with "Whammy award liar" in the fourth musical playgroup. This intentionality focused on realizing the piece holistically through contrasting instrumental parts for the verse and chorus, still allowing for individual flexibility within basic rhythm patterns. Tonya demonstrated the basic "feel" of the rhythm for the chorus, yet Keisha played her own variations on the pattern. As they continued to rehearse, the overall structure remained fixed and more firmly established within a steady pulse. No two performances were exactly alike in terms of individual instrumental performances, as the children added slight pauses or accents to reflect the overall "feel" of the song.

Overview: Each Child Creates Music

Throughout the series of musical playgroups, I encouraged the children to create music as a group using the instruments provided. To foster the quasi-formal music learning environment of my research design, I served as a facilitator and assistant to their activities, promoting individual choice and group decision-making. I offered nonspecific verbal prompts such as "how could we make a song together?" or "what would you like to play today?" In each playgroup, the children quickly immersed themselves in creating music based on their own spontaneous ideas rather than a carefully planned course of action. Figure 5 illustrates the progression of creative activities in the playgroups, indicating the focus of the activities, the nature of the creative material, and the trajectory and roles of the group.

	Playgroup 1	**Playgroup 2**	**Playgroup 3**	**Playgroup 4**
Creative activities	Layered soundscapes	Call and response rhythms	Tonya's original song, "Roll of thunder, hear my cry"	Tonya's original song, "Whammy award liar"
Nature of creative material	Arrhythmic sound "bursts" on instruments; non-vocal	Echoed rhythm patterns; Created original arrangements within given structure; non-vocal	Vocal and rhythmic materials	Vocal, rhythmic, and dance materials
Trajectory/Roles	Negotiated group collaboration; Landon and Tonya conducted	Group collaboration within modeled structure; Charles and Tonya generated arrangement ideas	Focus on specific musical material; Tonya leads, Landon and Keisha accompany	Focus on specific musical material; Tonya leads, Landon and Keisha accompany

Figure 5: Creating music: activities, nature of material, trajectory and roles.

A note on terminology and definitions. For clarification, I use the term *create music* to include the processes of the children's active engagement in musical behaviors that resulted in an original musical product. This included consideration of creativity as demonstrated through a mixture of composition and improvisation. Creativity in music has been defined on the individual level by Webster (2002) as "the engagement of the mind in the active, structured process of thinking in sound for the purpose of producing some product that is new to the creator" (p. 26). His definition recognizes the utilization of convergent and divergent thinking processes as enabled by discipline-based skills and

contextual conditions (both personal and socio-cultural), and is intended to be applied at any developmental level. Although this definition is helpful, I find Burnard's (2006) definition of musical creativity more suitable to my research, both because it is more child-centrically conceived and it more fully acknowledges the confluence of personal, social, and cultural worlds.

> My definition treats the ever-widening child's world of musical creativity as irrefutably a *cultural construct* related to how *individuals* construe themselves within a multiplicity of *cultural networks*. . . As I see it, a child's musical creativity develops not as something solitary (that is, in relation only to themselves) but rather in solidarity with others. According to this view. . . it is the dialectic in which their *individual and social worlds* interact that provides the tacit messages, culturally embedded in and supported, as members of multiple cultures each with its own musical affiliations. (p. 356)

This definition provides a framework from which I considered creating music on both individual and group levels, and the creativity implicit within those processes.

The trajectory of the creative activities began with children negotiating group collaboration and evolved to a focus on specific musical materials. During each playgroup, they concentrated on developing and fine-tuning one creative activity. The following descriptions detail the children's creative focus during each of the playgroups, with particular attention to musical materials and actions in the context of group interaction.

Playgroup one: Layered soundscapes. Landon requested that the group "make like a big band and think about a beat," resulting in a series of layered soundscapes. Even though Landon began the soundscapes by selecting a programmed rhythm loop from the keyboard, none of the children aligned with the tempo or beat established from the keyboard. Instead, the children played in rapid percussive bursts of sound, adding or

subtracting their individual parts from the group according to Landon's or Tonya's conducting cues.

Playgroup two: Call and response. I modeled a series of call and response rhythm patterns as a starting point for eliciting the children's original improvisations. Using the claves, I improvised a variety of four-beat rhythm patterns that the children easily replicated on their choices of instruments. Next, I played eight steady beats and encouraged the children to answer with eight beats of "anything interesting." At first, the children simply echoed back the eight steady beats. When I reminded them to "play anything you want," Charles and Tonya established a *rhythmic foundation* with the repeated pattern, revisiting this pattern through subsequent arrangements:

Keisha matched this pattern on the slide whistle. Landon emerged as the solo improviser, plucking random notes on the keyboard and varying his rhythms with beat notes and duplets played to the steady pulse.

With the children comfortable in the call and response form, I stepped aside as they negotiated instrument swaps, and let them decide what to do next. The following list describes each subsequent arrangement.

- Charles suggests the boys play four beats and the girls play eight beats. Charles steps up neighboring white keys on the keyboard and Landon switches small percussion instruments on each iteration. Tonya and Keisha retain the *rhythmic foundation* on drums.

- Tonya suggests the boys play four beats, girls play eight beats, boys play eight beats, girls play four beats, etc. Charles and Landon maintain a steady beat, and Tonya and Keisha retain *rhythmic foundation.*

- Tonya suggests an additive process: the girls play one beat,; the boys play two beats; the girls play three beats; the boys play four beats, etc. The boys played

> steady pulses on even-numbered beats, while the girls attempted to fit the *rhythmic foundation* into the odd-numbered beats. Tonya asked, "how do you do a five beat? Let's try it again." The girls switched to playing pulses, with Tonya spontaneously adding, "everybody do eight together!" as they reached the end.

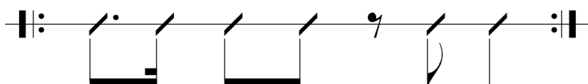
The children's call and response creations revealed a great deal about their musical thought processes. Rather than considering how the final product might sound, their approaches to music making were flexible and open-ended exercises, fostering team (e.g., girls vs. boys) and group participation. As they developed increasingly complex challenges to one another within the call and response form, their choices of rhythmic materials remained rather static and fixed, with the boys playing steady pulses and the girls returning to the *rhythmic foundation* motif. Through thinking in terms of musical roles and simple motifs, the children immersed themselves in immediate and full musical engagement, focusing less on individual rhythmic contributions and more on group cohesion. Together the children created a gestalt of musical meaning, whereby the whole of the musical experience held more significance than the sum of its individual parts.

Playgroup three: "Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry." Tonya introduced her song as taken from the title of the book she was reading in her classroom, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.* This piece was more improvised during our playgroup rather than fully composed prior to our meeting, consisting of Tonya's rhythmically chanting the book's title four times. As she introduced the song to Keisha and Landon, Tonya first scraped a mallet across the tabletop slowly on each line of text. The following list describes the development of the song, including the introduction of rhythmic material, the negotiation of multiple roles, and the addition of text and melodic material in the final performance.

- Tonya chants the words while tapping the rhythm pattern. Keisha joins in on the bongos and Landon observes.

ROLL of THUN-DER hear my CRY

(tapping)



- Tonya establishes her roles as teacher, conductor, and arranger. She instructs Keisha to use both hands on the bongos, demonstrates for Landon how to play the bucket drum on beats one and three, and indicates that I should play four-beat slides on the slide whistle. Tonya conducts the group by waving her mallet to the steady beat, offering a positive assessment of our rehearsal by saying, "good job! Give everybody a big clap!"

- Tonya notes that she "forgot" to sing, to which Keisha asks, "do you want us to do it softer?" Tonya affirms the idea and requests that Landon match Keisha's rhythm pattern. Tonya cues the group by counting aloud, "five, six, seven, eight," and enters after two measures of instrumental introduction. She adds melodic and textual materials to the final performance.

ROLL of THUN - DER hear my CRY

2

ROLL of THUN - DER hear my CRY

3

ROLL of THUN - DER hear my CRY

4

ROLL of THUN - DER I'm so FLY

5

Tonya's inspired performance elicited smiles and laughter from the group as our playgroup came to a close. She imbued the six words of the book's title with musical meaning, enhancing the natural rhythms of the words with forceful accents and heavy

downbeats. Keisha and Landon willingly accommodated Tonya's leadership role by following her requests rather than offering additional ideas of their own. Perhaps their acquiescence reflected their satisfaction with the elemental nature of the rhythms that suited the mood and feel of the song. Or perhaps the issue of Tonya's ownership of the creative material came into play, with Keisha and Landon unfamiliar with her musical ideas and how she wanted them realized. Nonetheless, all three children focused intently on working together as an ensemble, listening to each other in efforts to play with rhythmic accuracy and group cohesiveness.

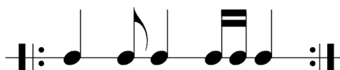
Playgroup four: "Whammy Award Liar." "I've got the beat in my head. It's slow, but it gets fast in the middle," Tonya explained as she re-introduced her original song "Whammy Award Liar." Unlike her more improvised piece, "Roll of Thunder," Tonya had "Whammy Award Liar" "in her head" for some time, having composed it at home with a friend and sung it *a cappella* for Charles and me in our first interview. The song followed a verse-chorus pop song structure, with the verse composed of a series of smooth, ascending melodic phrases and a contrasting chorus composed of repeated pitches accented with staccato sounds. Tonya began by singing the song in its entirety while Keisha and Landon listened:

> I have dreamt of a place with your face in my eyes
> I have a guy, 'cause you've been around a couple times
> I had you, but when we had the fight
> I moved on
>
> 'Cause you're a whammy award liar
> Whammy award liar
> Whammy award—liar!

The following list describes the steps taken to develop the song, as the group exchanged rhythmic ideas, developed and practiced the arrangement, and added improvised material.

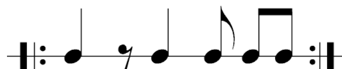
- As Tonya sang, Keisha and Landon spontaneously started playing drums on the chorus:

  Keisha:

  Landon:

  "THIS is the beat," Tonya emphasized, singing the chorus again while playing the bongos:

  "Is this it?" Keisha asked and demonstrated a slight variation on the pattern while Tonya hums the chorus:

  Tonya confirms, "that's it! But don't play on the stop," asking Keisha to omit the final eighth note of the pattern.

- Tonya moves forward with the arrangement of the song, but does not always clarify her intentions to the others. Tonya hums a few measures of the verse, scraping the frog on the downbeats, and deciding, "let's start with this." Landon asks me "when do we go?" Tonya reaches the chorus, and nods to Keisha and Landon to begin the rhythm pattern. Tonya sings the chorus a second time, allowing the drummers a longer opportunity to practice their parts.

- Improvised text, dance, and rhythm materials emerge as the children continue to practice. Tonya leaps from her chair and improvises a dance, stomping her feet and thrusting her arms downward while chanting:

  We ARE got THESE she NAW gah MEE my MAN—Australia!

  Tonya stretches the word "Australia" over several beats, as Keisha and Landon match her with flourishes of rapid drumbeats. The pulsating word rhythms and stomping dance inspire Tonya to create contrasting drum patterns for her new

coda, instructing Landon to play on beats one and three and demonstrating a new rhythm pattern for Keisha:

- With the arrangement in place, the group performs the song a final time. Tonya cues the group by counting, "five, six, seven, eight," sings the verse and scrapes the frog. Keisha and Landon join in on the chorus and play the original rhythm pattern on the drums. Maintaining the same tempo, Tonya counts down again, cuing Keisha and Landon to switch to the coda rhythm pattern. After Tonya performs a few measures of the stomping dance, Keisha bounces from her chair and joins her, adding claps on the downbeats. Landon smiles at the girls' exuberant performance and laughingly says, "those girls are crazy!"

Even though Tonya's ownership of "Whammy award liar" placed her once again in a leadership role, the nature of the group's creative processes emerged in different ways from previous playgroups. Tonya provided a musical framework in a familiar verse-chorus structure that allowed Keisha and Landon swift access to musical participation. Tonya demonstrated more flexibility in listening to and accepting the others' musical ideas, particularly when Keisha proposed a rhythm pattern for the chorus that differed slightly from Tonya's. Once the group reached this consensus, a more efficient rehearsal strategy followed. Instead of always beginning at the first verse, Tonya started the group at the chorus several times and allowed Keisha and Landon to continue practicing for mastery of the rhythm pattern. Keisha and Landon avoided static adherence to their assigned parts by adding a slight pause here or an extra note there to spice up their performances. While Tonya provided a preponderance of the creative material, including an improvised coda from which new material developed, all of the children remained fully engaged in active music making throughout with very little

discussion on how to achieve this. The group hit their stride in their final performance of "Whammy Award Liar," blending together as a cohesive ensemble and playing with energy and liveliness.

Landon creates. "Let's make it like a big band," Landon said in the first playgroup, encouraging his peers to create their first piece of music as an ensemble. He recognized the social aspects of creating music in the fourth interview as he imagined a music class where students played together "like a symphony and all the music goes together. A student presents his own song that he makes up, and everyone else is invited to add on to it." His comments surprised me, as I often felt this fiercely independent boy would be happy experimenting on the keyboard for hours on his own. Yet for Landon, creating music as a group did not—or should not—preclude independent decision-making. He let the others decide what to contribute to the "big band," and reluctantly played the downbeats as requested by Tonya, forgoing his own musical ideas for the benefit of the group.

Landon creates as expression of self. Landon valued his independence, but this did not deter him from understanding and wanting to be a part of creating music in a social context. I often felt that he simply needed more time to explore rhythms and melodies, particularly when the group worked on Tonya's songs. Landon seemed comfortable in open-ended musical activities that were not directed at a specific goal or endpoint. His musical dialogue with Keisha on the keyboard exemplified this idea of open-endedness: their interchange was completely non-verbal and based in sharing abstract musical ideas that unfolded in the moment. As such, Landon created music primarily through improvisation, playing with the possibilities of sounds.

Keisha creates. Keisha hesitated to offer original ideas for melodies or rhythms, but enthusiastically contributed to the group's musical creations as an instrumental accompanist. Her improvised doodling on the bongos kept her musically engaged while Tonya introduced her songs, and helped her focus on the rhythms, the structural forms, and the feel of the music. As a musical contributor, Keisha offered strategies for fine-tuning the group's performance, such as playing a passage softer or with stronger accents. Even though she sought Tonya's approval for a rhythm pattern, Keisha added her own expressive interpretations to subsequent performances with accents and slight pauses.

Keisha creates as expression of self. Keisha negotiated a role within her personal comfort zone and emerged as a musical contributor for the group. She willingly ceded the spotlight to Tonya, but remained fully invested in creating music with the group. Her doodling on the bongos not only revealed her desire to be immediately and continually engaged with creating music, but also seemed to announce her membership as part of the group, as if to say *I am here and I want to make music with you.* In fact, she seemed to express her ideas by speaking through her bongo playing rather than explaining ideas verbally, immediately playing louder or softer in response to Tonya's singing. When creating music, Keisha lived in the moment as an individual, while at the same time acutely aware of her contribution to the whole of the group.

Charles creates. Although Charles had little to say in the interviews, he jumped at the chance to create music, both experimenting with sounds on his own and working together with the group. His confidence surprised me when he was the first to offer ideas for call-and-response arrangements. He challenged the others by rearranging the number of beats for calls and responses, as though he created a musical puzzle for the group to

solve. This led me to wonder if he conceptualized how the resulting music would sound or if he approached the activity like a game involving combinations of musical sounds.

Charles creates as expression of self. As a self-described “daredevil,” Charles worked from the call-and-response model to create his own original ideas, challenging both him and the group. Although he worked within an unambiguous structure, he revealed two aspects of himself through creating music. First, he emerged as a rule maker that contrasted with his general persona as a rule follower. Second, he remained open to uncertainty yet confident, allowing his musical ideas to unfold with the cooperation of his peers. Charles seemed to integrate himself into the group through this activity in ways I witnessed at no other time. He established a common ground with his peers through creating music with the group, negotiating a space where his personal differences in musical preferences and his subservient personality were perhaps less exposed.

Tonya creates. “I would like to see what inspired that man or woman or boy or girl who invented music. And I want to know what inspired them to make music.” These comments from the first interview reveal how Tonya pondered the very origins of music, perhaps as a way to understand the natural creative impulses that seemed to envelop her sense of self. Re-creating the vocal performance of her favorite song by Rhianna was simply a starting point, as the urge to create her own music filled times of boredom at home and provided the central focus for playgroup activities. She proudly shared her songs with the group, maneuvering with ease among multiple musical roles of singer, arranger, and conductor.

Tonya creates as expression of self. Tonya's musical creations were songs of the self: she proclaimed a strong sense of her own blackness in "Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry;" and "Whammy Award Liar" encompassed both the musings of puppy-love infatuation and the anger of a young woman scorned. Her songs were less autobiographical stories of her life than they were reflections of how *she* experienced her blackness and her emotional development as a pre-adolescent girl. Her lyrics explored aspects of her sense of self, but it was through musical expression that her songs came to life. Ranging from lively rhythmic chanting peppered with staccatos to smooth, melodic phrases, Tonya effectively employed musical language to express who she was through her songs. Even though her songs represented personal expressions of self, she invited the others to share in further shaping her songs, recognizing the social aspects of music making that allowed her creativity to flourish. This exemplifies Burnard's (2006) conception of children's musical creativity as developing not as something solitary but rather in solidarity with others. Tonya's songs grew beyond ephemeral expressions of self that she sang alone at home in her room and became expressions of *us*, creating a space for each child to explore their creative impulses on individual and social levels.

Dimensions of Creating

Over the course of the playgroups, the children spontaneously engaged in creating music that blended elements of improvisation and composition. They approached each creative piece as an open-ended framework for group music making, rather than planning a specific course of action. They tacitly negotiated roles for musical participation and social interaction, orchestrating their fluid individual and social worlds within a space that honored individual musical identities and celebrated group identity.

Feeling safe in an open-ended framework. In each of the playgroups, the children's creative activities arose spontaneously, with little discussion or planning in regard to what they intended to create. Except for the call-and-respond model I demonstrated in the second playgroup, the children initiated group music making by offering a broad idea or framework, such as the layered soundscapes of Landon's "big band," and Tonya's original songs. Once the broad idea was offered, the children selected instruments and began playing. They developed rhythm patterns in the moment rather than demonstrating ideas for each other, fine-tuning their patterns through practice and repetition as a group.

As I watched the children create music together, I noticed how their music seemed to unfold naturally and without a sense of urgency to reach pre-determined goals. They created together within open-ended frameworks, carried by their own momentum that aimed toward remaining continuously engaged in active music making. Over the course of the playgroups, they created music on a continuum that shifted and blended elements of improvisation and composition. The layered soundscapes exemplified pure improvisation through combining spontaneous sound bursts as a group. By the fourth playgroup, they worked with Tonya's composition of "Whammy Award Liar." Tonya's verse and chorus vocal lines remained fixed throughout, but elements of improvisation emerged both in Keisha's flexible bongo pattern and in the spontaneous coda of chanting and dance. The open-ended nature of their music making allowed for individual creative input and group cohesion. The children constructed a safe space to develop their musical ideas, a place where missteps were self-identified but not criticized. In fact, Tonya

celebrated the group's performances of her songs and congratulated their work several times, proclaiming, "Good job! Give everybody a big clap!"

Orchestrating individual and social worlds. Burnard (2006) described children's creativity as interaction within the dialectic of individual and social worlds. Burnard's conceptualization rang true to my research, as I observed the children orchestrate their individual and social worlds through creating music. The children tacitly negotiated individual roles that fell within their own comfort zones of musical participation and social interaction, whereas Landon, Keisha, and Charles were less inclined to sing and gravitated toward performing on the instruments. On the other hand, Tonya leapt at the opportunity to sing and eagerly shared her original songs.

The social roles ranged from leader to contributor to follower, and seemed dependent on the nature of the musical activity. For example, Landon and Charles emerged as impromptu leaders for the first two playgroups not necessarily out of choice, but because they were the first to initiate ideas for music making. Perhaps the musical nature of the layered soundscapes and call-and-response pieces influenced the boys' willingness to lead. These activities focused on instruments rather than vocals, representing a comfort zone of musical participation for the reluctant singers. Tonya firmly established her leadership role in the final two playgroups primarily because she presented and led original songs. The fullness of her musicality manifested itself through multiple roles as she simultaneously performed as singer, conductor, and arranger for the group. As a contributor, Keisha shaped Tonya's rhythm patterns and offered ideas for fine-tuning the songs through dynamic contrasts. Landon shifted to follower of Tonya's songs, grudgingly playing downbeats yet still wanting to remain musically involved.

As the children created music, their individual and social worlds fluidly overlapped as they negotiated a space that honored individual musical identities. I was struck by the ways their creative activities seemed to simply emerge and continued to unfold until we ran out of time. A few minor disagreements arose, but were quickly resolved in order to keep moving forward. As such, I sensed the formation of a group identity that Phinney (2008) referred to as a "complex, dynamic construct that develops over time as individuals strive to make sense of who they are in terms of the groups they belong to within their immediate and larger social context" (p. 98). I first sensed this group identity when a teacher happened to walk in the room during the call-and-response activity.

> Teacher: I'm sorry I interrupted. I was just so amazed watching them!
> *(Children giggle and smile at the teacher.)*
> Michelle: I know! They're great musicians! Let's try it again. Remember, you should try to fill up all eight beats. Do I need to count out loud?
> Tonya: No. *We've* got it in our minds.

The children exchanged warm giggles and smiles in recognition of their shared accomplishments. Tonya served as spokesperson, confident that not just *she* but *we* understood the task and were collectively capable of musical mastery.

Part I Summary: Musical Identities Across Multiple Musical Modalities

The children in my study explored and expressed their musical identities through singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating music. Each child engaged within modalities both in individualized and shared ways, reflecting his or her own unique lived experiences of musical identity formation that may emerge in social contexts.

Singing behaviors were primarily situated within self-selected contexts such as chorus or home, and with familiar materials. These experiences tended to indicate growing self-awareness of musical preferences, activity choices, musical confidence and musical roles, working in concert with social and gender comparisons.

Listening to music held a prominent place in all the children's lives. They swiftly and purposely accessed their digital worlds of music outside of school, and actively constructed their own meaning of music by engaging with intra- and extra-musical qualities. They independently explored unfamiliar songs in familiar genres at home. In school, they showed willingness and intrigue with less familiar music, such as that performed in *Sound Learning* visits. It was clear that their preferences and interests were still expanding. They considered how to blend the new with the familiar, as when the group wholeheartedly agreed with Keisha's idea that videos of *Sound Learning* visits should be posted to YouTube.

Performing on instruments provided immediate musical engagement that developed from experimentation into increased intentionality of musical ideas within group music making. Creating music through open-ended frameworks that blended improvisation and composition revealed the fluidity and overlap of individual and social worlds, as the children converged upon a musical meeting space that both honored individual identities and celebrated group musical identity. At times, the group became "as one," resulting in high moments of musical and feelingful gestalt, whereby the whole of the musical experience held more significance than the sum of individual parts.

Part II: The Lived Experience of Children's Musical Identity

Music is something out there waiting *for* you.—Keisha

I returned to my primary research question to synthesize my findings of children's lived experience of musical identity formation: *In what ways do children's direct participation in music (living in music) and music experience in diverse contexts (living through music) reveal their musical identities?* I began my research with the phenomenological view that although each child's lived experience of musical identity formation would undoubtedly be unique, essences would be revealed. Keisha's statement captured one such essence, as she so succinctly expressed her experience of music as an enduring phenomenon, waiting to be sung, heard, performed and created. Music was likewise "waiting" for Landon, Charles, and Tonya, revealed in the ways all the children explored, evaluated, expressed and engaged with their musical worlds. As I observed and interacted with the children in my study, it was vividly clear that music beckoned them to explore, to discover whom they are musically and beyond music, to share musical experiences with others and to seek understanding of the musical world around them. Although Keisha spoke of music as "something out there," it was clear in this study that music emerged from within each child, bubbling up in their own expression that explored, imitated, expanded and evaluated the objective realm of actualized music—both within their own music and that of others. Findings of this study suggest that children in middle childhood may actively shape their musical identities within a dynamic nexus of individualized and social continuums of music experience and learning.

Three themes describe this phenomenon, as children's lived experience of musical identity formation may be understood along three dimensions: development; components, i.e. music participation and learning; and processes. First, *the developmental spectrum of 8-9 year-old children provides a fluid context for understanding children's musical identity*, revealed not as a fixed entity but through interweaving elements of their past, present, and future musical lives. Second, *self-directed music participation and learning may shape and contextualize musical identity along a continuum that encompasses both musical and social roles,* as children enact components of musical behaviors within social interaction. Third, children's musical identity may be understood as a process, in which *personal dialogue meets external discourses,* as children continuously negotiate self-conceptions of musicality within and among their musical worlds. This section presents and discusses my three themes, followed by implications for future research and music educators, and conclusions.

The developmental spectrum of 8-9 year-old children provides a fluid context for understanding musical identity.

This theme elucidates my findings in terms of musical identity and children's development. I begin with a review of the definition of musical identity that I used to understand the ways these children were *living in* and *living through* music. From this definition, I consider children's development in relation to musical identity formation, revealing the ways these children fluidly integrated elements of past, present, and future developmental traits within their lived experience of musical identity.

Drawn from the work of Hargreaves, Miell and Macdonald (2002), I conceptualized musical identity to include the roles, behaviors, and preferences enacted through one's engagement with music, as well as music's contribution to and interaction with other aspects of one's overall identity. This definition rang true to understanding the musical identities of the children in my study.

The musical playgroups were an essential feature of my study, affording a space where *living in* and *living through* music were revealed through individualized choices in musical roles and behaviors. Musical preferences were acknowledged through interviews and listening sessions, both through children's descriptions of, and active musical engagement with, their favorite songs. Aspects of music's interaction with overall identity were more subtly revealed, apparent through generalized personality traits within choices of musical participation. Landon's innate curiosity and independent nature extended into his explorations of music. Keisha's pleasant and accommodating personality often placed her within the role of musical contributor. Both subservient and "daredevilish," Charles conformed to behavioral expectations in chorus and bravely defended his preference for rock and roll to his peers. Tonya's outgoing and assertive personality blended with her musical confidence, as she increasingly assumed leadership of music making activities. Links to specific identities included Tonya's expression of her black identity through her original song "Roll of thunder, hear my cry," as well as Keisha's exploration of female adolescent identity as she reflected upon lyrical content in her favorite songs.

According to Harter (1988), the ability to make domain-specific and global self-representations increases in middle childhood. My findings support these claims, as

children's musical identities in middle childhood could be observed as representations specific to musical behaviors and merged with global features of selves. In addition, musical identities may be concurrently explored among multiple identities, particularly within those that are strongly felt. Tonya embraced her African-American identity, expressing her blackness both through musical engagement and her definition of self. Her song "Roll of thunder" powerfully proclaimed her sense of blackness as connected to stories of African-American history. She described her preferred genres of hip-hop and rap as "where my family is from," linking her sense of blackness to music, family and place. She often used color as a point of overall self-differentiation: "that (white) teacher is your color, Ms. Mercier;" and singer Katy Perry "is that white girl," but black singer Rhianna "is *my* color."

Just as musical identity formation integrated generalized personality traits and specific identities, these children fluidly integrated elements of past, present and future developmental traits within their lived experiences of musical identity. Each of the children retained the confidence and positive self-appraisals of their musicality, harkening back to developmental characteristics of early childhood (Harter, 1999).

> I have a beautiful voice. People get jealous of me because of my beautiful singing.—Tonya
>
> I want a drum set so bad. I think I would be a good drummer.—Keisha
>
> I could make a living playing piano or drums.—Landon

These statements point to the children's sense of musical confidence with Tonya's positive self-appraisal of singing situated in the present, and Keisha and Landon extending their current musical confidence to future conceptions of musical participation.

In middle childhood, children increase self-comparisons, particularly among their peers (Damon & Hart, 1988; Lamont, 2002). These comparisons surfaced more frequently around singing, with Tonya emerging as soloist in the musical playgroups, and Keisha and Charles segmenting their singing to chorus-only. Self-comparisons were tacit negotiations, manifested through choices of musical behaviors and roles rather than verbal critiques of individual musical performances.

Approaching adolescence, children seek to increase their autonomy, particularly from their parents, as they pursue more independence and personal jurisdiction in creating their own cultural and personal spaces (Larson, 1995). Children in my study were beginning to explore their autonomy, through identifying personal musical preferences in comparison to their parents' music, which they referred to as "old school." The children did not wholly reject but rather tolerated their parents' music. Landon enjoyed the humor in old the school song "Monster In My House," and the song evoked a memorable shared experience with his father. Tonya tolerated her father's old school music in small doses.

> My daddy *loves* old school. I listen to it, but I tell him daddy, how about you change it in about five or ten minutes, and maybe play some T.I., Beyonce, or Chris Brown!

The children often learned of artists or songs from family members, but made decisions independently whether to include them in their personal repertoire of musical preferences. Charles's brother introduced him to the music of Ozzy Osbourne, an artist Charles decided he liked after watching several videos. Landon learned about Soulja Boy from a cousin, but was "willing to take a chance" by independently seeking out additional unfamiliar songs by his favorite artist.

My findings indicate that the children's formations of musical identity were not affixed to specific levels of cognitive or musical development, but echoed the confidence of early childhood, embodied the self-comparisons of middle childhood, and foreshadowed the autonomy of adolescence. They combined past beliefs, present experiences and future conceptions to shape musical identities in a fluid context. As such, I sensed a "wholeness" to these children's evolving musical identities, not so much in terms of completeness but more of continuity, much like a symbiotic relationship between music and who they were, who they are, and who they hoped to be.

Although studies exist that investigate the musical identities of adolescents (Arnett, 1995; Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001) and adults (Sloboda, 2001), my research focused on middle childhood due to the dearth of related literature for this age group. The literature on children's cognitive development in music is plentiful, yet may unintentionally generalize musical development as fixed achievements as compared to adults' levels of competency (Kratus 1991; 1995). Further problematizing a deeper understanding of children's musical lives is the *tabula rasa* assumption within the traditional music education paradigm that presupposes children know nothing of music until they are properly taught in formal school or private lessons setting (Bartel, 2004). Consideration of children's musical development *along with* their musical identities might offer a richer and more complete picture of children's musical lives. I found that children's lived experiences of musical identity formation were holistic and not necessarily tied to fixed but *fluid* stages of development. Might this compel a shift in how we understand children's musical development—that may indeed be reflective of

discrete skills and abilities—but fails to account for the "wholeness" of their musical lives?

Self-directed music participation and learning may shape and contextualize musical identity along a continuum that encompasses both musical and social roles.

This theme illustrates my findings of children's musical identities as they emerged in self-directed contexts of music participation and learning. I purposefully designed the musical playgroups and interviews as naturalistic contexts to understand how children shape musical identities through self-directed choices of individual and group musical engagement. Self-directed choices were revealed through *immediate musical engagement,* and explored across *multiple modalities* of singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating music.

In addition, the children progressed along a *trajectory of musical engagement* that ranged from musical experimentation to intentionally realizing musical ideas. Across this trajectory, the children performed both musical and social roles on continuums of brief exploration to sustained engagement. As they engaged in and negotiated these roles, the children honored individual identities and developed group musical identity.

Immediate musical engagement across multiple modalities. In the first playgroup, the children watched, wide-eyed and anxious, as I pulled the instruments one-by-one out of shabby cardboard boxes. I quickly realized that the children were barely interested in hearing the names of the instruments and even less interested in watching me demonstrate how to play them. I poured the remaining instruments from the boxes and

the children were off, exploring a world of sound and occasionally asking me "what was this one called again?"

Throughout the playgroups, the children dove into immediate musical engagement through spontaneous action. Their self-directed musical engagement encompassed multiple modalities of singing, listening, performing on instruments and creating music. Aspects of immediate engagement across multiple modalities may inform how children shape musical identities in relation to musical understanding. Within their active musical engagement in the playgroups, explicit links to musical play emerged (Marsh & Young, 2006).

The children spontaneously shared ideas for making music together that developed within open-ended frameworks, highlighting immediate and non-linear approaches to musical engagement. As they experimented with instruments individually or created music as a group, the children did not discuss their intentions or plans beforehand, but acted toward music through direct action. The children developed rhythmic and melodic patterns within active music making, rather than as pre-planned, discrete bits of musical information. They created music holistically, focusing on the *forms* of layered soundscapes and call-and-response compositions, and the overall *feel* of Tonya's original songs.

Their immediate engagement may inform how musical identities are shaped, as reflections of the ways children conceptualize their musical understanding and act on their musical thinking. The children approached musical engagement through holistic conceptions of music that intersected with their natural musical impulses. Their musical impulses focused on individual expression and group cohesion, constructing musical

understanding on their own terms. Thought of in terms of self-directed learning objectives, the children remained open to possibilities rather than imposing barriers or restrictions to musical engagement (i.e., not approached as "I need to know *this* before I can make music").

In addition to immediate engagement, the playgroups provided a context for self-directed exploration across multiple musical modalities. The children's natural impulses for singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating music converged as they constructed holistic musical experiences. Although the children moved toward specific comfort zones—Tonya and singing, Landon and performing on instruments—they were acutely attuned to individual contributions within the whole of the musical experience. Musical modalities often overlapped, as for example, they blended singing with listening. Movement accompanied nearly all of their engagements within the modalities, swaying and bouncing as they listened or nodding their heads as they performed on instruments.

As I observed the children in the playgroups, I noted the quality of their musical engagement as both playful and focused, filled with laughter and enthusiastic resolve. In the first playgroup, Keisha exclaimed, "I'm having so much *fun* in the music!" The motif of *fun* in relation to music participation and learning arose again in the fourth playgroup, when I asked the children to imagine and describe "the ideal music class." Above all, they emphasized that music participation must start by being *fun* in order to connect to opportunities for learning.

> I would want the kids to have *fun* and enjoy their music. Later in the year, I would give them sheets of music to practice.—Keisha
>
> Students would have *fun*, but they'll be learning at the same time.—Tonya

> I would want children to have *fun*, basically do anything that was music, but then make it go together, like a symphony. All the music goes together.—Landon

Keisha further explained *fun* as purposeful, self-motivated musical engagement:

> If you're playing a specific instrument, it doesn't mean that you don't have *fun*. It doesn't mean that you can just sit there and do nothing. Because music is something out there waiting *for* you, and you can have fun with it.

Through their conceptions of music as *fun*, perhaps the children intuitively approached music participation and learning as a form of musical play. My serendipitous choice of the term "playgroup" and the children's activities within this context may connect to musical play more than I originally realized.

Reflecting on the work of Marsh and Young (2006), the definition and characteristics of musical play vividly overlap with what I observed in terms of immediate engagement and utilization of multiple modalities in the playgroups. Musical play may be understood as self-initiated and self-directed musical activities that often include social interactions with peers, and arise through activities that are enjoyable and intrinsically motivated. Musical play typically takes place outside organized educational or recreational contexts, recognized in activities such as singing or chanting games that may accompany hand-clapping, jump-roping, counting elimination or dance routines. Characteristics of musical play include multimodal engagement, its unpremeditated and improvisatorial nature, and the creative transformation of musical forms. Children engaged in musical play may blend singing with movement, and instruments if available, through spontaneous and unplanned engagement. Even if the song-games are part of an oral tradition, children often create and share variations with their peers. Songs and skills are taught within holistic frameworks through peer modeling, as children choose their own levels and forms of participation.

Although Marsh and Young did not address children's musical identities specifically, they stated that "the significance of play as an essential vehicle for children's musical expression should be acknowledged and encouraged within and beyond educational settings" (p. 306). Thus, children's musicality as expressed through play may provide a vital and vibrant setting for understanding their musical identities.

Elements of musical play were deeply embedded within the children's self-directed engagement in the playgroups, as they initiated spontaneous and holistic music making across multiple modalities. They expressed their beliefs that music and learning should be *fun*. As such, musical play may be viewed a cultural tool and a contextual space that children utilize to shape musical identities (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995).

Trajectory of musical engagement. Over the course of the musical playgroups, the children traveled a similar trajectory of musical engagement, from experimentation with musical sounds to intentionality of realizing musical ideas within the group context. Exploration remained embedded throughout, revealing the ways the children shaped their musical identities in relation to their understanding of music. This included exploration of musical and social roles that honored individual musical identities and shaped group musical identity.

The children spent much of the first playgroup immersed in experimenting with instrument possibilities through quick, loud bursts of sound, racing from one instrument to the next with little regard to creating repeated rhythmic or melodic patterns. They transferred their sound bursts into their first group piece, a layered soundscape of arrhythmic sound materials. In subsequent playgroups, the children worked within formal structures, such as the call-and-response form or Tonya's original songs. They

increased intentionality by adapting repeated rhythmic or melodic materials that fit within the piece. Rather than reproducing static patterns, the children added flourishes of improvisation—a slight pause here, a heavily accented note there—varying each performance to reflect the overall feel of a song. By the fourth playgroup, the children developed a more intentional and efficient rehearsal strategy, trouble-shooting specific sections or patterns instead of always starting from the beginning of the song.

As they shaped their group pieces, exploration remained an important component of musical engagement. They developed and refined their ideas *in the moment* of music making rather than planning, discussing or sharing individual patterns beforehand. As such, the children "spoke" to one another using the language of musical materials instead of music terminology. In fact, they used the catchall phrase "the beat" to refer to all aspects of music, whether rhythmic or not, and misapplied music terminology in other instances. Charles defined a "rock and roll beat" as the sound of electric guitars. When Tonya introduced "Whammy Award Liar," she described it as a "slow song, but it gets fast in the middle." However, she performed the song with a consistent steady pulse across its two sections. Perhaps she meant to describe the song's form of a smooth and melodic chorus that contrasted with a declamatory and rhythmic verse, but she lacked adequate musical vocabulary to do so.

I admittedly found myself needing to suppress my urges to correct terminology or to expedite the children's idiosyncratic approaches to musical engagement. So as not to impede their focus and flow, I simply observed, offering assistance when asked and encouragement throughout. What appeared as perhaps haphazard explorations may reflect children's natural approaches to understanding music, developed through

experiences *in* musical engagement. This resonated with Green's (2008) research of informal music learning practices that revealed the experiential nature of musical skills and knowledge development, which may or may not be later linked to technical vocabulary or abstract theoretical musical concepts. Green suggests that premature attempts to forge the links between self-directed experiences and abstract concepts may interrupt the flow of learning and prevent meaningful connections.

> (Music educators) are too concerned with speed and the narrow assessment of progress, focusing too much on only those areas that are susceptible to measurement. Thus we have overleapt the need of the learner to dwell in the quality of experience and develop idiosyncratic, but for that very reason, deeper aural understand and appreciation of music over time. (p. 91)

In addition to exploring their understanding of music across the trajectory of musical engagement, the children explored their musical identities through musical action, interaction and self-comparisons. In the first playgroup, each child began by experimenting with the instruments, progressing from individual exploration, to sharing sounds in pairs, and finally combining their sounds as a group. This seemed to convey the comparative processes of self- and self-other understanding, as though to ask: *what can I do? What can you do? What can we do?*

As they progressed toward increased intentionality in creating music, they explored a variety of overlapping musical and social roles. Musical roles were driven by individual choice, often based on the nature of the musical activity. These roles ranged across the spectrum of singer, instrumentalist, composer-improviser, arranger, and conductor. Social roles included leader, contributor, and follower, and were tacitly negotiated through individual choice as well as ownership of musical material. Musical and social roles emerged spontaneously and concurrently after the broad idea for a

musical activity was proposed. Charles spontaneously offered to lead the group's first call-and-response piece, simultaneously serving as arranger and instrumentalist. Tonya's ownership of "Whammy Award Liar" necessitated her roles as singer, composer, and leader of the group's activities.

The children explored their musical identities from brief "trying on" to sustained engagement within musical and social roles. Landon rarely sang in the playgroups, yet "tried on" a rap star persona when singing along with his favorite recordings. Tonya composed "Whammy Award Liar" previously at home, sustaining her engagement as composer and singer by presenting the song to the group. As such, individual choices often reflected past experiences in musical and social roles. Comfortable as drumming leader for her dance class, Tonya's leadership experiences merged easily within the playgroup context. Yet experience was not the only factor that influenced choices of roles. Keisha and Charles acknowledged their chorus experiences, yet rarely chose singing roles in the playgroups, instead "trying on" their roles as instrumentalists in the playgroups.

Perhaps Keisha and Charles recognized the playgroups as a unique opportunity to perform on instruments, an activity they rarely experienced in chorus. Consideration of self-comparisons may provide a richer explanation of individual choices in musical and social roles. The self- and self-other comparisons that emerged in the first playgroup extended across the trajectory of musical engagement, particularly as evident with singing. When Keisha said, "I wouldn't want to sing any of my chorus songs" in the playgroup context, she segmented her identity to a chorus-only singer. Tonya emerged as the group's primary singer, ever eager to showcase what she called "my beautiful voice."

She welcomed the instrumental accompaniments of Keisha and Landon, praising their efforts toward realizing her songs. Throughout their comparative processes, the children negotiated roles that honored musical identities and shaped group identity, as though to ask: *how am I musical? How are you musical? How are we musical?*

Personal Dialogue Meets External Discourse

The first two themes reflected findings as contextualized primarily within playgroups and interviews, yet the children interacted within multiple musical contexts beyond the research settings. Part of the complexity of understanding children's musical identity is its fluidity, as individuals interact among multiple social contexts. A child's lived experience of musical identity formation may be highly individualized, yet necessarily impacted by the people and places that encompass his or her musical world. My findings indicate that musical identities may be understood as a process through which children continuously attempt to reconcile their personal dialogues within and among external discourses.

Personal dialogue may be conceptualized as the process through which children construct ownership and self-conceptions of their own musicality. This may include understanding oneself in relation to music, as it emerges through children's natural propensities for musical engagement, both alone and with others, and their personal beliefs of musicality. I sensed an ownership of musical identities with the children in my study, expressed through the ways they naturally engaged with music. In the playgroups, they spontaneously explored sounds, intentionally created music, and explored a variety of musical and social roles, not as a *result* of instruction but as something that seemed to

emanate from within. Expressions of personal beliefs of musicality were both overt and tacit. Tonya overtly referred to her "beautiful voice" and utilized it repeatedly in our playgroups. Tacit beliefs of musical confidence were more subtly revealed, yet evidenced through the children's active engagement, such as Charles's offering leadership and ideas for call-and-response pieces, and Keisha's and Landon's self-assuredness on the drums. Identities and personal traits outside of music often commingled with personal dialogues. A striking example includes Tonya's strongly felt African-American identity that became amplified through musical expression.

Children's personal dialogues may necessarily interact with external discourses, as children's musical identities are formulated through interaction with others among a variety of social contexts. External dialogues may be conceptualized as messages and experiences with family, peers, formal music learning environments and music drawn from media sources. Family has often been identified as children's first source of musical knowledge and enculturation (Campbell, 1998; Lamont, 2002). As children enter school, they expand their sources of music enculturation through interactions with peers, in formal music education contexts and engaging with music through the media. External dialogues may be thought of as sources or contexts for musical identity formation, but as a highly individualized process, children may choose whether or not to integrate some, all, or none of these dialogues within their own musical identities. Interaction with peers has already been explored in the playgroup contexts. Here, I choose to focus on the children's interaction with family and school music programs.

The children in my study described a variety of family situations that involved music listening, and Charles briefly described the blues musicians in his family. A

common thread throughout their stories was the enjoyment derived from family musical sharing, in situations that were as much about familial bonding as they were musically focused. The children embraced some their family's musical preferences, perhaps connecting certain songs to feelings of familial connections. As these children approached the independence associated with adolescence, they rejected some of their family's music, favoring current artists and songs to the "old school" music of their parents.

Each of the children participated in school music programs: Keisha and Charles in chorus; Tonya as drumming leader in dance class; and all of the children, including Landon in the *Sound Learning* program. Keisha and Charles spoke of their chorus participation as highly enjoyable, but perhaps for different reasons. Keisha said, "the most important thing we do is *sing,"* focusing on the personal rewards of musical engagement. Charles described his chorus trips and games as "fun," yet was perhaps motivated as much by external rewards for proper behavior as intrinsic musical engagement. Tonya thrived as drumming leader in dance class, a space where her innate musicality was recognized and celebrated. Landon thought analytically about *Sound Learning* visits, recognizing the simplicity of using a bucket for a drum and the complexity of the musicians' performances. From observing the musicians' strategies of switching quickly between instruments within a single piece, Landon applied this same strategy into the layered soundscapes.

The external discourses derived from music participation in school music programs may have shaped the ways the children understood their musicality. Implicit within these and other external discourses were models of musicality and definitions of

"who a musician is," that may have been integrated or discarded in an ongoing process of musical identity formation. Keisha and Charles understood themselves as singers in chorus, but chose not to integrate their singing within playgroups. Tonya rejected the model of singing presented to her in chorus, choosing instead to drum in dance class. Her leadership skills seemed to transfer easily within the playgroup context, as did her musical compositions. She cited various hip-hop songs and artists as models for her own songs, perhaps viewing her songs as having equal value to those of her musical models. Landon adapted the musical performance model he observed in *Sound Learning* to his musical creativity in the playgroup.

Children's musical worlds may be ensconced within a variety of people, places, and music, never static and always shifting. Thus, musical identity in relation to personal dialogues and external discourses may be thought of as a process, never fixed, never finished, and always evolving. I believe the relevant questions then become: are we, as children's caretakers, teachers, and models of musicality, recognizing and validating the active role children take in shaping their musical identities? Are we providing not just ample, but *rich* opportunities for children to explore and express their musical identities? Are we taking the time to listen to children's natural musicality, as they are apt to explain to us through their creative musicking, who they musically are and who they hope to musically be?

Implications

Implications for Future Research

This study was designed to explore children's lived experience of music formation in quasi-formal music learning settings. Findings of this study are limited to

the themes that emerged relative to data in regard to four children in one school. The unique musical identities of these children may not be representative of other children of similar ages, or in different geographical areas and school settings.

Future researchers should consider spending extended periods of time with children in a variety of music and non-music settings. Children's musical lives begin and extend beyond school, therefore observing children at home, in after-school groups or activities, or in social settings such as church or family gatherings might offer a more detailed picture of their everyday lives in relation to musical identities. In addition, I gathered data over the course of a single school semester. Due to the fluid and non-fixed nature of musical identity formation, researchers may consider longitudinal studies with the same participants that take place over a year or more. Such studies might offer important perspectives of musical identities in relation to children's development, as well as offer researchers opportunities for observing participants create music over extended periods of time. Talking with children about their musical interests and activities may provide cursory information, but observing children in self-guided, active music making provides richer pictures of whom they are.

Studies of children's musical identities should include design components for active music participation. This might include observations in formal or traditional music programs, as these contexts provide opportunities for researchers to gain a sense of children's musical skills and knowledge. However, I strongly believe that the self-directed musical playgroups were an essential feature of my study, affording a context for children's natural performances of musical identities. Rather than being taught specific music or assigned musical roles, the playgroups developed from the children's own ideas

about music and how they chose to express their musicality, both as individuals and as a group. The playgroups provided a space for the children to explore multiple aspects of their musicality, including singing, performing on instruments, and creating music. The listening sessions were equally fruitful, as the children were excited to have a choice to pick their favorite songs, share them with the group, and reveal understandings and connections to *their* music.

Playgroups, interviews, and close observations provided contexts that highlighted children's lived experiences of musical identities. The importance of giving children a voice was paramount to my study. Recognizing that children's musical identities are deeply felt and personal expressions of their musicality necessitates a researcher's stance that is nurturing and non-judgmental. I found that the children in my study were eager and impassioned to share *their* music with me, both their personal preferences and the creative music that emerged from within each child. As such, *their* music should be valued and validated as authentic expressions of musical identities.

I offer a caveat for future researchers who may choose to study children's musical identities. Important consideration must be given to whether a study is designed for depth or breadth. I designed my study for depth of understanding four children, accepting the limitations of findings that are not generalizable to large populations. Aiming toward depth required intensive analyses at both individual and group levels, culled from large amounts of data even given the relatively short time I spent with the children. This allowed for detailed accounts of the children as I observed them, yet still only represents a fraction of their musical identities. Future researchers may choose to design a study for breadth, including many more children (e.g., all students a music class

or an after-school program) or multiple age groups. A study of breadth could provide interesting comparative data, with the understanding that individual details may be missed.

Implications for Music Facilitators and Educators

This study points to the importance of recognizing, validating, and celebrating the musical identities that children indeed actively construct, as individual expressions of musicality and as developed through social interaction. Through my experience as a full-time public elementary school music specialist, I understand the joys of witnessing young children engage with music, as well as the challenges that accompany such a responsibility. A typical elementary specialist teaches every child in the school, and in my case, those numbers rose above five hundred students. A specialist may see each child for less than an hour, once a week or even less, creating therein a challenge to learn every child's name, much less understand individual musical identities with any sort of depth. Yet children are actively exploring and shaping their musical identities, both within the walls of music classrooms and beyond. My study provides examples of how four children engaged with and thought about music, which may inform strategies for classroom practice. These include the importance of musical exploration and the multiple forms of children's musical engagement.

I found that exploration and musical play were deeply embedded throughout musical engagement with the children in my study. In a rush to prepare concert performances or cover a long list of state-mandated standards, teachers may lose sight of the value of exploration and musical play in relation to children's natural propensities for musical engagement. Offering children opportunities for self-guided immersion in

musical sounds, alone and with others, may provide the necessary foundation from which conceptual understanding is built. I strongly believe that opportunities for exploration should not just be offered at the beginning of a school year and then abandoned, but serve as a starting point and extend through any lesson or unit. Exploration and play may appear idiosyncratic or haphazard, yet this allows children to experiment with their voices and on instruments as they learn to shape their own musical language.

The children in my study explored multiple modalities and roles within the playgroups. Singing, listening, performing on instruments, and creating music were interconnected rather than discrete activities. Music classrooms should reflect this through activities that allow multimodal engagement rather than segment musical behaviors (e.g., a "listening" lesson; a "singing" lesson). The fluidity of musical identity formation suggests that children are engaged in an on-going process of discovering who they are musically. Programs that prematurely ascribe fixed roles or limit exploration across a variety of roles may inadvertently *define* musical identities rather provide a supportive environment for their development. The hesitant singer that is, for efficiency's sake, repeatedly assigned to play the wood block instead, may be served a devastating blow to his or her musical identity. Perhaps that child wants to develop his or her voice, but is uncomfortable singing around others. One-on-one teacher or peer modeling might facilitate vocal development, along with a non-judgmental and accepting musical environment that values individualized approaches to participation and learning.

Conclusions

This study confirmed that children in middle childhood actively shape musical identities, both as personal expressions of musicality and in relation to external

discourses. Landon, Keisha, Charles, and Tonya enthusiastically and thoughtfully shared their musical lives with me, as rich and vibrant expressions of their musical identities.

I learned the importance of understanding children's musical identities as both individual and social constructions, driven by innate impulses for musicality that craved interactions with others in musical realms. In shaping musical identities, children seek to learn who they are and who others are in their vast musical worlds.

I learned that music held an important place in each of the children's lives. Music created a space for familial bonding and was sought out as a trusted companion in times spent alone. Children turned to the language of music to understand the world around them and express who they were.

I learned that children's musical identities are fluid, perpetually transforming as reflections of past experiences, present opportunities, and future goals. Musical identities may represent a complex amalgam of music-related roles and behaviors that commingle among personality traits and other strongly felt identities.

I learned that children want to be heard—that they want to create, share, and engage with *their* music as well as learn about the musical world around them. As caretakers, teachers, and musical models, are we listening?

References

Abrams, D. & Hogg, A. (1999). Social identity and social cognition: Historical background and current trends. In D. Abrams & A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity and social cognition* (pp. 1-25). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Alexander, J. & Mabe, J. (2008). The Climb [Recorded by M. Cyrus]. On *Hannah Montana: the movie soundtrack* [iTunes download]. Los Angeles, CA: Walt Disney Records.

Arnett, J. J. (1995). Adolescents' uses of media for self-socialization. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 24* (5), 519-533.

Ashford, N. & Simpson, V. (1978/1992). I'm every woman [Recorded by W. Houston]. On *The Bodyguard: original soundtrack* [iTunes download]. Los Angeles, CA: Arista, Inc.

Austin, J. Renwick, J., & McPherson, G. E. (2008). Developing motivation. In G. E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (pp. 213-238). New York: Oxford University Press.

Azmitia, M., Syed, M., & Radmacher, K. (2008). On the intersection of personal and social identities: Introduction and evidence from a longitudinal study of emerging adults. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 120,* 1-16.

Baldwin, J. M. (1897). *Social and ethical interpretations in mental development: A study in social psychology.* New York: Macmillan.

Bartel, L. R. (2004). What is the music education paradigm? In L. R. Bartel (Ed.), *Questioning the music education paradigm* (xii-xvi). Waterloo, ON: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Bergen, D. & Fromberg, D.P. (2009). Play and social interaction in middle childhood. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 426-430.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Boal-Palheiros, G. M. & Hargreaves, D. J. (2001). Listening to music at home and at school. *British Journal of Music Education, 18* (2), 103-118.

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education. An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson

Brewer, M. B. (2003). Optimal distinctiveness, social identity, and the self. In M.R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 480-491). New York: The Guilford Press.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Buller-Peters, J. (2004). They are not a blank score. In L. R. Bartel (Ed.), *Questioning the music education paradigm* (pp. 2-20). Waterloo, ON: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Burnard, P. (1999). Bodily intention in children's improvisation and composition. *Psychology of Music, 27* (2), 159-174.

Burnard, P. (2000). Examining experiential differences between improvisation and composition in children's music-making. *British Journal of Music Education, 17* (3), 227-245.

Burnard, P. (2002). Investigating children's meaning-making and the emergence of musical interaction in group improvisation. *British Journal of Music Education, 19* (2), 157-172.

Burnard, P. (2006). The individual and social worlds of children's musical creativity. In G.E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of development* (pp. 353-374). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, P. S, (1998). *Songs in their heads: Music and its meaning in children's lives* . New York: Oxford University Press.

Carroll, L. (1871/2004). *Alice's adventures in wonderland and through the looking glass.* New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Classics.

Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and social order.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crotty, M. (2003). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Damon, W. & Hart, D. (1988). *Self-understanding in childhood and adolescence.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Davidson, J. W. & Borthwick, S. J. (2002). Family dynamics and family scripts: A case study of musical development. *Psychology of Music, 30* (1), 121-136.

Davidson, J. W. & Burland, K. (2007). Musical identity formation. In G. E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (pp. 475-490). New York: Oxford University Press.

Denzin, N. (2004). The art and politics of interpretation. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on theory and practice* (pp. 447-472). New York: Oxford University Press.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2003). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Devenish, S. (April, 2002). An applied method for undertaking phenomenological explication of interview transcripts. *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 2* (1). Retrieved September 30, 2008 from http://www.ipjp.org.

Devos, T. & Banaji, M. R. (2003). Implicit self and identity. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 153-178). New York: The Guilford Press.

DeWalt, K. M. & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers.* Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Eatough, V. & Smith, J. (2006). 'I was like a wild person:' Understanding feelings of anger using interpretative phenomenological analysis. *British Journal of Psychology, 97,* 483- 498.

Ellemers, N., Spears, R. & Doosje, B. (1999). Introduction. In N. Ellemers, R. Spears & B. Doosje (Eds.), *Social identity: Context, commitment, content.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Eccles, J., Wigfield, A., Harold, R. & Blumenfeld, P. (1993). Age and gender differences in children's self- and task perceptions during elementary school. *Child Development, 64,* 830-847.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Finkenauer, C., Engels, R., Meeus, W. & Oosterwegel, A. (2002). Self and identity in early adolescence: The pains and gains of know who and what you are. In T. M. Brinthaupt & R. P. Lipka (Eds.), *Understanding early adolescent self and identity* (pp. 25-56). Albany: State University of New York Press..

Gordon, E. (1997). *Learning sequences in music: Skill, content, and patterns: A music learning theory.* Chicago: GIA Publications.

Grbich, C. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Green, L. (2002). *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Green, L. (2008). *Music, informal learning and the school: A new classroom pedagogy.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Grotevan, H. D., Bosma, H. A., De Levita, D. J. & Graafsma, T. G. (1994). Introduction. In H. A. Bosma, T. G. Graafsma, H. D. Grotevant & D. J. De Levita (Eds.), *Identity and development: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 1-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hargreaves, D. J., Miell, D. & Macdonald, R. (2002). What are musical identities, and why are they important? In R. Macdonald, D. J. Hargreaves & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (pp. 1-20). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hargreaves, D.J. & North, A.C. (1997). *The social psychology of music.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harter, S. (1999). *The construction of self: A developmental perspective.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Hewitt, J. P. (2000). *Self and society: A symbolic interactionist social psychology* (8th ed). Boston*:* Allyn and Bacon.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D. & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Holroyd, C. (April, 2001). Phenomenological research method, design and procedure: A phenomenological investigation of the phenomenon of being-in-community as experienced by two individuals who have participated in a Community Building Workshop. *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 1* (1). Retrieved on September 30, 2008 from http://www.ipjp.org.

Howe, M. J., Davidson, J. W. & Sloboda, J. A. (1998). Innate talents: Reality or Myth? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 21* (3), 99-407.

Hurtado, A. & Silva, J. (2008). Creating new social identities in children through critical multicultural media: The case of *Little Bill. New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 120,* 17-30.

James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology.* New York: Holt.

Jorgensen, E. R. (2003). *Transforming Music Education.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Knowles, B., Ghost, A., & Dench, I. (2006). Beautiful liar. On *B'Day* [iTunes download]. New York, NY: Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

Kratus, J. (1991). Growing with improvisation. *Music Educators Journal, 78* (4), 35-40.

Kratus, J. (1995). A developmental approach to teaching music improvisation. *International Journal of Music Education, 26,* 27-38.

Kroger, J. (2004). *Identity in adolescence: The balance between self and other* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Lamont, A. (2002). Musical identities and the school environment. In R. Macdonald, D. Hargreaves & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (pp. 41-59). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lamont, A. Hargreaves, D. J., Marshall, N. A. & Tarrant, M. (2003). Young people's music in and out of school. *British Journal of Music Education, 20* (3), 229-241.

Larson, R. (1995). Secrets in the bedroom: Adolescents' private use of media. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 24* (5), 535-550.

Leary, M. R. & Tangney, J. P. (2003). The self as an organizing construct in the behavioral and social sciences. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 3-14). New York: The Guilford Press.

Lurye, L., Zosuls, K. & Ruble, D. (2008). Gender identity and adjustment: Understanding the impact of individual and normative differences in sex typing. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 120,* 31-46.

Macann, C. (1993). *Four phenomenological philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Marcia, J. E. (1994). The empirical study of ego identity. In H. A. Bosma, T. L. Graafsma, H. D. Grotevant & D. J. De Levita (Eds.), *Identity and development: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 67-80). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Marsh, K. & Young, S. (2006). Musical play. In G.E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of development* (pp. 289-310). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Marsh, H. W. (1990). The structure of academic self-concept: The Marsh/Shavelson model. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82* (4), 623-636.

Marsh, H. W., Craven, R. G. & Debus, R. (1991). Self-concepts of young children 5 to 8 years of age: Measurement and multidimensional structure. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 83* (3), 377-392.

Marsh, H. W. & Shavelson, R. (1985). Self-concept: Its multifaceted, hierarchical structure. *Educational Psychologist, 20* (3), 107-123.

Marsh, K. (1999). Mediated orality: The role of popular music in the changing tradition of children's musical play. *Research Studies in Music Education, 13*, 2-12.

Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and behavior.* New York: Harper & Row.

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology, 5* (2), 100-122.

McCormick, J. & McPherson, G. (2003). The role of self-efficacy in a musical performance examination: An exploratory structural equation analysis. *Psychology of Music, 31* (1), 37-51.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception.* New York: Routledge.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study application in education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Millward, L. J. (2006). The transition to motherhood in an organizational context: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Occupational and Organization Psychology, 79,* 315-333.

Mischel, W. & Morf, C. C. (2003). The self as a psycho-social dynamic processing system: A meta-perspective on a century of the self in psychology. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 15-46). New York: The Guilford Press.

Morrisette, P. J. (1999). Phenomenological data analysis: A proposed model for counselors. *Guidance and Counseling, 15* (1), 2-8.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

MENC Committee on Performance Standards (1994). *Performance standards for music: Strategies and benchmarks for assessing progress toward the national standards.* Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference.

MENC Talk Force for National Standards in the Arts (1994). *The school music program: A new vision.* Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference.

O'Neill, S. A. (2007). Positive youth musical engagement. In G. E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (pp. 461-474). New York: Oxford University Press.

Operario, D. & Fiske, S. (1999). Integrating social identity and social cognition: A framework for bridging diverse perspectives. In D. Abrams & A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity and social cognition* (pp. 26-54). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

O'Reilly, K. (2005). *Ethnographic methods.* New York: Routledge.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Penuel, W. R., & Wertsch, J. V. (1995). Vygotsky and identity formation: A sociocultural approach. *Educational Psychologist, 30* (2), 83-92.

Pflederer, M. (1964). The responses of children to musical tasks embodying Piaget's principle of conservation. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 15* (3), 251-268.

Pflederer, M. (1969). Conservation laws applied to the development of musical intelligence. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 18* (1), 215-223.

Pflederer-Zimmerman, M. & Sechrest, L. (1970). Brief focused instruction and musical concepts. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 18* (1), 25-36.

Phinney, J. S. (2008). Bridging identities and disciplines: Advances and challenges in understanding multiple identities. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 120,* 97-110.

Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J. & Goldenberg, J. L. (2003). Freedom versus fear: On the defense, growth, and expansion of the self. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 314-343). New York: The Guilford Press.

Roessel, D. & Rampesod, A. (Eds.). (1994). *Poetry for young people: Langston Hughes.* New York, NY. Sterling Publishing Company.

Rogers, C. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science* (Vol. 3, pp. 184-256). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2003). On assimilating identities to the self: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization and integrity within cultures. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 253-274). New York: The Guilford Press.

Sandstrom, K., Martin, D. & Fine, G. (2001). Symbolic interactionism at the end of the century. In K. de Marrais & S. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 161-180). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sloboda, J. (2001). Emotion, functionality and the everyday experience of music: Where does music education fit? *Music Education Research, 3* (2), 243-253.

Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: the meanings of performance and listening.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1,* 39-54.

Smithrim, K. & Upitis, R. (2004). Music for life: Contaminated by peaceful feelings. In L. Bartel (Ed.), *Questioning the music education paradigm* (74-86). Waterloo, Ontario: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Snead, T. E. (2010). *Dichotomous musical worlds: Interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture.* Georgia State University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/577422756?accountid=11226

Stets. J. E. & Burke, P. J. (2003). A sociological approach to self and identity. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 128-152). New York: The Guilford Press.

Stevenson, R.L. (1957). *A children's garden of verses.* New York, NY: Grosset and Dunlap.

Sturken, C., Rogers, E., Sumner, B., Hook, P., Morris, S., and Gilbert, G. (2007). Shut up and drive [Recorded by Rhianna]. On *Good girl gone bad* [iTunes download]. New York, NY: Island/Def Jam Records.

Swanwick, K. (1994). *Musical knowledge: Intuition, analysis and music education.* New York: Routledge.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Social identity and intergroup relations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, M.D. (1976). *Roll of thunder, hear my cry.* New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Trevarthan, C. (2002). Origins of musical identity: Evidence from infancy for musical social awareness. In R. Macdonald, D. Hargreaves & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (pp. 21-40). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thorne, A. (2004). Putting the person into social identity. *Human Development, 47,* 361-365.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* London, ON: The State University of New York Press.

Vispoel, W. (1995). Self-concept in artistic domains: An extension of the Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) model. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 87* (1), 134-153.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1930/1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Way, D. A. (2008). Hey, you there. On *iSouljaBoyTellem* [iTunes download]. Atlanta, GA: ColliPark/Interscope Music.

Way, D. A. (2008). Turn my swag on. On *iSouljaBoyTellem* [iTunes download]. Atlanta, GA: ColliPark/Interscope Music.

Webster, P. (2002). Creative thinking in music: Advanding a model. In T. Sullivan & L. Willingham (Eds.), *Creativity and music education* (pp. 16-34). Edmonton, AB Canada: Canadian Music Educators' Association.

Welch, G. (2005). We are musical. *International Journal of Music Education, 23,* 117-120.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

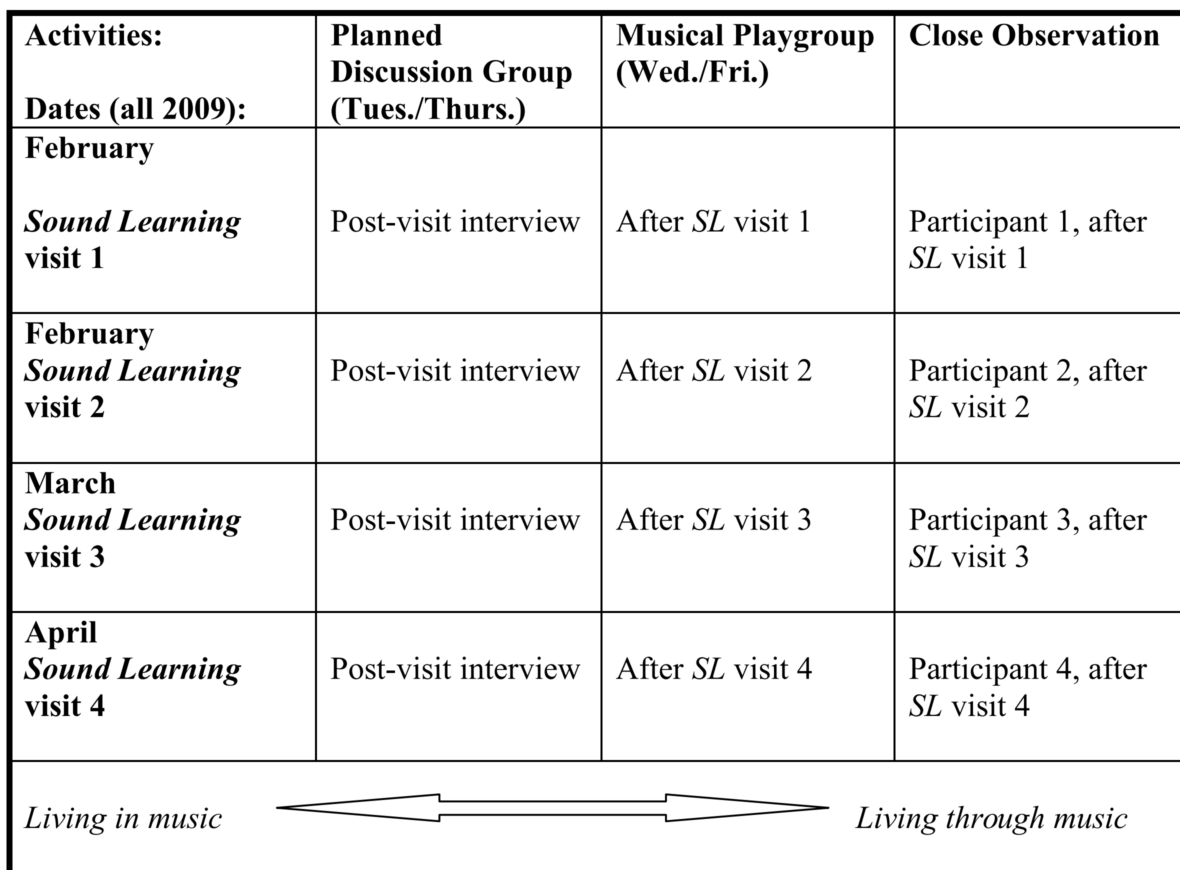
Westen, D. & Heim, A. K. (2003). Disturbances of self and identity in personality disorders. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 643-666). New York: The Guilford Press.

Younker, B. A. (2009). Composing in the classroom: the journey of five children. In J. L. Kerchner & C. R. Abril (Eds.), *Music experience in our lives: Things we learn and meanings we make* (pp. 145-164). Landham, MD: The National Association for Music Education/Rowman and Littlefield Education.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION CALENDAR



Activities: **Dates (all 2009):**	**Planned Discussion Group (Tues./Thurs.)**	**Musical Playgroup (Wed./Fri.)**	**Close Observation**
February ***Sound Learning* visit 1**	Post-visit interview	After *SL* visit 1	Participant 1, after *SL* visit 1
February ***Sound Learning* visit 2**	Post-visit interview	After *SL* visit 2	Participant 2, after *SL* visit 2
March ***Sound Learning* visit 3**	Post-visit interview	After *SL* visit 3	Participant 3, after *SL* visit 3
April ***Sound Learning* visit 4**	Post-visit interview	After *SL* visit 4	Participant 4, after *SL* visit 4
Living in music	⟷		*Living through music*

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT DATA COLLECTION CALENDAR

Context: Participant:	*Sound Learning*	Close Observation	Interview	Musical Playgroup
Landon	2/26/09 3/5/09 3/19/09 4/30/09	5/13/09	3/19/09 4/30/09 5/14/09	3/9/09 3/20/09 5/1/09 5/14/09

Context: Participant:	*Sound Learning*	Close Observation	Interview	Musical Playgroup
Keisha	2/26/09 3/5/09 3/19/09 4/30/09	3/26/2009	3/19/09 4/30/09 5/14/09	3/9/09 3/20/09 5/1/09 5/14/09

Context: Participant:	*Sound Learning*	Close Observation	Interview	Musical Playgroup
Charles	2/26/09 3/5/09 3/19/09 4/30/09	5/5/09	3/5/09 3/19/09 4/30/09	3/9/09 3/20/09

Context: Participant:	*Sound Learning*	Close Observation	Interview	Musical Playgroup
Tonya	2/26/09 3/5/09 3/19/09 4/30/09	3/12/09	3/5/09 3/19/09 4/30/09 5/14/09	3/9/09 3/20/09 5/1/09 5/14/09

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS

Interview 1:

Balance the interview between a review of what happened in the Sound Learning visit, as well as questions about their musical interests.

- I'd like to know what you thought about the musical visitors today. Would you like to talk about some of the things that happened in the visit? What did you find interesting?
- Could you describe the music they played? Or sing it?
- How do you think they learned to be musicians? How do you think they learned to play as a group?
- Tell me how you learn music: what are some of your favorite songs, and how did you learn them?
- Have you learned to play any instruments, and how did you learn(*which ones, where did you learn to play, i.e., school, parents, private lessons, etc.)*?
- Is there anything you don't understand or have questions about?

Interview 2:

Balance the interview between a review of what happened in the Sound Learning visits, and probe deeper for their personal musical interests in performing, listening and creating music.

- What new things did you learn in the visit today?
- Could you describe the music they played? What did it remind you of?
- What was the most/least interesting thing about today's visit, and why?
- Which instruments would you like to learn how to play? (*probe here: how the child learned about the instrument, do they know someone personally who plays the instrument, do the think it would be difficult/easy to learn, etc.)*
- Let's talk about your favorite music: what music do you like, where did you learn about it, etc.
- Do you ever make up your own music/songs? (*probe here: is this a solitary activity, or done with others in school/outside of school)*
- Is there anything you didn't understand or have questions about?

Interview 3:

Briefly review the visit and what they found interesting. In this interview, continue to probe about their musical interests: how music is accessed, how frequently they engage in musical activities and with whom, etc.

- What new things did you learn in the visit today?
- Could you describe the music they played, and what you liked (or didn't) about it?
- What was the most/least interesting thing about today's visit?
- Let's talk about the music you listen to/the music you like—this can be at home or at school. (*Ask them to share how frequently they listen to music and*

in what mode such as CD's, radio, movies, etc. Do they listen with family members, find out about songs from their friends?)

- Is there anything you didn't understand or have questions about?

Interview 4:

Briefly review the visit, working toward their overall assessment of the Sound Learning program. Also, in this interview, work towards the role music plays in their lives (major/minor, important/just for fun), and how they see themselves as musical/a musician.

- We've seen the musicians 4 times now. How do you feel about musicians coming to your school (*Try to gauge level of interest, e.g. "I liked it a lot/a little/not music," and probe for why. For example, were they drawn to the music, the instruments, the performance, or did the musicians talk about things they didn't understand?)*
- Could you talk about or show me the kinds of things you learned about?
- How is having the musicians come to school the same/different from what you do in music class? How is it the same/different from other kinds of music things you do (*i.e., at home, at church, with friends, etc.*)?
- What was your favorite thing/least favorite thing about the visits?
- How important is music to you? For example, is music a big part of your life or a hobby? Do you think you will continue to be a musician when you grow up (*if so, have them describe what they picture this to be)* or is music something to do just for fun?
- What are some of your interests/goals for doing music (*i.e., instruments you'd like to learn to play, play in a group such as band, chorus, or a group with friends, would you like to create more of your own music or learn songs, what 'styles' of music would you like to play, etc.)*?
- Is there anything else about music you'd like to talk about, or have questions about that I can help answer?

APPENDIX D

MUSICAL PLAYGROUP GUIDING ACTIVITIES

The major goal of all of the music playgroups is to give the children their choice of musical engagement, both individually and together as a group. This includes allowing plenty of time for the children to freely experiment with all of the musical instruments (keyboard, drums, tambourines, shakers, guitar, etc), while offering my assistance individually and as a group as it is needed. As the children explore the instruments, I will be inquiring as to what they are doing ("how did you learn that pattern or did you just make it up," "that's an interesting pattern, could you add something to it, or make it fit with someone else's pattern," etc.), as well as reserve the last 5 minutes for their reflections. These reflection aim toward having the children describe what they liked about what they just did, how they might refine it, what they would like to add next time, etc.

Music Playgroup 1

- Introduce children to all of the instruments: give names, brief demonstration of how to play. Find out what experience (if any) the children have with the instruments.
- Give children plenty of time to experiment with each of the instruments, at least 20 minutes.
- As a closing activity, lead the children in a rhythmic activity: I will start with a steady beat on a drum, have children improvise over the beat, first individually, then as a group.
- As a closing reflection, have the children talk about what they did: which instruments do they like, what do they think we can do next time to organize a group activity (such as, base on a favorite song, or structure a 'leader/echo' activity)

Music Playgroup 2

- Quickly review names/how to play instruments. Let children explore instruments freely for about 5 minutes.
- Lead a 'call/response' rhythmic activity.
- Have children determine how to structure a song (this can be based on original or known material). Allow time for children to find the main 'melody' (original or known) then add rhythmic accompaniment. (OR, reverse this process, starting with rhythmic pattern and adding melodic phrases).
- As a closing reflection, have children talk about what they did: what particular melodic/rhythmic material did they like, what would they like to keep/change, how will they accomplish this, etc.

Music Playgroup 3

- 5 minute warm up: free choice of instruments, call-response exercise, led by child if they choose to.

- Return to what children created in playgroup 2: review parts (melodies, rhythms, etc) and have children expand on these ideas (such as adding lyrics, dynamics, etc).
- As a closing reflection, have children talk about what they did: what is working well, what needs refinement? Do they need additional parts/instruments? How is the piece being 'structured' (such as verse/chorus) and could this be refined?

Music Playgroup 4

- 5 minute warm up: free choice of instruments, call-response exercise, led by child if they choose to.
- Continue to build on what children created in previous playgroups and continue to rehearse, refine parts.
- Continue to structure the piece: may add verse/chorus structures, solo parts layered over group parts, etc.
- As a closing reflection, have children talk about what they did—what did they think about the process of making their own music? What was difficult? What was easy or fun?