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The Musical Identities of Piano Students: A Phenomenological Case Study

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The Musical Identities of Piano Students: A Phenomenological Case Study

by

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Abstract

It might be said that everyone has a musical identity. Whether you casually sing in the shower or seriously study Classical piano, music holds a role in everyone's daily life. But what does it mean to incorporate the term *musician* into your identity? How does being a musician hold a place for who you *are* and how you describe yourself to others? This research investigated the musical identities of adolescent students in private piano lessons, with supporting evidence from their parents and piano teachers. It was formed around two research questions: *How do piano students construct their musical identities and understand themselves as musicians? What kinds of experiences contribute to the formation of a salient musical identity*? Drawing from a phenomenological approach, semi-structured interviews, photovoice, demographic surveys, and lesson observations brought forward the experiences which shaped students' identities. Results suggested that the social environment, possible selves, and motivation were important themes in the formation of a musical identity because they provided experiences which shaped how students understood themselves as musicians. Beyond these three main themes, ability, choice, and relationships arose as their own emerging areas of consideration. Implications for teachers, parents, and students are provided, such as gaining a better understanding of student-centered learning to improve students' experiences with piano lessons and harness more salient musical identities. This study offers an unprecedented use of photovoice methodology in music education research, and is unique in its focus on the musical identities of adolescent piano students. Further, this study offered a concurrent conceptualization of social environment, possible selves, and motivation. It connected the topics of musical identities and student-centered learning, providing new contributions and challenges to traditional piano pedagogy.

last decade of graduate work. Thanks to my mother-in-law Marite, and close friend Dora Chizek, for providing childcare while I attended meetings. To my colleagues Dr. Merlin Thompson and Esther Bing for being 'sounding-boards' while I talked through my research problems. Thank you to my former piano teachers Lynn Ewing and Linda Kundert for sharing their music with me and demonstrating what it means to be a musician.

Finally, thank you to my baby son, Henry, who was born during the course of this research. You are the light of my life and have shown me how beautiful the world can be with music in it. When the dark days before you were born stole the song from my heart, you were the one who brought it back. Thank you for helping me find my music again, and for singing along with me.

Dedication

For my mum, Noreen Wensley, who was my first piano teacher and my biggest fan.

Even though Noreen passed away only weeks before I defended my Master's thesis, she knew I would be continuing forward into doctoral studies and would have been so proud of my research on musical identities. Growing up, she would sometimes say, "Karen, you have more music in your little finger than all of my students put together." While that was not meant to discourage her other piano students, the point was that she believed that music lived inside of me and was the first to consider me a musician. Her musical legacy lives on.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

If a child hears good music from the day of his birth, and learns to play it himself, he develops sensitivity, discipline, and endurance. He gets a beautiful heart. (Suzuki, 1983, p. 139)

This study investigates musical identities of adolescent piano students. The subject of musical identities is a relatively new topic which combines the study of music, education, and psychology (MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2017). This topic has only taken shape in the past twenty years but is gaining momentum as a field of research. People of all historical eras might anecdotally agree that musical experiences shape a large part of their lives. The music we listen to while driving, concerts attended on weekends, time spent practicing an instrument, or that particular piece chosen for a wedding day first dance all becomes the soundtrack of our lives. It influences not only our identities but how we construct and interpret the world around us. For most people, music has a contextual element. Musical experiences often happen in groups and are a shared phenomenon (Hoffman, 2008). But what does this mean for the piano student who takes individual lessons, plays an instrument with an enormous amount of solo repertoire, and who practices alone on a daily basis? With relatively little external feedback and community reinforcement, how do they construct their identities as musicians? What does a master-apprentice approach to private lessons mean for their distinctive musical identities?

My interest in musical identities grows from my Master's research which studied motivation between dropout and continuing piano students to find that the students who quit lessons had home environments which did not support music study, had significantly lower levels of intrinsic motivation, and most importantly did not envision themselves studying music long-term. When asked if they might play piano in the future, students would often respond that

they 'did not see themselves doing it' or that it was 'not their thing' (King, 2016). While many would interpret these results as a simple lack of commitment, one of the most important studies on this topic demonstrates that it may have been a deeper lack of *identity* as a musician which led to dropout (Evans & McPherson, 2015). Understanding how to support a musician's identity formation may impact how long students continue to study music. Recent research has suggested that students may be more likely to undertake musical activities when they believe that "music is a part of who they are" (Woody et al., 2021, p. 431). The inspiration for this work comes not only from my past academic endeavors, but also my current role as a piano teacher and my own personal struggle with building a musical identity. Despite having played the piano for over 30 years, I am bound by this constrained definition of musician-as-performer and viewing myself as a musician had never really come into consideration until recently. Since I do not perform with orchestras or have a record label, but instead teach, the idea of being a 'real' musician has been called into question. In my own personal struggle to define what it means to be a musician – and to understand if I am in fact a musician – I decided to embrace this struggle as research. Since no one had ever suggested I was a musician as a student, and this is not a word I use to describe myself, the idea of a musical identity is something I am now attempting to adopt. It also makes me question what it means to be a musician.

This research operates with the belief that everyone is musical, and that expressing oneself through music can be one of the most fulfilling parts of life. As students are able to say *playing the piano is part of who I am*, and have the related context to support that statement, a deeper identification may help them navigate the difficult periods in any musician's journey. It seems that everyone engages with music at some level, everyday. Even if you do not play an instrument, your YouTube history or iTunes playlist says something about your musical identity.

The radio settings in your car tell others about who you are. These everyday musical moments are shaped by your past experiences and will continue to shape your future self. In most cultures, people participate in musical activities every day (Lehmann, 1997; Parker, 2020; Rickard & Chin, 2017). Could we then say that everyone has a musical identity? Perhaps, but it seems more important that one uses the word 'musician' to describe themself. This is particularly true for adolescent piano students who are asking pivotal questions of identity such that "thinking of oneself as a musician can be an important step on the road to becoming one" (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003, p. 272). Research with music students has demonstrated that "identity is about *what* and *who* one identifies *as* and *with*, rather than something that others ascribe to us" (McPherson, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012, p. 168). This suggests that students' musical identities are formed through self-reflective, associative processes, rather than some mysterious inborn ability. In other words, being a musician is not reserved for a few 'gifted' or 'talented' people but rather that a musical identity can be constructed by anyone through their daily experiences.

Smells Like Teen Spirit: A Personal Narrative

My own personal story gives insight into the complex nature of identity. I am sharing my journey towards seeing myself as a musician because it demonstrates that identities are fluctuating, deeply reliant on context and social influence, and that formative identity struggles happen in the adolescent years. I know the intricate nature of identity through my own personal history which involves competing pianist and dancer identities, a phase of dropout, and the importance of eventually viewing myself as a musician. Research has suggested that "the multiplicity of identities that all researchers bring to the field has an impact" (Ramirez, 2014, p. 91). Mine seem to be particularly important in this case, not only to illustrate the topic in question but to position myself as a researcher.

I had an extremely enriched musical upbringing and music has occupied a central role in almost every day of my life: from parent and baby music classes as a toddler, to piano lessons at age 6, hand bell choir in elementary school, vocal jazz in high school, four musical theatre productions, and saxophone in university concert band. I won the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association provincial composition competition at age 11 with a piece in 5/4 titled *Windchimes*, I started attending the opera at age 18, and felt like I was the only 20-year-old with season tickets to the symphony orchestra. By age 30 I had established a well-respected private music studio. Perhaps this is not surprising considering the lineage of musicians in my family: we are the first family in Canadian history to have three consecutive generations of ARCT diploma recipients from the Royal Conservatory of Music.

My maternal grandmother, Betty Horgan, was a soprano who won the silver medal during her Grade 10 voice exam, which meant that she was the strongest vocalist in the province that year. She was so genuinely talented that her examiner begged her to continue her studies at the conservatory in Toronto, however in the 1950s, her family only valued post-secondary education for boys. While Betty's brothers went to university and seminary, she received an ARCT in vocal performance, married, and earned a meager income singing hymns and solos for services at McKague's Funeral Home in Saskatoon. This fee allowed her to pay for piano lessons for her daughter, Noreen Wensley. Although many students typically give up somewhere along the way, her teacher Mrs. MacPherson would say, "Oh, but you're so close… why don't you just keep going a bit further?" Throughout the 1970s, Noreen completed her graded exams and ARCT Teacher's diploma practicing on a mediocre Heintzman upright piano in their modest dining room. As she later finished her diploma requirements, Noreen was unable to attend her official convocation ceremony in Toronto because she was pregnant with me. As I grew up, this

was Noreen's chance to pass on our musical lineage. Our multi-generational musical trio would attend piano recitals, Michael Bublé concerts, or Irish folk music afternoons at the pub. It was common to for any of us to spontaneously break into song at annual holidays – *here comes Peter Cottontail* – while on vacation – *siiiiingin' in the rain!* – or while driving in the mini-van – *'cause I've got one hand in my pocket, and the other one is playing the pi-a-no.* Since photos are an important form of communication within this study, I have included my own visual representation of the three generations of musical women (see Photo 1).

Photo 1

Three Generations of ARCT Recipients

Note. Photo of Betty Horgan, Noreen Wensley, and Karen King at the Royal Conservatory of Music ARCT diploma convocation, Toronto, 2012.

Although I have painted a rosy picture of myself as someone who loved music and had an environment supportive of a musical identity, that was not always the case. In fact, I was known more widely by my family and friends as a competitive Irish dancer. That was the identity I spent a dozen hours a week for ten years in the studio training towards. I travelled across North

America competing in both solos and teams, and wore glamorous makeup and expensive costumes in high-stakes performances. Very few people know that when I was 14 – the one week when my father took me to piano lessons – I asked him to drive around the city for an hour instead of going into the lesson. He thought the act of lying about this optional activity was absurd and promptly marched into my teacher's house to announce that I was quitting. My mum was furious. After some reflection 20 years later, I understand that it was not that I disliked music, my teacher, or my lessons, but seems that the dancer identity had overthrown the pianist identity. It was the dancer identity that had a close group of relationships, that understood the significance of cultural symbols, that received praise from friends and family, trophies at competitions, and called for an exciting international travel schedule. Meanwhile, the pianist identity spent the majority of time practicing alone, working on music her friends did not recognise, and being told to practice more quietly or at another time. In other words, the dancer-self enjoyed competency, autonomy, and relevancy, while the pianist-self presented a great deal of struggle for very little benefit.

While I did resume piano lessons a few years later and proceed to perform at a high level, this teenage identity struggle has become an important basis for my research. It was in a recent conversation in a doctoral seminar where I was surprised to learn that everyone in that classroom considered me to be a musician – except myself. There was perhaps once in my early twenties, during the final week in my final year of lessons, that I felt like a something of a musician. After I had flawlessly and exquisitely played Chopin's *Berceuse*, Mrs. Ewing looked at me with a small smile, said nothing, and her eyes read, "There. Now I have taught you to play the piano." That was perhaps the single time I have ever felt like a worthy musician. In fact, there were a number of events which suggested that in fact, I was certainly *not* a worthy musician. The most

distinct of these was after performing my audition selections for the B.Mus/B.Ed. program at the University of Saskatchewan, and responding to the adjudicating panel that even though I was never going to play Carnegie Hall, I was going to be an outstanding music teacher. The rejection letter arrived several weeks later. I went on to earn both Associate and Licentiate piano performance diplomas from Trinity College (London, UK), as well as the ARCT previously mentioned, but this initial rejection has not been easily forgotten. I completed a Master of Arts in piano pedagogy through the University of Ottawa where my research focused on students who had quit piano lessons and the role motivation played in the decision to drop out. The most interesting results from my Master's research were exploratory findings: dropout students had no long-term sense of music as being important throughout their adult lives. Upon further analysis, it was not simply a lack of long-term commitment which seemed to lead to dropout, but ultimately a lack of identity as a musician and lack of musical experiences to support that identity. The most striking part was that I saw myself in this research.

The questions of who is eligible to be called a 'musician', and if I am a musician, carry forward into my adult life. Upon answering the basic, Western introduction question of "what do you do?", I never answer that I am a musician. Is being a musician something necessarily tied to your career choice? If performance does not come as naturally to me as writing about music or teaching music, am I still a musician? Even though ten thousand hours of practice is the generally accepted standard to be considered an expert in your field, is it possible to identify as a musician before reaching this monumental threshold? What does this mean for students who are trying to express their musical selves but do not have a clear concept of themselves as musicians? Ultimately, these questions led me to the deeper topic of musical identity.

What Does it Mean to *Be* a Musician?: Key Terms

Musician. The current research in the field of musical identities has not strongly agreed upon the definition of 'musician'. Depending on who you ask, the distinction between who is or is not a musician receives completely different answers (Rickard & Chin, 2017). A musician is one who makes music, but at what level of proficiency? For whom? To what end? Lamont and Hargreaves (2019) asked, *what do we mean when we call someone a musician?* O'Neill (2002) aptly observes that "in Western cultures, being a 'musician' is often equated with being able to play a musical instrument. However, there is growing criticism of this narrow conceptualization" (p. 79). Similarly, Green (2008) believes that society is too reticent about including children and amateurs as musicians. Music pedagogy has recently started challenging the entrenched definition of musician-as-performer. A teacher in Mills' (2010) study defined a musician as "someone who can play all the scales on whatever instrument they play, and know all the key signatures, that are able to play inversions, who show that they are musicians, not that they love music" (p. 47). In contrast, that teacher's students felt that you are a musician when "you live, breathe, and practically take it from the inner soul of the music so you really express it" (Mills, 2010, p. 46). Children tend to view musicians as those who play for pure creative enjoyment or expression, and a student in another study defined musician as a person who "makes or composes music" (Kastner, 2009, p. 101). Students are not often referred to as musicians by adults and this may have an impact on how they view themselves on the long journey to mastering an instrument. If the surrounding environment tells students that they cannot be considered musicians until they pass some arbitrary point, what impact will that have on the mindset and motivation during the many thousands of hours required to reach that esteemed point? A strong concept of a musical future self is particularly important because of the lifelong

journey it takes to master an instrument. For the purposes of this work, a musician will be viewed as *anyone who creates music with a combination of skill and passion, and uses the term 'musician' to describe themselves*. This is the most appropriate definition for examining the musical identities of young people because it challenges the traditional model and leans more strongly towards students' conceptualizations of a 'musician'.

Identity. Due to the individualized and highly contextual nature of identity, pinning down one universal definition is difficult. Early identity theorist Erik Erikson (1968) wrote that he could not define identity and that "the more one writes about this subject, the more the word becomes a term for something as unfathomable as it is all-pervasive" (p. 9). The abstractness of *identity* means that it is often discussed inconsistently and merges with other topics such as self, behaviour, and personality. No one can simply state what his or her identity 'is', although identity is broadly understood to be who we 'are' (Josselson, 2017). Everyone has multiple identities they present to the world – for example, as a parent, friend, teacher, photographer, Liberal, vegetarian – and each of these various identities become synthesized within a single self. Individuals accept some identities and reject others, which means that identities can change over time based on a person's unique combination of experiences and interactions with others, and their interpretation of what matters (Ryan & Deci, 2012). There is debate in the literature as to whether people have one, stable identity throughout life, or a multitude of identities that are dependent on time and context. Gee (2000) considers that "each of us has what we might call a 'core identity' that holds more uniformly, for ourselves and others, across contexts" (p. 99). However, most contemporary identity theorists consider identity to be malleable and subject to outside influences. In my experience, even the relatively stable identity of being a daughter has meant different things in different phases of my life. As such, I believe that identity should be

considered contingent, determined by experiences, and continuously reinterpreted at different points in time (Oyserman, 2004). Marcia (1994) considers that a "sense of identity suggests an individual's continuity with the past, a personally meaningful present, and a direction for the future" (p. 70). Some identities which mattered in certain phases of life will be replaced as we age, but still form an important part of how we understand our current story. Specific to musical identity literature, Lamont (2017) views identity as "a way of finding a place in the world, of comparing oneself to others, and of providing a source of internal motivation and strength" (p. 178). In this work, identity will be viewed as *the state of being oneself: the outward expression of who one believes they 'are', influenced by experiences and relationships, dependent on time and space, and inwardly renegotiated throughout life.* This definition draws from the constructivist paradigm which guides this research and aligns with the position taken up in most other research with musical identities (e.g. Rowley, Reid, & Bennett, 2021). More importantly, this definition recognises that identity is deeply dependent on history and culture, and is both inwardly and outwardly constructed: it pushes and pulls between the self and society.

  Self. Much of the literature discusses self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and possible selves without first defining what they mean by *self.* Some researchers decidedly do not wish to create a distinction between the self and identity since "these words point to large, amorphous, and changing phenomena that defy hard and fast definitions" (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997, p. 5). However, for the purposes of this research it is important to understand the differences between the two concepts. It has been suggested that "any creature who is capable of reading and understanding these words *is* a self, or *has* a self" (Hanna, 2011, p. 121). In other words, the self is a being who consciously experiences and reflects upon the world in a highly individualized way. Whereas a person might perform multiple identities throughout the day, they are drawn

inwards and knit together to become the self (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). When we feel as if we know ourselves and have made sense of our various identities as a harmonious whole, this helps to direct our choices in life towards things which feel congruent (Deci & Ryan, 2017). McAdams (1996) proposes the term *selfing* as we grasp and interpret experiences as our own: it is the individual's appropriation and self-narration of the world around them. The active practice of *selfing* means we know our experiences are ours. Self-concept is embedded in the larger, overarching self and shares many of the same definitions. It has been suggested that "the self-concept is the set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. It is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act toward us, our wishes and desires, and our evaluations of ourselves" (Stets & Burke, 2003, p. 136). For the purposes of this research, the self will be viewed as *the individual way one experiences, reflects upon, makes meaning from their world, and integrates their many identities within a single self.* I have come to this definition because it distinguishes self from identity, and suggests that while identity is more concerned with outward expression, the self is more inward-looking and dependent on how one interprets the world around them. The topic of self was taken up within this study when student participants were asked what music had taught them about themselves: they set aside the kinds of music they identified with, went beyond their musical experiences, reflected, and articulated the core of who they were.

 ***Musical Identity*.** In the first major publication on musical identities, MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) differentiated between *identities in music*, which are the labels such as 'pianist', 'composer', 'theorist' that peers and institutions assign, and *music in identities*, which is a personalized sense of one's own musicality. While identities are certainly constructed based on the markers and affordances others give to us, the individual interpretation of what

music means in our lives seems to be more important. *Music in identities* speaks to "how we use music within our overall self-identities – to the extent to which music is important in our self-definitions" (Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell, 2017, p. 4). A lengthy but particularly well-formulated definition describes the following:

> 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. (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002, p. 1)

Like most identity research, **"**a variety of terms have been used interchangeably to describe musical identity" (Kaster, 2009, p. 6). Evans & McPherson (2015) suggest that students' musical identities must be fused "within their own personal sense of identity – their own working theory of their self – and to incorporate a long-term view of their self as being somebody for whom music plays a significant role in their life" (p. 421). Perhaps because it means something different to each person as they incorporate it within themselves, these authors do not offer a definition of musical identity. However, for the purposes of a research study, a clear definition must be reached. Mills (2008) considers musical identity as *"*the ways in which individuals define themselves as musicians" (p. 12). Burland (2005) considers that "musical identity refers to an individual's self-perceptions relating to, and dependent upon, his/her musical experiences, namely his/her interactions with others, reflections on ability and achievement, and his/her goals and ambitions" (p. 50). Musical identity is situated in time and adapts to the "nature of the lived space of past and present" (Mans, 2009, p. 100). Mercier de Shon (2012) considers that musical

identity "refers to how children *live in and live through* music in an ongoing formation of their musical selves" (p. 56). Ultimately, musical identity comes down to this question: how does music help to make sense of 'who we are'? For the purposes of this research, musical identity will be viewed as *how one understands themselves as a musician, based on the role of music in their individual and collective worlds at that point in time*. I have settled upon this definition because it comprehensively blends the concepts of identity and self together, while pushing and pulling between inner meaning and outward expression. My conceptualization of musical identities takes into account external influences – such as experiences and relationships – which are absorbed and affect the self, but it is also concerned with how one silently makes meaning of those influences and outwardly expresses their identity. The reference to time signifies that musical identities are malleable and will change throughout different stages of life.

Research Questions and Overview of the Study

This research seeks to answer the following questions: *How do piano students construct their musical identities and understand themselves as musicians? What kinds of experiences contribute to the formation of a salient musical identity?* By examining these questions, this study will provide a more robust understanding of musical identity and the relationship between social environment, possible selves, and motivation in its construction. This research operates on the assumptions that identities are fluid and complex, highly individual yet developed by the surrounding collective environment, and come heavily into question during the early adolescent years. The theoretical underpinnings of this work draw on the social psychology literature and are interpreted with a phenomenological lens. Because of the phenomenological viewpoint, questions of experience are important and there will be a focus on how experience matters for identity construction. The methodological framework is built upon qualitative case study and

arts-based research in order to understand how early-adolescent piano students shape their musical identities, and the meaning that holds for their lives now and in the future. This research included interviews with 8 piano students – as well as their parents and teachers – who were taking private lessons and who had plans to continue. A combination of semi-structured interviews and photovoice asked students to express themselves in verbal and non-verbal ways. There was an initial interview that focused on the topic of musical identities and its subthemes, and also a follow up interview that explored the stories behind the photovoice submissions and the meaning the images held. The photovoice component allowed students to answer questions by taking pictures and then explaining the photo's meaning in relation to the topic. It created different avenues of exploration than interviews alone would provide. Next, parents completed a short demographic survey and participated in their own semi-structured interview. Finally, a lesson observation and semi-structured interview with the student's piano teacher allowed for a view of the student's identity from a different angle. This *triangulation* of data, combining traditional qualitative interviews, surveys, and observations with innovative arts-based approaches, afforded a more comprehensive understanding of this complex topic. Likewise, considering multiple forms of data is one of the archetypal elements of case study research. The interview data was analyzed according to interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) and organized based on thematic coding.

There are a number of particularly important contributions to the field of music pedagogy within this study. First, private piano students had never been the subjects of a study on musical identity. Considering the enormity of the scholarship on identity, and the maturing field of musical identities, it was surprising that piano students have not been the subject of more investigation since piano continues to be the world's most popularly studied instrument. Second,

to my knowledge, photovoice had never been used in music education research. Other music education research has used arts-based approaches such as drawing or composing, but capturing photos as data is unique to this study. Including photovoice as a research method strengthens the recognition of this data source and allowed for the study to reach new depths, beyond what words alone could express. Next, the themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation had not been taken up concurrently when addressing musical identities. Other research has encompassed one or two themes at a time, but this study argues that it is impossible to consider one without the others since the three themes are reliant upon – and tangled within – one another. Finally, these threads all weave together to address the topic of pedagogy: student-centered learning and salient musical identities seem to be intricately connected.

Why This Research Matters: Context and Significance

There is plenty of available data on why music lessons are valuable for students. Research shows that playing an instrument has a broad array of cognitive benefits, such as verbal fluency, improved working memory, and better performance with auditory and motor tasks (Holmes, 2021). Further, studies show that social skills develop with music lessons and increase self-esteem, sense of belonging, cooperation, and active engagement in learning (Heyworth, 2013). Music matters for adolescent development but also for how students view themselves and present themselves to the world, such that "music ought to be thought of as a tool that we appropriate and use to construct different forms of self-experience and social relatedness" (Krueger, 2011, p. 2). Relatively little research been done on the sociocultural processes by which children construct their musical identities (Ripani, 2022). Previous work suggests that "there is a pressing need for research which helps us to understand and theorize the fundamentally social processes that are implicated in becoming a musician" (Juuti & Littleton,

2010, p. 482). Music lessons can be one of the most fulfilling experiences of life, however we understand so little about the private lesson structure of studying an instrument and the consequent impact on students' musical identities. As the field of musical identities develops, this work offers a timely addition.

Most research in music education has taken place in classroom settings, with less study of private, one-to-one lesson instruction (Gaunt, López- Íñiguez, & Creech, 2021; Wilson, 2018). Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe (1997) demonstrate that "the population of children who study piano privately has been the topic of few research investigations, and relatively little is known about the students who participate in piano lessons" (p. 51). Research with school bands, choirs, or orchestra is not sufficient to be generalized to piano students because individual lessons provide different challenges than group settings. Private piano lessons often involve difficult solo repertoire and many hours of solitary practice time; they lack the social group component which many adolescents find valuable in classroom music. The one-on-one format involves a high level of parental support and a close teacher relationship (Creech, 2009). We do not know exactly how many students currently study extracurricular music, but most applied music teachers would estimate there are several hundred thousand students in Canada who take weekly instrumental lessons in a private studio. There are millions of students globally who are enrolled specifically in piano lessons (Trelawny, 2008), and conservatories conduct hundreds of thousands of music examinations each year (Mitchell, 2017). However, private piano teaching has no systematic regulation, and has remained an "informal professional discipline" (Gaunt, López-Íñiguez, & Creech, 2021, p. 335). The centuries-long tradition of private instrumental study – and unregulated nature of the profession – invites more scholarly work.

The impact of social environment, the concept of possible selves, the question of motivation, and the role of identity at their center, have not yet been formally studied in the context of private piano lessons. In fact, these three themes have not widely been taken up concurrently in the literature when addressing the question of musical identities. There has been limited research that addresses the connection between musical identity and piano lessons with adolescents (O'Neill, 2017; Symonds, Hargreaves & Long, 2017). Much of the scholarship on musical identities has focused on navigating transitions as music students become university music majors (Bennett, 2009; Burland & Pitts, 2007; Garnett, 2014; Juuti & Littleton, 2010; Parker & Powell, 2014; Paananen, 2022; Roberts, 1993; Woody et al., 2021), as university graduates build careers in music (Rowley, Reid, & Bennett, 2021), or on music teacher identity (Kastner 2020; Pike, 2015; Wagoner, 2015). As such, there is a need for more research on the ways in which adolescent identities are shaped by music participation (Mills, 2008), and why this matters for the success of their instrumental music education (Evans & McPherson, 2015). Identity is central to this work but given my interest in education, I also consider how identity and pedagogy are ultimately connected. Salient musical identities seem to be linked to student-centered learning, and issues of pedagogy continuously flow alongside the research questions.

Moving forward, Chapter 2 will examine literature on the longstanding scholarship of identity, and the interrelated topics of social environment, possible selves, and motivation within the literature on musical identities. I will offer a critical evaluation of this literature and highlight missing pieces which are yet to be studied or inconsistencies which require clarification. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of a phenomenological case study, which draws on qualitative and arts-based research methods, and includes the justification and procedure of collecting data from students, teachers, and parents. Chapter 4 will offer portraits of each student to understand how

their unique combination of musical experiences have shaped 'who they are', as well as data from parents and teachers to better understand the students. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the results which discuss musical identities in relation to the three main themes of this work, but also develops three emergent themes of relationships, ability, and choice. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary of the study and answers the research questions, as well as offering implications and giving recommendations for future research. Implications include practical changes for parents, students, and teachers, but more importantly offers a new connection between musical identities and student-centered learning.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The literature largely emphasizes that musical identities are constructed based on our musical experiences, and that some form of musical identity is a valuable part of everyone's daily life – whether you are the world's greatest Led Zeppelin fan or play viola for the New York Philharmonic. Everyone can develop a musical identity (Spychiger, 2021). The work on musical identities has been primarily qualitative (e.g. Davidson & Burland, 2006; de Bruin, 2022; Hoffman, 2008; Juuti & Littleton, 2010; Oakland, MacDonald & Flowers, 2013) although quantitative (Evans & McPherson, 2015; Wagoner, 2015) and mixed methodologies (Burland, 2005) exist without tension between the approaches. However, the primary sense is that qualitative research methods such as case studies, interviews, narrative inquiry, or ethnography provide the deepest understanding of something as complex and nuanced as musical identities (Ramirez, 2014). Arts-based approaches have been applied in a small number of studies to gain a deeper understanding of students' musical identities (Creech & Hallam, 2006; Goopy, 2022; Kastner, 2009). Over the past decade in particular, the field of musical identity has encountered greater interest. The evolving nature of the work "has witnessed a burgeoning of interest and research activity in the theoretical and practical applications of identity theory to music and music education" (Barrett, 2017, p. 63). Rather than two competing ideological views or a division between academic disciplines, "the field as a whole has become increasingly multidisciplinary in character" (MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2017, p. 3). Work of scholars often draws on and supports others without offering strong criticism or contrast, and overall there is generally little debate in the literature. Perhaps this is due to the relatively new nature of the topic and once the field is more robust, emerging viewpoints will challenge the early work. For now, researchers are embracing diverse topics such as musical identities and mental health

(Hense & McFerran, 2017), musical identity and technology (Linson, 2017), or collective musical identity through an ethnomusicological approach (Green, 2011). While the discussion of a collective musical identity is a compelling one, it will not be the focus of this literature review. There has been a great deal of excellent work completed on nationalist musical identity, for example the role of German music on the citizens' shared sense of nationhood (Eichner, 2012), however this discussion will focus on how students construct their own, individual musical identities.

This section will begin with a broad overview of the literature on identity, which is primarily rooted in psychology. It will focus on the work of Erik Erikson, who was pivotal in the development of the field, but will draw on more contemporary researchers as well. From there, I will narrow the view to musical identity, and then even further refine this topic to examine the three interrelated subthemes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation as they relate to musical identities. I argue that it is necessary to consider these concepts simultaneously because they entangle with one another when considering musical identities: the social environment shapes one's possible selves, the future possible selves act as a catalyst for one's motivation in the present, and motivation towards or away from an activity shapes the social environment. To illustrate with a hypothetical example, a family who values and supports piano study asks the student questions of how music could matter for their life in the future,, a clear vision of their musical hoped-for self drives motivation to practice in the present, and the desire to practice daily means that the family's piano physically occupies a central location in the home. While there has been a great deal of work discussing learning students' learning environments and success of music lessons (Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe, 1997; O'Neill, 2017; Zdzinski, 2021), there has been less research completed on students' motivation for music (Evans & McPherson,

2015; Spychiger, 2021), and little discussing students and their possible musical selves (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020; Goopy, 2022; Schnare, MacIntyre, & Doucette, 2011). This review will focus on research conducted with students in the pursuit of understanding their musical identities, but will draw on work with adult musicians as well.

Identity

Identity research typically revolves around three questions: Who am I? How did I get here? What does that mean for where I am going next? This section gives a broad overview of how these questions have been debated by researchers and theorists for over a century. I will briefly consider the historical trajectory of identity research, outline the most important main themes, and demonstrate how musical identity literature fits into this field. While many scholars in various disciplines have taken up this rich and widely-applicable topic, it is impossible to review them all here. The work being drawn upon focuses on the socially constructed nature of identity, although opposing viewpoints certainly exist (e.g. Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). This section is framed within the social psychological field of research, however the larger sociopolitical perspective is worth briefly considering in order to position this work and to remind ourselves that ideas of identity are different across time and place. Our increasingly liberal and decreasingly collective 21st century society puts a great emphasis on personal choice and free-will to decide for ourselves who we would like to become. We live in a time and culture where the "individualistic form of selfhood that promotes inner exploration of the single person … allows people to choose and define who they are" (Baumeister, Park & Ainsworth, 2013, p. 484). Yet, this is not always the case. In many parts of the world, identities can also be forced upon people or come about because of a lack of options. Deci and Ryan have found that "the more pressure and control that is used in the socialization of identity, the less well anchored that

identity will be in the self of the individual" (2017, p. 238). It is not difficult to imagine that someone coercing you into being a musician would be weakly integrated into your sense of self. A student forced into taking piano lessons could be similar.

The topic of identity surfaced in the 19th century (see James, 1892), and was further developed by Freud (1923/1989) who explored questions of identity, the ego, and self-definition. The pivotal work on identity was Erikson's (1950) publication *Childhood and Society* in which identity was moved forward to become its own area of scholarship, and in which Erikson distinguished identity from personality as a bona fide field of study. Erikson is an important scholar to highlight in this review of literature because of his foundational thinking in the field of identity, and in particular, his emphasis on adolescent identity development. Part of his conceptualization of identity involved a bi-polar spectrum in which people navigate between *identity synthesis* and *identity confusion.* Identity synthesis represents a self-determined and self-identified set of beliefs about who one 'is', and identity confusion represents an inability to develop a coherent, working definition of oneself. Identity synthesis manifests when behaviors are predictable across contexts and are based on a sense of self-sameness and continuity (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012). For example, when we tease that an action 'sounds like something she would do', we are acknowledging that person's identity synthesis. In contrast, identity confusion could be not knowing which major to declare in your undergraduate degree, or feeling as though your life lacks purpose and direction. Beautifully explained by Schwartz (2001):

> career, romantic preferences, religious ideology, and political preferences, among other
>
> facets, come together to form the mosaic that represents who one is. The more complete
>
> and consistent that mosaic is, the closer to ego identity synthesis one is, whereas the more

disjointed and incomplete the picture is, the more ego identity confusion one will

manifest. (p. 9)

Identity synthesis is the ultimate goal of adolescence as we move into – and through – adulthood, and represents a sense of "a present with an anticipated future" (Erikson, 1968, p. 30). Although the concept of possible selves was not designated as its own area of study until many years later (see Markus & Nurius, 1986), the self as temporal and forward-learning was established in this early work.

Erikson founded the tradition of identity theory, and one of his most important main points was that adolescence is a particularly critical time in which young people ask questions of who they are, what they value, who they might become, and their place in society. In his often-cited work with stages of development, Erikson viewed the transition between childhood and adolescence "as one in which adolescents begin to take ownership of their lives by selecting commitments consistent with how they conceptualize their current and past selves" (in McLean & Pasupathi, 2012, p. 8). Adolescence brings together the important events and relationships with others in a desire to construct a unified story of oneself, and this also provides direction for future actions. Optimal identity development involves finding one's social role within a wider community, and "initial resolutions to this task normally are undertaken during the mid- to late-adolescence as one sets up vocational and interpersonal structures for adult life" (Kroger, 2007, p. 8). This phase is a time full of 'I' and 'me' questions – sometimes in contrast with 'them' and 'others' – as adolescents establish their own identities and gain independence.

The work focusing on adolescent identity development is particularly important to the topic of musical identities because this period is when many students determine the role of music in their lives, if they are musicians, and if not, adolescence is the point at which many students

drop out of lessons. In answering questions of who one is or would like to become, Erikson believed that "it is the presence of self-selected identity elements that separates children from adolescents and adults" (in Schwartz, 2001, p. 9). Adolescence is the time when youth bridge who they were as children to who they want to become as adults, and the notion that identity continuously evolves between past, present, and future is central to most identity scholarship. The adolescent process is complete only when an individual has overcome their childhood identity and transformed it into a new kind of identification which tends to "force the young individual into choices and decisions which will, with increasing immediacy, lead to commitments 'for life'" (Erikson, 1968, p. 155). Parker (2020) has conceptualized this phase as *developing* a musical identity, after early years of *constructing* and then *emerging*, and where adolescents began to express an individualized sense of who they were as musical people. The decision to commit to an activity like piano lessons during this developmental stage is typically where the lifelong benefits occur, and where a long-term musical identity is taken up. Previous research has shown that "if identity is a central goal to be achieved during the adolescent to young adulthood transition then it needs to be accounted for when considering musical development during this period" (Burland, 2005, p. 48). Unfortunately, because most private music instruction and music education research focuses on building skill and working towards performance, the discussion of what it *means* to identify as a musician is not usually practiced with students. Identities are the meanings we have in each role we play (Stets & Burke, 2003). What does it *mean* to be a student, a musician, or a pianist? Making sense of the meanings are what give depth and content to the identity.

Erikson's research inspired decades' more study on the subject of identity; somewhat more recently, the work of James Marcia is worth briefly considering since it is often taken up in

music education literature in connection with adolescent identity (e.g. Lamont & Hargreaves, 2019). Marcia and Rowe (1980) published results based on the analytical framework of adolescents' four ego-identity statuses (see Figure 1). These statuses are described as such:

> Identity Achievement – has gone through a decision-making period and is occupationally and ideologically committed; Moratorium – is currently in the decision-making period and has nonspecific commitments; Foreclosure – is committed, but has undergone little decision making, usually just adopting parental dictates; Identity Diffusion – may or may not have experienced decision making but is uncommitted. (p. 89)

One of the main ideas is that adolescents progress from less advanced identity statuses to more advanced ones. It is not necessarily always a direct progression, but research has found that "the largest proportion of early adolescents seems to be in identity diffusion or identity foreclosure statuses, and their proportion was lower in older age groups" (Waterman, 1999 as cited in Nurmi, 2004, p. 108). In other words, adolescence is a time to explore various identities and then make choices about which of those to commit to. However, it is often a phase of life where many choices are still being made on young people's behalf, which results in identity *foreclosure*. For example, if a student continues to register for piano lessons because of parental expectations, their commitment might be high but exploration is low. Some students find themselves in identity *diffusion,* with low commitment and low exploration, where they have not put much thought into their music education and are equally passive learners. For example, a piano student who attends lessons sporadically, has no particular goals, and has never considered music to be part of their identity. Other students may be in *moratorium*, with low commitment but high exploration, where they are actively considering the role music holds in their lives, yet without a clear vision of where that might lead. Finally, a larger number of older students would find

themselves in *achievement*, with high commitment and high exploration, if they have accepted a certain identity into their self-definition and concluded that is who they would 'like to be'. The combination of exploration and commitment produce a scale which leads to highly or less salient identities.

Music education scholars Evans and McPherson (2017) also draw on Marcia's work and describe adolescence as a time for testing various identities and making decisions about which ones best fit with their sense of self (see Figure 1). For music students, this includes exploratory questions about whether to become a professional musician, a recreational music-maker, or more distanced music enthusiast later in life. Evans and McPherson (2017) suggest that "a healthy process of identity seeking would involve adolescents exploring these various identities and reflecting on whether they align with their personal interests and values, eventually making a decision on an identity that they feel is aligned with their sense of self" (p. 215). In this way of thinking, what matters more are the *processes* which lead to identity formation, rather than the *contents* of one's already-formed identity.

Figure 1

Marcia's identity outcomes
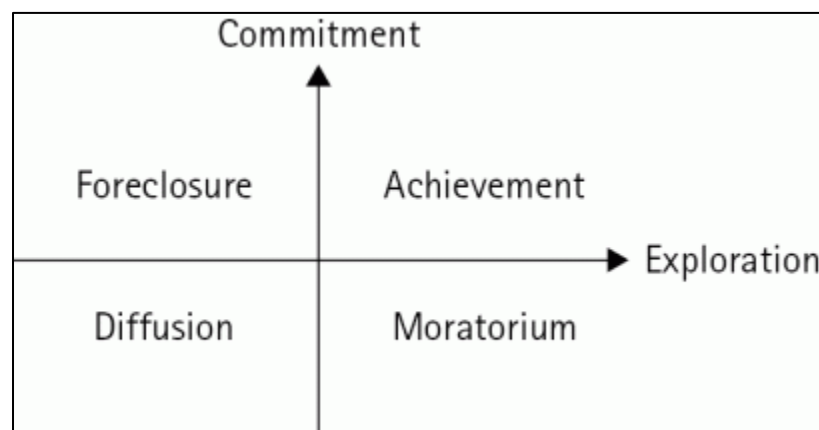
Research in musical identities typically takes the term 'identity' for granted, and many music scholars fail to explore the details of this complex topic or give a theoretical perspective. Most identity work in music (e.g. Lamont, 2011) is influenced by the social constructionist paradigm, although this is not often clearly explained in the literature. A social constructionist view of identity suggests that people have many, malleable identities which are contextually situated and operate in interaction with others, rather than having one stable, core identity. Most musical identity research approaches the topic as an interplay between the individual and the collective; a reciprocal relationship between personal values and the surrounding context (Ripani, 2022). Mead's early work (1934) still seems to be particularly influential in musical identities research where "identity is seen as a construction created through interactions between the self and the society we live in" (Oakland, MacDonald, & Flowers, 2013, p. 261). Most researchers in the field of musical identities agree that identity is contextually situated, flexible, and continuously reinterpreted based on our surroundings (MacDonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2017); it is a fluid concept which is influenced by time, place, and other people (O'Neill, 2017). Identity "seems to be about collective self-understanding as represented by various characteristics, activities, and customs, including music" (Rajs, 2007, p. 23). There is some work in musical identities which references identity's "sameness over time" (Kastner, 2009, p. 8) but this view is not often adopted. As such, there is little debate in this area about which model offers the most compelling way to study musical identities and social constructionism is most frequently referenced. Perhaps because music itself is malleable and interpretive – as in, what we

choose to play, how, when, and who we choose to play it for are negotiable – the same view is taken when discussing musical identities.

The Role of Social Environment in Musical Identities

A student's musical identity is constantly being shaped and renegotiated by their surrounding environments. Adolescents' musical identities develop in response to cultural norms and feedback received from interactions with others (Hallam, 2017; Parker, 2020). Research has shown that young children construct their emergent identity "as a musical and sociocultured being" (Barrett, 2010, p. 403). In other words, children's musical identities are continuously renegotiated based on the world around them, and their position in time and space. For all of us, other research agrees that "inhabiting a particular musical world and living by its rules defines our musical identity" (Mans, 2009, p. 25). Music we listen to or perform has its own set of implications that can be viewed as either 'cool' or 'weird', 'trendy' or 'old-fashioned' as we interpret reactions from others. Research suggests that not only is a student's musical identity shaped by the daily worlds of family and school but also by larger influences, such as the mass media and culture in general (McPherson, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012; Ripani, 2022; Shouldice, 2014). Evans (2009) argues that "one of the ways music differs from other school subjects is its close association with personal and social identity" (p. 46). The instruments that students choose, or the styles of music played, are how students express themselves and relate to one another. Further, not only the type of instrument a student might play but "the kinds of music a child plays and listens to contributes to the way the child sees themselves and the role of music in their social world" (Evans, 2016, p. 330). When an adolescent says, "I love Bruno Mars" or "I hate playing Bach" they are not simply making a statement: they are aligning themselves with a specific community of music makers and listeners. In other words, they are performing their self-

narrative. In doing so, they also attach themselves to the musical world that Bruno Mars represents or distance themselves from Baroque music.

Students do well when the community around them considers music to be important. The sense of belonging to a group of likeminded supporters sends the message that music is a valuable part of life (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2017). Music lessons become problematic when the material a student is learning at piano lessons is not seen as relevant to others (Thompson, 2022). What impact does this have for the piano student who is learning music of the classical tradition but whose friends find this music 'stuffy'? How can a student develop an interest in music written specifically for the piano when we live in the golden-age of guitar? Without a social network of people who are also interested in piano music, this becomes difficult. Since our primary influences in life are family and home culture, paired with peers and a wider community culture, this section will review literature which examines the influence of the sociocultural environment and its connection with musical identity.

Identity is formed in part by the social interactions within the family, school, peer groups, and other social circumstances in which adolescents interact with others and learn about themselves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). These interactions are "crucial" to adolescents' musical identities (Paananen, 2022, p. 111), and an individual has no tangible identity without community (Bardill, 2014). *Musicking* is a particularly valuable way that adolescents construct their identities (Parker, 2020), and since music exists as a form of expression, it necessarily joins together participants in the sociocultural environment. Adolescents build their musical identities based on the understanding of themselves as musicians in relation to the social systems in which they operate (Hoffman, 2008). Music enables students to "define themselves in relation to others, their friends, colleagues, social networks and to the cultures in which they live" (North,

Hargreaves, O'Neill, 2000, p. 256). Similarly, Parker (2020) suggests that "adolescents dynamically construct musical identities through interaction with important others" (p. 11). Even very young children have shown that music provides an outlet for making sense of the world around them, and children's musical experiences function as a means of self-regulation where music helps "to establish the parameters of their worlds, and to interpret and understand their interactions in and with these worlds" (Barrett, 2010, p. 405). This interpretive music making is inextricably linked to their emerging identities as sociocultural beings as they take inspiration for future musical experiences from the world around them. Although this section on social environment takes up many of the same categories outlined in Hallam's (2017) Influences on Musical Identities (see Figure 2), I have redesigned this map and will offer my own conceptualization of musical identity at the end of Chapter 2.

Figure 2

Influences on Musical Identities
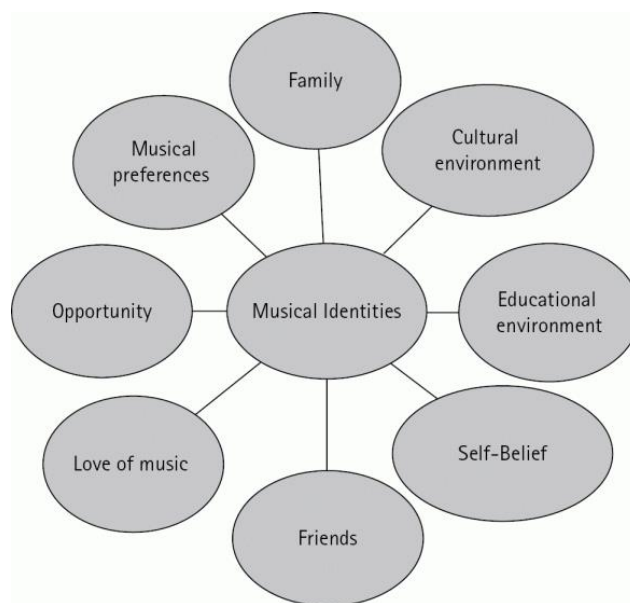
Note. Reprinted from "Musical Identity, learning, and teaching" by S. Hallam, in R. MacDonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Handbook of musical identities* (p. 488), 2017, Oxford University Press. Copyright 2017 by Oxford University Press.

Literature Spotlight: Evans & McPherson (2015). The draw towards studying music students' social environments, motivation, and its effect on identity emerged from work by Evans and McPherson (2015) which is worth discussing in detail. These authors expand on work from a previous 10-year longitudinal study conducted by McPherson and Davidson (2002), which surveyed a sample of 157 Australian children between 7 and 9 years old before they began instrumental music lessons. The original study collected an enormous amount of both qualitative and quantitative data – particularly on practicing, home environment, and attrition – as it followed students' musical interests over the course of a decade (McPherson, Davidson, Faulkner, 2012). It has since come to be regarded as one of the most comprehensive and influential studies conducted with music students. Evans and McPherson's (2015) analysis further developed the results regarding practice, achievement, and long-term commitment to find that students who anticipated taking lessons throughout much of their lifetime scored higher on music proficiency tests than those who only had a short-term vision of lessons, even when both groups were matched in total number of practice hours. Upon reflection of the original study, the authors acknowledged "the possibility that what was initially labeled as 'commitment' actually reflects something much richer – a contextualized and well-developed sense of personal identity that the children were able to readily draw upon when asked about their future music-making" (Evans & McPherson, 2015, p. 416). The researchers found that experiences such as listening to music in the home, dancing, having music accompany cooking, or observing a parent play an instrument impacted the child's sense of what music entailed and how useful or important it might be to their hoped-for future self. This sense of contextualized identity suggests that identity forms in relationships. In contrast, the students who quit music lessons had no image of why music would matter for who they wanted to become in the future, and had "relatively little

experience of where it might lead them" (Evans & McPherson, 2015, p. 418). In conclusion, the authors' main findings suggest that children who have formed a long-term identity of themselves as musicians – and consequently reached higher levels of motivation and achievement – were likely to come from school and home environments where music was a valuable part of the daily culture. This is one of the only studies conducted on musical identities to use quantitative methods and as such, offers some compelling data and viewpoints which complement the qualitative literature.

  Parents & Home Culture. Dr. Shinichi Suzuki is fabled to have said that 'children learn to smile from their parents'. Parents and the surrounding home culture are the primary influences on children's identity, and more specifically, their musical identity. Family culture is a particularly important distinction between piano and other instrumental lessons: the many hours of solitary home practice necessary for mastering the piano are starkly contrasted with classroom music where the majority of learning takes place during the school day and has immediate social rewards. Research has shown that "the attitudes of adults around them to the potential of music, and its relevance to young lives, shape children's emerging sense of musical identity. This gives teachers and parents a strong responsibility to present clear routes into musical engagement if children's development in this area is to flourish" (Pitts, 2014, p. 129). Brand (1986) demonstrated that the best musical learning is achieved when parents and teachers work "in concert so that the unique opportunities and special resources of home and school operate simultaneously and cooperatively to positively influence the growth of children" (Brand, 1986, p. 118). Unfortunately, my previous work found that students who quit piano lessons spent significantly less time listening to piano music, more time listening to pop and country, attended professional concerts less often, and had less ensemble experience than students who continued

(King, 2016). This suggests that parents have an important role to play in modelling behaviours which support the study of music. There has been a great deal of research which confirms that parents establish the environment which shapes a child's musical success (McPherson & Davidson, 2002; Moore, Burland, & Davidson, 2003; Sloboda & Davidson, 1996; Zdzinski, 2021), and the parental influence has been identified as a primary external factor affecting a student's motivation towards achievement and continuation of lessons (McPherson, 2009; Comeau, Huta & Liu, 2015). Parents who are involved in, and supportive of, their children's music lessons had students with stronger self-concepts in music and developed greater motivation to participate in future musical activities (Sichivitsa, 2007). However, there is also research that cautions that parental input must be sensitively offered with "undue interference often resented by the children, and superficial praise sometimes serving to reduce expectations rather than act as encouragement" (Pitts, Davidson & McPherson, 2000, p. 53). Overall, the literature suggests that parental influence is one of the foremost factors in whether students persist or give up with music lessons (Zdzinski, 2021). By listening to piano music at home or attending professional concerts in the community, parents are also showing the child that adopting a musician identity is valuable, and children do not often get that same message at school or from other activities.

Teachers & Lesson Environments. Multiple years of private lessons are one of the most unique factors in studying the piano, and a close teacher relationship makes piano lessons different from all other school learning. Individualized instruction stems from music apprenticeship in previous centuries (Varvarigou & Creech, 2021; Gaunt, López- Íñiguez, & Creech, 2021). Regular, undivided attention from an adult role model through students' developmental years can have a major impact on their identity formation. Successful music

students generally seem to "form close familial-type bonds with their teachers in the initial period of learning" (Davidson, 1997, p. 214). Similarly, "teachers are a vital source for providing the necessary technical skill and musical knowledge, but they also influence musical tastes and serve as role models" (Burland, 2005, p. 15). For children who continued to study music long-term and made significant achievements, teachers were initially viewed as personable and friendly, but later adapted to the student's performance needs and were perceived to have strong professional skills (Davidson, Moore, Sloboda, & Howe, 1998). Although piano teachers have a unique opportunity for adaptability, to understand students as individuals, and to develop their musical identity, this is sometimes ignored in preference of traditional learning curriculum. Conventional content-centered learning environments seem to operate with fixed objectives. An inflexibility results in teachers who "tend to hold very strong views about which music method is the best, and … they diligently promote the philosophy of the method they have chosen and often hold negative views about other teaching approaches" (Comeau & Huta, 2016, p. 46). In contrast, some of the most positive learning outcomes were "characterised by teachers who offered strong leadership yet were also highly responsive and differentiated in their practice" (Gaunt, López-Íñiguez, & Creech, 2021, p. 341). These student-centered environments encouraged dialogue and offered effort-based feedback. There seems to be a spectrum between control and responsiveness for applied, instrumental teachers (Creech, 2009). Teachers play a significant role in shaping students' musical identities – and creating environments in which students can understand their musical identity – but the connection between pedagogy and musical identity has not been well explored.

Teachers have a responsibility to bring together the technical elements of musicianship, alongside the personal realities of the student, and also the lasting social impacts that music

lessons can achieve. In Hargreaves, Marshall, and North's (2003) research, three spheres all centre around the ideal outcome of a musical self-identity (see Figure 3). This is modeled on the belief that "the ultimate outcome of music education is the development of individual self-identity" (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2017, p. 177). Individual, expert performance skills are the basis of most applied piano lessons, but comprise only one section in this diagram. The *musical-artistic* sphere overlaps with the *personal* sphere to create a deeper level of musicianship through expression and awareness. The *personal* sphere emphasizes cognitive and academic achievement, but also overlaps with the *socio-cultural* sphere to create a musical community. The *socio-cultural* sphere is comprised of the long-lasting impacts that music lessons can have on a student's overall quality of life. Finally, the *socio-cultural* sphere overlaps with the *musical-artistic* sphere to communicate with other musicians or an audience during performances. This diagram challenges the standard format of most piano lessons. It seems that from this analysis, a music teacher's role extends well beyond the mechanics of playing the instrument: it is about creating holistic musicians. It has recently been suggested that piano teachers should refer to their students as musicians from their first lessons to "fuel the flourishing of independent and authentic student musicians" (Thompson, 2017, p. 59). Not only does this challenge students to think of themselves as musicians, it also challenges the standard, adult definition of what it means to be a musician, and also to reconsider the broader purpose of music lessons.

Figure 3

Ideal outcomes of music education, as determined by teachers.

MUSICAL-ARTISTIC

PERSONAL

Performance and aural skills
Literacy and sight-reading
Composition and improvisation

Aesthetic sensitivity
Creativity
Emotional expressiveness

Mood regulation
Cognition and learning
Scholastic gains

SELF-IDENTITY

Group performance and communication with audience

Interpersonal skills
Teamwork
Co-operation

Moral/spiritual development
Character development
Quality of life

SOCIAL-CULTURAL

Note. Original concept map found "Music education in the twenty-first century: A psychological perspective" by D.J. Hargreaves, N. A. Marshall, & A. C. North, *British Journal of Music Education*, (p. 160), 2003, Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2003 by Cambridge University Press.

This version was updated and has been reprinted from "Environmental influences on ability, achievement, and motivation" by D. J. Hargreaves, & A. Lamont, *The psychology of musical development*, (p. 176), 2017, Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2017 by Cambridge University Press.

Peers & Popular Culture. The influence of peer approval is a powerful force. By choosing to participate or associate with certain instruments or types of music, adolescents place themselves in certain social groups. During this phase of life, "music is often a vital part of the language of belonging and differentiation, of the development and defense of self-confidence forming new attachments and discovering a new identity with peers" (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2017, p. 156). As Fredricks and colleagues (2002) displayed, part of a student's personal belief in themselves as musicians comes from sufficient confirmation for their skills from peers, particularly during the teenage years. They explain that "receiving recognition from significant

others strengthened adolescents' perception of their own abilities, which in turn helped to bolster their commitment" (Fredricks et al., 2002, p. 79). Children are typically drawn towards activities they are viewed as 'good at', which often comes from external affirmation by their social community. Parents, other family members, teachers, and peers often provide feedback – both positive and negative – which influences a student's self-belief (Hallam, 2013). Even if the feedback is a positive confirmation, students must 'translate' this extrinsic message into their own internalized form for it to matter in regard to identity formation. Hoffman (2015) proposed that "identity construction is therefore both individuals' enactments of who they desire to be, as well as the internalized assessments of such behaviors or enactments by others" (p. 608). *Internalized* is the key word, and particularly relevant to music study, such that students who cannot find internal meaning in playing the piano are not likely to put in the required effort to succeed long-term. Students cannot be carried by the motivation of peer pressure and studies show that motivation to practice an instrument to gain social approval declines markedly by age twelve (Sloboda & Davidson, 1996). This is typically when children find themselves grappling with questions of identity in general (Erikson, 1968), and must find their own, deeper meaning in order to carry forward with music. The failure to establish an internalized musical identity – and instead heavily relying on external peer influence – may be part of the reason why there is a surge in attrition during the adolescent years (Evans, 2009).

It seems to be particularly important that adolescents learning to play the piano should develop relationships within a musical community. Having a relationship to piano music in various social contexts such as attending concerts, working on collaborative pieces rather than solo repertoire, or structuring group lessons "may provide a more relaxed and cooperative forum in which peers can discuss their music with others and develop their sense of a musical self"

(Moore, Burland, & Davidson, 2003, p. 546). North and Hargreaves (1999) suggest that adolescents demonstrate to the world around them 'who they are' through their musical performances, attendance at lessons and concerts, and uptake of digitally recorded or printed music. The concept of relatedness, or relevancy, will be presented in further detail later, but should be mentioned here as an important concept when discussing peer influence on piano students' identity formation. Students who choose to enroll in extra-curricular, private music lessons may identify with peer groups "through membership in co-curricular ensembles, participation in public performances, and consumption of musical products" (Hoffman, 2015, p. 608). However, students in private music lessons do not always benefit from the social support of their identity formation due to the individualized nature of instruction. This suggests that teachers and parents must work to establish a music community in which students can develop relationships with other peers who value music. As adolescents spend time together, they naturally begin to 'label' one another and as they each incorporate the labels others give them into their identity, they begin to behave in congruence with the label (Paul & Ballantyne, 2002). For example, if a teenage musician is referred to as a pianist by their friends, they will be more likely to 'perform' that identity. Research emphasizes the "importance of learners enjoying a range of musical activities and the opportunities they provide for socializing with other like-minded people in developing a long-term commitment to engaging with music" (Hallam, 2013, p. 287). Again, this is difficult when playing an instrument as solitary and complex as the piano presents problems of relevancy and peer-approval. As one piano student described, "you practice by yourself, but then during recitals, it's like you get to relate with each other the experiences. But it's most often alone." (Hallam, 2017, p. 91) Not only can the piano become a lonely

instrument for students, but it speaks to a deeper problem of fragmented music learning ecologies.

Learning Ecologies. At any given time, students' lives are made up of interconnected systems of learning ecologies (O'Neill, 2016). The contexts in which learning takes place, and the actors involved, necessarily impact identity. Learning ecologies are "located within wider societal, cultural, and global systems and although it is impossible to disentangle these systems and the sociocultural structures and practices that initiate and sustain them, it is possible to gain deeper insights into the multiple settings and relationships that comprise young people's music learning ecologies" (O'Neill, 2017, p. 82). The concept of learning ecologies has its origins in Bronfenbrenner's Ecology of Human Development (1979), which has also been taken up in important work discussing musical identities (Kastner, 2009; MacDonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002; O'Neill, 2016) and specifically adolescents' musical identities (Parker, 2020). Bronfenbrenner described it as a theory where the individual is reciprocally viewed as influencing, and being influenced by, the environment. The beauty of this model is that it considers the reciprocal and complex interactions between home, family, peers, community, and wider social or global systems. The interconnecting spheres consist of four levels: microsphere, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (see Figure 4). The microsphere is the direct setting in which a child interacts, such as the home, school, or neighborhood and the roles associated with these spaces. The mesosystem is made up of the connections between at least two of the microsystems, creating an interaction of microsystems. For example, a bank and a church may share the same community name and have similar participants active in both microsystems. The next level is the exosystem, and although the child does not directly take part here, the events at this level still impact their life in something like a parent's place of employment. Finally, the

macrosystem, comprises all of the real or imagined commonalities that the lower systems share. Bronfenbrenner aptly observes that "if you wish to understand the relation between the developing person and some aspect of his or her environment, try to budge the one, and see what happens to the other" (1977, p. 518). This interconnectedness of spheres is important to identity construction because is speaks to the merging of the individual and the collective: each person outwardly influences their widening spheres, but is also equally influenced by them. In other words, the individual is a uniquely interpreted sum of their social worlds' parts and the social world is also continuously impacted by individuals.

Figure 4

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development (1979)
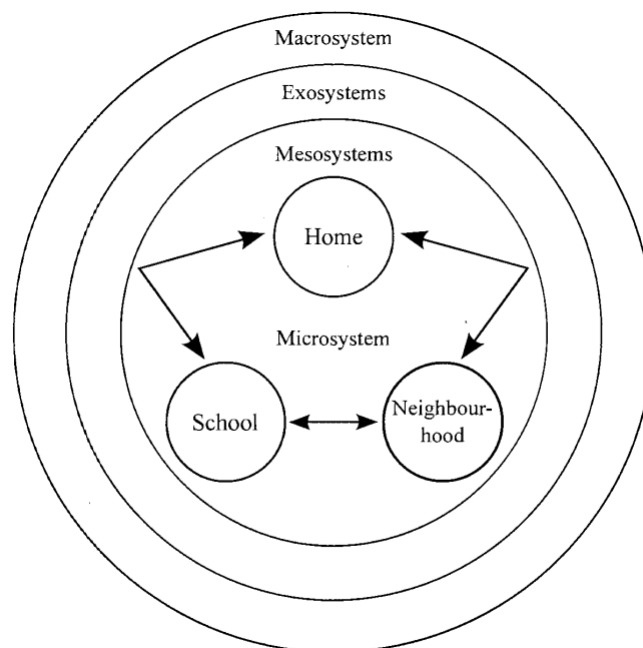
Note. Reprinted from "*Unwritten stories: An ethnographic case study of fourth-grade students' musical identities*", by J. D. Kastner (p. 30), 2009, Michigan State University. Copyright 2009 by Julie Degres Kastner.

Culture & Ethnicity. Hallam's (2017) model of influences on musical identity includes cultural environments, and every culture promotes its own type of musical identity. There are extensive publications connecting specific ethnicities with their own musical identities, for example German (Eichner, 2012), Tunisian (Karass, 2017), Croatian (Baker, 2008) or Colombian (Zapata Restrepo & Hargreaves, 2017). While musical traditions are universal, playing the piano has historically developed from Western European cultural roots, and formalized "music education is an invention of the West" (Ilari, 2017, p. 534). Even today, music teachers often favour a Eurocentric focus on Western art music (Cain, 2015). There is a persisting view "that classical music is the most valuable type of music" (Green, 2003, p. 17) and this ideology has been accepted by the majority of teachers and examination authorities in piano learning. Although piano music does not have historical ties to Asia and may seem culturally distant, there has been an explosion of interest and there are currently more than 40 million Chinese piano students (Montefiore, 2014). The success of Asian students may be due to the decreasing popularity and value of classical music in Western culture which "has allowed Asians and Asian Americans greater access to, and visibility within, this field of culture" (Wang, 2009, p. 899). Aside from simply filling a newly opened space, studying the piano is considered a tool to secure a better future in pragmatic terms rather than pure artistic appeal:

> Chinese people are motivated to make practical choices for themselves and their children in order to gain a well-rounded education, secure access to a high-level university, compete in society, improve their social status, create the possibility of a secure income, have freedom and creativity in their work, or enjoy a better life, and the piano has created new pathways for life success. (Bai, 2021, p. 524)

There have not been studies directly connecting Asian culture and piano study to musical identity, but there is evidence to suggest that Chinese students may have cultural environments more conducive to piano learning (Bai, 2021; Comeau, Huta, & Liu, 2015). The historical importance of piano music in Europe compared to the new demand for piano music in Asia means that those two ethnicities of students are sometimes compared (e.g., Comeau, Huta & Liu, 2015). Given this significant role that the piano plays in modern Chinese culture, it is important to consider the potential links between piano study, musical identity, and ethnicity.

There is a "thriving state of piano education in China" (Sun, 2012, p. 104) which also infuses itself into diasporic Asian communities around the world. Asian-heritage piano students have parents that more frequently sit in on piano lessons, believe that musical ability requires hard work, and display higher levels of autonomous motivation (Comeau, Huta & Liu, 2015). Even in popular literature such as Amy Chua's *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,* Asian parents are often portrayed as more invested in their children's music education. Usually based on greater quantity of frequent effort, and the belief that discipline is one of the most important elements of piano study (Cho, 2015), Asian students often enjoy higher levels of musical achievement than their Caucasian counterparts (Power, 1990). Asian students have proven to be successful in many international music competitions (Yang, 2009) and are heavily recruited by North American universities and conservatories, where they are viewed as model international students (Brand, 2001). Asians and Asian-American students comprise 30–50 percent of the population at leading music schools and university music departments in the United States (Wang, 2009, p. 882). The success of Asian students may be due to the ultimate respect of Asian students towards teachers, and one participant in a qualitative study expressed that "if the teacher asked students to play *Hanon No. 1* one hundred times… then they just did it" (Cho, 2015, p.

23). Instrument manufacturing plays a significant economic role as well: of the 493,000 pianos which were produced globally in 2012, eighty percent were made in China (Lin, 2016). All of this implies that Asian heritage students place a greater value on piano study and live within social environments which support a high level of dedication to music, but it is unclear what this cultural environment means for identity construction.

The Conservatory Institution. There are a number of different schools of music and philosophies about how to teach music, but the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) is the foremost institution of private music study in Canada. More than 5 million alumni have studied under the RCM's programming (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2015) and the conservatory "is embedded in our Canadian cultural quilt" (Dumlavwalla, 2011, p. 146). Founded in 1886 and associated with the University of Toronto, the RCM is well-established in promoting a music curriculum which students in Canada – and around the world – use to experience Western Classical music. Originally, the conservatory was modelled after the major schools of music in Europe, and sought "to reassure parents that their children were studying music in respectable, bona fide surroundings and with good teachers. There were many music teachers in the city, but they were unlicensed, unlike teachers in public schools; anyone claiming to be a music teacher could place a shingle across his or her front door and give lessons to the unwary" (Schabas, 2005, p. 14). Similar to today, anyone can teach piano without formal credentials and so the RCM has recently established its own international program of certified teachers. Implicitly, these teachers eventually use the curriculum to define their version of what music 'is' and what makes 'a musician'. The RCM has set the foundation for the pedagogical values that are still maintained today (Loepp-Thiessen, 2021).

The RCM curriculum has been updated to include more modern, Canadian works but relatively little from the rigorous exam system has changed since its inception. At every level in the past, "technical studies were mandatory, the repertoire – surprisingly similar to repertoire today – was extensive, sight-reading and transposing demands were rigorous, and accompanying ability was expected" (Schabas, 2005, p. 23). The Chief Examiner and College of Examiners releases a new piano syllabus every 8 years, and this guides the way teachers conduct private instrumental lessons. A new syllabus was released during the analysis of this research which included updated exam requirements and new repertoire options. The 10 Levels plus diploma examinations are optional but often encouraged to motivate students towards completing a goal during the academic year of study. The levels are standardized and sequentially more difficult. The levels are packed with meaning such that being a Level 9 student signifies something quite different than being a Level 3 student. The syllabus states that the RCM's mission includes developing human potential, and that "the arts are humanity's greatest means to achieve personal growth and social cohesion" (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2015, p. 2). It is unclear how this mission is achieved, and no tangible examples are provided.

Students spend months preparing to perform an exam, and then later receive a grade and written feedback from an examiner. Although examiners spend a great deal of time writing compliments and criticisms in order to help the student become a finer musician, the final grade is often the focus. One examiner apprentice expressed concerns that at times "marks rather than comments tend to steer the ship." He felt that the pressure and competitive nature of examinations could affect how the student performs overall (Dumlavwalla, 2011, p. 56). Students tend concentrate on the result rather than the learning, and formal exams become a quantified outcome of a qualitative art. It could be said that piano exams are the pinnacle of

formal learning, and this type of "prescribed and teacher-led music education continues to dominate the landscape, particularly in the domain of instrumental learning" (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020, p. 4). The experience is a standardized examination process.

Many of the same concerns are brought forward with other subjects that undergo competitive, standardized testing. Critics argue that "the main problem with standardized tests is that they inhibit the kind of education that matters the most", and do not adequately preparing young people with the higher-order thinking skills that will be necessary in their lives going froward (Bhattacharyya, Junot, & Clark, 2013, p. 633). There have not been published works discussing a connection between standardized testing and individual identity, but it is not difficult to extrapolate that conforming to the requirements of a standardized exam does not leave room for the individual expression of self. In private piano lessons, standardized conservatory exams are a widely used tool used to determine a student's progress and undergo a formal assessment however, it means that teachers are forced to conduct lessons which satisfy the exam requirements rather than honour the student's individual identity.

Codetta. The wider social environment both shapes children's definition of what it means to be a musician and their ability to identify with that definition. Experiences with others, and larger music education establishments, "clearly shape the musician and his or her self-concept in an ongoing manner" (Burland & Davidson, 2002, p. 136). Not only do individual lessons and the home practice environment impact identity but "participating in music concerts and other music-making events was an important element of their developing musical self-concept" (Varvarigou, Creech & Hallam, 2014, p. 93). On a smaller scale, "group lessons are expected to be an enjoyable interaction with peers, to motivate through positive feedback from both the teacher and peers, and to instil a sense of personal value" (Comeau & Huta, 2016, p. 29). This tells us that

adopting a musical identity matters in a variety of contexts where students develop relationships with those who also prioritize music.

The literature challenges the image of an isolated, lonely student sitting at an individualized instrument, working on solo repertoire, and taking private lessons. Instead, it has brought forward an understanding of musical identity development which reaches far beyond the individual piano student. Musical identity as dependent on social context may even be interpreted as challenging individualistic ideas of musical genius or giftedness, since there are much larger contributing forces at play. It shows that context matters for the success of piano lessons and demonstrates the complexities of musical identities. It also signifies that musical identity is influenced by far more than teacher at the weekly lesson: instead, it incorporates the young person's friends, pop culture, and family culture. It is important that students view themselves as musicians in a variety of different contexts, and establish the idea that music is a valuable part of who they are now, and who they would like to become in the future. It has been suggested that "social environments in which music plays an active part are conducive to children being able to form a long-term view of themselves as musicians" (Evans & McPherson, 2015, p. 421). This brings together the role of social environment with the concept of possible selves, which I examine next.

The Role of Possible Selves in Musical Identities

Origins of the Subject. The concept of possible selves, first conceptualized by Markus and Nurius (1986), has been taken up by many scholars in music education (Burland, 2005; Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020; Evans & McPherson, 2017; Goopy, 2022; Hallam, 2017; Schnare, MacIntyre & Doucette, 2011; Varvarigou, Creech & Hallam, 2014). This concept has gained popularity in musical identity discussions because of the long journey it takes to master

an instrument, and that students must have a clear vision of their ideal future self as someone who will find music valuable if they are to persist in the thousands of hours of practice and performance required. Possible selves might be described as "conceptions of ourselves in future states" (Erikson, 2007, p. 348). These visualizations could be optimal selves or dreaded selves. In an early, influential publication on the topic of possible selves, Markus and Nurius (1986) propose that self-knowledge is not simply informed by one's current state, but also by the ideas of what life holds in the future. By choosing a combination of life's most positive outcomes, we construct our *ideal self*; by imagining the negative outcomes, we construct our *feared self*. The authors illustrate that "the possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas the dreaded possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self" (p. 954). The authors expand further to say that the *past self* also informs the current and future self, such that identity is woven both backwards and forwards in time. In turn, present identity affects people's constructions of their remembered selves or predicted selves. These past selves are representative of the individual's longstanding memories, concerns, relationships, and ideologies which inform their current self and guide the future self. The idea of identity as temporal and extending both backwards and forwards in time had been previously explored but warranted further theoretical development (e.g. James, 1910).

Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that the self is both socially constructed, and also constrained, such that our surroundings allow or disallow who we were, are, or might become. They qualify that possible selves are only relevant in context, and "the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular sociocultural and historical context" (p. 954). More recently, scholars still agree that possible selves gain vital

components of their meaning from social context (Erikson, 2007). How we imagine ourselves in the future – both positively and negatively – is dependent upon the current social environment. In music education research, conceptualizations of oneself as a *musician* are shaped by the past, present, and future musical life, and all ideal musical selves have been found "to be bolstered when individuals feel a sense of being embedded within a community of musicians" (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020, p. 133). This means that in order to construct a hoped-for, ideal musical self, a student must feel belonging within a group of likeminded individuals. Their future possible self needs to matter for others in the present. The concept of possible selves serves as an important point of connection in this review of literature, since possible selves are thought to be dependent on – and resulting from – our social environment, and further, act as a catalyst for motivation in the present.

Key to their work, Markus and Nurius (1986) propose that our visions of the possible selves matter because what kind of person you would like to become – or avoid becoming – is a significant element of motivation. They provide a conceptual link between the self and motivation such that "all of these ideas about what is possible for us to be, to think, to feel, or to experience provide a direction and impetus for action, change, and development" (p. 960). The idea connecting identity with motivation is not a new one. For example, Foote (1951) described that motivation is the call to action based on one's identity, and that when doubts about identity emerge, action is paralysed. Identity-based motivation has more recently been taken up by Oyserman (2007) who suggests that people feel compelled to act in congruence with 'who they are'. Further, people are more likely to interpret their social world using identity-congruent lenses. *Identity-based motivation theory* "invokes both current and possible future identities, the identities one has now and the ones a person can imagine becoming in the future" (Elmore &

Oyserman, 2012, p. 178). However, echoing Markus and Nurius, Oyserman qualifies that identities only matter when in context, and if a possible self seems too distant it is unlikely to influence current behaviour. For example, piano students who are asked to practice technical exercises which will build long-term skill but have no future vision of themselves as a pianist will lack the motivation to follow through. In fact, "only those identities that seem relevant to the task at hand should shape action" (Oyserman, 2015, p. 8). Previous research has shown that a clear vision of possible selves impacts current action, such that students who described their future careers as academic-dependent (i.e. engineering) spent more time on homework and saw education as a path between their current and future selves (Destin & Oyserman, 2010). Overall, this work suggests that whether an identity matters for motivation is a combination of two things: *accessibility* – the ease of imagining oneself in the future – and *relevancy* – the meaningfulness of this image – based on the current context. For adolescents who are frequently struggling with what their future self will be like, these become particularly important questions.

  Musical Possible Selves. Arguably, music students must have a clear vision of a possible self as someone who values music if they are going to persist through the inevitable struggles of mastering an instrument, and the adolescent years often prove particularly difficult (Barry, 2007; Evans, 2009; Seo, 2010). Recent work suggests that the solution to long-term musical engagement into adulthood depends upon musical identity formation in youth (Woody et al., 2021). However, few significant studies have examined possible selves in adolescent music learning (Goopy, 2022). One exemplary publication suggests that musical possible selves are "represented in the ways in which students narrate their emergent musical selves" (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020, p. 62). The stories of who a student imagines themselves to be in the future has a significant impact for their present identity. To qualify as an ideal possible self, a

student must have a vivid picture in their mind; it is an image based on enduring goals and aspirations. In other words, ideal selves require an inward experience of what it would be like to live that type of life (Erikson, 2007). These visions influence adolescents' decisions in regard to what they spend time doing and who they surround themselves with. However, adolescents are adept to shifting identities as they make daily choices about 'who they are'. Their musical identities are "disrupted and reconstructed through a cyclical process of interactions and interpretations of past and present musical learning and participation, influencing orientations towards a musical future" (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020, p. 68). This fluid state means that adolescents regularly modify their musical aspirations and reframe their possible selves. In their work with music students, Evans and McPherson (2017) draw from work with identity theorist James Marcia (1966) to suggest that "the ongoing dynamic processes involving *exploration* and *commitment* are part of healthy identity formations that should involve conscious reflections about the self and the future self" (p. 226). Exploration means 'trying on' various identities, while commitment means accepting some and discarding others, and both form pathways towards certain identities and away from others.

The early teenage years are when a large number of students drop out of music lessons, perhaps due to adolescents' evolving nature of their possible selves. Daniel and Bowden (2013) found more than half of the music teachers surveyed believe the intermediate stage of piano learning "involves a high drop-out rate" (p. 255). Evans (2009) also found a gradual increase in music student dropout over time, but the first sudden and significant surge of dropout comes at age 11 or 12, in school year 7 (see Figure 5). This seems to suggest that students' ideal future selves did not include music. Campbell (2009) found that "encouraging youth to see themselves as musicians in the future may impact their continued participation in musical organizations

during adolescence" (p. iii). She also suggests that students who have a strong concept of a *musical possible self* were more likely to envision a future where music held a meaningful role than students who had lower *possible self* perceptions. The implications for teachers are such that "motivation to participate in music may be enhanced by connecting present activities to a vision of the future" (Campbell, 2009, p. 185). Research has not thoroughly investigated how adolescents construct their musical possible selves, but would be a valuable contribution to teachers and parents who often struggle with the turbulent teenage years.

Figure 5

Histogram depiction of when children ceased music learning
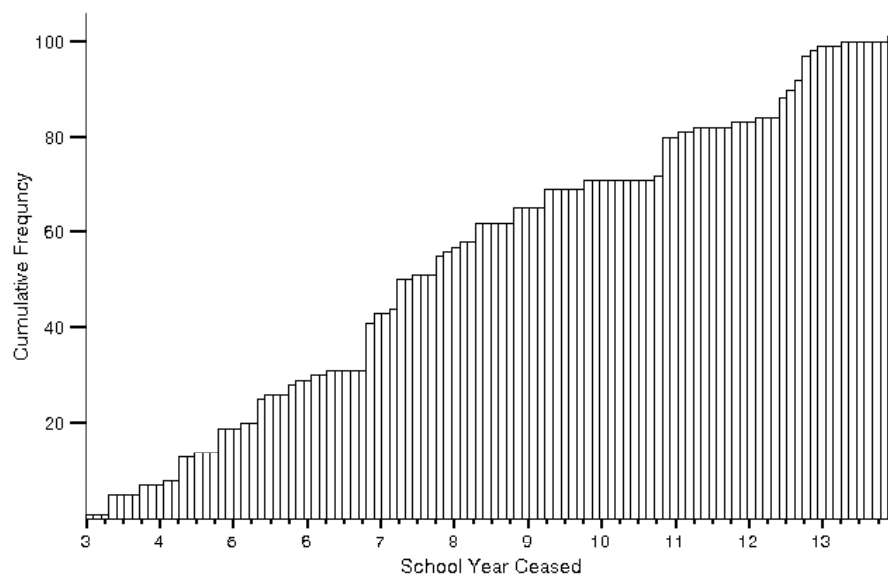
Note. Reprinted from "*Psychological needs and social-cognitive influences on participation in music activities*" by P. Evans (p. 83), 2009, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Copyright 2009 by Paul Evans.

Literature Spotlights: Evans & McPherson (2017) and Schnare, MacIntyre & Doucette (2011). The concept of a future musical self has not been widely taken up within the music education literature in general, but there are a few recent, compelling studies to feature. First,

Evans and MacPherson (2017) conducted a series of case study interviews as part of a project considering the role of music holding meaning in adolescents' lives. They interviewed Brian, in his final year of high school, who applied his strong sense of musical identity into the vision of his long-term goals. Brain did not foresee a career in music and explained that "in 10 or 20 years, if I go into law, I hope I would be working in a firm, working my way up. I would still be playing piano, even if it was something just for fun. I would always be playing the piano" (p. 225). Evans and McPherson illustrate that this student had competing interests in debate, Classical music, jazz, and philosophy but "the ongoing dynamic processes involving exploration and commitment are part of healthy identity formations that should involve conscious reflections about the self and the future self" (2017, p. 226). The researchers also reference self-determination theory, which will be explored in the next section, to find that when teenagers experience feelings of autonomy, competency, and relatedness in an activity, the more likely they will become to integrate the activity into their future self, value it, and regard it as being an integral part of their current self. Brian's example is important to highlight in this review of literature because a future musical self does not necessarily mean becoming a professional concert artist: the discussion here emphasizes that music will hold an important place in one's future life, whether as an amateur performer, music critic, casual composer, festival-goer, or symphony patron.

Next, Schnare, MacIntyre, and Doucette (2011) investigated musical identities, motivation, and the future self. Drawing on the work of Markus and Nurius (1986), they explain that future selves help to inspire action and give meaning to life's activities (Schnare, MacIntyre, & Doucette, 2011). In other words, the future self answers the current self's questions of *why am I doing this?* The researchers used an online survey to examine 204 professional and recreational

musicians between 18 and 69 years old. Specifically, they examined the balance between three constructions of the future self: a hoped-for self – the vision of who one hopes to become in the future, the expected self – what one believes might actually happen, and the feared self – what one avoids becoming. For example, one musician described his hoped-for self as "highly paid and jetlagged" (p. 102). Schnare, MacIntyre, and Doucette (2011) concluded that "the balance or tension between hope and fear is important for understanding the motivation of musicians" (p. 106). They suggest that positive hopes counterbalanced by negative fears are what calls musicians to action, and that some level of fear can result in a greater output of effort. The dynamic struggle which arises between hope and fear creates a tension which "has been shown to exert an influence on both motivation and performance" (p. 108). This study provides an interesting suggestion for future research that attrition from music may, in fact, be due to the possible selves becoming impossible selves. When the balance is tipped such that the feared self is more salient than the hoped-for self, the threat to motivation can become overpowering.

Codetta. The image of an ideal future self is particularly important in learning music because of the lifelong journey it takes to master an instrument. It is generally acknowledged that ten thousand hours of practice is the common standard which one must pass to be considered an expert in their field (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer & 1993; Schnare, MacIntyre, & Doucette, 2011). This is "how long researchers estimate it takes for complex skills to become so deeply ingrained that these become readily available, tacit knowledge" (Sennett, 2008, p. 172). A clear mental construction of a student's hoped-for musical self is compelling to develop early in lessons because "the physical, mental, and emotional effort needed to sustain long-term engagement requires a great deal of resilience and persistence" (McPherson, Davidson & Evans, 2016, p. 406). Children are regularly asked to articulate their possible selves through questions

such as *what would you like to be when you grow up?* If playing the piano holds no relevancy to a student's vision of their life as they move through adolescence and into adulthood, the desire to persist long-term will be weak. The literature in this section challenges the common practice that lessons are in pursuit of performances or exams, because these annual milestones only require short-term thinking. It is true that music exists as an 'in the moment' experience. However, this literature forces pedagogical thinking further along the path towards something more abstract and often harder to imagine. The concept of a future musical self points towards a more meaningful commitment to the arts as holding an important place over the course of one's lifetime. Cross and Markus (1991) describe how *possible selves* contribute to motivating student musicians over this long timeframe:

> The adolescent who has been praised for her musical abilities may develop images of herself as an accomplished pianist, performing in the all-city talent show. Such possible selves become the incentives that fuel long hours at the piano practicing scales, new techniques, and chord patterns. With time, she may begin to define herself not just as 'someone who plays the piano' but as a 'musician' or as a 'pianist', and this label will provide a focus and organization for an increasing number of her actions. (p. 232)

Research with instrumental music students found that the children who maintained interest and enthusiasm for music lessons reported enjoying the sound of their instruments, displayed high levels of enjoyment and personal satisfaction in performing and practice, but most importantly, had plans to study music long-term (Pitts, Davidson, & McPherson, 2000). After further analysis, these students did not just have a greater level of long-term commitment, but a deeper level of identification with music that worked in congruence with their future selves. Experiencing a compelling vision of the self in a future state is critical for undertaking certain actions in the

present because they work in line with who we 'want to be'. These actions are an individual's outward expression and concrete steps towards their conception of an ideal self and away from a feared self. The possible selves that we hold can provide a conceptual scaffold from which we can develop, providing a sense of direction to our forthcoming actions, "particularly as our self-conceptions have a direct influence on our behavior" (Hallam, 2017, p. 475). In other words, possible selves provide motivation for the current self.

The Role of Motivation in Musical Identities

Whereas classroom teachers often discuss student *engagement*, studio music teachers more frequently use the word *motivation.* In particular, the quest to harness a student's intrinsic motivation, the desire to play the piano because it is rewarding in its own right, is crucial over a long period of time since it is a voluntary activity (Hallam, 2013). Unlike classroom students who are legislated to attend certain numbers of school hours, piano students are not required to attend lessons. This means that establishing the motivation to attend lessons week after week, and practicing in the interim, is particularly important. Connections between motivation, identity, and music education are gaining attention in recent literature (Spychiger, 2021). For example, Evans (2016) has shown that "establishing a long-term musical identity from the outset of learning to play a musical instrument may be an important way to regulate motivation" (Evans, 2016, p. 331). Motivation is important to the discussion on identity formation because your outward, visible actions not only tell the community about who you are and what you value, but also help to strengthen the inner perception of yourself. Although this is a complex and diverse topic, most researchers would agree that "motivation relates to the individual's internal perceptions and external environments, and the two components are reciprocally related" (Burland, 2005, p. 30). For example, a pianist motivated towards establishing a regular practice

routine will likely have a stronger perception of themselves as a musician. Researchers have suggested that "it is not what successful musicians *do* that gives them pleasure, but rather what they *are*" (Pitts, Davidson & McPherson, 2000, p. 54). However, the argument being made here is that what musicians *do* is, in fact, a reflection of who they *are*. Although Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) and Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1979) are often taken up in music education literature when discussing motivation, they seem to connect motivation and achievement and speak less about motivation's role in identity. The value placed on an activity can certainly be viewed as a reflection of one's personal values which make up the self, but Expectancy-Value Theory and Attribution Theory's direct link towards identity is weaker than other theories of motivation. As such, this section will explore two of the most pertinent theories of motivation – Self-Determination Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory – and consider how motivation is integrally connected to identity.

Self-Determination Theory. The work discussing motivation and musical identity typically considers Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by American psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan et al. 2021). SDT assumes that humans are inherently oriented towards growth and well-being, and that people thrive most when their behavior is perceived as originating from within and continuously regulated by the self rather than externally determined (Evans & McPherson, 2017). SDT proposes that people are active organisms, continuously evolving and growing, mastering situational challenges, and integrating new experiences into a unified sense of self, however these developmental patterns do not operate automatically, but instead require ongoing, external social support. SDT asks questions of how motivation – the desire for tangible action – is an outward reflection of one's inner identity, and questions the extent to which an identity is

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autonomously integrated within one's self or is a controlled sense of self prescribed by others (Ryan et al. 2021). This theory argues that the conditions supporting the basic psychological needs of competency, autonomy, and relatedness helps "adolescents develop the inner resources to more autonomously explore and ultimately commit to identities, whereas controlled contexts can forestall, constrain, or rigidify the identity formation process and often catalyze defensive processes surrounding identity" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 382). Deci and Ryan (1985) propose that people have multiple identities which are contextually situated, but are more interested in the perceived *locus of control*. This means that where the call to action originates from – whether autonomously driven or externally commanded – is important when discussing motivation. Throughout their work, Deci and Ryan emphasize that the most fruitful types of motivation come from within and are situated in environments which support this motivation. Specifically, Deci emphasizes that "it is not your job to motivate people. It is your job to create the environments in which people will motivate themselves" (Deci, 2016). This brings us back to the role of social environment and its entanglement with motivation.

Motivation is internalized through the fulfilment of three basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy which allow intrinsic motivation to flourish while they move away from extrinsically motivated activities in which they feel those needs are undermined (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan et al. 2021). *Autonomy* is the need to feel self-endorsed, decisive, and wholeheartedly behind one's choices; *competence* is the need for a sense of mastery in order to feel effective in one's environment; *relatedness* is the need to feel cared for and connected to others in reciprocal relationships. Deci and Ryan have shown that supporting these three psychological needs fosters the most meaningful and high-quality forms of motivation, and includes improved performance, greater persistence, and higher creativity. By nurturing these

three psychological needs in learning environments, and moving a student towards a deeper level of integration, a student's motivation "will emanate from their sense of self" (Ryan & Deci, 2000b, p. 60). Recent research has connected SDT to musical identities (Paananen, 2022). In their work with classroom music students, Evans and McPherson (2017) have shown that "the more that the psychological needs are fulfilled within activities, the more likely those activities are to be assimilated to the self" (p. 218). Teachers, parents, and peers of piano students can ensure that basic psychological needs are fulfilled by providing opportunities to demonstrate competency, creating an environment of social relationships to foster relatedness, and providing curriculum choice to support autonomy. The more these needs are fulfilled, "the more a music student is able to integrate the values of the social environment and of the task of learning music—practising, performing, developing musical skills—into their identity and sense of self" (Evans, 2015, p. 77). In contrast, when a student's home practices are governed by their parents using punishments or rewards, and therefore compromising the student's autonomy, the student is unlikely to view the activity as an important part of his or her self-directed identity. In other words, when actions are *self-determined*, they create a congruence with the vision of who one 'is'.

The three psychological needs of competency, autonomy, and relatedness are entangled within one another and lead towards the type of motivation that matters for cohesive identity formation and wellbeing. For example, the social context of learning appears to be critical for sustaining motivation and for the development of musical skills (Moore, Burland, & Davidson, 2003). This image connects the relatedness of a supportive social context to skill-based competency. In turn, students with better developed musical skills affirmed a better connection with their musical identity (Goopy, 2022; Shouldice, 2014). Deci and Ryan (2008) demonstrated

than when one of the three psychological needs are thwarted, "people tend to adopt extrinsic goals that will lead to external indicators of worth, rather than the internal feelings of worth that result from need satisfaction" (p. 183). For example, if a piano student experiences competency though a skillful mastery of his piece, feels autonomously driven that he chose this activity for himself, but no one in his social world seems to appreciate this effort, this motivation to continue and the ability to identify as a musician will be compromised. The motivation to persist will be difficult to sustain unless a student feels their efforts are valued by those around them. Further, it will be difficult to identify as a musician if the surrounding environment tells students that becoming a musician is not a worthwhile pursuit. Instead, "musicians need to work together to ensure that every child has the opportunity to develop a positive musical identity, which is relevant to them" (Hallam, 2017, p. 489). The concept of relevance is not only determined by individual perception, but also by what others implicitly or explicitly tell us is important. In a study by Fredricks and colleagues (2002), adolescents participated in either sports or arts activities primarily because they were good at it and their friends were involved. Research has found that "a climate of relatedness conduces to more feelings of both autonomy and relatedness" since opinions of others which are perceived as autonomy-supportive also tend to be viewed as caring and cooperative (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 167). Therefore, autonomy and relatedness tend to operate synergistically. Specific to music lessons, research has suggested that the best form of motivation, is to "take part in group musical activities which in turn may provide the social context in which self-motivation may be fostered" (Moore, Burland & Davidson, 2003, p. 546). This is particularly difficult to orchestrate with a typically solo instrument such as the piano but seems to be critical for motivation and subsequent identity formation.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs. The most widely cited theorist on the subject of self-efficacy is Bandura (1986) and his work is often linked with music research when discussing student achievement, ability, and persistence (Ritchie & Williamon, 2011). His motivational theory is defined as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome" (Bandura, 1997, p. 79). In other words, self-efficacy refers to personal beliefs that one is – or will be – able to learn or perform specific tasks. Therefore, self-efficacy is regarded by many educators as the initial step in successful learning because it drives student behaviour and encourages feelings of perseverance (Jinks & Lorsbach, 2003, p. 113). Bandura (1982) further describes self-efficacy as concerned with judgements which "determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles or aversive experiences" (p. 123). Researchers in music have proposed that "self-efficacy thoughts refer to a person's beliefs about the extent to which she or he can do a task in a particular situation" (McPherson & McCormick, 2006, p. 323) and has been shown to directly impact music examination scores. In other words, how we *think* we can perform impacts how we *actually* perform.

Self-efficacy is not necessarily the same as self-concept, which is determined based on past instances of personal competence; for example, viewing oneself as 'good at' music based on previous achievements. However, self-concept is still thought to "contribute to an individual's motivation to persevere with certain activities" (Burland & Davidson, 2002, p. 122). As such, self-efficacy seems to be more directly linked to the future self, while self-concept is linked to the past self. The self component of *self*-efficacy is important to this discussion because research with music students has shown that motivation "is related to the centrality of music to his sense of self, as a form of expression" (Burland & Davidson, 2002, p. 130). Therefore, a belief in

oneself produces the motivation to move in certain directions, and take on specific activities based on our assessed capabilities, which both reflect and produce an identification with these actions.

Research with music students emphasizes that self-efficacy has a more important role to play than in other academic domains because of music's demand for rigorous practice, long-term investment, physical coordination, cognitive ability, and deep emotional investment. Researchers have suggested that:

the physical, mental and emotional effort needed to sustain long-term engagement when progress is not always apparent, plus the need to engage in repetition of repertoire that can take weeks or even months to fully master, requires a resilience and persistence of the kind that many students, even some with great potential, do not seem to possess. As with skill development in other domains, students' self-efficacy beliefs in their own competence and capacity to master tasks on the long road to success determine how, and in what ways, they will be able to persist in the face of difficulties, stressors, and competing attractions. (McPherson & McCormick, 2003, p. 332)

Although there has not been a great deal of work directly connecting the concepts of self-efficacy with identity, it is not difficult to imagine that a belief in one's capabilities is a reflection of their perceived identity. Burland and Pitts (2007) suggest that "the individual's musical identity in turn motivates behaviour to initiate musical activities" (p. 304). As we saw earlier, Hallam's chart (Figure 2) did not use the term 'self-efficacy' but suggested that self-belief was an integral part of building a musical identity. In fact, in Hallam's (2013) study with 163 instrumental music students, self-belief became a consistent factor in wanting to be involved in music, or in perceiving that music might be useful in a future career, and she suggests that self-

belief was "important for long term commitment to involvement with music" (Hallam, 2017, p. 482). Self-efficacy is not simply about observable action but that "individuals need to believe themselves capable of action to be able to engage in action; knowing how is not enough" (Wiggins, 2015, p. 105). For piano students, this belief in their own capability, rather than purely measurable skill, also speaks to a belief in their own identity. The agency which students invest towards learning the piano is, in a sense, investing in themselves.

Codetta. Motivation is one of the most frequently discussed topics in private music teaching. Self-determination theory and self-efficacy theory provide insight into many of the questions asked about motivation; however, they are sometimes overlooked in the scholarship of identity. The connection between identity and motivation seems clear: we are more inclined to move towards activities in which we find congruence with 'who we are'. This connection has not been well studied in piano pedagogy literature even though students are often involved with lessons during their most formative years, at a time when their motivation may fluctuate and they ask important questions about who they are becoming.

Critical Evaluation and Ways Forward

The topic of musical identities is interesting and timely given the recent interest in identity scholarship. Questions which ask 'who am I?' and 'what does that mean for where I am headed?' seem to be more prominent than ever in this highly-individualized and politically liberal era. Given the relatively recent study of identity within the music literature, there are a number of areas left to be addressed and researchers often lack a critical engagement with one another. For example, Paananen (2022) published a recent study using narrative inquiry to investigate musical identities of university undergraduate students, but concluded that many of the antiquated, master-apprentice learning structures should be left in place for classically-trained

musicians. Overall, the study of musical identity builds upon previous research, without offering innovative research methods or challenging other publications. Perhaps this is because there is not a robust enough body of literature built up to warrant challenging, but more reflective engagement, instead of simply identifying gaps, would make the topic even more compelling.

One of the most difficult parts of reading the musical identity literature is that many scholars do not explain what they mean by 'identity'. Historically, the psychological and sociological literature have discussed this construct with a number of different viewpoints. Publications on the topic of identity have sought to refine whether one has a core, stable identity throughout life, or if it malleable and contextually determined. Music identity literature tends to favour the latter view, but it would be helpful if this was more explicit. Lamont (2011) offers a synthesis of music education, identity, and life-long learning, and while she does outwardly adopt a social constructionist viewpoint, she does not expand what this means or explain why it is the more appropriate way of considering musical identities. In other work, Trevarthen and Malloch (2017) consider the differences between personal identity and communal identity, and cite Erikson's (1968) stages of development, but without explaining exactly what this means for identity scholarship. Many doctoral dissertations (Mills, 2008; Kastner, 2009; Mercier de Shon, 2012) do well to position their stance on identity, and a wider practice of explaining how identity is viewed would be beneficial to clarify this abstract concept.

The fact that so much of the research on musical identities has focused on university students and music teachers is also surprising. Considering that early adolescence is a time in which major physiological and social transitions happen, youth are asking important questions of who they are and might become. The fact that more research has not been done during this phase leaves a critical piece missing from the literature. On the topic of musical identities, Karkou and

Joseph (2017) have suggested that "further research in this area that explores the formation of adolescent identity would be of particular interest" (p. 242). Further, it is interesting that this topic has not been investigated in private piano lessons. Considering that piano is the most common instrument for which children are enrolled in private lessons, the lack of research specific to this area is a problem. Piano lessons are typically not studied due to the unregulated and 'closed-door' nature of the learning, yet more research in this area could potentially impact millions of students around the world. Specifically, research with adolescent private piano students could be critical for parents and teachers who are struggling with questions of attrition, and a better understanding of musical identity may be part of the answer.

The literature on musical identities has investigated the themes of social environment, the future self, and motivation but they have not been taken up concurrently. Perhaps this is due to the substantial nature of each topic individually, but it seems difficult to separate one without considering the others. As I show in Figure 6, they can be understood as interrelated and dependent on one another. One's concept of their musical identity is influenced by – and also influences – their social environment, possible selves, and motivation. The arrows connect each theme in a reciprocal nature, rather than a progressive cycle. This means that rather than cleanly moving through stages, the construction of a musical identity is a messy process, as the arrows connect each theme in all directions. These three themes are entangled and best examined together because they result in experiences that construct salient musical identities. One example of the interconnectedness might be that motivation may be in response to a hoped-for future self and would also determine the social environment. To illustrate, the motivation to practice piano in the present may be because the student has a vision of themselves successfully performing at a piano recital, and also wants to invite their grandparents to watch them play at that event. In

another example, a student's social environment might be changed by both motivation and the hoped-for future self. Investing in a grand piano physically changes the layout of a home, and reflects a more serious level of piano study with stronger motivation and a clearer vision of themselves as an advanced pianist. In a final example, a student's hoped-for future self is shaped by their social environment and motivation. When a student surrounds themselves with friends who also want to study music long-term, and finds their own motivation towards daily music practice, the student develops a better purpose for music in their life going forward. The kinds of experiences described here in these examples are rich enough to influence 'who we are'. The connection between the three themes is such that they rely on one another to create experiences that matter for identity formation.

Figure 6

Musical Identity Concept Map
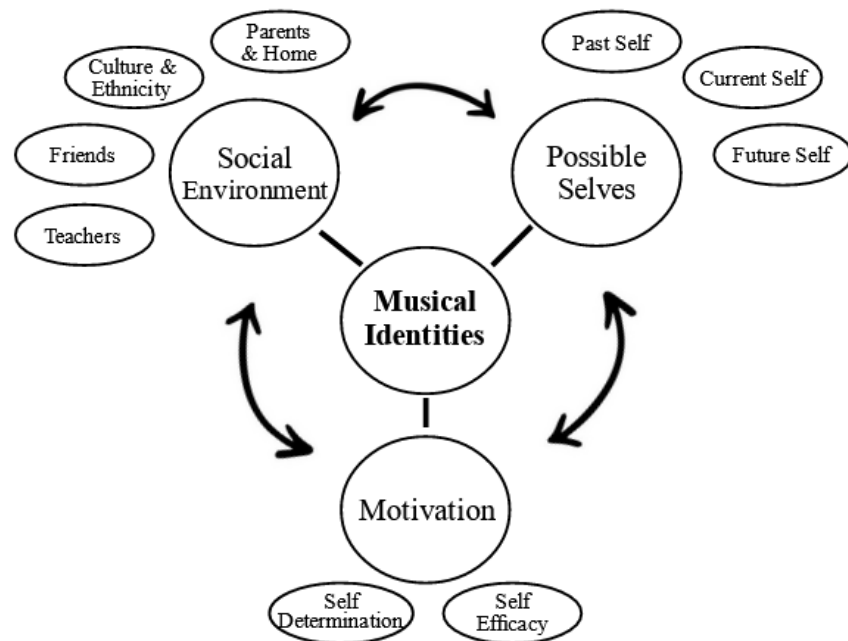
In order to have a complete and prominent musical identity, all three components are required. Two out of three are not enough. For example, if a student has a clear vision of a musical possible self and the intrinsic motivation to achieve that vision, but a completely disconnected social environment, their musical identity may be less salient. If a student has intrinsic motivation towards music and a supportive social environment, but no vision of themselves as a musician in the long-term, their musical identity may be less salient. Finally, if a student can imagine their musical possible self and has the social environment to support that vision, but lacks motivation to act in tangible ways, their musical identity may less salient. Instead, when students can successfully engage with their social environment, their own motivation, and their possible selves, musical identity will be prominent in a definition of *who they are* because this combination provides experiences in which students can more easily understand and identify themselves as musicians and develop salient musical identities.

Cheng and Southcott (2016) discuss the social environment and motivation, but do not carry this forward to possible selves. Evans and McPherson (2017) study the future self and motivation, but references to the social environment are typically in service of supporting motivation, not the relationships and culture which contribute to musical identity. Hallam (2013) does simultaneously consider social environment, the future self, and motivation but while examining predictors of musical expertise and not in relation to identity. Goopy (2022) includes the social environment, possible selves, and musical identity with adolescent students, but does not include motivation. This field would greatly benefit from the simultaneous study of the three constructs to give a well-rounded account of musical identity formation.

The methodological choices made in musical identity research have typically been from qualitative traditions, with an emphasis on ethnography or case study methodologies which use

observations or interviews to gather data. This is sensibly the way to understand a rich and nuanced topic like identity. However, the scope of data collection has been limited, and the way in which it was gathered is predictable. Language is typically prioritized as the only format in which participants share their thoughts on identity. This is problematic for children and adolescents who may not have grasped the abstract concept of identity or have the language capacity to describe their thoughts on this topic. In her work with infants and toddlers, Barrett (2017) has found that that "research work in identity theory has been intimately connected to language as researchers have sought to elicit and analyze verbal accounts of how individuals and groups describe their beliefs, perceptions, and practices in and through music" (p. 64). Because the majority of study in musical identities has been done with older teenagers and adults – specifically those transitioning into university music programs or with careers as performers – whose language capabilities are likely sufficient to discuss identity, alternate methods of gathering data have not been well utilized. This is a problem because the research may be missing out on critical data about how students construct their musical identities. Further, there have been no studies conducted which examine parental and educational influences on piano student identity. Since identity is a socially constructed phenomenon, it seems necessary that a student's primary social influences might also be involved as sources of understanding. The fact that arts-based research has sparingly been taken up when examining musical identities (Creech & Hallam, 2006; Kastner, 2009; Goopy, 2022) is surprising considering that music itself exists as an alternate, non-verbal form of communication. The fact that parents and teachers have been neglected in the research process seems to also be missing an important part of the identity puzzle.

My research will address these gaps by including arts-based, photovoice research and focusing particularly on adolescents' conceptualizations of musical identity. The study methodology proposed in the next chapter will contribute to the literature by offering multiple methods of data collection while examining the three interrelated themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation. These three themes are interwoven together and are necessary to consider simultaneously because they lead to experiences which form salient musical identities. This study focuses specifically on adolescent piano students, a group the field of musical identities has yet to consider, but simultaneously considers how parents, teachers, and the student's social environment shapes their musical identity.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Problem and Questions

The music education community would benefit from a better understanding of musical identities, specifically in relation to adolescent piano students. Little consideration has been given to the experiences which shape piano students' musical identities, or what role this identity plays in their current and future lives. This research is based upon the following questions:

How do piano students construct their musical identities and understand themselves as musicians?

What kinds of experiences contribute to the formation of a salient musical identity?

The word salient is particularly important because it signifies that an identity is relevant to the moment and 'front of mind'; it means *prominent* or *pertinent* and so a salient identity matters for constructing meaningful identities. When a person with a salient identity imagines themselves in that way, it has clear detail rather than vagueness. This has also been termed *elaboration* (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020) which entails vividness and emotionality when people describe their identities. Salience has been used in other musical identity research (e.g. Rowley, Reid, & Bennett, 2021) and in ways which are aligned with this study. For example, "the aspects of personal musical identity … and whether one is a musical person should become more salient at adolescence" (Symonds, Hargreaves, & Long, 2017, p. 512). The term salient is also used frequently in other identity literature and often in connection with the adolescent phase (see McLean & Syed, 2015; Peck & Grealey, 2020). The idea of experience matters in conjunction with saliency because an accumulation of experiences lead towards more salient identities.

Gaining a better understanding of these questions will provide a more robust knowledge of musical identity and the types of experiences which matter for musical identity construction.

There were three main justifications for this research: first, we do not understand what role musical identities play when discussing piano students; second, the themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation had not been taken up concurrently when addressing musical identities; and third, photovoice has never been used in music education research. Based on previous research which found that successful music learners had a stronger sense of who they were as musicians (Evans & McPherson, 2015), understanding how students form their musical identities and know themselves as musicians – with the contextual elements that support these processes – may lead to more fruitful music learning experiences and less attrition.

Philosophy, Design, and Procedure

Overview. The design for this research was inspired by other studies which used qualitative and arts-based research methods (Burland, 2005; Evans, 2009; Kastner, 2009; Mercier de Shon, 2012). Phenomenology is one of the preferred philosophical lenses for qualitative research in music education (Jourbet & Van der Merwe, 2020). This phenomenological case study (Creswell, 1998) used multiple methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996), photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), lesson observations (Burton & Bartlett, 2005), and surveys (Check & Schutt, 2012). The case itself could be considered an investigation into adolescent piano students' musical identities. This case was bound by the limits of 8 piano students between the ages of 12 – 14, as well as their parents and teachers, taking individualized lessons with private teachers and following a conservatory-based curriculum of learning. Gathering data using a combination of methods to study the same phenomenon has been termed *triangulation* in qualitative research and was included to strengthen the study's validity (Flick, 2018; Guba, 1981; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Case study

research was particularly appropriate for this interdisciplinary topic partly because of its extensive use in music, education, psychology, and phenomenology, but more importantly because it gathered rich and in-depth data to the complex questions of identity.

Participants included students at the center, but also their parents and piano teachers as complementary contributors. Considering multiple groups of participants is not common in a phenomenological case study. However, since student experience made up the focal point of this work, the additional sources illustrated this experience in supporting ways rather than distracting from it. For example, during the course of data collection a parent told a story about how her daughter's favourite piece was a pop song from the radio, however the student did not think that counted as 'real' music that she was learning and did not mention it during her interview. It proved to be an important part of her musical experience that I would not have learned about otherwise. These peripheral sources provided important glimpses into students' surrounding environments and the experiences which accumulated into who they were as musicians. Although rare, other phenomenological research in the arts has included parents' and teachers' perspectives in getting to the core of student experience (Nichols, 2006; Reinders, Bryden, & Fletcher, 2015). By bringing in peripheral participants, I was better able to examine the wider layers of learning ecologies in relation to the individual identity. I examined the nature of students' musical identity construction, as influenced by piano lessons, and considered the process of identity development in dynamic rather than static terms (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The data was analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (Noon, 2018; Smith, 1996), triangulated to strengthen the study's credibility (Flick, 2018), and will be presented with thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) in the next chapter. This research did not predefine dependent and

independent variables but focused on the complexity of human sense-making as students faced questions of their own identity.

Weaving in arts-based research into more traditional forms of data qualitative data collection includes "a process that uses the expressive qualities of [artistic] form to convey meaning" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. xii). In particular, the incorporation of photovoice research sought new ways of looking at common events, it opened up new questions, and stimulated new dialogue; in other words, it revealed multiple ways of looking at the same question. Photography is an art form, but photovoice has traditionally been used with a social justice approach. In this research, photos were used more strongly as an artistic form of data collection and with compelling design benefits. First, the arts teach students that their personal signature or way of thinking is important: their answers to questions and solutions to problems need not be identical. Arts-based research cannot be reduced to formulas, charts, or neatly written summaries and understanding identity as a mosaic is valuable. I encouraged students that there were no 'wrong answers'; whatever they submitted was valid and advantageous to the discussion. Next, the arts require honesty. The photos included in this research contain particularly personal, open, and sincere stories. For example, I learned about a student's admiration of her sister or another student's jealousy towards her brother. Finally, the arts attend to relationships. There is no great art built without relationships, and "how forms relate to one another is critical, so much so that artists will spend years refining the relationships in their work" (Eisner, 2002, p. 201). Every student submitted at least one photo of other people – as well as pets or musical items – and described the relationship between their musical identity and these influences. Questions of identity necessarily consider relationships, and arts-based research brought that point forward. Since musicians regularly operate with non-linguistic forms of expression, asking participants to

photograph important topics, people, or events seemed to harness another non-linguistic form of expression. It provided a thoughtful, caring, and responsible way for participants to think about their identity and the role of music in their lives.

Phenomenology. This study investigated adolescents' lived experiences of how they constructed their musical identities and how they understood themselves as musicians. Researchers within music education have often used phenomenology as a philosophical foundation (see Mercier de Shon, 2012; Nichols, 2006; O'Neill, 2017; Parker & Powell, 2014) and it has started to be more commonly applied to the topic of musical identities (see de Bruin, 2022; Mans, 2009; Sutherland, 2015). Phenomenological research is a qualitative inquiry in which researchers identify and make sense of human lived experiences based on the perspectives of participants (Joubert & Van der Merwe, 2020). It is a fitting philosophical approach for music education research because it encompasses many of the same practices as creating music itself. As Van Manen (2016) describes, a "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" (p. 39). Since both music and identity are continuously interpreted and reinterpreted, phenomenology permitted the fluid sense-making to happen when examining such a complex topic.

My reading and understanding of phenomenology draws primarily from the work of Van Manen (2014, 2016, 2017) who is a Canadian phenomenological scholar. His approach to phenomenological research and writing seemed most appropriate because of his interest in pedagogy and identity. It has been said that Van Manen's thinking draws upon both the phenomenology of Husserl and the hermeneutics of Heidegger. In other words, "it is a

combination of descriptive and interpretive phenomenology" (Dowling, 2007, p. 138). Originally, phenomenology was conceptualized within German philosophy and psychology. As it further developed, transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1970), ontological phenomenology (Heidegger, 1982), ethnical phenomenology (Levinas, 1979), existential phenomenology (Sartre, 1956), embodiment phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), critical phenomenology (Ricoeur, 1966), hermeneutic phenomenology (Gadamer, 1965), and many other branches became their own distinct areas of scholarship (all as cited in Van Manen, 2014). While this study does not settle firmly in one direction, it leans most closely towards hermeneutic phenomenology without going into any great detail. In this way of thinking, the research "is context-bound as the researcher moves beyond pure description of perceptions to understanding and interpreting the study of lived experiences" (Joubert & Van der Merwe, 2020, p. 339). Phenomenology was appropriate for this study because of its emphasis on capturing students' lived experiences – whether real or imagined – and then trying to make sense of it all. The act of phenomenological sense-making involves finding themes which are the focal points of experiences. These themes help a researcher bring forward the most important ideas and they converge at the essence of a common experience (Van Manen, 2016). From both myself and participants, phenomenology demanded a "radical, primal, or hyper reflection: it reflects on what is prior to reflection—lived experience" (Van Manen, 2014, p. 127). The results arrive at new, meaningful understandings. Research within this philosophical framework offers insights that bring us into better contact with the world itself (Van Manen, 2016).

Phenomenological work is interested in the conscious, lived experience of real people in their own, real worlds. It shows that the "everydayness" of daily life experiences is much more complex than we tend to think (Van Manen, 2014, p. 42). Phenomenological research is always

retrospective and subjective since a person cannot reflect on an experience while also concurrently living within the experience. It does not study the "what" of our experience but the "experience" of the what – how people consciously interpret the things or events in their lives, rather than the things or the events themselves (Van Manen, 2014, p. 91). In that sense, this study did not investigate *what* piano lessons were like, but rather students' *experiences* of what piano lessons were like. Phenomenology is less interested in the factual nature of exactly *what* or *how often* something may have happened, but rather the significance it has within the person's life. It offers a chance to see the deeper significance and meaning of the lived experiences that participants describe. It has been called "the science of examples" (Van Manen, 2016, p. 121) since it investigates the nature of participants' lived experiences and ways of being in the world. In other words, a phenomenological study is a large example composed of smaller examples.

Van Manen (2014) proposes that a phenomenological research question may arise when we have had an experience that causes us to pause and reflect. It must not only be clearly articulated but also "lived" by the researcher (Van Manen, 2016, p. 44). Remembering back to the opening scene where I was the only one in the doctoral seminar who did not consider myself a musician, that striking moment lead me in this direction. That sense of wonder, or perhaps bewilderment in my case, is where phenomenology lives. In this regard, "doing phenomenology is becoming infected with a certain pathos that creates an openness to the world and a wondering attentiveness that is the trigger for phenomenological inquiry" (Van Manen, 2014, p. 36). This is one of the multiple reasons that phenomenology was integral to this study.

Phenomenological research not only seeks to understand each individual's experience, but also considers the collective experience. Phenomenology allowed for an exploration of each

student's own individual process, but also assumed that "certain essences of shared experience will be revealed" (Mercier de Shon, 2012, p. 63). Van Manen (2016) pertinently explains that,

> 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). [emphasis in original]

It has been said that phenomenology is the study of essences. While this sounds mysterious and abstract, it means that the wide array of human lived experience is thought of in an easily understandable, yet insightful, way. A helpful description from Van Manen (2016) tells us that "the essence of something is construed so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way" (p. 39). Questions such as *what is it like to experience* … are typically phenomenological, and produce thoughtful descriptions from participants. The unforeseeable trajectory of where this type of question might lead gives way to a broad array of answers. It is then the researcher's responsibility to make sense of it all in a search for the *essence.* Phenomenology is concerned with that shows itself during the research process (Van Manen, 2017), and then how researchers later come to understand the *meaning* of what showed itself (Joubert & Van der Merwe, 2020). The essences of an experience come about by asking 'what does this all mean?' which is how interpretive phenomenological analysis is approached.

A smaller but notable thread which ran alongside the phenomenological approach was constructivism, which implies that knowledge is the product of interactions between individuals and this is situated within a historical moment and social context (Bryman, 2012). Most social

psychology literature reviewed earlier operated on a constructivist assumption where identities are products of experiences within one's social environment and interactions. In this view, knowledge is not necessarily a direct representation of reality, but a subjective interpretation of one's *experience* within that reality. Phenomenology and constructivism can work in tandem: they both prioritize personal meaning making and an understanding that experience is interpretive yet situationally constrained. There is a significant overlap between the two philosophies such that "at the most basic level, constructivism and phenomenology are each concerned with subjective experience" (Wilkinson & Hanna, 2016, p. 4). Constructivism did not inform the overall direction of this work, but its influence on the topic of musical identities and the background role it played is worth mentioning. Constructivism has been taken up in other recent work on musical identities which also brings forward the importance of experience (Kastner, 2020; Spychiger, 2017).

Case Study Methodology. While the overarching philosophical approach to this work was phenomenology, the methodological framework was built upon case study and arts-based research in order to understand how early adolescent piano students shaped their musical identities. Case study research is a methodology well known to music education researchers asking questions of adolescent identity (e.g. Symonds, Hargreaves, & Long, 2017; Varvarigou & Creech, 2021). There are three main theorists in case study methodology: Yin (1984), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998). Yin (1984) defines case study as an "inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). This research can be described as a detailed program of study which investigates a group of people and a timely topic, in real-world settings. For Stake (1995), case studies are

holistic and consider the interrelationships between the phenomenon in question and its larger contexts. Since this research studied the complex topic of identity, multiple data sources drew out different views of the same phenomenon and were analysed in relation to one another. Merriam (1998) considers that case studies must be *descriptive* – with rich accounts of the data – and *heuristic* – to increase the reader's understanding of the phenomenon in question (as cited in Yazan, 2015). Accordingly, the next chapter is written in highly descriptive language for an individualized analysis of each participant. Overall, the case in question is understanding early-adolescents and their musical identities, as influenced specifically by individual piano lessons. It was most beneficial to use case study methodology in this research because it involved an up-close examination of the students in question, as they were in their settings, while using multiple data sources to understand the phenomenon.

According to Yin (2003), a case study design is most effective when the study's focus is to answer *how* and *why* questions, however this is where his influence on this research ends. Yin's approach to case study is more analytical or linear, and his methodological, positivist approach to case study research is not compatible with phenomenology. Instead, this study embraces the 'messiness' of human interactions, with a loose framework that was meant to guide reflection and analysis. In that way, this study's approach to case study is closer to Stake's methodology, where the researcher acts as an *interpreter*. The goal is to achieve "a clearer view of the phenomenon under study through explanation and descriptions" (Brown, 2008, p. 6). Case study research seeks to deeply understand complicated situations and the relationships within it all: between the researcher and the established academic field, between participants in the study, between participant and researcher, and ultimately between the researcher and the reader. Case studies can be powerful because they are compellingly flexible: in order to investigate cases that

are complex and evolving, no single methodological or analytical path is given. This type of research is meant to "complicate notions of generalization" (Compton-Lily, 2013, p. 60) since the real purpose of case study research is "particularization, not generalization" (Stake, 1995, p. 8). Case studies allow researchers to go beyond generalized statements and provide in-depth, illustrative explanations to understand the problem in question. My role with participants in this case study, then, was to investigate genuinely and gently that "I want to know what you know *in the way that you know it"* (Heyl, 2001, p. 369).

In Stake's (2005) analysis, he presents the concept of an *intrinsic case study*, where the researcher primarily wants a better understanding of some particular case; a puzzling phenomenon which calls the researcher to action. The research is not undertaken because this case represents a connection to another, larger phenomenon – such as the question of 'what is good teaching' – but instead because, "in all its particularity *and* ordinariness, the case itself is of interest" (Stake, 2005, p. 445). Intrinsic case studies are often exploratory (Grandy, 2010), and support the researcher's own, intrinsic interest in the problem. True to form, this research was born from my own curiosity about adolescents' experiences of being a piano student and what that meant for their musical identities.

Case studies also dive deeply into the subject in question and often employ thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). Thick description imparts that case study research should be highly detailed and that it should increase the validity and reliability of the study. This type of descriptive analysis situates the results such that readers can determine whether the conclusions match their own problems, and whether findings can be transferred to other studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In other words, "thick description is used as a strategy to enable transferability" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257). Geertz suggests that a reader attempting to understand a

participant's experience at a later date is like trying to read an ancient manuscript that is "foreign, faded, and full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations and tendentious commentaries" (in Hammersley, 2008, p. 56). In order to fill in these gaps, detailed descriptions should paint a mental image for the reader. Someone on the receiving end of this study should be able to easily assess the similarities between their own research problem and the findings presented here.

This case study used a *bricolage* format (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) by drawing from direct interview quotes, observations, survey data, field notes, researcher memos, and photos to capture the dynamic case in question. The results are a richly written account of each student's experience, and acknowledges the researcher's own role in interpreting and representing the data (O'Reilly, 2009). My role as the *bricoleur* "creates a portrayal of the lived experiences of the participants, woven together in a way that communicates the multiple layers and perspectives of not only the participants, but also the researcher" (Green, 2018, p. 317). My assessment of the data – what is or is not important – inevitably shapes this work. What I have decided to bring forward in my analysis is unique to me as a researcher, and bricolage allows me to shape the work in an original manner. The multiple layers of data empowered my exploration of the multifaceted topic of identity by pulling the pieces together and making sense of a topic which is difficult to describe.

While there may be many elements which make up a case study, not all elements can be considered simultaneously. Stake (2005) explains that "for the qualitative research community, case study concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts" (p. 444). Part of the definition of what is – or is not – considered a case study depends on a bounded system, since research analysis cannot possibly

consider all of the many complex elements in question when researching human lives and interactions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Stake (2006) describes the tension between the case and the collection of influencing elements, where the central case must command most of the attention and not become overwhelmed by the number of surrounding factors. This was difficult to achieve because the bounded system in this study involved the student at the center, but also the social influences which bordered them: parents and home environment, their piano teacher, peers and pop culture. Stretching the limits was necessary because the literature review made a strong argument that students' musical identities are socially situated, therefore it was necessary to examine the surrounding conditions in order to understand the contextual nature of identity.

Phenomenological case study. There are often types of qualitative research where the approaches overlap (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and I have brought philosophy and methodology together to form a phenomenological case study. This work focuses on the 'lived experience' (Van Manen, 2016) of being a piano student, the social processes which influenced the experience, and what that meant for the construction of adolescents' musical identities. Other work suggests that "a phenomenological case study approach is appropriate when a literature search indicates few in-depth studies" (Riquelme & Lillo-Crispo, 2020, p. 13). There has only been one other work to use phenomenological case study specifically with piano students but it does not address identity (see Cheng & Southcott, 2016). Using a phenomenological case study to investigate piano student identity meant that the research was nuanced and flexible enough to account for variables that other, more strict methods may not have allowed for. The phenomenological questions in this study only partly centered on *why* adolescents embrace certain musical identities, but more importantly the *meaning* they have in adolescents' lives. The benefit of using a phenomenological case study was that students' ways of being in the world

became the center of the data, and their lived experiences were supported by the voices of others around them. Admittedly, it is unusual for a phenomenological case study to involve peripheral participants. However, the justification for involving multiple groups of participants was that parents and teachers acted as complementary sources to illustrate student experience. They provided insight into the experiences and social environments which led the student to where they were, and what that meant for the student's identity. While students were at the core of this research, parents and teachers offered a multi-dimensional view of the student's musical identity. This research is still considered a phenomenological case study because of the *how* and *why* questions asked, a focus on students' experiences, the methods of data collection, and the attempt to capture the heart of musical identity.

       Photovoice method. One of the unique features of this study was its use of photovoice within case study research, and this method of data collection will be taken up again later in this chapter. For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the method, an overview is provided here. The appeal of using photovoice within case study research is that both strive to represent deeply held meanings. Images are particularly adept at representing rich meanings behind abstract concepts, such as identity, because "images contribute to how we see ourselves, how we define and relate to the world, and what we perceive as significant or different" (Wang, 2009, p. 186). Wang and Burris (1997) developed the term *photovoice*, which combined the word 'photo' with the acronym VOICE to stand for *v*oicing *o*ur *i*ndividual and *c*ollective *e*xperience. What they found during their research was that photos allowed participants to actively participate in the research process and illustrate their experiences in a more vivid way. Participants not only become contributors, but owners of the research and the entire research process becomes more meaningfully co-constructed between participant and researcher. It allows participants to give a

firsthand account of their experiences, to promote a critical conversation about these experiences, and observe their everyday lives in a new way.

Originally, photovoice represented a shift in the power balance of research: from data collection by a governing researcher to data offerings by an active and interested participant. It often involved participatory action methods, critical theory, or social justice outcomes. However, it is increasingly used in arts-based research go beyond the boundaries of verbal data, to understand a problem from new angles, and seek an alternate form of self-expression for participants (Minthorn & Marsh, 2016; Rieger & Schultz, 2014). In that way, photovoice can enrich phenomenological research. Including photovoice in phenomenological inquiry "may fill a void of understanding furnished by limitations of traditional phenomenological inquiry" and can enhance researchers' understanding of participants' lived experiences (Plunkett, Leipert, & Ray, 2012, p. 156). Additionally, photovoice has been beneficial in arts-based research studies with children because "like drawings, photos are representations of what we or others see and experience; they serve to evoke information, feelings, and/or memories that can be discussed in a follow-up conversation and/or interview" (Driessnack & Furukawa, 2012, p. 6). This research took up arts-based approaches to photovoice, and encouraged students to consider the abstract questions of identity through personally meaningful visual representations.

With the proliferation of digital photography and integration of cameras into mobile phones, as well as the expansion of qualitative research methods, photovoice has gained acceptance in a variety of different fields. However, photovoice had never been used music education research until now. Most of the work with this approach had been used for qualitative research in the health sciences (Evans-Agnew & Rosemberg, 2016), but there were a number of similar benefits to using photovoice with piano students. First, it illuminated topics that were not

easily explained in words: students did not always have the means to describe what they were thinking or feeling during an interview, so taking a photo became another form of expression. If a picture is worth a thousand words, photos opened up other avenues of discussion. Next, it allowed me to understand the experience from a student's viewpoint and for the student to embrace the research as personally relevant. A particularly important strength is that photovoice brought out the participant's interpretation and analysis of a certain phenomenon as they explained what their photo meant and what it represented. Students were responsible for the majority of the analysis, but it allowed me to ask further questions about the stories behind the photos and take our conversations to deeper places. The movement away from researcher-driven analysis is important in terms of participant agency and their investment in the research process (Wang & Burris, 1997). Using photovoice led to a number of different topics outside of the originally planned interview questions. Student reflections resulted in personally meaningful conversations about the people and experiences in their lives that shaped their musical identities. Finally, it allowed the research to take place outside of the initial, scheduled meeting time, and in a flexible and unhurried, creative way to gain a deeper view into the lived experience of being a piano student. Photovoice methodology was valuable to the topic of musical identities because it invited the student to 'not just tell me but *show* me.'

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative research is an appropriate approach for addressing identity because of the rich and nuanced nature of the topic. Qualitative researchers typically believe that reality is never purely objective: it is represented differently in each research participant's mind and captured differently by each researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). For this study, qualitative research allowed me to operate with an "ethic of friendship, a stance of hope, caring, justice, even love"

(Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 735). This section will outline four separate but intertwined qualitative data sources: semi-structured interviews, photovoice, survey data, and observations. The participant and data sources overview are as such:

1. Students: 2 interviews and photovoice

2. Parents: 1 interview and demographic survey

3. Teachers: 1 interview and lesson observation

Interviews are the most common form of data collection in qualitative research, and semi-structured interviews allowed for a more flexible interview experience. Photovoice allowed students to express themselves in other, non-verbal ways and literally view the question through a different lens. Demographic survey data, collected from parents, gave an account of students' basic information and musical history. Lesson observations with the teacher allowed for many contextual elements to be taken into account. Several ways of seeking information are necessary to answer the research questions, and "in music education research, multiple sources of data are frequently used" (Roulston, 2014, p. 252). The number of data collection methods, paired with the number of research participants, meant that the study produced a large volume of work. This amount of data was important because I was interested in context which sough both depth and breadth: I wanted to know individual students deeply and also to understand how adolescents shaped their musical identities in a broader way. This section will provide the steps and justifications for using four data sources to address the research questions.

Data Source 1: Semi-Structured Student Interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a widely used data gathering tool in the social sciences and have been used in musical identity research (e.g., Juuti & Littleton, 2010). This form of data collection was used with students, parents, and teachers. The benefit over using surveys or highly-structured interviews is that semi-

structured interviews co-exist with phenomenology "to gain insight into how people attribute meaning to their worlds in social interaction" (Grindsted, 2005, p. 1015). Phenomenological interviews seek understanding of a problem through examining people's interpretations of their experience with that problem (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). They are similar to semi-structured interviews such that dialogue plays a role in the research process: further questions flow organically rather than having been predetermined. In qualitative research as a whole, there is a range of interview protocols from highly-structured to highly-unstructured. The former results in a formalized atmosphere where the researcher asks standardized questions in the same order, regardless of the participant's answers; the latter results in a relaxed atmosphere with few predetermined notions, where the discussion is free-flowing and limitless. In this research, I wanted a balance somewhere between these two approaches. Semi-structured interviews "provide freedom for interviewers to pursue further detail concerning topics that arise in discussions with individual participants" (Roulston, 2014, p. 251). The in-depth but flexible discussions meant that our conversations often deviated away from the prepared questions, but into equally interesting, relevant, and valuable topics. Accordingly, my values and interest in the topic were also influential to all phases of the inquiry process (Creswell, 1998). Semi-structured interviews allowed for dialogue and malleability in creating understanding. Unlike surveys or questionnaires, in which those giving information are relatively passive and are not allowed the opportunity to elaborate, participants shared in the work of the interview, sometimes guiding it in channels of their own choosing. They are treated as *partners* rather than as *objects* of research (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). It was my responsibility to listen carefully, without turning the research into a series of 'teachable moments', to offer a supportive environment in which participants could share as much or as little information as they felt comfortable.

Semi-structured interviews were used with students, parents, and teachers. For students'

first interviews, I prepared approximately 20 interview questions (see Appendix 1) to guide them

in answering the research questions proposed earlier in this chapter. The questions were loosely

organized into four themes: identity, social environment, possible selves, and motivation. The

questions were written to be open-ended because I wanted students to feel comfortable

describing themselves to a researcher they had only just met. The wording and ordering of

questions was influenced by Rubin and Rubin (1995) and their work in qualitative interviewing.

For instance, I asked students to describe how they would make music on a desert island or how

they would introduce themselves at party. The questions were carefully written to include

imagination and storytelling, for example "Could you tell me a story about a time when you felt

like playing the piano was a really important part of who you are?" Although this was technically

a yes-or-no question, it was asked as an invitation rather than a statement of capability. The

topics became more reflective over time and one of the most meaningful, final questions was

"What has studying piano taught you about yourself?" The important last question "What does it

mean to be a musician?" was inspired by Mills' (2010) study. It was reserved until the end

because of its abstract and powerful nature. Asking a number of other questions before the

culmination of the final question helped to prepare the topic, and created space for students to

think in that way.

Students were encouraged to be as true to themselves as possible, and to engage with who

they 'were' at that point in time. There were sometimes contradictory points in the interviews

since students had never thought so critically about their own identity and wrestled with the

questions. Case study research is known to sometimes "present disparate, incompatible, even

apparently contradictory information" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 233). Conflicting points

demonstrated the struggle students undertook. I sensed that students were personally invested in the research process, and there is evidence in the final chapter that personal growth occurred as their thinking about musical identities changed over the course of the work. Additionally, I asked students to show me a piece of music they were working on, or perform something on the piano, and this allowed for music to be at the heart of the subsequent conversations. Even though the performances were recorded as a result of the interview processes, they did not stand as a data source and were not analyzed or included in this research. Having music as part of the research process was still important because experiencing music – rather than just talking about it – is an important part of musical identity. Questions regarding how students felt while playing the piano would not have been as accurate from memory; a live performance brought those feelings forward and into the moment.

Before the second student interview, I listened to the playback recording of the first interview. The second student interviews had no official questions prepared and primarily focused on understanding the photovoice submissions, but I also wanted to clarify certain topics which arose during our first interviews. For example, I might ask "During our first conversation, you talked about _____, what do you think that tells us about who you are?" I wanted to know how their thinking about musical identity had changed over the course of the research and what students had learned about themselves. This opportunity for follow up questions was not considered *member checking* (Guba, 1981), which involves participants reading a transcript and confirming their own statements, but rather a chance for students to tell me more about themselves and the topics we had previously discussed. The second interviews resulted in surprisingly profound conversations about who students were, who they wished to become, and what they wanted to be known for.

For parents, I asked approximately 10 interview questions (see Appendix 1). Many of these questions were the same questions that students were asked, in order to view the same topic in different ways. Parents were almost exclusively talking about their child rather than themselves to understand the student's identity from another perspective. For teachers, I asked approximately 8 interview questions (see Appendix 1). Again, these were largely the same questions from a different perspective, however I also wanted to know how teachers shaped their students' musical identities since they were one of the most direct influences. Teachers were asked to speak more generally about their students' identities, their role in students' musical experiences, and also specifically about the student participant in question.

For all participants, the semi-structured nature of the interviews meant freedom and flexibility to have genuine conversations. Upon revealing an interesting answer, I often asked for further clarification by saying *You talked about… Tell me more about that.* Or, *You mentioned… What was that like for you?* My role was to inquire further and then listen. Parents and teachers were happy to expand on their thoughts, but in the first student interviews these inquiries did not usually lead down meaningful paths. There were many instances of silence, stutters, or fragmented answers. It was the second student interviews that took the conversations to surprisingly deep and thoughtful places in comparison. This was likely because the students were more comfortable with me as a researcher, themselves as being researched, and the topic of identity in general. The beauty of using semi-structured interviews was the plasticity which allowed the conversations to evolve while still maintaining a clear path of research. After each interview took place, I made short, point-form field memos about the overall tone or mood, surprising answers, and other observations which may not have come through in the recordings but were important to remember for later analysis.

Data Source 2 : Photos. There is a growing practice of using artwork and photos within the qualitative research tradition but giving credit to non-linguistic knowledge is still gaining validity. Research suggests that "our daily experience is made of a multiplicity of dimensions, which include the visual and the sensory, and which are worthy of investigation but cannot always be easily expressed in words, since not all knowledge is reducible to language" (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 547). For pre-teens, this was particularly valuable since communicating their thoughts on identity was sometimes difficult. In daily pop-culture where language is often reduced to emojis, acronyms (e.g. YOLO), and GIF pictures, alternate ways of expressing oneself have become important. Since adolescents regularly carry cell phones, most of which are equipped with cameras, participants were asked to take 4 digital photos: someone who *is* a musician, a person or place they made music with, how music might be important in their future, and something that motivated them to play the piano (see Appendix 2 for a full explanation). These prompts were drawn from the literature on identity, the social environment, possible selves, and motivation. Despite the abstract nature of the photovoice prompts, students thought carefully and creatively about each topic. The results were compelling. Participants emailed or texted the photos, where I saved them to a password-protected database. One participant printed her photos as 4x6" hard copies. As previously mentioned, these photos became the basis of students' second, follow-up interviews and sparked a number of rich conversations about their identity.

The desire to use this form of research originally came from Kastner's (2009) dissertation with fourth-grade music students who were asked to draw representations of what it meant to be a musician. Kastner (2009) and Goopy (2022) are the only others to join arts-based research with musical identity, and demonstrated how drawing and visual arts can be used as valuable avenues of exploring children's musical identities. In a mixed-methods study, Creech and Hallam (2006)

asked children to draw their perceptions of learning the violin, but did not address questions of identity. I concluded that those without strong artistic skills may not be able to express themselves in drawing any more effectively than in words. Taking cell phone photos required relatively little trained skill and was already something familiar to adolescent students. This method of data collection was for students only, although parents were likely aware of the photos' content since they were primarily taken at home.

Data Source 3: Demographic Information. During the time in which students were participating in the first interview, parents were sent away and asked to fill out a short questionnaire of primarily demographic information (see Appendix 3). The questions addressed family ethnicity, home music culture, and the student's daily engagement with the piano through practice time and other musical experiences. Parents were asked to self-identify their ethnic background and most chose to list nationality. These questions were important in order to capture the social environment in other ways. Questionnaires are typically a quantitative data collection source but are still useful in qualitative research because they are economical, anonymity can be assured, questions can be written for specific purposes, and contextual statements can be made (Opie, 2004). While questionnaires are not as in-depth as interviews, for this study they developed a surface-level, representative picture of certain themes and characteristics (Check & Schutt, 2012). Again, although this method leans towards quantitative research, it was a relatively simple way to capture important information with minimal time and effort required from parents while still prioritizing their qualitative interviews. Surveys took place before the interviews with parents, which also allowed them some preparatory time to think about the topic of musical identities. Surveys were not meant to influence the interviews in

one direction or another, but rather recognised that most people had not considered this topic and it gave a chance to stimulate their thoughts.

Data Source 4: Lesson Observations. Visiting the student's weekly piano lesson at the teacher's studio gave additional context to the student's musical identity. I arrived at the regularly scheduled lesson time and sat quietly while the teacher and student worked together on repertoire, technique, or whatever else their normal lesson routine included. Lessons were between 30 and 60 minutes, and were recorded by researcher notes and reflections (see Appendix 4). It was not audio recorded or videotaped, which would have put undue pressure on the student and teacher to create a performance environment rather than a learning atmosphere. The benefit of using lesson observations was that it offered a real-time enactment of the student's musical identity. More importantly, this method of data collection went behind the traditionally 'closed lesson door'. Lessons are typically a very private environment and outsiders – such as researchers, other students, siblings, and even parents – are not usually invited. There was some noticeable nervousness in teachers' voices, even though they were not the ones being observed. Observations allowed me to view the student's musical identity within one of its most prominent contexts and to see that identity 'in action'. As Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013) describe, "why settle for merely hearing about them second-hand? Seeing is believing, and seeing is often data collection, as well. Participant observation puts you in direct contact with the phenomena of interest in a way unrivaled by other data collection techniques" (p. 81). Observations included real-time researcher judgements about what to record and what not to record, how to interpret the situation, and which actions were relevant to the research questions (Burton & Bartlett, 2005). The observations focused on student identity, and the lesson techniques which may have influenced their identity, rather than a critical assessment of teaching practices.

Participants and Setting

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary prior to beginning data collection (Certification REB18-1837). The study involved 8 trios, each consisting of a student, their parent, and piano teacher. In other words, there were 24 participants in total. This student-parent-teacher grouping is a well-known combination in music education has been labelled the 'Suzuki Triangle' after the influential music educator Dr. Shinichi Suzuki. This model expresses the multidimensional nature of student success where relationships between all three participants are equally valuable (see Figure 7). Grouping participants in this way was inspired by the Suzuki philosophy and used as a design structure for recruitment. This trio combination has also been used in other music education research (Creech, 2009; Creech & Hallam, 2006). However, none of the students who participated in the study followed the Suzuki curriculum; they were primarily enrolled in traditional, conservatory-based piano lessons.

Figure 7

The Suzuki Triangle
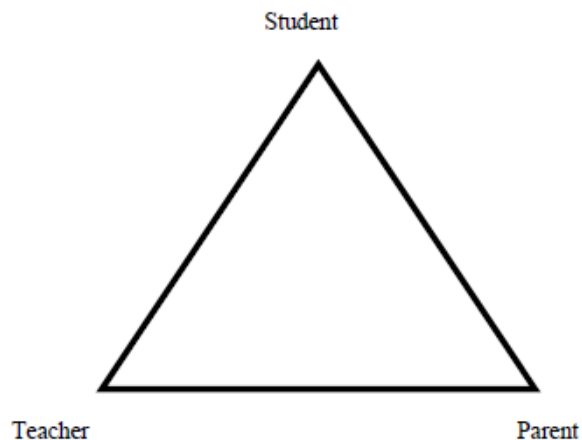
Note. Reprinted from *Parent as home teacher of Suzuki cello, violin, and piano students: Observation and analysis of Suzuki method practice sessions* by A. O'Neill (p. 4), 2003, Ohio State University. Copyright 2003 by Alice O'Neill.

A larger research sample was impractical for a detailed case study. Participants were not disqualified based on ethnicity, socioeconomic status, level of musical aptitude, or academic achievement, but were disqualified based on age since young students would have felt overwhelmed with the abstract and reflective nature of the interview questions. Students were all between the ages of 12 and 14 since adolescence is an important phase of identity formation. Students all had studied the piano for multiple years with a professional teacher and were enrolled in piano lessons with plans to continue. All students were taking Classically-based piano lessons which generally followed the Royal Conservatory of Music's 2015 syllabus, but with some flexibility in that approach. Although this is not the only program of piano study, it is the most common given the conservatory's longstanding history and prominence in Canada. Studying a formal music curriculum was not a requirement for participation, but unsurprising given the professional teacher affiliations and expert teachers' affinity for a rigorous program.

Recruitment. In total, 37 piano teachers were contacted by email who were members of the Alberta Registered Music Teachers' Association and the Alberta Piano Teachers' Association. Since I was also a member of these professional organizations, I had access to the membership contact lists and reached out to colleagues. Interested teachers were asked to contact students, distribute invitation letters, and gain permission to forward the parents' contact information (phone number or email address). From there, I communicated with parents directly to organize interview times and locations. I also kept in contact with the teachers to arrange lesson observation dates. The students and parents included in this study were not part of my own personal teaching studio, nor did I know any of them in other capacities. All of the teacher participants were colleagues who were familiar with my previous research, wanted to support my current study, and who I knew professionally.

When recruiting study participants, it was important to emphasize that the entire trio must all be available and willing to participate. If one member was unwilling to participate, the search continued for a new trio. This was uncommon and most student, parent, and teacher trios were all equally enthusiastic about participating. In one circumstance, the student, parent, and teacher were all interested to participate but were blocked by the administration of the music school who did not consent to having research conducted in their facility. In the end, 7 students in the study were taught in a home-based piano studios and 1 at a commercial music school, but all were enrolled in individual lessons with a long-term teacher. No participants withdrew over the course of the research.

Students. The 8 students in this study were between the ages of 12 – 14 years old and had taken formal, traditional piano lessons for an average of 7 years. They were all familiar with the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) curriculum, and were following that program to varying extents. The framework of a conservatory curriculum was central to student experience, even with supplementary repertoire included. The core data source for this study involved two interviews with each student. Interviews were recorded digitally for later transcription. The initial interview took 30 – 40 minutes where the conversation unfolded, in a semi-structured interview format, regarding approximately 20 questions. Between the first and second meetings, students submitted four photos to represent four questions concerning musical identity. Students took photos on their mobile phones and submitted the photos through text message or email. During the second interview, only follow-up questions to the first interview were prepared because the main purpose was for participants to interpret their photographs and express what their content meant. Because the photos were highly personal and required explanation, the second meeting was critical to understand how the photos reflected the given prompts. The

second, follow-up interview took 15 – 20 minutes and occurred within approximately one month of the first interview. The interviews took place during Fall 2019 at the students' homes. Students were all residents of Alberta, however further details about specific locations cannot be included.

Parents. The 8 parents in this study were comprised of 7 mothers and 1 father. During the initial visit to the students' homes, the parents completed a traditional paper demographic survey about their child's music learning history and family background. In addition, a shorter semi-structured interview with parents was conducted. This brief 15 – 20 minute interview gave a different perspective on students' musical identities. Parents provided additional information and shared stories which helped to illustrate students' experiences. Despite both student and parent interviews taking place in the same home, each occurred privately so as not to influence one another.

Teachers. The 8 teachers in this study were qualified, studio teachers who were members of professional music teachers' associations. They each had extensive training in university or conservatory post-secondary programs, and followed a traditional system of reading-based lessons with their students. Teachers were asked to allow one lesson observation with the student participant. This lesson was documented only through researcher notes, and not audio or video recordings. A lesson observation gave valuable insight into how teachers interacted with students, their relationship, and how musical identity came into question during their time together. In some cases, it demonstrated the influence teachers have in shaping students' images of themselves as musicians. Each teacher was also asked to participate in a short 15 – 20 minute semi-structured interview regarding their teaching philosophy, their role in shaping students' musical identities, and specific insight into the student participant. This interview typically took

place directly after the student's lesson, but sometimes occurred on a separate day at the teacher's home or elsewhere. This progression of having the interview after the observation was important so that the lesson was conducted in a typical way, without the influence of interview questions lingering in the teacher's mind.

Timeline

The sequencing of data collection activities was particularly important for this study (see Figure 8). This plan was carefully laid out so that participants could not influence one another's opinions, and data was not shared between students, parents, or teachers. Students in particular were assured that nothing they shared would be communicated to their parents or teachers, and were encouraged to be completely honest about their feelings and experiences. Every effort was made that one participant or situation would impact the others as little as possible. For example, teacher interviews were completed after the lesson observation, so that teachers would not alter their lesson plans more towards what I was 'looking for' in data collection.

After contacting interested participants, I visited students' homes where parents filled out the demographic survey while I interviewed the student. Once the student interview was finished, I continued to the parent interview. Next, I scheduled a lesson observation at the teacher's studio during the subsequent weeks. The teacher interview took place sometime after the lesson observation, either directly following the lesson or at another time within the following days. During this time, students were taking their four photos, and a second interview with the student was scheduled after the photos were submitted. The total interaction required for each participant was quite different, ranging from 3-weeks to 3-months. The large variation was primarily based on scheduling delays. The data collection took place between September and December 2019.

Figure 8

Timeline of data collection
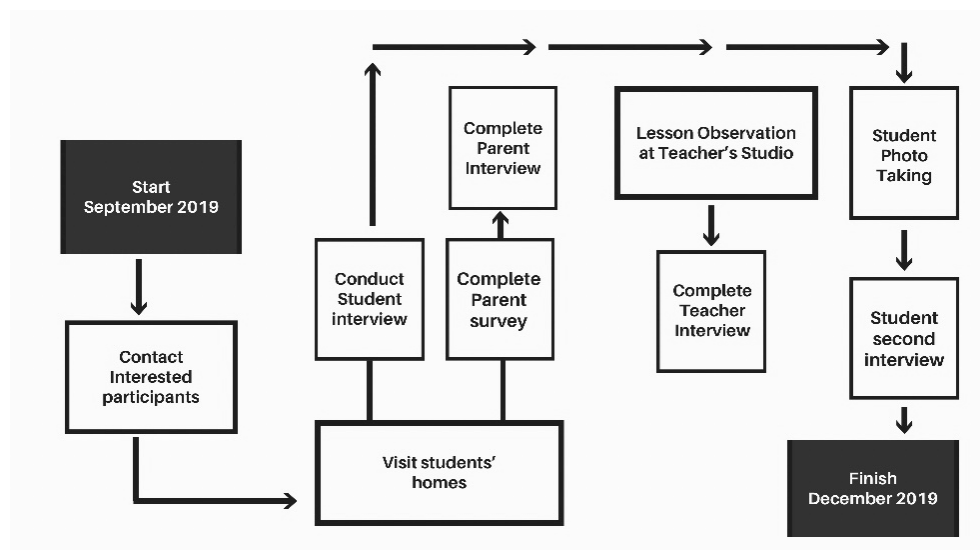
Glad It's Not 12-Tone: Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a familiar method of data analysis familiar to music education research (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Burland & Davidson, 2002; Caldwell, 2014; Cheng & Southcott, 2016; Peck & Grealey, 2020). However, many studies in music education which use IPA do not necessary acknowledge the phenomenological roots of this methodology (e.g. Burland, 2005; Oakland, MacDonald & Flowers, 2013). As Van Manen (2017) describes, "not all qualitative inquiry inspired by phenomenology is phenomenology" and cautions that many IPA studies do not have a phenomenological grounding (p. 777 – 778). First developed by Smith (1996), this methodology has its roots in psychology but has been adopted into research in health sciences, education, and social sciences. However, IPA is underpinned by the philosophies of phenomenology and hermeneutics, and draws from key theorists in its approach to inquiry. With the data analysis, IPA is primarily focused on Husserl's interest in experience, but also concerned with Heidegger's interest in the context and meaning of participants' experiences, attentive to Merleau-Ponty's interest in the physical, felt elements of

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the phenomenon, and cares about participants' relational experiences, informed by Sartre (Spiers & Smith, 2019). IPA seeks to understand an individual's understanding of an event or phenomenon, rather than ask them to provide an objective account, in discovering meanings rather than eliciting facts. IPA requires researchers to approach each case "on its own terms, to do justice to its own individuality" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 100). As such, IPA proved to be the most appropriate method of data analysis for this phenomenological case study. As Smith (1996) explains,

> The aim of IPA is to explore the participant's view of the world and to adopt, as far as is possible, an 'insider's perspective' of the phenomenon under study. At the same time, IPA also recognises that the research exercise is a dynamic process. While one attempts to get close to the participant's personal world, one cannot do this directly or completely. Access is both dependant on, and complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions which are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity. (p. 264)

According to Crawford (2019), there are two main stages to IPA research: first, participants try to make sense of their world as they articulate their experiences, and second, the researcher is trying to make sense of all participants' experiences to find meaning. Semi-structured interviews in a phenomenological case study fell precisely within this scope, since participants shared a detailed and highly personalized account of their experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Spiers & Smith, 2019). IPA was the most appropriate strategy for data analysis in this study because "analysis is fluid, iterative and multi-directional" (Noon, 2018, p. 77). Responsive-reflexive writing is at the centre of phenomenological research: it requires a "sensitive grasp" of both the content, the silence, and the nuances (Van Manen, 2016, p. 132).

Although case study research sometimes relies on stepwise coding, data collection and analysis are simultaneous processes in this kind of qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The true data analysis is "the process of making sense out of the data [which] involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning" (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). However, there is no single, standardized way that IPA analysis must be conducted (Crawford, 2019). The research process is meant to be organic, evolutionary, and flexible.

When analyzing the interview transcripts, I loosely followed Rapley's (2011, p. 274) approach to IPA and used his work to develop the following structure for analysis:

1. Read a single student transcript, mentally noting initial ideas or themes.

2. Re-read the same transcript, identifying and coding the main themes in separate colours to represent certain themes.

3. Consider any subthemes which emerged; code and highlight representative text in other colours.

4. Add comments, questions or other thoughts within the margins as comments.

5. Go to a new, but related transcript (such as parent or teacher), and repeat above process.

6. Once the entire trio's transcripts had been analysed together, continue to a new trio but always beginning with the student first.

7. Create a final list with themes and subthemes from all interview transcripts; begin writing.

Ultimately, the question of 'what does this all mean?' guided the analysis. I found that it was particularly important to not rush this process: analysing one participant's transcript thoroughly before moving to the next, without trying to process all of the participants' data

simultaneously, is where the most valuable data was gleaned (see Appendix 5 for coding example). The detailed work to colour-code the transcripts came from Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), and using different highlighted colours helped to quickly visualize which themes had arisen. *Themeing the data* involved notating "an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means" (Saldana, 2016, p. 199). The overarching themes primarily fit within the three major topics of social environment, possible selves, and motivation. However, there were interesting subthemes that also emerged – ability, choice, and relationships – which will be taken up in Chapter 5. *Themeing* was appropriate for this study because it has frequently been used with interviews which explore participants' "beliefs, constructs, identity development, and emotional experiences" (Saldana, 2016, p. 200).

The analysis of the additional data sources took shape in 8 groupings to represent the trios of participants. The demographic survey was considered first to give a surface-level overview. Next, student interviews were analysed using the steps mentioned above, followed by analysing parent and teacher interviews. All three interviews were read in sequence to see if any larger, overarching themes emerged from the group as an entity. Finally, lesson observation notes were incorporated into the data. I reviewed the students' photos, but it is important to remember that photos were not analyzed in this process: students had been responsible for that stage of interpretation during their second interview. After analyzing each data source in the trio, I moved on to the next trio and followed the same steps. As a final step, once all of the student-parent-teacher trio groupings had been analysed, student interviews were read together, in sequence and considered as a whole. Parent groupings and teacher groupings were not read together, in sequence since their purpose was to support student experience only and not to create their own themes. As previously mentioned, these multiple data sources resulted in *triangulation*,

which strengthened the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. I analysed the connection between the student's experience in conjunction with their parent's and teacher's interviews, the demographic survey, lesson observation, and the photovoice submissions. The various sources all existed in relation to one another since experiences happen in context. While each data source was its own line of sight, the lines continually crossed and overlapped. Considering multiple, but related, contexts was critical to provide an enriched understanding of the research questions.

While there were numerous ways to code and analyse the data, "coding is not a precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act" (Saldana, 2016, p. 5). Coding was meant to get at the heart of meaning without diminishing or reducing the data. In other words, rather than being simplified, the data was concentrated. While some coding work uses computer program for detail and precision, my process of coding was more fluid than procedural. Again, as part of the phenomenological nature of the work, the question 'what does this all mean?' arose frequently and the answers resulted in essential topics which informed the discussion in Chapter 5. Thematic coding was a tool for categorizing the many rich and diverse parts in an act of sense-making. Having a defined process provided a sense of direction and purpose, with the flexible analytical possibilities offered by IPA. Phenomenology and thematic coding were not competing but complementary approaches to this research. Coding helped to achieve a sense of clarity through the enormous amount of data that was collected. It helped to reach conclusions more easily, but phenomenology acted as the compass to guide the coding and offer explanations about what the conclusions meant.

'Oops, I Did It Again': Ethical Considerations

All texts used in recruiting participants, as well as the semi-structured interview questions, photovoice prompts, lesson observation protocol, and parent survey, were approved

by the University of Calgary Research Ethics Board. Upon beginning research, participants were given the choice to either participate or decline, and were advised of the possibility to withdraw during any point in the study. All participants – student, parent, and teacher – were required to sign a consent form and were informed that none of their personal information would be directly connected with the study's results. Although parents were often curious about their child's responses, and teachers wondered what might have been said about their lessons, none of the participants had access to other participants' data. There were many instances during the course of research where I declined comments and intentionally withheld information to protect participant confidentiality. Participants were assured of anonymity in future publications or presentations, that pseudonyms would used, and any identifying details would be changed or omitted. The anonymity of participants was prioritized throughout the entire research process. For example, if participants decided submit photos as 'selfies', they were not included in this document. All data sources and consent forms were kept on a password-protected computer in a private home office.

Reprise

This chapter presented a philosophical and methodological structure for a study on musical identities with piano students. Two research questions were asked: *How do piano students construct their musical identities and understand themselves as musicians?* and *What kinds of experiences contribute to the formation of a salient musical identity?* By using a phenomenological case study, answers to these questions were descriptive, holistic, and heuristic. The study involved 8 students at the centre, but also their parents and piano teachers as peripheral participants. Multiple sources of data were used in the form of semi-structured interviews, a demographic survey, a lesson observation, and photovoice. These data sources were

analysed according to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, which involved thematic coding. The themes addressed in the literature review – social environment, possible selves, and motivation – surfaced during the analysis. However, emergent themes of ability, choice, and relationships also arose and will be addressed in the following chapters. Going forward, Chapter 4 will present detailed portraits of each student participant and their musical experiences before going into the major, in-depth discussion in Chapter 5. Results from parents and teachers will also be presented to further illustrate student experience and gain a more comprehensive understanding of their identities.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview

  This chapter will begin with detailed portraits of students in order to understand each student's individual identity. Data from the two interviews, photovoice submissions, demographic survey data, and lesson observations will be presented in this section. I felt it was necessary to explore students' experiences one-by-one since their voices and personalities were each so compelling; their combination of lived experiences was completely unique to themselves. Phenomenological research is well-suited to emotional and affective way of being in the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and each portrait draws upon those complex, affective qualities that were part of student identity. Phenomenologists suggest that a person's identity is developed by the content of their self-narrative (Schechtman, 1996). As such, this section is presented in a more narrative style. There were a number of moving moments from student interviews which show how deeply these students were able to think about themselves as musicians, and how they described themselves as musicians gave way to moments of their own self discovery. Understanding our identities and what our lives mean is strongly shaped by reflection on our experiences. This has been termed *autobiographical reasoning* which describes a process of talking through elements of one's life, linking one experience to the next, and attempting to understand the present self in relation to the past and future selves (Habermas & Kober, 2014). Simply put, students shared parts of their 'life story'. This kind of thinking is what links a series of experiences into an identity and renders individuals as unique (Pasupathi, 2014). As students untangled their unique experiences and thought about questions of who they were, they arrived at a new understanding of themselves. The goal with this section is to understand each student's accrued musical experiences and how they have shaped their identity.

The latter half of this chapter presents results from the peripheral influences: parents and teachers who were part of students' musical experiences played a role in shaping their identity. Interviews with parents and teachers, as well as lesson observations, will be explored in greater detail there. This section has a different approach than with students, and it is presented in a more straightforward way in order to support the student portraits without distracting from them. It is not common in phenomenological research that other participants would be included to understand student experience and identity. One of the distinctive attributes of this study was the decision to include peripheral influences. The purpose was to give a well-rounded understanding of how students constructed their musical identities, and the selected moments from parents and teachers do important work in explaining student experience. Because student participants were between 12 and 14 years old, parents and teachers had a major role in shaping the musical environment in which students' identities were formed. Additionally, how parents and teachers spoke about each student gave a better understanding of how students spoke about themselves. It was important to understand the complex interactions between a student's wider learning ecologies of home, family, and community in order to understand what roles these played in shaping their identity. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed, the individual both influences, and is influenced by, their wider social environment in a reciprocal way.

Students

Helping the reader get to know each of the 8 students individually is important because they all have 8 distinct identities based on a unique combination of musical experiences. By presenting students one-by-one, I not only wanted to achieve a deeper understanding of each participant, but more importantly to emphasize the connection between lived experience and identity. Since phenomenology asks questions of experience, demonstrating each individual

student's musical experience and how it relates to their understanding of themselves as musicians is essential. The model for this chapter is to provide illustrative vignettes for each student participant, with supporting evidence from their parents and teachers included to draw out certain points. It is important to create these individual portraits in narrative style in order to convey students' life stories. It is my job to honour their voices. Throughout this section, direct quotes will be used extensively to allow the participants' voices to shine. Despite an enormous amount of data, only the most essential details about the student's experiences and how they understand themselves will be included in order for the reader to get to know who they *are*. These essential details address the themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation, which I believe are critical components of musical identity. A comprehensive table of student participants (see Table 1) and a general overview from the demographic survey aims to give a broad sense before the more in-depth descriptions are provided. All names have been changed to pseudonyms in order to protect participant anonymity, and photos which include identifiable markers such as people or specific places have been removed. References may still be made to the excluded photos, but described in such a way to glean important points without compromising student anonymity.

Table 1

Descriptive Overview of Student Participants

	Student Name	Age	Ethnic Background[1]	Years of Lessons	Program of Study & Level	Practice Days per Week	Parent	Teacher
1	Corina	13	Caribbean, African	6	RCM Level 5	4	Renata	Aaron
2	Quinn	13	Taiwanese	7	RCM Level 8	5	Fiona	Elizabeth
3	Hannah	12	Canadian	6	RCM Level 5	5	Faith	Adele
4	Grace	14	European	9	RCM Level 5	6	Maura	Annette
5	Madeline	13	Canadian	10	RCM Level 4	6	Lana	Katherine
6	Xavier	12	British	8	RCM Level 7	5	Nicholas	Louise
7	Sophia	12	Canadian	6	RCM Level 2	N/A	Deborah	Cara
8	Janelle	12	Asian	6	RCM Level 7	6	Sarah	Diana

Overall, students were from middle to upper-middle class families living in a large Canadian city. Since interviews were conducted at their homes, these research visits confirmed some level of affluence as noticed by single-family, detached houses, and most with the space and budget to afford acoustic upright pianos. Students all lived in two-parent households, and parents' occupations were more academic or 'white collar' in nature. For example, parents reported their careers as business managers or owners, a physician, accountant, mechanical designer, software engineer, scientist, hospital chaplain, federal government employee, researcher, and psychologist. There were two instances of stay-at-home mothers. While this study did not address socioeconomic status (SES) directly, it was possible to extrapolate that

[1] As identified by parents

these families were on the mid- to high-SES side of the spectrum based on parental occupation, and its links to education and income. Many families were able to afford music lessons for multiple children, and almost all students had siblings who were equally involved in music lessons. In terms of home culture, families mainly listened to Pop and Top 40 hits at home, with about half including classical and instrumental or jazz and blues music. There were fewer but still occasional references to rock, country, or world music.

On average, students had been taking piano lessons for about 7 years and were playing at about a Level 5 proficiency. They were practicing at home 5 days per week, for about half an hour at each practice session, which would accumulate to approximately 165 minutes each week. Parents reported that they were 'seldom' or 'sometimes' involved in their child's practicing, and that they provided feedback when something was wrong or well played. Parents anticipated that their children would likely continue piano lessons until the end of high school, and that their children would 'probably' or 'mostly likely' continue to play the piano as adults. Parents generally rated their children's piano playing abilities as 'average' or 'higher than average'.

Corina

Corina was a focused13-year-old who had recently developed a stronger interest towards her musical studies. She had a mind for language and spoke elegantly; she was sophisticated yet wearing sweatpants. Her balanced thinking made her answers to my interview questions particularly interesting. Corina's parents were from African and Caribbean backgrounds, and she lived at home with them both and her sister. She had been studying piano for six years and was currently learning Level 5 repertoire from the Royal Conservatory curriculum.

Corina's social environment involved others who studied and appreciated music. In her photovoice prompt of 'someone who is a musician' she submitted a photo of her friend who

played percussion and trombone in the school band (not included). Corina explained that "I have a whole lot more classmates that actually care about music, so I guess I relate to them more." These important musical friends in her social environment created feelings of relatedness and relevancy; a sense that others shared the same attitudes about learning music. This shared bond and community was part of Corina's musical identity, and these feelings are also a critical component of motivation and wellbeing according to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For 'something that motivates you to play the piano', Corina submitted a photo of her older sister who also played the piano and who she looked up to when younger (not included). Even though the photo was meant to focus on motivation, it represented the relationship between sisters and an important contributor to Corina's social environment. The girls disagreed on their popular musical preferences but piano was something that brought them together. Corina's sister could play well by ear and that proved to be inspirational. The sibling influence in her life not only shaped her daily home environment, but more importantly formed an important musical relationship.

In terms of the future self, Corina had a vision of how music would matter for her life and her forward-thinking musical goals seemed to provide an important context for her current identity. She had recently started to take her lessons more seriously and showed an increased level of dedication. Her teacher Aaron described that Corina was "very musical. I think there is a part of her that is desperate to express things. And I think she's very sensitive and she's also very smart. More importantly I think she really gets into feeling what's going on and listening to sound." Aaron believed that Corina had a bright future in music, with the aptitude to take it as far as she wanted, and explained that she eventually wanted to learn Liszt's *La Campanella* which is a diploma-level piece. Corina felt that piano would be part of her whole life, even if it was not

part of her career. Her photo of 'how music will be important to you in the future' shows the high school where she would be attending (see Photo 2), and Corina knew that music would help her in school, for university entrance, and for future jobs. She was considering careers in politics or finance, and gave an example that if she went into government she could make music education a stronger force in schools. She really never intended to stop playing the piano at any point, and this excerpt from our conversation demonstrates her thinking.

> C: Piano is something I think will just stick with me for probably most of my life.
>
> KG: And why do you think that is, that it will be a part of your life going forward?
>
> C: Because during my youth it is such a huge part of what I do now.

Photo 2

Corina: How music will be important in the future

Note. Photo of Corina's future high school, 2019.

In terms of motivation, her mom Renata and piano teacher Aaron both agreed that there was something musical within Corina, and that something had recently shifted in her outlook towards music lessons. The concept of choosing to play music well and play music for herself

had been a recent development: she had made the effort to take lessons throughout the summer, advance forward to the next level, and set her sights on progressing even further. Her vision of a hoped-for future musical self was also shaping both her motivation. In her photovoice submission of 'a place where you make music', Corina submitted a photo of her keyboard with the music for *No Worries* – a piece she was currently learning – open on the stand (see Photo 3). Although this photovoice prompt showed her musical environment at home, Corina analysed it in connection with motivation towards better learning. She described detailed practice strategies such as playing the "frustrating" parts slowly, working with the metronome, using the score to focus on timing, and reminding herself of how the music was supposed to sound. She explained that "I just try and figure out how can I make it sound this way by looking at the page, listening to the song, figuring it out." Corina was experiencing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) because she believed she would be able to learn more difficult pieces in a more experienced way, and working with this sense of self-belief was paying off. Her teacher Aaron recognised that "when she gets onstage she just brings it and she glows afterwards when it goes well." Successful experiences like this also seemed to be strengthening Corina's feelings competency and autonomy, which are two critical components that connect motivation with identity (Ryan & Deci, 2011). The following conversation shows how the concept of autonomous choice matters for learning, motivation, success, and wellbeing.

KG: You said in the beginning maybe [taking piano lessons] wasn't so much your choice, but now would you say it has become your choice?

C: Yes, definitely.

KG: So what changed along the way?

C: I felt like it was my choice when I started practicing more, and okay, I actually really want to do well on this performance and so I would focus. And I guess I got better at performing.

Photo 3

Corina: A place where you make music

Note. Photo of home digital keyboard with music open on the stand, 2019.

During our second interview, I revisited this topic of choice since it stood out during the first interview. In regard to motivation and its connection with identity, feeling free and in control of our own lives is essential. It seemed that Corina's experiences with more advanced music, and ability to learn music more independently, meant that she had chosen her own musical path.

> KG: Everyone sort of agreed that something changed for you this summer, like you started taking piano more seriously than ever, and you started to really get into this. Would you say that is true?
>
> C: Yeah, most years my mum would have to tell me, "Okay, you need to practice piano," and I kind of didn't think much of it, and then she started telling me, "Okay, if you don't practice more you won't be taking lessons," so I ended up just doing it more, actually practicing.
>
> KG: So there was some pressure from your mum there, but what do you think changed with *you* that you were like, "Yeah, I am going to do this!"
>
> C: I guess I started having more fun doing it, and since my teacher actually got me into learning my Etudes while I was still in Level 4 before my exams I just thought, 'Why I don't just learn some of my repertoire?' So I learned 'Sunset in

Rio' and I learned 'Scamp', and I learned a couple of my pieces and I ended up pushing them forwards.

The concept of choice arose again when Corina described what it meant to be a musician. At its most basic level, she believed that a musician is someone who plays music. She explained that it could be as simple as someone humming along to the music, "even if they are not necessarily good at it". She expressed that everyone could be a musician in their own way and that she considered herself to be a musician. We took up this topic again to explore it further, and deeper layers appeared where Corina explained that everyone *can* be a musician but not everyone *wants* to be a musician. Without knowing the extent to which this topic has been researched, she made the very astute observation that motivation is connected to identity: she needed to *want* to become a musician in order to become one.

Overall, the most striking impression from our time together was that Corina and her mom, Renata, had significantly different outlooks on important topics such as what it meant to be a musician. Corina believed she was a musician, but her mom did not necessarily think the same. Renata explained that she "would be fine if Corina decided she's had enough of piano but she wants to keep doing it". She expressed that piano would be the first thing to be eliminated if they fell on hard times, and that they had no intention of ever upgrading to an acoustic instrument. It seemed as if many of the traditional predictors of successful piano students were actually against Corina, such as a high level of parental support, extensive practicing, and a home environment which emphasized piano music. However, she played musically and was making excellent progress. Where did this come from? How was it supported? It seemed to be inside her, in a rather inexplicable way, and Corina demonstrated that there may be a link between musical ability and musical identity.

KG: So think about piano now … What drives you?

C: Because it is so much fun and I think it is awesome … to be able to make really beautiful sounds and songs. Yeah, I am not sure how to explain it.

Quinn

Quinn was a confident and academically gifted 13-year-old, who was also involved in badminton, hip-hop dancing, taekwondo, and played trumpet in the school band. She was the most advanced piano student in this study. Playing at a Level 8 standard is exceptional for that age and she described herself as "I am that Asian who plays piano." Quinn's parents were originally from Taiwan, and she lived at home with them and her brother. She had started informal lessons at age 3 in Taiwan, and had formally been studying piano for seven years in a performance-based system of learning. Music was central to Quinn's self-concept such that it defined who she was in a significant way. Living up to this expectation seemed to result in some pressure, and the relationships with her social environment were formed based on musical successes. This moment from our first interview demonstrated how music mattered for how Quinn was perceived by others.

KG: Why do you want to play the piano now?

Q: Well, I mean it is a big part of my life and I have been playing it for a really long time, and it is kind of a habit, and sometimes I don't want to play. It is a lot of pressure like, "oh yeah, Quinn, the piano person!" So if I quit now they are going to totally not know who I am anymore.

Quinn's social environment had music visible from every angle, and it formed an important part of her family relationships. It was clear upon arriving at their home that music was central to their household: at the top of the entryway stairs was a wall of winning certificates from the local Performing Arts Festival, and in the centre of the living room was a well-kept Yamaha upright piano. Both Quinn and her brother had achieved recognition in music competitions and exams, and their mom Fiona also actively studied music with another teacher.

There was a strong bond between Quinn and her mom, and Fiona explained that "we will yell at each other if she rejects to practice or if she did something wrong. It's kind of like support but she's angry but she knows mommy's there and not to yell at her but to help her become better." Fiona still sat alongside Quinn while practicing. In terms of motivation, some students might feel like their autonomy was being compromised by having a parent in such close contact, but it seemed not to have a detrimental effect. Instead, their relationship was strong, and Quinn mentioned her mom 18 times in our first interview. Quinn described this bond by explaining the investment her family had made in her musical education: "my mom, she spent all this time, money and effort. We used to have a really small electric keyboard and we kept upgrading and upgrading and we ended up with a really nice piano, so I was like, 'Mom spent so much money I have to keep doing this!' … So then I have to do piano. I already said it was a part of me so many times, I can't really give it up!" This investment of time and finances by her parents on practicing, lessons, and instruments meant that her everyday home environment was shaped towards musical study, and prioritizing a new upright piano even altered the configuration of their living room furniture. Beyond that surface-level social environment example, music had changed Quinn's relationship with her mom. She described that "my mom is my friend and we talk about music a lot." It seemed that there was a high level of dedication to Quinn's musical education, which not only resulted in a fondness for music but for one another.

Quinn's photovoice submission of 'someone you make music with' blended together the topics of social environment with motivation. She submitted a picture of her brother (not included) since they frequently performed duets together, and the two siblings had a very competitive relationship. Her brother was shown in a head-down, defeated pose and Quinn explained that "we were talking about how much better I am in piano and he got mad at me, and

ignored me, so I took a picture of him!". In a moment of pure honesty, Quinn admitted that she was in fact jealous of her brother's musical accomplishments and scared that he was going to match or surpass her level. She felt pressure to stay ahead of her younger sibling, and this provided a push towards more practicing. Her teacher Elizabeth identified that Quinn "is driven and kind of motivated by competition." Quinn felt extremely motivated to study music by tangible achievements and recognition from others. These outward confirmations of her musical competency were extrinsically motivating, but she was able to internalize those feelings. She described it like this:

> Q: It is always when I finish winning an award, or when I do a test, or I get my test results back and they are really high and I am like, 'Wow, this is me, and I should totally continue playing the piano because I am so awesome!' One time I was in Grade 3 and I won a gold medal, and it was my first one, and I was like, 'Mom! I am going to practice piano for three hours a day for the rest of my life!' and I said that and she still remembers it and uses it against me sometimes!

Quinn's photovoice submission of 'how you think music will be important to you in the future' blended together the topics of ideal future self and motivation. It shows a screenshot photo from the Royal Conservatory of Music's webpage regarding high school credits (see Photo 4). For context, passing a Level 8 piano exam and the accompanying theory can be transferred as a Grade 12 non-graded school credit, and having this extra line on a transcript often helps students as they apply for universities. Quinn knew all of these details already. Even as a 13-year-old, she was already thinking ahead to university admissions and at one point, she mentioned Harvard Law School. She had a clear vision of her ideal future self, which did not include attending university as a music major. Nevertheless, she knew that studying music along the way would be valuable for her future academic life in other ways, and also provided a drive towards that milestone in the present. Quinn admitted that when she first started piano lessons she did not particularly enjoy it, but her mom explained the importance of high school credits so

she "stuck with it" and had come to enjoy playing the piano over time. This may be another example of how an extrinsic motivator, when internalized, can have a more self-identified level of regulation.

Photo 4

Quinn: How music will be important in the future
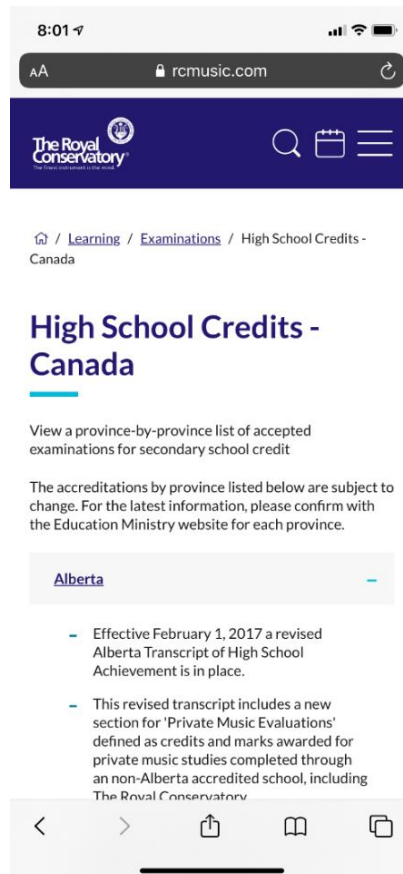
Note. Cellphone screen shot photo of the Royal Conservatory website's description of high school credits, 2019.

The overall topic of musical identity proved to be meaningful for Quinn. It was something she wrestled with and reflected upon within and between our interviews. Initially, she offered a well-thought-out answer about musicians and musical expression, and she could identify herself fitting into her own definition.

KG: What does it mean to be a musician?

Q: Well, I mean a musician is kind of like an artist and it is some way you express yourself. A musician is someone who just expresses themselves through music, like an artist would express themselves through art. I express myself through different art styles, like art and music, better than I express myself through words. When you get a song usually you wouldn't play it exactly like it is written, you would add a bit of loud and soft, and when they put something larghetto, you have to find your own style, the push and pull of it. You have to personalize it a bit, shape it into your own style.

KG: Okay, so think about all that stuff you just said… Are you a musician?

Q: Yeah.

Quinn explained the experience of being a musician in a particularly phenomenological way: everyone's combination of experiences throughout life shape their identity, and no two people will ever play the same piece the same way because they approach it with a different past set of experiences.

KG: Someone once said that everyone is a musician. What do you think of that?

Q: Well like, everyone has their own sense of style, they all have their different way of playing. If you play Fur Elise - and a lot of people play Fur Elise - they always have their different styles. It is like, you know, just what happened to me has shaped who I am as a musician, and everyone in the world has their own different story. Usually when you find a song you really connect to you can play it, and you play it using your own life memories, your own events, and like, it shows that story and the musician thing.

KG: So you just said a 'song you really connect to'? Have you ever felt a song that you really connect to?

Q: Not yet, and I am kind of sad.

Quinn went on to describe that you can create your own storylines for pieces and add your own emotional interpretation as you go along. The suggestion that she had never really played a piece that she strongly connected with after this many years of studying music was certainly surprising. Considering that she may never have deeply connected with the music she played, this feeling could have played a role in why she had difficulty seeing herself as a musician in other contexts. Between our first and second interviews, there seemed to be a disconnect in

Quinn's idea of what it meant to be a musician, which I interpreted as evidence of internal struggle with this question. Her photovoice submission of 'someone who is a musician' resulted in a photo of Mozart shown sitting regally in his most famous portrait (see Photo 5). Quinn explained again that a musician was someone who expresses themselves through music, and she thought that Mozart did that well. However, she did not have any personal experience playing Mozart's music. She identified him as a "prodigy" and that seemed to be important when describing a musician. It was interesting that despite our previous conversation she did not think of herself or someone she knows personally as a musician, but rather a distant and deceased composer with an unmatchable legacy.

> KG: Do you think you'll start using the term 'musician' to describe yourself?
>
> Q: Well I mean, I would want to, but I don't feel like I'm at the level to call myself a musician or that kind of performer. Because when you think of musician you think of those people who are on stage playing 5-hour pieces, and I'm just here at Level 8 piano.

This fluctuation between the musician-as-performer and musician-as-expressive-artist is a difficult question for many people. As much as Quinn may have liked to use the term 'musician' to introduce herself to others, based on her many years of training and strong musical qualities, it is possible that others in her social environment simply would not understand.

Photo 5

Quinn: Someone who 'is' a musician
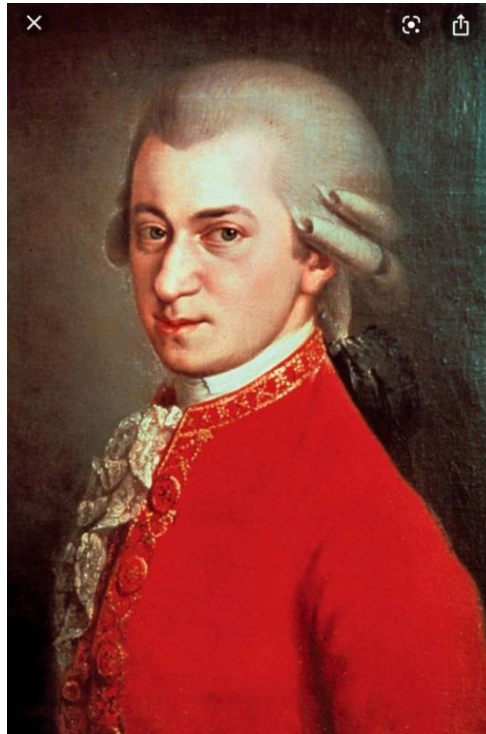
Note. Pinterest screenshot photo of Mozart's portrait, originally painted by posthumously by Barbara Krafft (1819), 2019.

Hannah

Hannah was an expressive, creative, and imaginative 12-year-old. She had recently joined a prestigious choir and loved dogs. One of Hannah's unique talents was the ability to gather up her feelings and pour them into her musical performances. This was a homeschooling family who had a poetic way of thinking about the world. Hannah's parents were Canadian, and she lived at home with them and her brother. She had been studying piano for six years and was currently learning Level 5 repertoire from the Royal Conservatory curriculum.

Hannah's social environment was full of those who supported her music learning, and encouraged her to use music as an outlet for the many emotions that come alongside being an adolescent. Their piano was an old, $500 Heintzmann in their dining room, which was the centre

of the house. Physically placing the instrument at the heart of their home seemed significant; the music would have spread through the whole home and practicing required the support of the entire family. Fortunately, her parents both recognised and supported Hannah's love of music. They made a distinct effort to let her be herself at the instrument rather than offering criticism or feedback. In particular, Hannah described how her dad always wished he had studied piano but never got the chance, and she felt some responsibility to make the most of her musical gifts. Hannah's photovoice submission of 'a place where you make music' was meant to capture the social environment and featured her actively playing Sonatina in F Major by Diabelli on her piano (not included). She was the only student who submitted a picture not only of a place where music might happen, but in the present-tense performance of actually making music in that place. It required her mom to physically take the photo, rather than herself because she was busy playing. Faith described how important it was for Hannah to have her own space to experience music.

> Faith: I think she's good at it, but I think more than that it feeds something in her spirit. And also I think it's a gift she gives to other people. I don't want her to just do music for other people, I want her to do it for herself, but it really is a gift. Her friend's cat, they had to put their cat down recently, and they FaceTime so she saw how sad her friend was. So she ran upstairs and dressed all in black, came downstairs and sat at the piano, and composed the *Requiem for Oscar*. She wrote this beautifully tragic song for this friend who lost her cat. Her friend is not musical at all. She says to me, "Mom sometimes it's just inside of me and I have to get it out". And so we've noticed if she's super excited and doesn't know what to do with her emotions, or super sad or upset she goes to the piano.
>
> KG: Wow!
>
> Faith: It took me a while to realize that's what she was doing, and my husband was like, "You know she's getting her stuff out at the piano, right?"

Hannah had a clear vision of her ideal future self as a musician, and a strong sense that music would be important throughout her entire life. She talked about perhaps combining her

notability as a famous musician with the ability to travel around the world as an advocate for women's rights. She mentioned performing as a soloist with the local orchestra. The photovoice submission for 'how music will be important to you in the future' was of her canvas choir bag (see Photo 6), and she explained that becoming an accompanist for the choir would bring together her love of piano and singing. The other photo of 'something that motivates you to play the piano' also had a forward-looking angle and shows how motivation and future self overlap. Levels 8 and 10 are significant milestones in the Royal Conservatory system and Hannah wanted to complete both levels (see Photo 7). It was interesting that she already had copies of these books, despite being a Level 5 student, and had a clear vision of herself as an advanced pianist. Completing these exams is well-recognised by other musicians and signals a combination of determination, hard work, and musical achievement. Hannah explained that "Level 8 and Level 10, when you tell someone that they are like, 'whoa!'". She also knew that these were the levels required to be taken seriously at a university entrance exam, and she had intentions to study post-secondary voice, piano, or choral. During a particularly special lesson observation, Hannah passed a mock practice-exam for Level 4 and in a significant milestone moment, advanced forward to Level 5. Her musical growth was well supported by her teacher, Adele, who believed in Hannah's musical future and explained that "I think music probably is going to be a huge part of her life. I can see that something to do with music might be part of her career". Hannah was already advancing through the intermediate grades and with momentum to continue much further.

Photo 6

Hannah: How music will be important in the future

Note. Photo of Hannah's *Cantare* choir music tote bag, 2019.

Photo 7

Hannah: Something that motivates you to play the piano

Note. Photo of the Royal Conservatory of Music's Level 10 and Level 8 piano repertoire books, 2019.

Hannah was one of the only students to describe the pure, intrinsic joy that comes with playing music. In terms of motivation, she did not use the words 'exam', 'festival', or 'recital' or any other classic extrinsic motivators. There were no certificates, rewards, or prizes. Rather, she described how music was internalized within her spirit. Piano teacher Adele pinpointed Hannah as being "a deeper thinker than a lot of 12-year-olds I know." Her mom, Faith, described a moment the previous day where Hannah explained that "sometimes I feel like a sponge and I pick up all the colors that people put out. But then it ends up like turning brown or black because I'm absorbing everything". Faith teared up talking about what music had done in her daughter's life. When Hannah absorbed all of that emotion to feel so deeply, sometimes it could become overwhelming which is when she turned to music as her outlet. In the healthiest ways possible to deal with the big feelings which come with being an early adolescent, she poured herself into the piano and singing. In our first interview, she explained it quite clearly:

H: And now, if I am feeling a really strong emotion I will sing or play the piano.

KG: Oh? Like what? What do you mean?

H: Like sometimes when something really exciting happens I will go to the piano and play, or like, if I am really sad I will just go to the piano. It is sort of like my safe space where I can do my own thing and nobody else will bug me.

Music had a therapeutic purpose, and using music to feel better about herself is a separable outcome that would tip slightly onto the extrinsic portion the motivational scale. However, the *integrated regulation* that Hannah displayed is characterized by high levels of autonomy and is often indistinguishable from intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2011). In our following interview, we returned to this topic and Hannah expanded on her thoughts as music as an outlet for her personality and emotions.

KG: What has studying piano taught you about yourself?

H: That sometimes when all my emotions are built up inside of me, I can always … it is almost like you know how your phone gets full and then you can plug it into a

USB key or whatever and it will take some of the stuff out so your phone isn't full? It is almost like if I plug my fingers into the piano I can like, dissolve it.

KG: Oh, that is so interesting! So it has taught you that music is an outlet for whatever you are feeling, so you can go to that because you were talking about that safe space before?

H: And if I am not in the mood to go to the piano or sing because I am really grumpy, I will just go on my iPod and turn on Vivaldi or whatever I feel like listening to.

Overall, in terms of musical identity, Hannah had the most unique capability of recognising herself and others as musicians. Not only was she well-supported by her parents and piano teacher, she recognised it within herself as well. She was the only student who had already freely used the term 'musician' to describe herself to others. It is worth noticing that this was a pre-teen who independently listens to Vivaldi, understands what a Requiem is, and was the only student who referenced a Classical Sonatina as their favourite piece. Her piano teacher Adele explained that Hannah "just has music in her soul; she wants to make music, you know? She is not one of those kids you kind of have to talk into loving things. For her, it is definitely giving her an identity: 'I am a pianist and a singer,' right? 'I am a musician.'" There was a mutual respect from both teacher and student, because Hannah's photovoice submission of 'someone who is a musician' was of her piano teacher (not included). They recognised and celebrated the musician identity in one another, despite being separated in age by many decades. Our final conversation brought out how she understands herself as a musician.

KG: Is there anything you find that you have learned about yourself?

H: Well it has really made me think.

KG: Think about what?

H: Everything.

KG: What do you mean?

H: Well it has made me think about maybe why music is such a big part of my life and how it got to be a big part of my life.

KG: And why is it such a big part of your life?

H: Well, I have always really loved music - hearing music and making music - and I really like playing, and like I said before, it helps me process everything and also, I feel like it is my … it is my *thing*. Because everyone sort of has their thing; lots of people do sports, but my *thing* is music.

KG: I *agree*, it is important to have your *thing* because it shows people part of who you are. Do you feel like you have a better understanding of this whole topic of musical identities and who you are as a musician?

H: [Nods yes]

KG: Yeah, because it is a big topic. Do you feel like you would use the term 'musician' to describe yourself now?

H: [Nods yes]

KG: Did you used to do that before? Oh, you already did that, so you will just keep doing that? Okay, cool.

Grace

Grace was a confident and independent 14-year-old who was involved in track and field club, summer tennis, and was a strong student at school. She was one of the only students whose parents studied music extensively as they were growing up. Grace's parents were from European heritage, and she lived at home with them and her two siblings. She had been studying piano for nine years and was in the process of preparing for a Level 5 piano exam with the Royal Conservatory.

Grace's social environment had a significant impact in how she thought of herself as a musician. In her photo 'a place where you make music' (see Photo 8), the upright Baldwin piano shown was the one her dad learned on while growing up. It was set up in the front office of their house which also doubled as a music studio. The piano was surrounded by framed certificates from the Royal Conservatory and other educational institutions. The metronome was open and there was music open on the stand, which implies that someone had recently been practicing.

Over the course of the research period, their family invested in a new piano based on their children's advancing skill. Grace's mom, Maura, was her very first piano teacher and she still played old favourites from her teenage years such as *Pachelbel's Canon* and *November Rain*. Her dad had a particular interest in jazz. Grace explained that "it was just my mum teaching me when I was pretty young, like 5 or 6, and then I got into real lessons, which was more them being, like, we want you to have a more proper piano education." Piano seemed to be set up as a regular, expected event in Grace's life rather than intermittent activities like track or tennis. She explained it not so much as a family requirement, but as something that was consciously valued and would be consistently and obviously part of her life:

> G: It is definitely something that I have always been doing, like it is never a seasonal thing, it is all the time, so it was definitely a constant. And then there would be times when I would be like, 'Why are my parents making me do this?' I would be like, 'I don't want to do this anymore', but then I realized if I just lost that and just did all of that work and then just stopped … what is the point?

Photo 8

Grace: A place where you make music
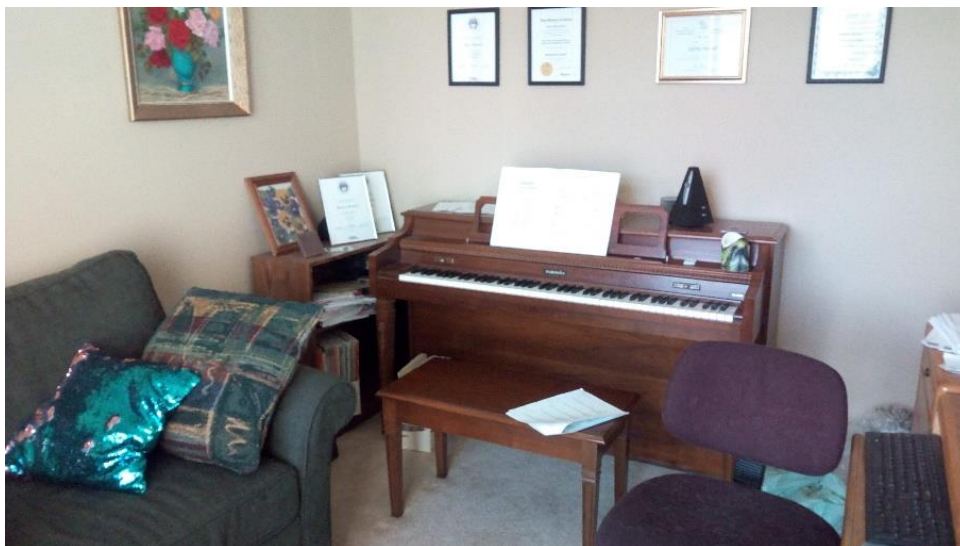
Note. Photo of the family home office and music room with diplomas and certificates, 2019.

Within her social environment, Grace's relationships with her parents and siblings were her most important musical influence. Grace considered herself to be part of a family of musicians, and that mattered for her identity construction. When she submitted a photo of 'someone who is a musician', she included both of her parents and two siblings (see Photo 9). Her photo did not have anything to do with a musical event – in fact, they were on a family vacation – but Grace wanted to capture her whole family in one shot. She did not mention whether they thought of *themselves* as musicians, but the fact that Grace thought of them as musicians, and considered herself as coming from a musical family, was significant. Instead of identifying a famous performing musician, she submitted a picture of those closest to her in her everyday life.

G: So this is all my family because everyone has strong ties to music. We have all played piano, we have all done band, and even we will just sing a lot. My brother is always whistling, and I feel these people are all musicians because they all share in creating music.

KG: Okay, so you will have to tell me about it because I have never really met your family.

G: My brother plays clarinet and piano, my dad played oboe and piano, my mum played piano and flute and trumpet, I think, and then [my sister] plays the piano but she says she thinks she will go into band as well.

Photo 9

Grace: Someone who is a musician

Note. Photo of Grace's two parents and two siblings on a recent family vacation, 2019.

In terms of her future self, Grace had a great deal of foresight about where music might take her in life. This foresight did not have to do with a musical career, but more so the life skills she was learning through studying music. She mentioned wanting to earn her Level 8 exam, and study theory more seriously, but ultimately she wanted to become a civil engineer. Grace connected performing in piano recitals now to her ideal future profession and recognised that "a huge part of any career is having to talk to people or show something in front of people, and doing a performance like that will help you gain that confidence." One of the things that stood out most about Grace, which had presumably been referenced by the adults around her, was the interest in learning benefits and brain science of music. In her photo of 'how music will be important to you in the future', Grace submitted a photo of herself sitting among a pile of books (not included). She explained that the skills gained in music lessons was a transferrable skill like reading: what you learn in one place you can use in many other instances throughout life. For example, she referenced comprehension, fine motor skills, multitasking, and communication

which were all life skills learned through piano lessons. Like many teenagers in music, she did not enjoy every moment but the larger purpose was always easy for her to find. This resulted in a better-defined sense of why studying music in the present was important, and this kind of thinking helped Grace understand herself in a new way. She was a person who considered the long-term benefits of studying music, which helped answer her own questions of 'why am I doing this?' in the present and demonstrate how future self and motivation often overlap. The type of motivation this produces has been termed *identified regulation* which reflects a conscious valuing of the activity, and its personal importance shows high quality engagement, but can be compartmentalized and not fully integrated within the self (Ryan & Deci, 2011).

KG: What has studying piano taught you about yourself?

G: That even if I don't really want to do something, I can find ways to be motivated by understanding the good it will do for me, and finding ways for me to be happy with what I have accomplished, and realize that what I am doing, although I may not see it as the most important thing I could be doing at the time, seeing long term the beneficial effects it would have on me and being able to see that. So maybe I am sacrificing time that I could be doing other things, but the good it will bring will be worth it.

Motivation was strongly linked to repertoire for Grace. One of the most interesting parts of our interviews was hearing about her past favourite pieces, such as *Crazy Comics* and *The Somersault King* which are both by contemporary composers. However, she admitted that her least favourite part of studying piano was when she did not enjoy a piece but "I just have to keep on playing it, knowing I am never practicing as hard because I don't like the song very much, so I don't feel motivated." When asked about the piece she had in mind, she could not even remember its title despite practicing it earlier that day. All of the pieces Grace referenced were included in the standard Royal Conservatory Celebration Series books and she was currently working on exam repertoire, including all of the accompanying technique, sight reading, and

listening tests. These seemed to be the answers she thought were formal enough for the questions in this research study. However, when her mom, Maura, described some of Grace's favourite recent pieces a new light emerged:

> M: I think that was really probably this summer it came out, but she wasn't studying her lesson pieces. It was going towards more of a pop music and the things that she could hear on the radio, and then she would get the music for those and she would just learn it and play it. So over the past summer that has been a real motivating thing for her: just learning pop songs that she really likes.

It seemed as if Grace was at the point where she could learn music independently, based on her skill accumulated over many years of lessons. Titles like *Budapest* by George Ezra or *Ride* by 21 Pilots were the hits she learned on her own. It was interesting that she did not think these 'counted' as music she was learning and neglected mention them in our interviews, but her mom, Maura, offered that information during the parent interview. Popular selections served an important purpose towards her motivation. The feelings of relatedness – the sense of belonging within the social environment – matter for adolescents and popular music. Grace demonstrated how her informal learning was just as important towards musical identity construction as what she was learning in formal lessons.

Overall, Grace had a surprisingly broad and inclusive definition of what it meant to be a musician. She considered a musician to be anyone who created or shared music, which might include music producers or someone making remixes of songs. She did not mention a skill level or specific instrument, but rather they had to connect with the music and connect with others through music. As she thought out her answer, she further rearranged this definition to include connecting inwardly: playing music simply for herself was enough to be considered a musician and it did not necessarily need to be shared. It was interesting to observe that between our first and second interviews, this definition evolved again as she began to see herself within this term.

KG: Do you think you are going to start using the term 'musician' when you start describing yourself to other people?

G: Like when you asked me to define musician - because I remember that question last time - I was like, "Oh," and then I think I said … I think my answer was something like 'someone who makes music and then shares it with other people' and then I started to think, like, I do that! You think of musician and you think of someone who is famous who everyone knows plays music, but then it could be anyone who was playing music and then helping spread that music and creating something with it.

KG: Yeah, it doesn't have to be just Mozart!

G: Yeah, it could be anyone who just found a passion in music and then was able to start doing it.

Madeline

Madeline was almost 13 years old and was enthusiastically involved in Girl Guides and the drama program at school. She had been playing the piano nearly for as long as she could remember, and was preparing for a Level 4 exam in January 2020. She was a sweet, giggly teen with a longstanding fondness for musical theatre classics like Grease, and even by age 10 she chose to dress up as a Pink Lady for Halloween. Madeline's lifelong dream was to be a piano teacher in New York for Broadway. She started with Suzuki music as a baby, and then Music for Young Children, before entering a conservatory-based system. Among more traditional repertoire, Madeline was studying with teacher who prioritized incorporating pop and jazz music. Madeline's parents were Canadian, and she lived at home with them and her brothers. She had been studying music for ten years and was playing at about a Level 4 proficiency, although with a great deal of personalized repertoire as well. She envisioned herself playing the piano long-term and explained that she wanted to achieve the "highest level of the Royal Conservatory, and then I'm kinda gonna go from there".

During her interviews it became clear that Madeline's life had always been immersed in music: not only with piano lessons, but also with her friendships and family relationships. The social environment was structured such that important musical influences were the people she loved the most. For example, she explained that "me and my dad have the same favourite song: *Can't Help Falling in Love with You* by Elvis Presley". Madeline also referenced Madonna, ABBA, The Sound of Music, and her familiarity with music of other generations was striking for a 21st century adolescent. It suggest she had strong relationships with important adult influences. All three trio participants talked about Madeline's grandma and her special involvement in the musical journey. Piano teacher, Katherine, explained that "this is their special day on music day. So her Grandma picks her up from school and they go out to her place and they always do something interesting, like plant the garden or bake cookies, ride bikes, and she practices together with her a little bit. And then they come here together." This relationship between Grandmother and Granddaughter had revolved around music ever since Madeline was a baby, and her grandmother still attended lessons as a silent observer. The bond between the two generations was something remarkable, and her Grandma shaped the social environment around music. For Madeline, her Grandmother's involvement in music lessons was so much more than a fun activity they shared, but a real foundation of building her identity as a musician.

One of Madeline's photovoice submissions included her teaching two young students at Grandma's carved, wooden upright piano (not included). In the photo, which answered 'how music will be important in the future', Madeline is attentively pointing towards the music as she guides the students along the score. This is an example of how possible selves and social environment can overlap: her vision of teaching others is dependent on an instrument which has a family legacy and physically occupied a prominent place in her Grandma's home. It also

demonstrates how students can develop relationships with instruments themselves. Madeline explained again that she wanted to teach piano in the future, and it seemed significant that even though this was a staged lesson for a picture, her first picture of herself as a piano teacher was around her Grandma's old piano. She told another story about this same piano:

> M: I remember very clearly the reason why I got put into lessons was my grandma, who I go to piano lessons with and I've always gone to piano with her. She has this big piano in her house and in her old house it used to be right where we would eat dinner, like at family dinners. So I remember when I was little I'd climb up on the piano because I was too little to even, like, go and sit on it, my feet would dangle off the little… like, the bench, and I would just start playing. Just banging at the piano, not even making any music. But then they were like, 'she really enjoys doing that!' so then they put me in lessons. And then I've enjoyed it since then.

Madeline's home musical environment included a Roland keyboard next to her fireplace in the living room. In her photo of 'a place where you make music' (see Photo 10), Madeline took a picture of her piano area and explained it was a place where she invented and physically wrote down her own, new music. She interpreted the word 'make' to mean generating her own original compositions. She enjoyed playing expressive, melodic pieces such as *Reflections* by Dennis Alexander, or *Dreamcatcher* by Anne Crosby on the piano, and spent time writing her own lyrics and melodies to sing. This space also occupied a significant amount of free time, and her mom, Lana explained that "When she's bored, she's like 'I'm going to go play piano'. There's not really boredom because there's piano." The home culture was supportive of dreaming up original music, and her parents were present but allowed space for musical exploration. It seemed that music was always on Madeline's mind, including during a recent family trip (see Photo 11).

> M: So I went to B.C. the other weekend just for like 2 days and that was a photo from over there. And it was kind of like, usually I play piano every day. So then when we were gone I couldn't play piano for 3 days … And I had a song in my head – the music was playing in my head that I could have wrote down, but I couldn't because I didn't have a piano.

KG: So is the song in your head something that you thought up all by yourself?

M: Yeah.

KG: Or something you already played?

M: No, like a song that I wrote, that just kinda came into my head. And then I was like, 'oh I wish I could put that into music!'.

Even though this photovoice prompt was 'something that motivates you to play the piano', Madeline's interpretation had more to do with the everyday inspirations behind making her own music and living a musical life. It seems worth noticing that the neon lights of the *Towne* sign, the stylized streetlamp, the car headlights at dusk, and the storefronts have a distinctly Broadway feel which is aligned with Madeline's future vision of making a career in New York.

Photo 10

Madeline: A place where you make music
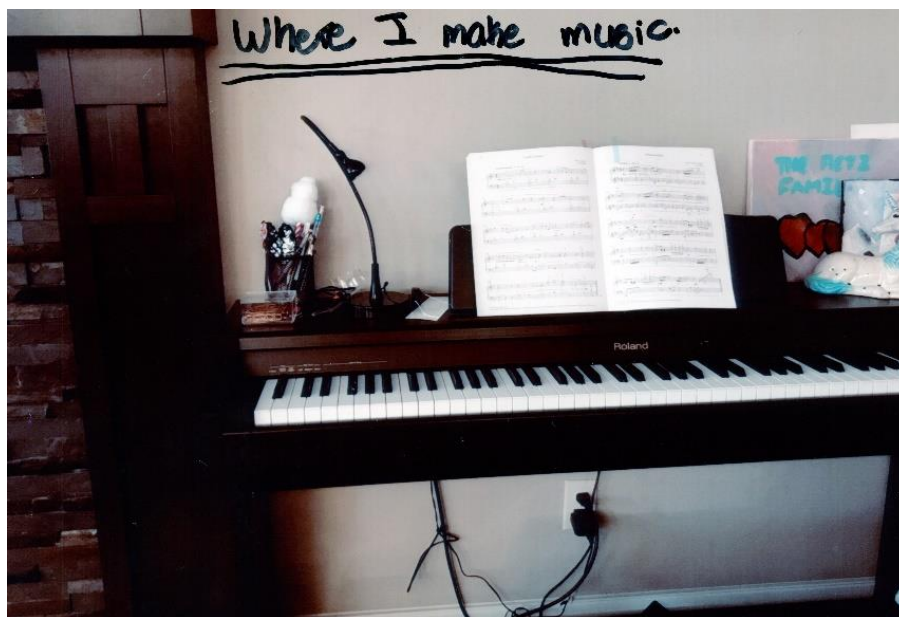
Note. A printed 4x6 photo of a keyboard next to a fireplace, with the RCM Level 4 repertoire book open to *Dreamcatcher* by composer Anne Crosby, 2019.

Photo 11

Madeline: Something that motivates you to play the piano

Note. Photo of downtown Vernon, British Columbia on a recent family trip, 2019.

In terms of motivation, Madeline's love of music came from within and was based on a lifelong involvement in music combined with natural musical ability. While her parents certainly encouraged daily home practice, and believed that their daughter would play piano regularly as an adult, the practice routine was largely student-driven. Lana explained that "I'll never push her to do it. It has to be her own willingness to do it." If Madeline ever missed a day of practice, she had the self-discipline to practice twice the following day. Madeline focused more on playing music for feeling and expression, and she said more than once that music helped her find her voice. Her shy nervousness and hesitant answers about herself – even as being the authority on herself – meant that being able to communicate in other, musical ways was important. Despite the years of accumulated daily practice, which students can find tedious, Madeline described that "I think once you realize how much you love it, then you'll realize why it's worth it." The moment that she identified loving music was significant in understanding her intrinsic motivation and its role in musical identity. Her musicianship was supported by a strong ear, a creative mind,

and a real connection to the music itself. Lana also identified Madeline's pure love of music and elaborated that,

> L: It's just always been there. Like music has always been really a part of Madeline's life even since she was like a little tiny baby.
>
> KG   Would you say that's a part of who she is?
>
> L: Probably, I would say it's a big part … It's just always been Madeline: music. When little kids sing songs and some kids sing and they're a little bit out tune and you're like 'oh!', she's never really been one of those kids where we plug our ears. She's always been kind of in tune and she's always been *singsongy* and piano just was a natural go to her. Because it's always been there. Which is good I guess... She loves it.

Overall, Madeline's musical identity might be said to be 'identity achieved' (Marcia, 1966), where she has discovered her purpose and made a commitment to her musical identity. Identity achievement involves a questioning or exploration period, and Madeline explained that she can achieve anything she *wants* to achieve. However, she needs time to think about it first. Once she decides, she is committed and hard working, and she used the example of her successful previous piano exam. These many small, individual, daily decisions – such as taking a piano exam, practicing twice in one day, or improvising a melody – accumulated into a series of musical experiences that placed her in identity achievement. Madeline seemed committed to thinking of herself as a musician and achieved that definition within her own working concept of self.

> KG   What do you think it means to be a musician?
>
> M   I think it's to enjoy the art of music, and whether it's playing music, whether it's writing music, whether it's just enjoying listening to music. I think that any of those is what it is to be a musician.
>
> KG   Ok, so thinking about all that stuff you just said right now… are you a musician?
>
> M   Yes… yeah.

Xavier

Xavier was 12 years old, lived at home with his sister and their two fathers, and was involved in hockey, air cadets, and the school band. The fathers' roots were British, but Xavier had been adopted. He had recently been involved in the school's musical theatre production as part of the technical team, and had an interest in computer coding. Xavier had been playing the piano since age 4 and had recently completed his Level 6 RCM piano exam in June 2019. He mostly listened to techno music in his own time, such as Tobu and Daftpunk, and his lessons had taken a turn this year towards more modern pieces including pop, jazz, and movie themes in an attempt to keep up his motivation through more relevant repertoire. Xavier might be described as shy, sensitive, and innovative, but in a pre-teen slump.

Xavier's social environment included musical instruments and a musical family. The photovoice prompt regarding how music would be important to him in the future revealed an old trombone mounted to a wall above the fireplace in his living room (see Photo 12). Considering the prominence of this placement, the family was making a statement about the importance of music in their home culture. Xavier explained that it "was my grandpa's old trombone I think, or my great grandpa, I'm not sure. I think he was in a marching band or something. And I'm in air cadets so… and I also play trombone in a concert band." Although this photo was meant to capture a possible musical future self, it also has strong lines towards social environment since it demonstrated something the family honours and sees in their daily lives. It was interesting that Xavier identified another instrument as being more important to his future than piano. Xavier believed that some of his long-term musical goals included playing in a jazz band or travelling and performing with his high school band. Interestingly, he could not think of any long-term goals with piano. Louise, his piano teacher, specifically pointed out how "music is important in

their family". Nicolas, his father, had studied piano growing up and took piano examinations with Western Board[2] until Level 9. Professionally he was a physician, but he also played piano with an amateur jazz orchestra and attended rehearsals once per week. He acknowledged that this musical involvement likely had an impact on his children, and explained that "you know I get after Xavier for not practicing but I don't practice nearly enough. But yeah, so I'm often on the piano, fiddling around. Yeah. More with [the children] actually to help them sight read or if they're trying to pick out songs."

Photo 12

Xavier: How music will be important in the future

Note. Photo of Grandfather's trombone mounted to the wall above the fireplace, 2019.

In terms of motivation, it was clear Xavier was keenly musical and extremely creative, but tired of the structure of traditional piano lessons. For 'something that motivates you to play the piano', Xavier submitted a photo of the score for *Jurassic Park*, and described it as being

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[2] As of 1997, Western Board merged with the Western Ontario Conservatory to become Conservatory Canada.

"fun" and "liking the melody" (see Photo 13). These descriptions identified a personal connection with the music itself, but the choice of popular repertoire meant that he was also searching for greater relatedness. Xavier's draw towards music that others might know and enjoy may have improved his social image and experienced belongingness among friends. Feeling accepted is critical to motivation. He also played pieces by ear, composed, and learned other works with vivid, imaginative titles such as *Santa Ana Winds* and *Spinning Through Space*. However, watching him play these teacher-assigned pieces during a lesson observation, Xavier struggled with the tempo, his wrists hanged off the piano, he sat slouching, and his answers to questions were short and pointed. From the outward appearance, Xavier's level of enthusiasm was clearly low. His dad, Nicholas, explained that this year in particular had "been a struggle with Xavier to get him to practice", and teacher Louise hoped that "we can keep him going through his teenage years here now because, you know, he's up and down about that." When asked if piano lessons had added or subtracted anything from his life, Xavier replied "time" and explained that practicing and lessons took away from all of the other things he would rather be doing. He later explained that the thing he looks forward to most about lessons is the end – not because something special happens at the end of each lesson, but because he gets to leave.

Photo 13

Xavier: Something that motivates you to play the piano

Note. Photo of *Jurassic Park Theme* piano solo sheet music, published by Hal Leonard, 2019.

Competency and self-efficacy are other critical components of motivation, and the most important thing which stood out about Xavier was his aptitude for composing. He attended the provincial music competition twice; the previous year with his composition titled *Binary* which was based on his interest in computer coding. His success at these prestigious events meant that he believed in his own abilities based on past displays of competency and was currently writing a new piece called *Hippyman.* It was based in a comic book series that Xavier had written about "a superhero who goes around chilling people out" (see Composition 1). The music has a great syncopation and sense of humour to it. Despite many clipped answers during our interviews and lesson observation, the compositions let his cheeky personality come forward. For example, during the lesson observation, Xavier had not brought the *Hippyman* score with him but rather played by memory with a noticeable difference in body language, better tone, and more

verbalization after the performance. His teacher, Louise, was excellent at encouraging student composing, and explained that Xavier "is so good at composition for instance, like he's just quite exceptional at that kind of thing, so he seems to enjoy doing it too." Not only was it a question of enjoyment, but also how motivation and social environment are connected since composing played a large part in forming a musical identity that was both formally and informally acknowledged by others around him. Aside from accumulated competency, which might be thought of as learned skill, all three trio participants also talked about Xavier's natural ear for music and inner musical abilities. His dad, Nicolas, especially expressed that Xavier "can sit down and play a piece by ear, he hears it almost right away and has sort of a natural rhythm with things. And that really surprised me. So I think he has some innate ability anyway." Xavier also referenced his strong ear and when asked why he wanted to play the piano, he simply responded, "because I'm good at it." The outward acknowledgement of competency from others, such as at music festivals, and the inner acknowledgement of talent from himself, such as having a strong ear, meant that Xavier did have some form of musical identity.

KG: What does your piano teacher or your family say or do to keep you motivated?

X: The only one I can think of is 'you're talented'.

KG: Oh, that's good! Who says that?

X: Everyone.

KG: Oh – well that's important. Do you think you're talented?

X: Yeah, I guess.

KG: Ok, how is that? What do you…?

X: I dunno, I don't think I'm very good but it's obvious that I am good.

KG: How is it obvious?

X: Because I do good at festivals and stuff.

Overall, the topic of musical identities revealed surprising moments. Although he may not have outwardly displayed it, Xavier was one of the only students that when asked to 'take a photo of someone who *is* a musician', he submitted a photo of himself (not included). His selfie submission and acknowledgement of self-as-musician is the first and most important step to being a musician. His inner reflection and unique interpretation of the photovoice prompt points towards music as having a deeply important place in his concept of self. Although traditional piano lessons may not have been the answer, there was music inside Xavier and he knew it. Throughout the interviews it was unclear whether studying music was Xavier's independent choice, or the choice of his parents. The tone came across as a stage where the ownership was fluctuating and Xavier was struggling to figure out 'who he was' and music's place in his life. However, Xavier came up with a unique idea of what it meant to be a musician, and where he fit within his own definition.

KG: Do you think of yourself as a musician?

X: Well I guess. I think that whoever… I think everyone is a musician, whether they choose to play music is different though.

KG: So would you say you choose to play music?

X: Sometimes.

KG: What do you think it means to be a musician?

X: That you are creative, motivated, and hard working, and that you can play an instrument.

KG: Ok – so thinking about your definition would you say you're a musician?

X: Yeah!

KG: Interesting – because you feel like those are some words that describe you?

X: Some, yeah.

KG: What do you mean?

X: Well I'm not always hard working. But, the other ones yeah.

Composition 1

Hippyman: an original and incomplete score

Sophia

Sophia was a bright and busy 12-year-old, who lived in a large acreage house with her sister, two parents, pets, and a grand piano. Their family self-identified as Canadian. She was a strong student academically, well-liked by teachers, and her other interests included extracurricular acting, volleyball, and reading. Sophia had recently been diagnosed with advanced scoliosis which meant wearing a brace, a considerable number of doctor's appointments, and physiotherapy. As such, her parents were in the process of simplifying her life and made piano an optional, low-pressure activity. A lesson observation was not possible with this student. Sophia had been studying piano for six years and was playing Level 2 repertoire.

Many of Sophia's interview comments focused on motivation: ownership in practicing, engaging repertoire, and self-efficacy beliefs. Her mom, Deborah, explained that no one wanted to see Sophia lose the musical skill she had developed, and her lessons would continue, but they were not going to ask her to practice. Her teacher, Cara, was very understanding that maintaining a love of music and playing pieces which were interesting but not necessarily incrementally more challenging was an important pedagogical strategy during this time. Catchy, easy to learn pieces at about a Level 2 standard, with imaginative titles such as *Sparkling Brook, End Game,* and *Water Lilies* seemed to capture her attention. Cara noticed that Sophia had grown from having music as a skill to "more recently something she really enjoys doing, and not because she has been asked to do it. I think I have seen that over the last couple of months that she has become much more invested personally in the process of learning music." There seemed to be a different level of autonomy emerging, especially when she was given the personal choice about how music lessons unfolded. Sophia would practice when she wanted to, but with no expectations of achieving certain milestones and a distinct effort not to overwhelm her schedule. Like many

children, Sophia began piano lessons because her mom, Deborah, took lessons as a child for few years. Now as a psychologist, Deborah had read about the many benefits of music lessons on childhood development. Even though piano lessons were initially parent-driven, there was a sense of ownership which had transferred to Sophia. She explained that "my mum kind of wanted me to do it in the first place, which I am kind of grateful for because now I can actually say that I have played the piano." Sophia was the only student in this study who used the words *grateful* and *piano* in the same sentence. She explained her own motivational process and practice schedule in the context of repertoire that she loved.

> KG: Can you describe a time when you felt really motivated to practice and to play piano?
>
> S: There was this really good song that I was excited to learn, and be like, 'okay I am excited to learn, and I am really excited to play this song'. I think I actually got up early to practice, and some time during the summer this year – I didn't have to do any practice at all if I didn't want to – and I wanted to play *Hummingbird* and for the first couple of weeks I would play it twice or three times a week, even though through past years of piano playing I haven't even played at all during the summer, so that was new for me.

Sophia likely had the option to quit lessons but she did not want to. She spoke very clearly about how she enjoyed the feeling of being an accomplished learner. Unknowingly, she spoke about competency which is a critical component in motivation: "the feeling of when you accomplish another line of the song, or when you are finally finished another measure, or figured out a new note or something for the first time. It was really cool, and I could actually talk to the people in my school about playing the piano as well, so that was fun." When I asked her about what she had learned about herself during our time together, she responded that she had not realized how much music actually meant to her, she had never thought about how much she actually loved playing the piano, and how much she enjoyed learning new pieces, even if they seemed impossible initially. Her musical experiences had been novel but not deep. Sophia

described a time when she loved the music because she felt successful, and that success led to more musicking: "I practiced the first line and I was really proud of myself because it was a super hard song, but it was still really fun. I got so good at that one line that I started singing along with it, even though it wasn't required, which was really fun."

Relatively few of Sophia's interview comments had to do with a musical social environment, however her photovoice analysis was compelling. Sophia enjoyed sharing her music and Deborah explained that if Sophia "sees a piano at someone's house she'll sit down and play something for them". Performing in recitals happened annually. In her photo of 'a place where you make music', Sophia submitted a partial view of her grand piano, and it was notable that she was the only student in this study with a grand piano, rather than an upright or digital (see Photo 14). There was not any further analysis of this photo and it did not lead to any significant moments. However, Sophia's photo of 'what motivates you to play the piano' was a picture of her parents (not included) and this became her most important contribution to the research. She explained that her parents remind her of how excited she will be when she learns a certain piece, or about how music will benefit her life going forward. Sophia admitted that she would sometimes get a bit upset at her mom for reminding her to practice piano, especially when she did not feel like it, but "then when I start playing I realize that she is right and that there is a lot that it could help me with in the future". When she told her parents that they were the subject of the motivation question, Deborah was evidently "shocked", but Sophia mentioned her mom 10 times in one interview which suggests a strong relationship and a great deal of influence. This was an interesting moment because it blended together her social environment – the parental influences, with motivation – the desire to please others, and her future self – the possible

emotional and musical benefits yet to come. The three main themes that have been the focus of this study appeared in one photo.

Photo 14

Sophia: A place where you make music

Note. Partial view of Sophia's grand piano with her reflection in the music stand, 2019.

In terms of her future self, Sophia had a sense of how music was going to help her in the future, except it did not necessarily have to do with her own self-interest. Despite playing at a relatively low level for her age, she mentioned wanting to being able to read music well, playing throughout her life, and that idea of being able to sit down and sight-read a piece as an adult was important. More importantly, taking piano lessons might help to pass on the legacy of music to her own children someday, or help someone else understand music. In her photo of 'what music will mean to you in the future' Sophia took a photo of her sister (not included) and explained that if she ends up getting too busy to continue with lessons, then she will have gained enough knowledge to still be able to help her sister by demonstrating concepts. Helping others was

something unique to Sophia's character compared to other students, and her photo overlapped the topics of social environment with her ideal musical self.

Overall, Sophia offered interesting contributions of what it meant to be a musician. She struggled with her definition, and initially talked about a musician as being someone who plays multiple instruments. It seemed that she had a clear image of the professional performing artist and referenced the television show *America's Got Talent* at one point. However, her thinking broadened by the end of our interviews to include anyone who plays music. She offered, for example, someone who knows how to pick up and hold a ukulele properly and strum a few chords, could be a musician. At one point, she explained, "I think it means that you have to be brave enough to go up and play something, either that you wrote yourself and you are proud of, or you are not that proud of, but you still have to do it… so you be like, confident in yourself." As she spoke, she described a musician as someone who plays music as part of who they are, inescapably so, and without wavering from outside criticism or influence. A musician has music inside them. This came up similarly when she submitted a photo of 'someone who *is* a musician' and thought of her budgie, Pan (see Photo 15). She was the only student to submit a photo of an animal in response to this question. Our dialogue wondered if music had much deeper roots in the evolutionary process, and in a very open-minded, abstract way of thinking, Sophia imagined that music had always been inborn for all living things.

S: The way that they chirp, they have many different volumes… They could be doing a clicking noise, but also a chirp at the exact same time. And I just consider that to be kind of like a percussionist and a singer mixed together.

KG: This is so interesting because this is a debate in music that… is music exclusive to humans, or does music exist in nature? Like if you think about whale calls, whales kind of sing so is that music?

S: In my opinion, yes.

KG: It depends who you ask though! I think this is really interesting because you were the only one who submitted a picture of an animal. So, music exists for animals too?

S: Yeah

KG: Is that where music started?

S: Probably, yeah.

Photo 15

Sophia: Someone who is a musician

Note. Photo of Sophia's budgie, Pan, in its cage, 2019.

In a continued attempt to untangle this enormous question, Sophia could not quite make the connection between what it meant to be a musician and incorporating the term into her working sense of identity. Even when prompted, she still defaulted to her original idea that a musician needed to play multiple instruments in a performance-based way.

KG: So do you think you'll use the term musician to describe yourself?

S: Probably not, because that's not one of the first things that comes to mind when I think of myself.

KG: But think about your definition of a musician… because you fit in there.

S: Yeah, it's just not the first thing that comes to mind. When I think of a musician, I still think of someone who plays 1 or 2 instruments. I'm thinking of other people when I think of a musician, I don't really think of myself.

Janelle

Janelle had just barely turned 12 but was a thoughtful and articulate preteen. She was very conscientious of her responsibilities and respected her parents and teachers. Janelle's ability to manage her many competing interests was remarkable: her mom, Sarah, referenced that Janelle had been taking piano lessons since age 6, but was also involved in skating, swimming, ballet, art lessons, running club, badminton, school band, and soccer. Her piano teacher, Diana, commented that Janelle had an excellent work ethic and was smart, but "she is also very busy so there is not a ton of time to focus on piano". However, she was confidently studying Level 7 piano repertoire and practicing 5 to 6 days per week. Janelle's parents were Asian, she lived at home with them, and had a brother who was at university in the United States.

In Janelle's family culture, music was a priority. It was expected that she practice as much and as often as possible, including during the summer months. Missing a practice because she did not feel like it simply was not an option. Janelle explained that "if I don't play piano today then I have to play double tomorrow. And then I'll have less time to work with tomorrow." Janelle's brother received his Level 8 RCM piano certificate and also played the clarinet. The same was expected for Janelle. Her mom, Sarah, expressed that "I still require her to finish Grade 8, and after Grade 8 if she wants another instrument I may just let her choose because now she has all her own knowledge to choose."[3] However, Sarah had significant concerns about her

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[3] 'Grades' and 'Levels' are terms that are used interchangeably when discussing the RCM curriculum, and does not have to do with a student's school classroom grade or age.

daughter recently losing interest, and that she needed to be asked to play rather than going to the piano on her own. In her beginning lessons, Janelle and Sarah would practice together but since the music had become too difficult, Janelle needed to organize her own practicing which did not always follow the lesson plan. Sarah believed that it was important to insist on daily practice, even if it was boring, because "not every day is interesting!" The discipline of returning to an activity day after day is one of the larger life-lessons her parents hoped to achieve. It seemed that Janelle took up piano almost by default, because that was the norm within her social environment, but there was a sense of musical curiosity that was surpassing the obligation she might have felt. Her description shows an evolution towards the personal satisfaction of intrinsic motivation.

KG: Why do you want to take piano now?

J: In the beginning when you first start learning a piece it's completely new. Every week I try to start a new piece, or make something feel new to me … Now, I want to play piano because I want to feel, like new, I want to play something new. And I guess I'm also a really curious person.

KG: What are you curious about with music?

J: I really like… each song has a different quality. I want to learn the quality of as much songs as I can.

In her broader, informal social environment, one of the most notable things about Janelle was her recent interest in K-Pop. She was a huge fan of BTS, which is a 7-member Korean boy band, and she had an entire binder of their music which was printed from the internet. Janelle would use this for sight reading or just playing for pure enjoyment since it was not part of her official lessons, an indication that music and the social environment were connected to motivation. She had framed photos of the band members set up on her bedroom windowsill and felt that their music motivated her to play the piano. BTS is known for socially conscious music that reflects the realities of modern teen life, and Janelle referenced a song called *Serendipity*

which she played every day because of the lyrics: "It's about this person who's lonely, and they just want a friend. And at the end of the song, they found one and they're sharing their relief that they finally found a friend." We can see the band members' photos laid across her bed, which is an intimate setting for such an important influence (see Photo 16). The admiration Janelle had for these musicians was unlike anything she felt when describing her conservatory piano music. Although she was quite proficient at playing Classically-based repertoire and her lesson included a balanced structure of technique, repertoire, and musical detailing, her teacher seemed to focus on honouring the curriculum rather than the musician. In fact, after her lesson observation it was striking how disconnected Janelle's two worlds were in her life. There is a significant difference between K-Pop songs and Kuhlau Sonatinas. Although both are musically valuable, it raises important questions of relevancy and relatedness, which are important factors in motivation. The conversation below demonstrates how music must be meaningful; playing antiquated and irrelevant pieces neither fit into Janelle's social environment nor lead to motivation. Janelle's previous explanation of wanting to learn new music and new things about music described a personal curiosity and fast pace, while playing traditional etudes and sonatinas did not result in those same feelings for her.

KG: Can you describe a time when you felt really motivated to practice and play piano?

J: There was this time period where I really didn't want to play piano, so I asked a friend who really liked playing piano how she was able to play piano, like without being bored. She told me she played songs that she really liked to listen to. So I just printed off like a bunch of these – I probably printed off like 10 songs. And then I was really motivated to play, finish playing them all by the end of class. But I only finished one, half the song. But I really wanted to play the songs that I listened to.

KG: So think about all those times when you felt super unmotivated – what were your strategies to persist and just keep going no matter what?

J: I would just print out different songs and just play them. Because mostly I get really unmotivated when I'm playing the Grade 7 Celebration Series. And it's because they're all like, sonatinas and etudes. Every sonatina has a same sonatina feel. I guess I was playing a lot of etudes during that time, and I really didn't feel like playing any more.

Photo 16

Janelle: Something that motivates you to play the piano
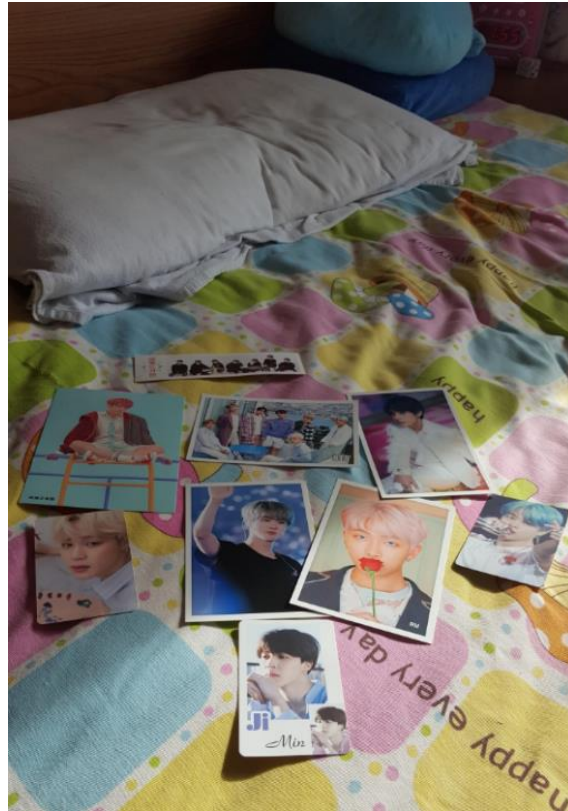
Note. Iconic photos of K-Pop band BTS laid across Janelle's bed in her room, 2019.

In terms of her future musical self, Janelle wanted to pass her Level 8 piano and theory exams, but more importantly she believed piano lessons would help her become a certain kind of person. It was particularly interesting that Janelle submitted a diagram of how music will help her in the future (see Photo 16). She edited a Google Images search result to fit the topic in question, and added her own keywords – *multitasking, efficiency, sense of music,* and *release emotions* – to the black-and-white image. This well-prepared diagram certainly speaks to her

clear and straightforward personality, and to understanding musical benefits in a quantitative way. Janelle referenced the word *multitasking* 12 times in two interviews and it appears as the first entry on her assessment of how music would be important to her in the future. This kind of methodical thinking demonstrates an organized and diligent person, but more than that, Janelle was considering the bigger life skills she was learning through music. All of the hours practicing and going to lessons were not just about playing music proficiently but rather contributing to the formation of certain characteristics. In other words, piano lessons were shaping her identity.

J: For piano you can… one hand does one thing and the other hand does another thing. And you also have to read music and all that. And listen to it. It really helps you multitask. Because you also have theory and all that. It also helps efficiency, and let's say you're getting really, I don't know, mad or something. You can draw or play your feelings out. And this last one's mostly like how, the actual purpose of music is to help you get a sense of music.

KG: That's an interesting thing you just said: "the actual purpose of music". What is the actual purpose of music?

J: Like a lot of people, when they first start playing an instrument, they just want to learn it and hear it and be able to play and all that. But then over the years it can help you do a lot of other things as well.

KG: Like what?

J: Like as I said, multitasking, efficiency, and let's say there's music playing on the radio, you can hear the beat of it and you can kind of *predict*, I guess, the music through theory and all that.

Photo 17

Janelle: How music will be important to you in the future
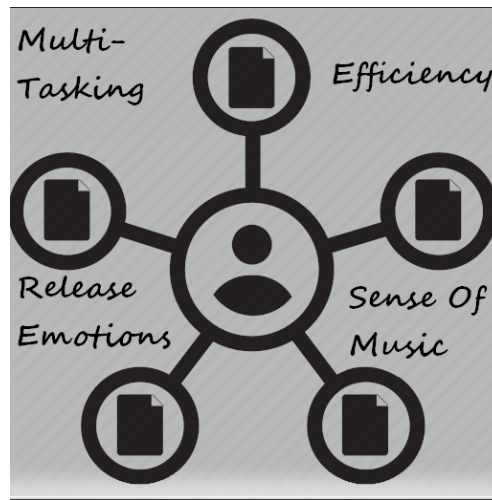
Note. Edited Google image with keywords regarding the future value of music in Janelle's life, 2019.

In an overall sense of musical identity, Janelle had found some real, personal meaning through piano lessons. When she was asked to take a photo of someone who *is* a musician, she provided a photo of herself (not included). Aside from Xavier, Janelle was the only other student to submit a selfie in response to this photovoice prompt. She originally wanted to take a photo of her brother, since he was the most respected musician in her mind, but he was studying abroad and unavailable. Instead, the photo showed Janelle in a skyscraper above the Thames River in London, with the Tower Bridge below. This was a photo that was taken previous to our interviews while on a family trip, and just happened to be a photo that Janelle liked. Although this photo did not have anything in particular to do with music, she explained that a musician is anyone who makes music, and she was a musician since she played both piano and flute. Janelle talked a lot about artistry and how visual art, music, and dance were all connected, and similar in that they release emotions. Since she was involved with all of these artistic, expressive activities, Janelle found that they all intermingled with one another such that "you can express your

emotions through drawing, sound, or your body." She felt that being a musician was just another part of making art, and that all good art needs to have an emotional component at its core. When considering whether or not she was a musician, Janelle had a beautiful but somewhat elusive answer:

> J: Doing piano, if it's a sad piece I put in sad emotions. If it's happy I try to put in happy emotions. And it really makes my playing sound better. But if I just play it, it doesn't really have the same type of quality as putting emotion into it. So I would say I'm sometimes a musician. Sometimes… I'm a musician when I choose to be, I guess.

Non-Chord Tones: Parents and Teachers

Parent Interviews

Musical identity proved to be a compelling topic for parents. The parents who participated in this study were particularly interested in helping their children get to know themselves as musicians. With the child's assent, parents encouraged participation because they understood the intangible benefits of being included in this work. The general sense was that parents wanted their student to think about who they are and where music fit into that definition. A few parents even found themselves in a different place by the end of our interview questions. In particular, Sophia's mom Deborah expressed that,

> You know that's super cool actually to go through that. That makes me see it differently. Those are really intriguing questions. And that's actually partly why I agreed for her – well, I asked her and she wanted to, but I knew she didn't know what she was getting into but I had an idea. And I'm like, maybe this will help her connect back more with the music. And feel maybe more motivated about her piano. Or just to be asked questions about it and think about it.

Throughout the parent interviews, each one spoke candidly about their child and what a meaningful place that music had in their lives. Since parents saw the daily struggles and triumphs of piano lessons, rather than the summary a teacher sees at the weekly lesson, they understand

how music matters to their child in different ways. Further, parents know their child in different ways than the child knows themselves and including parents in the process of data collection proved important.

Home practicing particularly brought together the themes of social environment and motivation. After having been involved with piano lessons for about half their lives, music had played a large role in each student's daily routine over the course of many years. Parents often cited themselves as the main instigator of practicing at home. They might have liked greater instances of student-driven practicing and higher levels of student ownership, but this was not often the case. Some parents identified the difficult teenage years as being linked to difficult home practices. They seemed to understand that their student knew that practicing was associated with achievement, and parents implied that students were actually grateful for the reminders. Students may have initially perceived the reminders as nagging, but in the end found it to be show of support. It is important to note that the words 'practice' or 'practicing' appeared 60 times throughout the interviews with all eight parents and became a major topic of discussion. The selected quotations show some important moments to illustrate the topic of practicing and the need for parental involvement.

> Nicolas, Xavier's Dad: "He's almost a teenager now. He resists a little bit sort of the strictness how much he has to practice."
>
> Renata, Corina's Mom: "I usually have to remind her that she has an obligation to practice… sometimes she's self motivating and sometimes I need to remind her."
>
> Fiona, Quinn's Mom: "To force her to practice piano sometimes will be an issue. Because she doesn't want to practice but she likes piano. Yeah, but I told her, "if you don't practice, you won't be able to play piano perfectly."
>
> Faith, Hannah's Mom: "She'd rather not always practice but make music, so then we struggle with that sometimes."

Maura, Grace's Mom: "I'm always encouraging her to do the practicing but it's hard because you don't want to sound like you're nagging."

Sarah, Janelle's Mom: "Right now she is in this stage, I need to ask her to play."

Parents admitted that the daily motivation to practice was difficult but worthwhile because it was in pursuit of a future musical self. It seems from the tone of the previous excerpts that parents absorbed some responsibility for their child's success, and even if their student was not always happy about practicing it was something that needed to be done. Their foresight pointed towards a future musical identity. Parents understood the discipline necessary for studying an instrument and our conversations acknowledged that it was a delicate balance between getting their student to do the required tasks, like playing scales and triads which would be important to their long-term musical knowledge, and letting them have the freedom to express themselves at the instrument, like playing pop music or composing which was important for autonomy in the moment. Parents acknowledged that the ability to play music proficiently and expressively was only possible if it was supported with an understanding of the theory and technique. They understood that their efforts in getting the student to practice, and the student's effort in spending time on the piano bench, was valuable even if it was sometimes difficult. Whether they needed a gentle push or found their own way to the piano bench seemed less important; the reality is that in order to form a musical identity, students needed to be making music regularly. Overall, parents appreciated that practicing was critical to being a musician since you cannot claim an identity of something that you do not spend time doing. Deborah illustrates this common message from the interviews, and shows this parent's desire for how music will shape her daughter's life in the future.

I know the stage that they're at with having to practice, kind of against their will, you know. I know this is an arduous process to get them to a place where they can then express themselves in their music in a creative way. And that is the gift that I want them

to have I want them to get to that point where they now want to play for the sake of playing, and that is something they can do when they're sad or when they're happy, and they can play the right melody that fits that. So that's what I'm hoping we'll get to. But where she's at right now it can… it can be a bit of a struggle.

Piano lessons were also defining relationships between parents and their children. The question of what music had taught parents about their child provided important insight to their relationship. It asked parents to examine their child in the context of music and ask how music lessons had shaped who they were. It implied that parents were continuously getting to know their child, and that being involved in music lessons regularly changed who their child *was*. Further, this question brought forward elements of a student's identity that the students were not always able to identify within themselves. Students often had a hard time describing the larger, overarching characteristics of their identity and these answers helped me get to know them better. Parents' answers primarily expressed virtues: effort, strong relationships, sensitivity, persistence, bravery, and determination. The tone behind this question revealed that parents were proud of the young adults that their children were becoming and how music was influencing their lives. There were even some proud tears at certain points. The selected quotations from among the interviews should be read with warmth and demonstrate how music has positively influenced the parent-child relationship.

> Fiona, Quinn's Mom: We will sit together and listen to everything and I will know what kind of music she likes and she will tell me why. And of course, more stories behind the song, she will tell me 'why I like this one' because, and she will share something in her life with me. I think it's a very good connection.

> Faith, Hannah's Mom: I think it's given me more understanding into her sensitivity, her emotions, I think the gift that she has inside of her. And I just always tell her like, 'Even if you never ever play for anyone else again in your life, I hope that you use this gift for yourself'. To give back to who you are, whether that's when you're upset or sad or whatever, you go to the piano or you sing or you make music somehow.

Maura, Grace's Mom: I like to see that she is determined when she's working on a piece that's new, or it doesn't really sound right. And then she just keeps working on it until finally she can get it.

Lana, Madeline's Mom: It's actually taught me that she's very brave. Doing the recitals since she was really little, like to get up there in front of many people … it makes me nervous more than it makes her nervous.

Deborah, Sophia's Mom: She's more persistent than I thought … With piano, she'll work on a difficult song until she's mastered it.

Renata, Corina's Mom: It's the first thing that I've ever seen her put a lot of effort into. With music, she does have to put in the effort and she sees that the effort actually does pay off.

Overall, parents had important insights regarding their children's musical identities. In particular, their role in home practicing brought together the themes of social environment, motivation, and possible selves since parents influenced when and where students practiced, but also urged them to practice regularly in pursuit of a musical future. Parents admitted that their role was sometimes difficult, but it contained important foresight. More importantly, piano lessons were allowing parents understand their children in new ways and even strengthen their relationship.

Teacher Interviews

The 8 teachers in this study were all members of professional teachers' organizations, and well-respected within the field. They had all made teaching their primary career, some with decades of experience, and had worked with each of the students in this study for a number of years. Even though the teachers were mostly classically-trained and hosted traditional piano lessons, their goals stretched beyond teaching the mechanics of playing the piano. Each teacher spoke at length about the non-musical benefits of studying music in the lives of their students. It was clear that they cared for their students and wanted to them to be successful musicians, but they were also interested in helping their students become virtuous people. For many of the

teachers, it seemed that teaching music was not actually their main priority; creating rich musical experiences which might shape young people into better human beings was the goal. This is compelling because it brings together all three themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation into a single topic: character development. This is a subtheme of musical identity that is not often discussed. In terms of social environment, teachers were role models in students' lives and influences their daily home routine to include time and space for practicing, combined with perseverance. For example, Elizabeth discussed settings like performing on stage but also that music lessons are where students develop work ethic. In terms of the possible selves, teachers had a vision for their students as continuing music throughout their lives, and this foresight was combined with a sense of purpose. For example, Cara talked about the long-term goal of students becoming music enthusiasts. In terms of motivation, teachers used weekly lessons to inspire a passion towards further progress. For example, Louise talked about the persistent sense of drive that music requires, no matter how small the steps.

> Teacher, Elizabeth: I definitely think the discipline is really good because it teaches you that things don't just come easy, that you need to work for these things, and helps organize yourself. I mean not everybody is going to get on stage and perform, but I think a lot of piano students do, at least once a year, and so just doing that that takes a lot of effort. I think to have them do it in general just makes them a better person somehow, you know? Learning to express yourself through music is really a privilege.

> Teacher, Cara: I think it can give them a sense of purpose and something to work towards that is long term, and can last with them to adult life. That is my philosophy in my studio that they will continue on to at least love music by the time they become adults.

> Teacher, Louise: I read that little saying that, "Wherever you are now is better than where you started". And then, you know, to stick with something is a huge accomplishment. So that's something for instance I did communicate to all the students. My little pep talk thing at the beginning of the year.

Teaching music was a catalyst for much bigger life lessons. When teachers were asked about how music had been beneficial in the lives of the students in this study, they referenced traits like

ownership, creativity, expression, self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of accomplishment. It not only created a better life for them as individuals, but as a citizen of the world. In two contrasting examples, Annette talked about the small-scale, inward looking self and believed that music lessons were an opportunity for students to learn about themselves as people. Conversely, Aaron talked about the large-scale, outward looking view, how music could be used to teach different perspectives on the world, and how students understood themselves as a part of humanity.

> Teacher, Annette: I think learning to play the piano is an opportunity for them to learn about themselves, for who they are. Do they tolerate frustration? Are they able to figure out a strategy to solve a problem? Are they afraid of making mistakes and how to go about it? I think that it helps them think outside the box and it provides a safe environment to take risks.

> Teacher, Aaron: I think we give a unique perspective on the world through music and through learning how to use it – whether students become lifelong musicians or not. And that's my goal for every one of them: I want them to play for their whole lives, but I recognize that almost certainly will not happen. And so yeah, for me it's about giving a human being an experience of something that is accessible only through this art form and which I think ultimately will benefit all of us.

Teachers are in a unique position to bring together possible selves with long-term relationships. Students typically study with the same piano teacher for a number of years, and so this not only gives time for teachers to create a long-term lesson plan or learning trajectory but also for a deeply meaningful relationship to form. Teachers know that because of the one-on-one learning environment, they are in a powerful position to shape students' current identity and also influence their students' lives in a personal way. I asked teachers how music might be a part of each student's life going forward. They talked about the tangible goals, such as reaching certain grade levels of achievement or establishing a career in music, and the intangible goals such as gaining life skills like problem solving, the ability to stick with something even when it gets tough, and creating better human connections. Teacher, Adele concisely described what almost

all teachers mentioned: "I want them to love music, I want them to want to go on playing or making music in some ways." Even if students switched instruments or left lessons before a clear stopping point, teachers' primary goal was to have students hold music as a part of their lives and identities forever. They intended something deeper than music appreciation, but rather be able to experience music by creating it for themselves. They wanted to instill the musical skills that would stay with the students throughout life. The capability to draw out music from within is perhaps one definition of *being* a musician. Diana talked about the importance of sharing music and that music should be the catalyst behind people coming together. She did not directly reference 'relationships with others' but that is the root of the interactions she described.

> Teacher, Diana: I would like them to be able to play for themselves and play at family gatherings, play Happy Birthday … you know, there is a popular piece of music and they could go to the store and even with an easy arrangement they could play it. You don't have to play on the concert stage, but maybe they would be part of the community and play for the choir, or maybe join a little group of some kind - an adult band group - in the future. That is what I would like, just for them to play and enjoy it.

In a more general way, teachers were asked about how many students stay in lessons long enough to become advanced players. Of a hypothetical 100 beginner piano students who started lessons this year, teachers estimated that on average, only 6 students would eventually make it to advanced levels. After a discussion about what might have gone wrong for the imaginary 94 students who dropped out, the conversation turned to what teachers hoped to accomplish with the remaining students during their many years together. This was the more important discussion in relation to identity. Although none of the teachers used the phrase 'musical identity' directly, they largely talked around this topic. The concept map originally published by Hargreaves, Marshall, and North (2003), nicely illustrated how teachers referenced the many topics which contribute to a student's musical identity (see Figure 3). In the musical-artistic sphere, musical literacy, performance experience, technical skills were all obvious parts of applied lessons, and

these points came up regularly in interviews. In the personal sphere, the topics of cognition and learning were surprisingly frequent and the popularity of recent brain research regarding the positive effects of music lessons had gained strong recognition among teachers. Overall, most teachers' main goal was for students to maintain music as an informal part of their lives into adulthood, and the character development component of the socio-cultural sphere was the most important topic of all. Teacher, Louise put quite simply that music "just gives them a better life." To further this common discussion, Diana focused on the link between students' individual musical development, their broader community, and creating a better quality of life. Her vision for students included music as having the potential to help others, create better citizens, and work towards a social good by giving back to the community.

> Teacher, Diana:　　　What do I hope to accomplish? That they can reach that level and then they still can play for themselves, they can help others, they can teach others if they like and play a bigger role in the community because they have a higher level of piano and they can play for the ballet classes, or they can play for the choirs, or accompany the soloist who is fantastic. Maybe they can be a concert pianist, but certainly they could teach and give back to society in a way.

Most importantly, as teachers were asked to create a definition of what it meant to be a musician, they compared their students to this definition and unanimously concluded that their students were indeed already musicians. Similar to parents, teachers believed in their students' musical identities but offered different views on how students' musical identities are constructed and understood. While results did consider the three themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation, teachers also created new musical experiences, such as through a long-term relationship with a role model, that contributed to the saliency of musical identity. Teachers' strong emphasis on character development was unlike what most students themselves had discussed and offered a new perspective to the study. However, it was surprising that none of these character development moments were outwardly, explicitly present in the lesson

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observations. How teachers conducted lessons did not reflect what they wanted to achieve. Teaching with these overarching goals in mind without bringing them to the forefront created an interesting disconnect.

Lesson Observations

The lesson observations offered a glimpse into the weekly ritual of studying music and an important component of students' social environment. Students all attended lessons once per week with a professional teacher. There was one lesson at a commercial music school, but the seven others were in home-based studios, and all students were studying with teachers who were regarded as serious instructors given their memberships in nationally recognized professional associations. Teachers primarily taught on grand pianos with their degrees and diplomas hanging nearby. All students had been working with the same teacher for a number of years. Overall, it was clear that the relationship between students and their teacher was something special: it was developed over a long period of time rather than switching teachers every year, like at school. This longstanding arrangement meant that lessons were conducted with care and trust, where students had confidence in their teacher's abilities and where teachers were acting in the best interests of their students. For example, teacher Aaron explained to Corina that "the point is that you should sit there and struggle with it". This did not mean that he was unavailable to help, but rather that he had created a safe space for her to make mistakes, take risks, and grapple with complex ideas. He believed in her ability. The close physical proximity of students and teachers, within about 2 metres of one another, also meant that a close relationship developed. Body language, facial expressions, tone of voice were all methods of communication that were easily understood. Non-linguistic communication was common.

All of the students attended individual lessons, which meant that teachers were better able to shape the learning goals to suit the student depending on their pedagogical intentions. Lessons were between 30 and 60 minutes, such that more advanced students had longer lessons given the increased demands of their playing. All students – to varying degrees of enthusiasm – were following the Royal Conservatory of Music curriculum which included studying technique and repertoire spanning about 400 years. This system includes formal examinations, and most students were studying with that goal in mind for their future. In fact, Hannah's lesson observation included a mock examination, hosted informally by her teacher, where she was advanced from Level 4 to 5. Xavier and Madeline's lessons incorporated more modern, 'fun' repertoire rather than exam preparation, as teachers aimed to improve student motivation. Corina, Quinn, Grace, and Janelle were at various points towards preparing for future exams at undetermined dates. A lesson observation was not possible with Sophia. Overall, the Royal Conservatory program shaped most lesson observations and lessons were typically balanced with playing pieces, technique, theory, and aural development. Teachers had a clear direction for improving the student's ability based on the conservatory model of learning.

Most lessons unfolded in a master-apprentice design, where teachers played the leading role and students followed their instruction. All students were attentive and respectful; they obliged their teachers' requests to play certain pieces or modify specific things within their playing. The one-sided interaction from teacher to student was particularly interesting. This top-down model meant that teachers asked for a performance, listened attentively, and then proceeded with comments, compliments, and criticisms. It left very little room for the student's voice to be heard. By the end of certain lessons, some students had hardly said anything or been asked for their opinion. These students were disciplined, aimed to please their teacher, and open

to feedback. However, the lecture-style delivery did not typically allow for interpretation or dialogue. Students left with a better understanding of musical details and concepts and having improved their musical ability. But, in a lesson observation which aimed to observe the student, it was difficult to achieve because the teachers' prominent role meant that students were relatively passive. Although the previous section on teacher interviews referenced a number of virtuous traits – such as worldview, work ethic, or purpose – that teachers were hoping to create in their students, the lesson observations did not clearly show those types of moments.

Overall, the lesson observations revealed that piano lessons created better understanding of musical details and concepts, music history, or theory, but not necessarily a better understanding of students as musicians. Throughout the observations, there were no direct references to the students as pianists, or statements encouraging students to think of themselves as musicians. There was generally no explicit feedback that might have formed a musical identity. Teacher Adele told her student Hannah, "I love the way that you…", or that "I think you like this piece – you really paint a picture with it." This suggests that teachers knew their students and either tried to choose repertoire which suited them or encouraged their musical growth. Perhaps there were implicit messages sent, for example that technique is an important component of being a musician. In more subtle ways, teachers saw their students as musicians and commented on their competency as pianists. They often acknowledged improvements from the previous week and provided specific feedback in order to strengthen students' musical abilities. However, clear statements such as "Now that sounds like how a musician would play it!" or "You have really progressed as a musician this week" did not appear. More significantly, questions regarding musical imagination and interpretation, for example "What kind of dream has been caught in Anne Crosby's *Dreamcatcher*?" were missed opportunities for dialogue.

Teachers did often take time to inquire about how the student's week had been, upcoming holidays, or which other activities they were involved in. The goal of these inquiries was partly to take an interest in the student's personal life, but also to discover how much time they had practiced that week. Piano teachers had a unique opportunity to understand students as individuals, and to develop their unique musical identity, but this was sometimes ignored in preference of teaching traditional learning goals.

Recapitulation

This chapter painted detailed pictures of students in order to understand who they were as musicians. The demographic surveys gave a brief overview of the group before going deeper into each student's musical identity. The themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation came through in each portrait, and were further illustrated by students' photovoice submissions. Students' unique combination of musical experiences meant that they all constructed their identities in different directions and understood themselves differently as musicians. Supporting evidence from parents was included, and presented two important themes: practicing and relationships. These themes directly influenced students' social environments, but also drew from motivation and possible selves as well. Supporting evidence from teachers was included, and presented one large, important theme: character development. This discussion was unique to teachers who believed that virtuous traits such as perseverance, creativity, and expression were the true purpose of music lessons and ultimately, musical identity. Finally, the lesson observations were meant to observe students' musical identities 'in action' but that was not always the case. While their musicianship was certainly part of each lesson, students' musical identities as individuals were not always visible. This finding will be taken up further in the following chapters.

Going forward, Chapter 5 will give a more detailed analysis of the three major themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation. Additionally, exploratory topics of musical ability, choice, and relationships will be discussed. Further direct quotes from students, parents, and teachers will be used to illustrate these points, but will be weaved throughout the scholarly literature and new analysis to make sense of the data and interpret the meanings.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand how students construct their musical identities and the previous chapter demonstrated that experiences are what guide identity formation. The results section helped readers get to know 'who they are' by illustrating each student's unique combination of musical experiences and the extent to which they understood themselves as musicians. The discussion section will explore the three main themes – the social environment, possible selves, and motivation – that contribute to the saliency of musical identity. As the concept map in Chapter 2 explained, each of the three main themes overlap with one another which makes for messy but also interconnected analysis. The first section of this chapter will investigate the *social environment* – which includes the roles of parents, friends, home culture, and conservatory institutions – in relation to musical identities. Next, the section regarding *possible selves* will investigate the turning point of adolescence and students' possible musical selves. Finally, the last section explores *motivation* – including the transfer of ownership, relatedness and repertoire, and competency – which is loosely framed around the three psychological needs of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The purpose of this chapter is to offer a deeper examination of the data, and will use further direct quotes from participants interwoven with the scholarly literature to achieve understanding.

This chapter culminates with a discussion of three new, emergent themes which were not previously explored. These topics were not set out to be studied, but proved so prevalent and so powerful that they offer new perspectives to the literature. More detail about these topics will be given later, but *ability*, *choice*, and *relationships* bring new areas of understanding to the topic of musical identities.

Social Environment

The Role of the Parents, Friends, & Home Culture in Musical Identity

Parents. A musical identity is just one of many identities that students wear over the course of a day, and these identities are reinforced by those around them, particularly parents. Parents have a powerful role to play in how a student thinks of themself as an academic, a sibling, an athlete, or a musician. Other research has agreed that "the representations parents make of their children easily become self-fulfilling prophecies" (McPherson, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012, p. 144). In academics, Bandura and colleagues (2001) demonstrated that parents encouraged their children's academic strengths by promoting feelings of self-efficacy and having their own high aspirations. The same could be said for music: parental expressions of high musical aspirations convey faith in the child's capabilities. Lamont (2017) observed that parents' conceptions of their children's musical abilities and aptitudes are important for their development. For piano students who do the majority of their work at home through practicing each day, and only go to their formal lesson once per week, the home environment plays a significant role in their musical identity formation. Implications from Shouldice's (2014) work suggest that "students are receiving clear messages about their musical abilities from a variety of sources, which can be powerful factors in the formation of their musical identities" (p. 341). In this research, there were a number of examples which stood out for students about how their parents and home culture influenced how they thought of themselves as musicians. To answer the prompt of 'something that motivates you to play piano', Sophia submitted a photo of her two parents and explained that they reminded her about how music would help her in the future, even if she did not follow a musical career. To answer the prompt of 'a person or place you make music with', Grace described that her mom was her first piano teacher, which shows the level of

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importance placed on music by the parent who wanted to include a musical education for her daughter as early as possible, and the parent's belief that her daughter had a musical future. In an interview, Janelle referenced her brother's high level of musical achievement with admiration, which suggests that music is an important and long-term component of growing up in their household. There are examples from every student about how the parents and home culture shaped students' musical identities, but these instances stood out when describing the social environment, and they overlap with both motivation and possible selves.

In the Concept Map (Figure 5), I described that the social environment both influences, and is influenced by, motivation and the future self. This connection can be better illustrated by examples in this research. Xavier submitted a photo of his grandfather's trombone, mounted on the wall above the fireplace in his house, which served as a consistent, visual, daily reminder about the legacy of music in their family. This object that occupied a place of honour allowed Xavier to imagine himself as playing music in the air cadets band someday, as part of his future self, and also provided a sense of relevancy or relatedness between his involvement in music and his family, as a part of motivation. Sophia had a grand piano in her living room which occupied a significant amount of square footage and a prominent place in the household. To take the opposite direction in the concept map, if Sophia was not motivated to continue lessons and saw no purpose for music as part of her future self, the family might sell their grand piano, the home environment would be visibly changed, and something else might take its place. Evans and McPherson (2015) suggest that musical environments create the conditions in which students can imagine their current and future selves as musicians. Not only did music play an active role in everyday life, but families even arranged their home décor to support music learning.

Parents acknowledged their influence in shaping who their children were becoming. In most instances, parents initially enrolled their children for piano lessons and took a leading role in guiding home practicing throughout the week. Other research admits that "the majority of children are coaxed into formal instruction by well-meaning parents" (Lehmann, 1997). However, parents knew that there was a shift taking place in autonomy and ownership as students approached the adolescent years. A conversation with Faith, Hannah's mom, showed the power that parents have in shaping who their children become:

> I read a book recently about like letting your children be who they *are* instead of trying to force them to be what you wish they would be. I did a lot of sports growing up so I've always been like, 'maybe we should push harder for them to do more sports' but she's like, 'Mom that's not who I am and that's not what I want'. And maybe someday, but yeah, if I'm going to nourish her spirit, it's music right now.

This excerpt is an example of how well adolescents know themselves and how parents can respect and support their children's musical identities. The fact that most parents considered their children to be musicians is an important part of identity formation. Being a musician "also requires other people around us to confirm or reject our emerging musician identity" (Burland & Davidson, 2006, p. 478). Although it did not seem that most parents outwardly used the term *musician* to describe their child, the fact that they believed in their children as musicians is a critical first step.

Gender. The fact that almost all of the participants in this study were girls poses interesting and problematic cultural points on a wider scale. Even though young children do not typically view the piano as a gendered instrument (Marshall & Shibazaki, 2013), certain musical identities seem to have gender norms (Hallam, 2017). In general, nearly twice as many girls learn to play musical instruments than boys, even though men continue to achieve greater positions of musical performance and privilege in their careers (O'Neill, Ivaldi, & Fox, 2002). The 7 girls

and 1 boy involved in this study illustrate the gender disparity in private piano lessons, and seem to suggest that classically-based piano lessons may be more central to girls' musical identities. Xavier was viewed as being musical by his parent and teacher, but he seemed unsure about his commitment to piano throughout the interviews. His competing interests with cadets, hockey, and computers – which are activities traditionally driven towards boys – could have played a role in his insecure musical identity as a pianist. His selfie submission suggests that there were ways in which he understood himself as a musician, such as through experiences with composing and marching band, but piano may not have been part of his ideal musical identity.

Fitting into a social group is a significant desire in the early teenage years as adolescents distance themselves from parents and spend increasing time with peers (Nurmi, 2004). There is some research to suggest that "boys may need to have a greater love of music and enjoyment of musical participation to persevere with some musical activities perhaps because they are more influenced by their friends in contrast to girls, for whom teachers and parents seem to be more important" (Hallam, 2017, p. 483). It seems unwarranted that boys need to show greater levels of effort and desire than girls in order to continue with music or to consider themselves as musicians. There become fewer male piano students over time, such that "the percentage of boys taking lessons dropped from 33.6% when they were 9 years old, to 9.8% when they were 17" (Cremaschi, Ilinykh, Leger & Smith, 2015, p. 15). Xavier persisted but was among the minority. Other research with students in lower secondary school grades found that boys did not find music lessons as useful or as important to their lives when compared to girls (McPherson, Osborne, Barrett, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2015). It could be that boys are thinking ahead to traditionally masculine future careers and this image does not include involvement in the arts.

Considering that boys may have certain cultural obstacles to overcome when involved in piano lessons, it is unsurprising but unfortunate that a gender disparity exists.

Friends. The role of friends becomes increasingly important throughout the adolescent years in terms of identity formation (Evans & McPherson, 2017). Every participant in this study talked about their friends to some extent. Previous research has demonstrated that music functions as a 'badge' in adolescents' social worlds (North & Hargreaves, 1999). Do music students need to be around other music students in order to harness their musical identity? The answer seems to point towards 'yes'. Students often go to great lengths to fit into peer groups, and their friends send strong messages about which types of music are desirable (Lamont & Hargreaves, 2019). Most students do not want their involvement in music lessons to threaten their social status; they typically strive towards "cool" and avoid "geeky" (Evans, McPherson, & Davidson, 2013). For those enrolled in classically-based piano lessons, this can be a challenge because it presents problems of relevancy amongst friends. Even for those who enjoy historical music, that "statement of musical preference is interpreted by adolescents as implying a range of other characteristics and values" (North & Hargreaves, 1999, p. 90). Aside from being viewed as nerdy or boring, most students typically did not listen to the types of music they were learning at piano lessons in their everyday lives. As such, they did not have a bigger context in which to support that type of musical identity, even if it might have desirable characteristics. For example, Corina references the "people of my generation" in the excerpt below, and while it may not point towards specific friends, it certainly has a peer-driven influence.

KG:	Tell me about the music you listen to on iTunes or YouTube, what is that like?
Corina:	I generally stick to pop and rock. Sometimes I like jazz and R&B, but like, the thing is, the music that most people of my generation listen to is kind

of what I am just used to so I will generally stick with that – stick with what I know.

Quinn was known amongst her friends as being musical and enjoyed being acknowledged by them as an accomplished pianist. She talked about how her commitment to music meant that she had to decline invitations to social events, but she did not mind because it had a bigger purpose. She described herself as being "not very outgoing" and that trait had negatively impacted friendships, but also that she had "a lot of nice music – musicality – in my life" which was a positive outcome. Ito (2010) contrasts friendship-driven practices with interest-driven practices. These are cases where the interest in the activity surpasses the need for friendship and peer approval; the interest comes first, and that interest structures the rest of the student's social interactions. Ito describes interest-driven practices "as the domain of the geeks, freaks, musicians, artists, and dorks—the kids who are identified as smart, different, or creative, who generally exist at the margins of teen social worlds" (2010, p. 16). That seems to be how Quinn described herself. In this case, friendships do not serve a significant a role in identity formation because the pure interest in music itself is so strong.

Quinn: Well, to be honest, people will think it is kind of sad that I can't go outside and play with my friends, but I am actually really thankful because all my friends are all … I am kind of trash-talking them. They are really outgoing, like they just go to the mall and spend almost a thousand dollars on random stuff, and I am just sort of sitting here, and I like piano so, "Oh sorry guys, I have got piano. Oh no, I can't do this today, I have got piano," and that kind of stuff.

Hannah had friends in her life who valued and encouraged her musical identity. During our first interview, she described a recent encounter with an equally musical friend. This friend had confidence in Hannah's musical ability, and helped her to imagine a possible self that was a distinguished professional musician.

KG: So, imagine these people who call you a musician, who would those be?

Hannah: Well, Holly. She says I am going to sing for the Queen of England one day, and I am like, that is very unlikely, but … okay, thank you for believing in me. She also does voice lessons and piano lessons too.

Similar to other research in music education, students whose identity formation was well underway demonstrated a backdrop of family and peer support (Evans & McPherson, 2017). Aside from simply showing interest, building relationships with other musical peers can be *transformative*. Transformative music experiences occur through social interactions, where relationships among friends become highly significant and where a high level of shared purpose matters in terms of musical identity (O'Neill, 2017). Certain students like Quinn with pure interest-driven practice (Ito, 2010) might be considered outliers, because most students in this research relied upon a shared purpose with musical peers to achieve a salient musical identity.

Ethnicity, Home Environment, and Identity. Two major ethnic groups which are sometimes compared in piano pedagogy literature are Asian and European heritage students (Comeau, Huta, & Liu, 2015). Aside from Corina, who had Caribbean heritage, the other participants generally fell into those two groups. There is a perception amongst piano teachers that Asian-heritage students are more diligent and work harder than European-heritage students. In general, hard work and consistent effort are valued highly in Asian cultures (Li, 2002). Research specific to piano students found that "Chinese participants had a stronger work ethic with regards to piano practice than did the North American Caucasians" (Comeau, Huta, & Liu, 2015, p. 190). Work ethic is often tied to achievement and in this current research, the two highest achieving students were from Asian backgrounds. While visiting these two students' homes, it was clear that music played an important part of their daily life: in both cases, the piano was in the centre of the house and surrounded by certificates from festivals and examinations. Janelle and Quinn had some of the highest practice amounts, at 40 and 50 minutes each,

respectively. Parents were personally invested in seeing their children do well in music and their teachers were pleased with their progress.

> Teacher, Diana: The younger ones aren't quite as committed as the others. The others have Asian parents, shall we say?
>
> KG: Yes, I know what that means.
>
> D: Which is very good. I haven't quite figured out how they manage to motivate their children.
>
> The Asian group are very committed, the parents, I have seen it over the years, and in other things, not just music, but in many activities and they want their children to really excel and succeed and be at the top because they can.
>
> KG: And that is not to say that any other ethnicity of kids can't, but it is a difference of … priority?
>
> D: Yeah, I think it is culture, which is really great.

This conversation shows that there are preconceived notions at play based on a student's ethnicity. The comparative tone of us-versus-them, and "othering" language (Griffin, 2017) to describe parenting styles concluded that 'their' way is better. While Asian students have demonstrated higher levels of achievement and motivation (Comeau, Huta, & Liu, 2015), this does not necessarily translate into a stronger sense of musical identity. Many of the European-heritage students who were slightly less proficient still had clear images of themselves as musicians. For example, Hannah had a self-confidence in her identity as a musician beyond most other students, and this was something she had thought about before being involved in this research. If identities are formed through meaningful experiences, this could mean that rigorous daily practice and success at formal music competitions leads to a robust musical identity. However, it could also mean that informal 'noodling' around on the piano, composing, or attending summer music camps still achieves the same, strong sense of musical identity. The characteristics of the two identities are likely different: one prioritises the quantitative, accurate, virtuosic nature of music and the other prioritises the qualitative, creative, expressive nature of

music. There is likely some cultural influence which affects how these identity characteristics are shaped. While the Asian cultural demands seemed to result in more proficient students, it did not inevitably mean a more salient musical identity.

Supporting versus Commanding an Identity. There is a sensitive line which parents and teachers need to navigate with students: on one side, there is a need for structure and organization, and on the other there is freedom and choice. A student's musical identity "is more likely to be aligned with the self if their parents help to regulate the practice behavior in an autonomy-supportive way and provide structure around the activity" (Evans & McPherson, 2017, p. 217). Parents understood that frequent home practicing was critical for success, and they played a supporting role in ensuring that students had the space – both in the home and in their schedules – to fulfill that obligation. Teachers understood that learning the basics of music reading and technique were important components of being a musician. However, these things must be sensitively offered such that they are viewed by students as supporting rather than commanding their musical development. The difference in supporting roles is that the student is at the centre making decisions based on what is happening around them; commanding means the teacher or parent is making the decisions regardless of what is happening around them. The difference is in who owns the power. A conversation with teacher, Adele about who 'is' a musician brought this forward:

> The only of my students I would be doubtful about calling them musicians is if - and I don't have any like that anymore - but I had a few that were kind of frogmarched to piano lessons by their parents and they had already decided that they were just doing this because Mum said I had to, and so their music never had anything of them in it, even if they played well enough to get through exams, you know? They just never bought into it and were just going through the motions to keep Mum happy.

The term *frogmarched* is a vivid example of commanding. We can picture the body language and tone of these interactions between an eager parent, a willing teacher, but a thoroughly disinterested student. It is interesting that Adele also described that a lack of musical identity also shows itself in the music: students who are not invested do not play as beautifully as those students who put themselves into the music. However, support is not always acknowledged in the moment by students. In Lamont's (2011) research, a participant recounted that "My piano playing was really a result of parental and teaching pressure but now I am very grateful for having learned the basics and the musical foundation it gave me" (p. 373). This is the sensitive line which parents and teachers dance on top of: putting acceptable amounts of pressure on students in the short-term can be beneficial in the long-term. It requires foresight, and students are often thankful for parents and teachers who nudged them in certain directions in supportive kinds of ways. However, it is critical that students experience agency and consider themselves to be the ones who are in control. Janelle's mom, Julia, described that she was heavily involved in her daughter's elementary practicing, and still arranges time in her daily schedule for practicing to happen, but her supportive role has changed from participant to observer. She explained that Janelle "is not a hundred percent following the lesson but she uses her own way; she uses her own way to distribute her time to different things." Perhaps this freedom was a contributing factor to her salient musical identity, since Janelle was one of the only students to submit a 'selfie' in response to the question of someone who *is* a musician. Ultimately, no matter how much parental desire there may be, students are the ones who decide which experiences are meaningful and whether or not they are musicians. The identities students adopt can be forced on them by others but will result in feelings of oppression and poorer psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2012). In contrast, identities which are autonomous and integrated within the self

represent a life of meaning and personal flourishing. Even if parents, teachers, and the wider social environment are perfectly set up to hone a musical identity, the student is the one who integrates it within their sense of self.

The Role of the Institution in Shaping Student Identity

The conservatory curriculum that all students were following, to varying extents, inevitably shaped they way they understood what it meant to be a musician. Teachers commonly used the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) syllabus to guide their teaching, and often encouraged students to participate in the examination system. Over the course of our interviews, 7 students discussed piano exams and examples were given throughout the previous chapter. During the lesson observations, it became clear that the structure of piano lessons commonly relied upon a leveled system of technique and repertoire. This meant that teaching was primarily focused on building musical skill. For example, Grace described all of the components that would be required for her upcoming Level 5 exam: "Well I am playing the five pieces, and I have to memorize the three from the repertoire, and then there is a whole bunch of scales, arpeggios, dominant sevens, and triads, and then there is the formula pattern and the chromatic scales, and then there is also a listening part where they play chords and I have to hear the chord, and then there is also sight reading. There is a lot." From the tone of our conversation, it was not clear if Grace knew *why* she might need to understand those things. Was it to build musicianship or to satisfy a checklist? In this case, musical identity is connected to ability within a predetermined curriculum. Institutions share important, but often implicit, messages about who may or may not be considered a musician. The way in which the RCM defines music learning can feel directive for teachers, rather than allowing for imagination and pedagogical freedom to choose what suits each student's learning needs. Teachers 'teach to the test' to ensure that

students have mastered the necessary requirements and will do well on the examination day. Does 'teaching to the test' strengthen students' musical identities, or merely put more pressure on both teachers and students? Research suggests that self-determined, autonomous actions are what result in high-quality learning, curiosity, and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 2000b). Deadlines and competitive pressure may result in greater observable action but students experience them as controlling. Sophia mentioned that "My mom said I should do it until Grade 8, that level of piano, because it is the best time to stop or something." She explained the accumulation of skill by that point, and the ability to read music, but it was curious that she referenced specific, quantifiable levels instead of certain pieces she might like to play. In this case, it seemed to be about achieving a level or skillset rather than experiencing the music itself, and with a parent-driven approach. In contrast, Corina mentioned that she would like to play Liszt's *La Campanella* some day, and this kind of thinking brings students back to the music at the heart of the experience. It connects with specific pieces of music that speak to the kind of musician they would like to become, and not only achieving certain levels.

Among the many requirements in exam preparation, improvisation or composing to develop a student's creativity was not included in the 2015 syllabus. Although music can be full of freedom and choice, exams typically prioritize attentiveness and accuracy: playing music cleanly with proficiency is the goal. Expression is important but not at the expense of precision. This means that there is less room for interpretation or personalization in a performance, partly because students feel bound to respect the score and partly because they are worried about pleasing the examiner. The result is that students are not encouraged to develop their own musical ideas or use the repertoire as an outlet for their own musical identity. Xavier had been recognised for his compositions, and worked with a teacher who extensively encouraged students

to write their own music. Hannah recently composed a piece called *Requiem for Oscar* for a friend's cat who had died. Madeline also talked about her recent experience making up her own pieces, whether notated or by ear. However, Corina explained that "sometimes I will think up a tune and it is nice to hear, but I can't always remember it because I don't know how to compose music at the moment". The desire to use music as an autonomous, expressive outlet is there within students but missed when preparing for an examination. The only place where students might perform their own original music is a repertoire substitution called 'Teacher's Choice' selection. It is problematic that this is not called a 'Student's Choice' selection. This title shifts the ownership away from student – who is meant to study and connect with the music – and gives authority to the teacher instead. While there is certainly a place for teacher guidance, having students choose repertoire that speaks to their own musical interests could result in greater relevancy, support feelings of student autonomy, and widen the variety of music being studied in general. The RCM is "one of many institutions that frames the music it teaches as universal" but without indicating how narrow a scope the curriculum actually takes (Loepp-Thiessen, 2021, p. 13). Having students prepare their own works would do more to support their musical identities, deepen a student's understanding of how music is created, and broaden the scope of music being performed.

The levelled exam system is a musical experience which generally does not integrate with students' everyday musical lives. It creates tensions for students between playing music that speaks to who they are and the competitiveness of moving up through the levels. In this study, Janelle was working on a Level 7 Sonatina but had little interest in this style of music throughout her everyday life. Her photovoice submissions and interviews referenced the Korean pop band, BTS many times. Even though she had a binder of the band's music that she downloaded and

practiced for fun in her free time, this music was not part of her official lessons and would not be used for an exam. For Grace, her favourite pop song was called 'So What' by Pink which features many electric guitars but no piano. Grace was preparing for a piano exam, and explained that she needed to prepare herself "to succeed there because that is something I have decided that I need to work towards, so I need to put in that work to be able to achieve it." For Grace and many other students, exams become an exercise in technical proficiency, discipline, work ethic, and following instructions rather than exploring repertoire which has meaning in their lives. In other research, one participant described that they were forced to practice music that they did not choose, which left them feeling "restricted and oppressed" (Evans, McPherson, & Davidson, 2013, p. 610). This finding demonstrates a lack of autonomy which is not only an important part of motivation, but also identity and overall wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2017). The lack of connectedness between the exam system and the remainder of students' lives makes understanding their musical selves more difficult. The contrasting musical parts can coexist together, but only with meaningful connections between the different parts. With the right structure in place, "young people in particular are able to move rapidly between musical worlds without necessarily changing identity" (Mans, 2009, p. 102). Musical identities are a product of the systems people inhabit (Hallam, 2017), and it is possible to integrate both formal musical experiences like Classical piano, and informal musical experiences like movie themes, given the appropriate supports. But when systems have no connection between them, this could create a disjuncture in students' understanding of themselves as musicians.

Similar to another study by O'Neill (2017), the student participant described participating in exams, recitals, and music competitions as highly specialized, challenging, task-orientated activities where the main purpose is simply to complete them, not necessarily to grow as a

musician. These musical experiences become formal events and mean that students' musical lives exist with fractured, segmented parts, rather than harmonious and reciprocal ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). O'Neill's concept of *segmented learning ecologies* results in students feeling "isolated and isolating, lacking in a sense of connectedness and agency, replete with mundane routines, and driven by mostly external goals that offer possible rewards and recognition, rather than a sense of contribution – all of which act as constraining influences on their developing sense of musical selves" (2017, p. 91). Kelly-McHale (2013) also noticed that musical experiences inside classrooms were not transferrable to students' everyday lives, resulting in an "isolated experience" (p. 210). There seems to be little sense of connectedness between students' formal and informal musical experiences, and it is unclear which direction the arrow points: do students' informal, everyday lives need to include a greater place for piano music, or do the music institutions need to include a greater emphasis on music from students' everyday lives? While the answer is likely both, a better application of learning from one context to the next would create a greater sense of cohesion, and integrated sense of self, and would allow the student to more easily understand the purpose of learning as it pertains to their musical identity.

Most of the students in this study were learning from the current repertoire books published by the RCM. The standard set of music books at each level provides a breadth of styles which span keyboard works from the last 400 years (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2015). The common method of teaching from the prescribed books meant that teachers sometimes lacked personalization in approaching each student. Students often move sequentially through the levelled repertoire, without exploring bigger works which could offer an interesting challenge, or simpler works for the pure enjoyment of playing effortlessly. It has been suggested that teachers

should offer "growth" and "rest" pieces to students, in order to both expand their ability and offer more achievable moments (Thompson, 2018). This means that students would span a number of levels simultaneously and not become bound by one single set of repertoire books. Only one teacher, Elizabeth, described this as her strategy where if a student is playing "Grade 1, they are going to be doing a couple Grade 2 pieces and one Grade 3 piece just for super challenge, and that Grade 3 piece might take quite a bit longer to learn." In terms of identity, the benefit is that students would no longer characterize themselves as a 'Level 2 piano student', for example, which can be limiting. Instead, they might see themselves as someone who loves playing Clementi Sonatinas and Christmas carols, whichever level they happen to be, to develop a better connection with the music instead of the quantifiable level number.

Despite the concerns with the institution and its pedagogical approaches, most students did feel that they were musicians and exams played a role in how they understood their musical identity. The integration of 'Level 5 piano student' into a working definition of self seemed to be a positive label. This might be described as *identities in music* (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002), which are defined by external categories that others use descriptively – such as 'music student', 'composer', or 'pianist' – and hold cultural meaning to those who give and understand the definition. How a student thinks of themselves and defines their *identity in music* is "reinforced by musical institutions such as schools and conservatories and forms an important part of the self-concept" (Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell, 2017, p. 4). Each RCM level becomes part of how students describe themselves to others, and a definition that is packed with meaning about the student's level of commitment, dedication, and achievement. For instance, telling others that you are a Level 5 piano student also implicitly tells them about the number of years music has been a formal part of your life and how seriously you take it. Passing exams

gives external confirmation of students' musical aptitude which serves to strengthen their musical self-concept. Students believe being 'good at music' includes a range of qualities such as instrumental mastery, performing in front of others, reading music, "and passing examinations" (Lamont, 2017, p. 183). Typically, what we are 'good at' becomes central to our identity. The confirmation of musical achievement with official assessment solidifies a student's understanding of themselves as an accomplished musician. The levelled system can provide feelings of competency, which is a critical part of motivation and also identity.

However, the levelled system can also discourage students from thinking of themselves as musicians. For most people, musicians can only be considered a true musician once they reach a certain, high level of proficiency. Initially, Quinn described that since she was not performing on stage playing 5-hour long pieces, but rather Level 8 piano, she was not at the point to call herself a musician. This was surprising because, in fact, she was the most advanced pianist in this study. Green (2008) notes that the lofty definition of 'musician' means that "even advanced young musicians often hesitate to refer to themselves as 'musicians'" (p. 64). Quinn's photovoice submission of 'someone who is a musician' proved extremely interesting. The historical portrait of Mozart signifies that the term 'musician' is reserved for a few, mysteriously talented, high-achieving virtuosos. No matter how many years Quinn took lessons, she would likely never live up to her own definition. She acknowledged that there were elements of musicianship within her but she could not comfortably use the term musician to describe herself: "I want to call myself a musician, like I can add dynamics and my own flavour to my songs, but it's not like performer-musician." This is telling for Quinn since the construction of her own musical identity, and her notion of what constitutes a musician, appears to be inextricably tied to the Western European classical music tradition where the most well-known composers wrote

music at Level 9 and higher. If a student is not considered a musician until they can play full Mozart sonatas, at the associate diploma level, what does this mean for their motivation, identity, and ultimately commitment to music in the earlier levels along the way? While the exam system can provide some confirmation of musical competency as students advance from one level to the next, it is also possible that the same system puts limitations in place where students are unable to view themselves as musicians until they reach the top levels. Unfortunately, most students leave piano lessons before ever reaching the top levels.

Possible Selves

Adolescent Age and A Turning Point

Adolescence is held by Erikson (1950) to be one of the significant moments of identity crisis. More recently, Deci and Ryan (2017) agree that adolescence is a period of "heavy lifting" in terms of identity formation (p. 384). The results of this study show crisis or heaviness not in a disastrous light, but rather an intense period of questioning. There were many moments when student participants struggled to define who they were, what they thought, or the place of music their world. In their childhood years, they relied on adults to answer those questions for them. However, as students entered the adolescent stage and gained more independence from their parents, they were starting to answer those questions for themselves. Sophia's mom, Deborah, described that, "I feel like we've turned a corner … she enjoys playing more complex pieces and being proud of that and showcasing them." That turning point she referenced also incorporated the fact that Sophia was not being asked to practice anymore; it was her own, independent decision whether to move forward with lessons and at what rate. For most people, music is a resource for finding our way through difficult moments of transition or other crises (Lamont, 2011). Research based on Marcia's (1966) models of identity formation found that "individuals

who have gone through a period of crisis or exploration and have committed to an ideology and occupation are classified as identity achieved" (Dunkel & Anthis, 2001, p. 765). In one instance, the peak of identity crisis was revealed in Xavier's life as he acknowledged that he had not come to any conclusions the role of music, or about his identity in general. His tone of struggling through big questions was a defining moment of the interview. Marcia's model would likely place Xavier in *moratorium* where he was in a decision-making phase and had not made any firm commitments, but had mostly just followed his parents' guidance without a great deal of independence.

KG: Have you learned anything about yourself during our time together as we talk?

X: No. I'm as confused as I was a long time ago.

KG: What do you mean? Like, you're still trying to figure yourself out?

X: Still trying to figure *life* out.

KG: Me too, man. Me too.

Xavier's teacher, Louise, also identified that he was at a crossroads between taking lessons to please his parents and taking lessons for his own interest. She explained that "he's at a stage where he has to push his own wings, and he has, so we've taken a different approach. But I know he still enjoys it, and it's important to him." In this case, it seemed as if no one – including Xavier himself – was certain about the role of music would play in his life going forward. This proved to be a good example of how the early teen years, and the shift away from parental guidance, can be liberating but also daunting. Research has shown that those students without a clear concept of themselves as a musician, and the role of music in their future, achieve lower levels of performance and are more likely to drop out (Evans & McPherson, 2015). While Xavier had some natural ability, a supportive home environment, and a teacher who nurtured his creativity, there was still something missing in his mind that made his ideal musical self unclear.

Early adolescence is a critical point in music learning, not only for shaping their possible musical selves, because this is when most teachers see students drop out. There is a common feeling amongst teachers, although largely unstudied, that age 12 is a major point at which piano students quit taking lessons. American piano teacher Theresa Chen (2011) has observed that adolescence – between the ages of 12 and 14 – is where most students quit. Perhaps this is because of the identity crisis stage and without being able to understand themselves as musicians, students cannot find a purpose to continue with lessons. Drawing from early research, Lawrence and Dachinger (1967) found that "14 seems to be the age beyond which the student must pass" if they are to play long-term (p. 28). In other words, if students can navigate the crisis period of adolescence, there seems to be a strong chance that music will be part of their lives going forward. It suggests that students who pass through this crisis stage have determined who they are as musicians – or in Marcia's (1966) words, have reached *identity achievement* – and found a meaningful place for music within their self-concept. In a retrospective story, one of the teachers even came to terms with her own musical identity as she realized that it surfaced in the early adolescent years.

> KG: Can students be musicians?
>
> Teacher, Elizabeth: Yes, they can. Because I did … I started considering myself a musician around maybe age 12, 13, 14. I never thought about that. And so why did I consider myself a musician? I think the bulk of my activities and my hours were spent thinking, reading, practicing music, and that is a musician, when the bulk of your hours are spent - at some point in your life - I think that is what makes it; you are just consumed with music.
>
> Elizabeth spoke of the intense relationship she had – and still has – with music, and these

immersive experiences are what shaped her musical identity. It was interesting that a professional musician was coming to terms with her past self as our interview unfolded, and also considering what that meant for her adolescent students who were at the same critical point. We

can learn that the hoped-for future musical self should be outwardly discussed with students, and much sooner than adolescence. The possible selves of an 8-year-old can have an impact on their immediate engagement and potential success (Evans & McPherson, 2015). What might happen if all children were encouraged to think of their ideal future musical self from the beginning years? It raises questions of whether students who quit piano lessons in childhood had ever imagined their future musical self, and what that means for pedagogy. Rather than teaching the current repertoire, perhaps there should there be a greater focus on teaching the future musician.

Adolescence is a critical period in the development of musical taste (North & Hargreaves, 2002). Music listening may play more of a role in musical identity formation – and the impact on possible selves – than most students realize. This could have to do with the prominent role of Musikerleben during adolescence, which is a German term that roughly translates into *strongly emotional musical experience* (Behne, 1997). The music we experience in adolescence has a powerful and lasting impact because it plays an important role identity exploration and development (Bonneville-Roussy, Rentfrow, Xu, & Potter, 2013; Lamont & Hargreaves, 2019). Research suggests that "meaningful musical experiences during youth can leave a lasting impression on an individual by shaping their identity and place in the world" (Peck & Grealey, 2020, p. 1). In this study, participants were enrolled in classically-based piano lessons but not all students had the supporting role of hearing similar kinds of music at home. Most students expressed the desire to play more popular music, which is what they spent time listening to in their everyday lives. In one case, Hannah described that her dad was always playing Vivaldi and she had developed an enthusiasm for this type of music:

> Hannah: I really like Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons'. I can just imagine what he is writing it about. I can hear the storm and … during the Winter one, I can see him in the top of this old European building just sitting there, looking out the window and it is cold, and all the

leaves are gone from the trees and he is just writing this music. I can just see that. I can just picture it.

This student also had a particularly clear image of where music might lead her throughout life. Hannah described studying music at university and becoming a choir accompanist. Her vision of an ideal future musical self was providing motivation for her current actions. Hannah was known to her family and friends as a musician, and most importantly thought of herself as a musician. Davidson and Burland (2006) demonstrate that music listening, apart from performing or studying, "has a major impact on the way in which an individual chooses to perceive and so develops him/herself" (p. 478). Adolescents often rely on their musical taste as a token of identity and describe who they are to others (Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell, 2017; Lamont & Hargreaves, 2019). Music is one of many ways that students experience the world and define their place within it (Ilari, 2017). For example, Madeline's enthusiasm for musical theatre soundtracks, Janelle's enthusiasm for Korean pop culture, and Xavier's enthusiasm for electronic and techno music were unique to their musical identities. However, the majority of lessons in these cases were being conducted in a traditional manner, based on repertoire, technique and theory. North, Hargreaves, and O'Neill (2000) described that most students' opinions regarding Classical music were quite negative, and the only benefits were to please parents or teachers. They found that "since pop music was preferred over classical music to such an extent it is easy to see why listening to or playing classical music is viewed so negatively: it presents a poor impression of oneself to others" (p. 269). However, there is some evidence to suggest that classical music preferences increase as people age and the appeal of contemporary music tends to decline (Bonneville-Roussy, Rentfrow, Xu, & Potter, 2013). This poses pedagogical questions for teachers about whether maintaining the exposure to classical music will be important for the student's possible future self, or whether teaching popular music is more important to encourage

feelings of relevancy and relatedness in the moment. Adolescence is the time for musical identities to be tested, adopted, thrown away, and solidified. The results suggest that either students' informal, social worlds need to incorporate more interactions with classical music and strive to make that type of music relevant, or formal lessons need to incorporate more popular music where the students already have a connection.

Musical Future Selves

The photovoice submissions regarding 'how you think music will be important to you in the future' resulted in some of the most compelling data. It required students to live the experiences of how their futures might look; to imagine what it would be like if their ideal self came true (Erikson, 2007). Considering that it is impossible to take a photo of the future, this request required students to take a distant, abstract notion and bring it to life. Students were unexpectedly candid with their answers. Corina and Quinn described tangible benefits, such as doing well in high school music classes or having conservatory credits transferred to their transcript. Other photos described sharing music with others, for example Madeline teaching her own children piano someday. Janelle explained that music lessons would help build the characteristics she needed for a future career, like multitasking and efficiency. These representations of self in the future gave meaning to what they were doing in their current learning. Cross and Markus (1991) would describe these as hoped-for or ideal selves: for example, the high-achieving high-school-band self, the extra-credit university-applicant self, the mother-as-piano-teacher self, or the unrelated-career-but-music-enthusiast self. All of their possible selves were quite likely; students generally did not reference farfetched ideas such as becoming Lang Lang's duet partner. Their realistic visions of hoped-for selves helped to make sense of their present musical identity. Students visualized their future goals and imagined their

hoped-for selves in tangible ways. Consistency also had an important role: the consistency of hoped-for possible selves reflects the importance of setting and working toward personalized and relevant goals in current music lessons. Identity commitment, which potentially leads to future identity *achievement*, was associated with consistency in hoped-for possible selves across time (Dunkel & Anthis, 2001). In other words, students would not achieve their hoped-for self if they changed their minds weekly; they needed to establish some level of flexible commitment. Students with clearly defined hoped-for possible selves were those who had reflected on their previous experiences, developed aspirations for the future, and had either integrated them into their definition of self or abandoned those beliefs and replaced them with new ones. Either way, their possible selves provided a context by which the current self was evaluated.

The role of music for students' possible selves also came into the interview discussions. Hannah described her hoped-for self as being actively involved with music, both formally and informally. She explained that "I still will keep doing it, I hope, until I am old." She did not elaborate on what *old* meant, but the longitudinal nature of her comment and her reference to *hope* signalled aspirations of a future musical self. The kind of person Hannah wanted to become – and the kind of life she envisioned – involved music as a significant component. In contrast, Quinn revealed both her hoped-for self and her feared-self in the same sentence. These possible selves were reflections on past experiences that were projected into the future. They were dependent on effort, where the amounts of practicing would determine both the outcome and the reaction from her piano teacher. Quinn described that "whenever I play really good I feel really proud of myself, like yeah 'she is going to be proud of me for this because I practiced'! When I don't practice it is the opposite, and I hate it - I absolutely hate it." Her hoped-for self included a successful, proficient performer who enjoyed the rewards of hard work; her feared-self included

regret and the disapproval of a teacher with high standards. These examples entail possible musical selves, but Grace also had a well-defined idea of how piano lessons would inform her possible virtuous self as someone who was disciplined and empathetic, but not necessarily musical.

KG: What has studying piano taught you about yourself?

Grace: Even if I don't really want to do something I can find ways to be motivated by understanding the good it will do for me, and finding ways for me to be happy with what I have accomplished, and realize that what I am doing, although I may not see it as the most important thing I could be doing at the time, seeing long term the beneficial effects it would have on me and being able to see that, so maybe I am sacrificing time that I could be doing other things, but the good it will bring will be worth it.

KG: So it sounds like it taught you that you are the kind of person that even if it isn't fun all the time you can see further beyond that?

Grace: And teaching myself to be able to see further than that, and that it is not always going to be something you want to do, so you are going to have to do things that you don't think are good uses of your time and energy, but then you have to be able to see, like from other people's point of view, that is a good thing I should be doing.

KG: I think the word for that is foresight - have you heard that word before?

Grace: Yeah, like being able to see how the effect something is going to have in the future, instead of just what it is doing for you in the present.

The word 'foresight' is not one that is often used in musical identity research, but seems to be an important concept with possible selves. Even though Grace did not picture herself as a professional musician, the other benefits that music would bring to her life still mattered. Grace pictured herself as a civil engineer. She seemed to know that delayed gratification of something well done would benefit her future career. Later in life, Grace envisioned being able to sit down at the piano from time to time and play her old, favourite pieces. In other words, her hoped-for musical self was more recreational in nature, but still important for her identity. This demonstrates that music would always be part of her life, but there would be other identities that

were more central. Evans and MacPherson (2017) suggest that "even those who leave formal music learning continue to have a musical identity in that they have beliefs, tastes, preferences, and attitudes about music" (p. 228). Grace's involvement in music lessons had shaped how she understood music and its place in her life.

Motivation

Motivation is a topic often discussed in music teaching, but only recently connected to musical identity (Evans & McPherson, 2015). When motivation and identity are considered together, it naturally leans to the intrinsic or autonomous side of the scale (Ryan & Deci, 2012). Humans tend to gravitate towards activities which are in line with their self-concept (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). Behaviours which are extrinsically motivated and not part of our identity feel controlling or forced. The students would already be considered by most to be highly-motivated students, but the quality of the motivation is what matters for questions of identity: making music for the pure joy of the music itself is where it connects with 'who we are'. Faith, Hannah's mom, described intrinsic motivation in its purest form:

> So at the end of the year, like when lessons are finished and all the recitals are done, she needs about a week and then she's back at that piano. But she's not practicing, she's expressing herself. And it amazes me every summer that she spends hours at that piano. Not necessarily playing anything but just making music, or like teaching herself songs she's always had in her mind that she wants to learn. Or going on YouTube and finding videos and teaching herself those songs she listens to. She gets really motivated after we go to a concert. We go to a certain concert and she wants to come and play that music when she gets home. So, I find almost more music inspires her to make more music.

Hannah had an extremely clear musical self-concept, and her mom's words provide an excellent example of how a strong musical identity and intrinsic motivation are reciprocal. The more she made music and experienced joy in the process, more salient her musical identity became, which inspired her towards playing more music. Burland and Davidson (2002) found

that "the centrality of music to self-concept contributes to intrinsic motivation" (p. 134). Put simply, the more music plays a role in defining 'who you are', the stronger drive towards – and more joy you get from – doing it. Going forward in this section on motivation, the three psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competency – which are critical to intrinsic motivation according to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) – form the framework.

Transfer of Ownership: Autonomy & Independence

There was a distinct shift towards students taking charge of their own piano lessons compared to when they were younger. This was discussed previously in the Possible Selves section, but the shift towards independence also fits with motivation since autonomy comprises such a large part of this transition. Parents had originally enrolled their children for piano lessons when they were 6 years old, on average, and there was a high level of parental involvement in the early years. As the students grew more towards adolescence, they were becoming more independent and actively choosing to study music for themselves. The transfer of ownership from parent to student meant that students were experiencing a greater sense of autonomy. It also meant they had to find their own meaning for continuing with lessons, and coming to terms with their sense of purpose seemed to be creating a stronger sense of intrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) found that "autonomy orientation involves a high degree of experienced choice with respect to the initiation and regulation of one's own behaviour … With a high level of autonomy orientation, people are more often intrinsically motivated" (p. 111). Although extrinsic motivation plays a role throughout life, such as initially taking piano lessons to please a parent, intrinsic motivation must play a bigger and stronger role as students enter the teenage years. Research with music students has found that unless the initial extrinsic motivators – such as rewards, which often propel young students – evolve into intrinsic motivation by the early

teenage years, it is difficult to sustain the commitment required for music lessons (Sloboda & Davidson, 1996). The students in this study were at a critical point of finding their own, meaningful reasons for continuing piano lessons. Grace described a transfer of ownership, which blends together influences from her social environment with motivation:

KG: So think about your parents and friends, how have they all contributed or influenced your decision to study piano?

Grace: I think, for sure, my parents really encourage me, and they are the ones who put me in piano lessons. My friends started playing piano and I think that also was cool for me because, like, 'Oh, so they like, did their own choice, they went out and wanted to play it'. Huh. Maybe it is something I should be keeping to do because I just got to do it automatically and I didn't even have to ask my parents to let me do it.

KG: That is interesting, you said just now that it was their own choice; would you say that piano is your choice?

Grace: When I got into the real lessons it was definitely my choice. Before it was my choice, and then I made the decision, like 'Oh, I actually want to do this later on.'

KG: Like right now?

Grace: Yeah.

The concept of autonomy also extended to how lessons unfolded. When students felt like they had control over their musical decisions, their level of engagement was noticeably better. For example, when Xavier played his own, original composition at his lesson, there was a distinct change in body language as well as musical tone and attitude compared to the teacher-assigned pieces. The lesson observations had not been emphasized in the Results section because they did not generally draw out students' musical identities. Students seemed to leave the lesson with a greater understanding of musical details and concepts, but not a better understanding of themselves as musicians. The teacher-lecture, student-follow-through style with which most lessons were conducted seemed to maintain a sense of routine. In common practice, this is likely

how most teachers themselves were instructed as children. Despite individual lessons which could easily accommodate student autonomy, teachers still maintained an authoritative lead. Students were respectful and obedient rather than an active, autonomous part of the learning process. In some cases, teachers would ask brief questions, for example Diana inquiring "so how did it go with your practicing this week?" or Aaron encouraging independent risk-taking to "go ahead and be wrong!". But these momentary transactions were not necessarily enough to tap into the student's autonomy or identity. If teachers had more actively involved students in the learning process – with dialogue, structured boundaries, and some level of guidance – students might have experienced stronger feelings of autonomous motivation. In one instance, Annette, prioritized student ownership over being 'right', knowing that a mistaken decision now would only lead to a teachable moment later.

> A: I would say that the most important motivational strategy is sharing power. I am not the one that calls the shots here. I am the one that gives choices and it is up to the which of the choices they would like to do. So they feel they have a say in it, they have control over what they are doing and then they will be most likely to do it because then it is their choice. You notice when I was talking to her? "We have three options. Which one would you like to do?"

> KG: Yes, I did notice that.

> A: And I am not expecting to have the right answer; whatever she says, it is what we do. Maybe I know that her choice is not going to be the best one, but she has to learn it on her own because it is not a matter of life or death, it is not going to change the fate of her life! She has enough time to learn that, "Oh, maybe that was not the best one."

Student autonomy was at the centre of all Annette's teaching, even if it did not fit with traditional learning trajectories. She acknowledged that learning music one way versus another does not result in dire consequences, and students needed to have the space and freedom to make mistakes. In the end, they would learn more about music and more about themselves as musicians if they were the ones who made autonomous decisions. The dire consequences fall in

the wider context where controlled students become rigid, lack vitality, and suffer from poorer well-being. If autonomy is not part of a student's identity formation process, it fails "to provide either authentic meaning or deep connections, and thus serves as a poor vehicle for a flourishing life" (Deci & Ryan, 2017, p. 383). Deci and Ryan (2008) have shown that autonomous decisions are connected with better overall mental health and behaviour. Teaching individual piano lessons can allow for the highest levels of autonomy, which is not only a critical part of motivation but identity as well.

Relatedness and Repertoire

What students spend time playing matters because of the enormous number of hours it takes to practice, memorize, and polish a single piece. Repertoire is not a subject which is well addressed in the literature on musical identities. However, it came up in every interview and it seems significant because over many weeks, students develop a relationship with their music. Returning to the instrument day after day only to be working on music the student does not find relevant can be detrimental to motivation. Among the student interviews, it was noticeable that they often connected with music which had imaginative titles such as *The Somersault King, Dreamcatcher, Sunset in Rio*, or *Hummingbirds.* Xavier was working on the Theme from Jurassic Park; Madeline had the official ABBA piano book; Grace was teaching herself music by George Ezra which she heard on the radio. The strongest moment of disconnection was with Janelle, who enthusiastically showed off an entire binder of K-Pop music from the band BTS but was playing a traditional course of Sonatinas and Etudes at her lessons. There is sometimes a disconnect between piano students' preferences of what they enjoy playing and teachers' *perceptions* of what students most enjoy playing that are problematic (Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe, 1997, p. 79). Music from movies, video games, popular culture, and modern-sounding repertoire

are the prominent kinds of music which exist in the students' wider, daily social environment that teachers may be unaware of. There was often a noticeable separation between what students listened to in their everyday lives and what they were learning in piano lessons. However, it depends on what students' social environment is made up of: Hannah loved playing Sonatinas while Janelle found them tedious. This could be because Hannah's musical environment included listening to Vivaldi and choral concerts while Janelle's musical environment included extensive Youtube playlists and friends who liked K-Pop. It asks the question of which direction the arrow points: do students need greater exposure to Classical music in their everyday lives, or do piano lessons need to incorporate a greater variety of modern, popular music? If certain students are not able to relate to Classical music, is teaching them early keyboard works is still valuable? If so, what does this means for their musical identity as a piano student?

If students cannot find a connection to music which is antiquated and irrelevant in their minds, this could have serious consequences for their motivation. For example, Grace described that her least favourite part of going to piano lessons was "when there is a song I feel so slow on, when I am just slogging through and then I just have to keep on playing it, knowing I am never practicing as hard because I don't like the song very much." Particularly when preparing for Conservatory exams which demand a breath of musical styles from the 1600s onward, students are typically forced to play music where they cannot find a sense of relatedness elsewhere in their lives. Research suggests that teachers should "involve the student in the selection of materials and repertoire, and more importantly, the goals of the lessons. It is important to find 'middle ground' between what a student finds fun and the teacher's goals. Teachers should "strive to include enjoyment as one of the goals of their learning activities" (Cremaschi, Ilinykh, Leger, & Smith, 2015, p. 21). It seems striking that teachers must be reminded that *enjoyment*

should be one of the main pedagogical goals of piano lessons. Moments of pure enjoyment, along with a sense of purpose and wellbeing, are the trademarks of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2012). More often, offering a 'balanced diet' of music is more strongly emphasized in traditional teaching, but it is necessary to consider the impact on student motivation. It asks the question of how we reconcile this as professionals: relevancy does not demand throwing away great pieces of music, but there needs to be a more distinct effort at making a connection to the 21st century. If the early repertoire is, in fact, deemed valuable, it may take a greater effort to ensure that it has a place in the student's daily environment. Relatedness can be created. For example, listening to Chopin Etudes in the car or hearing Bach Partitas while cooking meals at home would bridge part of the relevancy gap. Over the course of this research there were a certain moments which stood out regarding relatedness and flexibility with repertoire. It seems that most teachers in this study already understood the value of including relevant repertoire and believed they were giving students choices in the music they studied.

> Teacher, Cara about another student: So definitely trying to find the music they *like* because I do have one, definitely and for sure, if he doesn't like the music he will not practice it at all. So we spend a lot of time looking for music.

> Teacher, Katherine: I like to open up their minds and their awareness to, not just the Classical composers, but what is a Bossa Nova and Latin-style Samba, or what is swing, what is jazz? Where did it come from? So having learned all those different styles, then they know what it is if they go around the world in the future.

The teachers cited here know that repertoire is an important catalyst in establishing a student's musical identity. The two teachers spoke in contrasting ways about repertoire: Cara prioritized teaching familiar, likable pieces which spoke to the student, while Katherine prioritized exposing students to new and unfamiliar styles. Cara explained that students who do

not like their music will not practice it, and typically students do not like the music because they do not connect with it. However, it is also the teacher's responsibility to expose students to a variety of musical styles that they may not otherwise encounter. Katherine was enthusiastic about introducing her students to new styles, and explained her role in educating towards a global musicianship. In other parts of our conversation together, she described how music can be used to emphasize social justice and equality. These two excerpts represent a delicate balance: while students often prefer to play music that they know because it is relevant, it is also important to expand a student's thinking into new areas. The problem is the gap between the exposure and the connections with others. Identities are reliant on relatedness because it helps "individuals connect with others and experience belongingness" (Ryan & Deci, 2012, p. 241). For example, Argentinian tango music for piano could be fun, but for the student practicing alone in their house without any Argentinian friends, vision of a tango, and no sense of South American culture, the experience will not create a sense of belonging or contribute to their overall well-being. The music might be learned for a short-term goal, for instance to play in a recital, but will not find a place in their long-term identity as a musician. In other words, exposure is not enough; it must be surrounded by other meaningful experiences which lead to belonging in order to be considered relevant for identity formation.

The lived experiences that students have with the repertoire shape how they think of themselves as musicians. The student who has played 10 Beethoven Sonatas will think of themselves quite differently than the student who has played the score from the Broadway musical *Wicked*. Both are valuable learning experiences, but the point is that different combinations of musical experiences lead to different musical identities. Ilari (2017) draws from other research about creating a social identity in children, which lends important insight about

identification (in Garcia-Coll & Marks, 2009). Identification occurs when a child views themselves as belonging to a particular group or category; it "captures something of both identity and alliance" (Dueck, 2017, p. 392). For example, if a student identifies with specific repertoire as being 'their' music, they also tend to identify with others interested in the same kinds of music. This student makes further categorizations between 'us' and 'them' for other types of music and its listeners. Piano students might consider jazz music to be associated with 'cool' clubs and 'hip' musicians but consider symphonies to be 'stodgy' music that their grandparents enjoy. Grace described that as an adult, "I could even try jazz – my dad is a really good jazz player – just to be able to sit down at the piano and play stuff, and that is really cool to me, to be able to pop things out of my head". In other instances, like for Hannah, it could be the exact opposite: "My dad really likes going to [philharmonic orchestra] concerts, and so always whenever I am looking at the orchestra and trying to find a piano, and like, oh, that would be so cool to play one day!". The idea is that identification serves to construct our social identity by aligning ourselves with certain types of music that we deem valuable and relevant, and distancing ourselves from other kinds of music that we do not. Identifying ourselves as members of certain musical groups plays an important role in how we view ourselves as musicians.

Competency & Efficacy: Accomplished Learners and Self-Belief

Being 'good at' something is based on past experiences with our own competency; it is our own assessment of a successful outcome. These past feelings of competency lead to self-belief, and believing in ourselves points towards a future vision of who we might become. The interplay between the past and the future are important for motivation and possible selves. The literature describes competency (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) as each being an important part of identity construction as well. For example, Quinn's wall of music

festival certificates likely did not serve as an extrinsic motivator – in other words, studying music simply in pursuit of winning more certificates – but rather as a confirmation of her competency in playing the piano. It is easy to imagine she walked past that wall every day and felt proud of herself, which inspired more practicing. Deci and Ryan (1985) found that for those who already have a well-established sense of autonomy, "they will be less controlled by extrinsic rewards and will tend to experience them more as affirmations of their competency or effectance" (p. 112). Quinn also believed she would achieve Level 10 piano one day, and this personal goal setting was based on an appraisal of her own capabilities (Bandura, 1993). Her self-reflexive appraisal was formed, in part, by her past successes which influenced her future goals, and the belief that this goal was within her capabilities. Quinn was a particularly self-assured, confident student, and research suggests that "the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal aspirations people adopt and the firmer is their commitment to them" (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001, p. 189). Her mom, Fiona, described how competency helped her daughter achieve deeper intrinsic motivation and identify music as part of 'who she was' in that moment. She not only mentions *competency* or 'being good at' piano, but also *relatedness*, playing duets with a classmate, and *autonomy*, choosing to play in an optional school concert, which are the three psychological needs required for motivation according to Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

> KG: Would you say playing the piano is part of who she is?
>
> Fiona: Yeah.
>
> KG: That's something other people recognize?
>
> Fiona: Because she is kind of good at piano compared to other kids at school, so yeah. For example, last Christmas at the school concert, she and her classmate played a duet in front of everybody, it makes her feel that she is popular. That's why she wants to practice more.

Research has demonstrated that children's own competence beliefs and values are based, in part, on parents' and teachers' judgments of their competence (Wigfield et. al, 1997). This is important since competency is a critical component of both motivation and identity.

The idea of *fun* came up throughout the research process as a prominent idea, and typically in connection with competency. There are tensions that piano lessons, as an extra-curricular activity, should be 'just for fun'. Alicia Keys playing the piano while standing up in stilettos on Saturday Night Live is fun. Almost all young children have fun while freely and spontaneously making music (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2017). However, fun in these contexts is a surface-level engagement for brief periods of entertainment. While playing music certainly can be enjoyable, cursory experiences are not typically what shape our identity. The kind of fun that has meaning comes with competency, and often competency comes with an acceptable amount of struggle. Teacher, Louise described that "people of this generation more than any generation think 'Oh we're just gonna have fun!' Well, you have fun when you're *good* at it and you can do something well." She knew this could be weeks, months, or years after first trying a piece. Corina described learning a piece called *Sunset in Rio* by Mike Schoenmehl: "I like playing it because it has a lot of energy to it. It is fun, it bounces, and learning it I didn't just sight read it and it was easy. I had to find it, but it wasn't so hard that I was screaming at myself every time that I tried to look at this specific piece." Corina was able to reach the place where playing music was fun because represented a place of accomplishment, and that she grew as a musician in the process. Educators are mistaken to think that best learning environment is one that is fun and obstacle-free. In fact, all learning begins with a felt difficulty (Dewey, 1910). Competency comes from overcoming difficulties; all growth comes from struggle. Grace described that, "it is really fun to be able to try and successfully complete a piece and be able to play it, in its entirety

and see that 'wow, I took time and now I can do this.'" The students in this study seemed to be uniquely aware that fun comes as a result of hard work or even tension. The idea of *acceptable tension* is an idea that pushes students to the threshold of their capabilities, but not over the edge (Thompson, 2015). When tensions are considered to be challenging but realistic, this gives way to competency, competency gives way to motivation, motivation gives way to identity, and this is when music becomes fun in a deep and satisfying way. Musical experiences should create the conditions for further growth, but it may not always be an easy kind of fun.

Emergent Themes

This section includes themes which were not originally set out to be studied. The three emergent themes of ability, choice, and relationships arose from the data as being significant and repeated topics among all participants. The theme of *ability* was not well-explored in the literature in connection with identity, but became such a prominent idea throughout the interviews that it warrants consideration. *Choice* appeared in discussions about the social environment, possible selves, and motivation: for example, parents choosing to include a piano in their home environment, students choosing to take ownership of their lessons going forward into the future, and teachers choosing repertoire with student motivation in mind. The role of choice in adopting a musical identity also became its own independent area of discussion. Finally, *relationships* may be the most important emergent theme, not only because of its frequency in participant discussions, but because it connects with literature which demonstrates that relationships form the basis of identity.

Going forward, this chapter presents further analysis of the three emerging areas in a section of exploratory topics. In this way, exploratory means 'topics at a preliminary state of investigation'. I will analyse the themes which arose during data collection and consider how the

analysis fits with the existing literature. Below is an expanded version of the original concept map which includes these new themes (see Figure 9). All three emergent themes of ability, choice, and relationships can fit into every one of the original, main themes. For example, our abilities and relationships influence how we imagine our possible selves; autonomous choice and relevant relationships are critical parts of motivation; our daily choices and personal abilities shape the social environment. The concept map could have arrows pointing in every direction. However, in pursuit of clarity and simplicity, I have identified the most important connections between each subtheme and main theme. Ability is most closely related to motivation: competency is a key construct of self-determination theory and the self-belief that efficacy requires is based on reflections of ability. Research in music education links ability – also known as skill, achievement, talent, or proficiency – to motivation (Austin, Renwick, & McPherson, 2006). Choice is most closely connected to possible selves: how we choose to remember our past selves and the hopes we choose for our future self shape who we are in the moment. In alignment, Erikson (2007) uses the term *agency* and believes it to be a critical feature of our possible selves because it is filled with personalized meaning and not simply a forthcoming "life task" (p. 352). Relationships are most closely connected to social environment: having others simply exist within the social environment is not strong enough to matter for identity construction, but forming relationships with them is what makes a difference. There is recent evidence that musical relationships are deeply intertwined with adolescents' musical identities (Parker, 2020; Peck & Grealey, 2020), and it seems that there is a timeliness to this discussion which warrants further exploration.

The emergent themes offer new or expanded areas of thought to the topic of musical identities. They emerged as more nuanced understanding of the three main themes that originally

inspired the work. This section contributes new and distinct analyses, but at the same time connects us back to the earlier discussions within this chapter. It offers a new layer to the previous themes. The analysis will add important details about why ability, choice, and relationships matter for salient musical identities. As I delved more deeply into the topic, this section demonstrates what the data analysis pulled my attention towards and what I would like to offer to the field musical identities research.

Figure 9

Expanded Musical Identity Concept Map
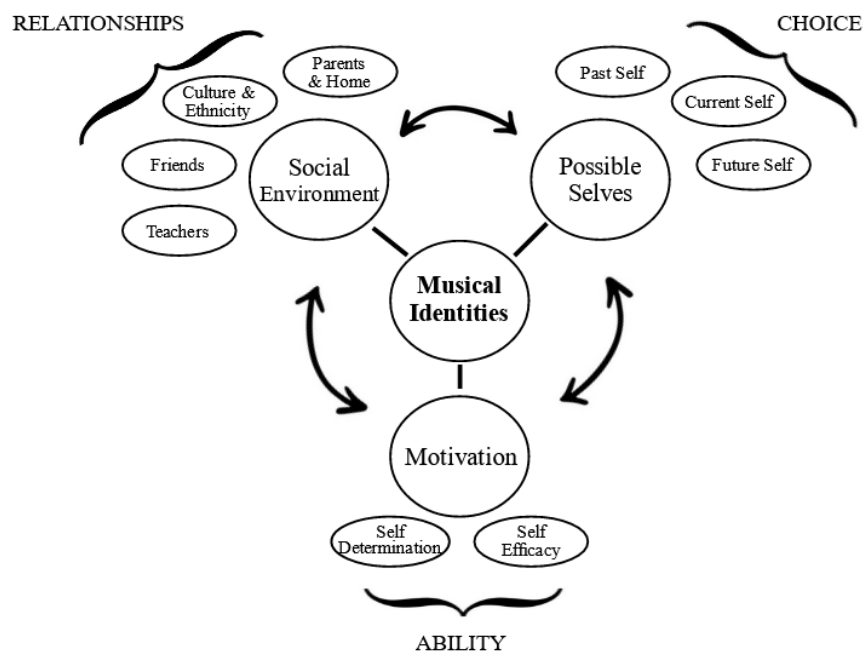
Identity and Musical Ability

There is a longstanding, popular perception of the musician as this mysteriously blessed person, with music embedded within them as some kind of divine gift (Hoffman, 2015; Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998; Jaap & Patrick, 2015). This perception of *musical* or *non-musical* has created a divide (Rickard & Chin, 2017; Woody et al., 2021). We hear informal phrases such

as 'he hasn't got a musical bone in his body' and someone who was described in this way likely would not think of themselves as a musician. Over the last few decades, and significantly influenced by music educators like Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, there has been a shift in thinking towards more inclusive language and inclusive pedagogical approaches (Jaap & Patrick, 2015). In particular, all students can develop musical ability, and this has been further influenced by the thinking that outward effort is more important that inner ability (Dweck, 2008). In other words, effort gives way to ability, but ability in this case is more synonymous will *skill* than *talent*. What makes this conversation difficult is that skill, talent, proficiency, and ability are often used interchangeably in pedagogical discussions. Teacher, Diana, expressed that "I hate using the word 'talented' because that doesn't describe people accurately". When observers say things like, 'she is so talented', they are usually admiring the enormous amount of hours spent practicing the instrument and accumulated skill. Suzuki is known for his informal saying that ability is knowledge plus 10,000 times, and that ability was not innate but rather skillfully and intentionally developed from birth (Suzuki, 1983).

In this study, Madeline's Mom, Lana thought that her daughter had "a very natural talent to it", but Madeline started music lessons at age 2, she had a well-established daily home practice routine, and a balanced combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Howe, Davidson, and Sloboda (1998) defined that true talent was due to genetically-transmitted factors and could be seen with indicators at early ages. However, research has found little evidence towards supporting the talent argument that could not be equally explained by other influencing factors, such practice, support from parents, or excellent teaching (Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998; Lehmann, 1997). Lamont (2017) explains that "so-called talented individuals still required substantial training and support to reach high levels of achievement" (p. 179). There can

certainly be some natural inclination towards musical ability, but it seems that nurturing that inclination is what leads to developing the skill that is required for a musical identity. An inborn sense of ability is not enough; it is only the starting point. Constructing a musical identity requires regular experiences and consistent effort in order develop any natural ability, and this view challenges the widely-held folklore belief that those who identify as musicians are inexplicably talented people who play effortlessly.

There is some evidence that musical achievements and musical competency may be linked to a stronger sense of musical identity (Goopy, 2022). Students with unique and exceptional musical achievements developed more salient musical identities based on those important moments of recognition. For example, Janelle and Xavier were both entering the upper levels of piano study and were the only students to submit a selfie to fulfill the question of 'someone who is a musician'. Grace told her story about a time when playing the piano was an important part of 'who she was': "I was playing piano just in our Band room, and someone came up to me and said, "Wow, that is really great playing; you are so good at piano!" Memories like these served to solidify the students' musical identities. Formal or informal acknowledgements from others about a student's competency allowed that student to reflect on their own ability and find a place for it within their definition of self. This suggests that students' achievements could acts as a validation of their musical identity: when students received positive feedback from friends, certificates at music festivals or good exam grades, they thought of music as being part of 'who they were'. Students make sense of their identities as musicians as they experience music with others who confirm their abilities (Hoffman, 2015). Austin, Renwick, and McPherson (2006) suggest that "children who feel they are competent musicians are likely to achieve at a higher level than children who have more negative views about their musical ability" (p. 225).

While achievement and identity are not usually linked, it seems there may be a case for it here. Those who play well, feel competent, and achieve outward recognition or inner personal satisfaction view music as part of who they are. It is not difficult to imagine the inverse where playing poorly at a music festival or failing a piano exam would call into question a student's ability and cause them to doubt their identity as a musician. Successful musical achievements become part of a student's story; their experiences at musical events shape their narrative. It is something they tell their friends or grandparents about after the fact, and are celebrated for. Hargreaves and Lamont (2017) are one of the few resources that connect ability with identity and explain and that as musical success spirals upward, musical identity is strengthened:

> Their self-perceptions as 'being good at music' can motivate them to achieve higher levels of practice and achievement, which in turn can lead to further reinforcement of the 'myself as musician' role, so that a 'virtuous cycle' can develop in which increasing levels of musical achievement motivation and musical identity are interdependent. In other words, children's motivation to succeed in music is linked with aspects of their musical identities: the ways in which they think about their own abilities have a direct influence upon their motivation to engage in activities which develop those abilities, and vice versa. (p. 153)

In this study, Sophia was playing at a Level 2 proficiency which was low compared to her peers. During our first interview, after describing what it meant to be a musician, she concluded that "I wouldn't say I was a musician". During our second interview, she reconfirmed that other people came to mind when thinking of a musician and that she would not likely use that term in her self-definition. This suggests that a lack of ability is connected to a less salient identity. While it seems that musical identity includes elements of ability, it is not necessarily required since young children without formal lessons are also readily able to think of themselves as musicians (Barrett, 2017; Tafuri, 2017). However, Hallam's research (2013) showed that a self-belief in musical ability increased as the student's conservatory level of study increased, suggesting that "a strong musical identity was being developed as individuals gained increasing levels of expertise"

(Hallam, 2017, p. 483). Research with band and classroom music students found that the musical self developed concurrently alongside the student's musical skills (Goopy, 2022; Sutherland, 2015). Students may need to persist with the early levels because the feeling of being an accomplished musician can be delayed until the upper levels, and the upper levels is often where musical identities crystallize.

Parents and teachers noticed a connection between natural ability and identity. Hearing validations from adult influences could strengthen students' own perceptions of themselves as musicians. The opinions formed by significant influences, particularly parents and music teachers "affect children's own self-concept in powerful ways" (Lamont, 2011, p. 372). There were a number of moments which stood out directly throughout the interview process regarding natural musical ability:

> Teacher Louise, about Xavier: "He's very respectful and he listens and tries hard. And he's got, like I say, natural talents."
>
> Parent Faith, about Hannah: "Well I think she has a gift and I think she's talented. I think she's good at it, but I think more than that it feeds something in her spirit."
>
> Parent Maura, about Grace: "I think she's really proud of herself that she has this ability that not everybody has."
>
> Teacher Katherine, in general: "You can't teach talent. It's just some have it and some don't."

As much as the musical community has shifted away from the inner giftedness model of musical talent, it seems there is still a place for this in terms of identity. Deci and Ryan (2017) suggest that "some children seem inclined, for example, toward music … These inclinations can be a starting point, a seed, for identities" (p. 386). Natural inclinations seem to anchor themselves as an important part of an individual's identity, so long as they are supported by others who encourage that identity to flourish. In research with talented musicians, the place music held within a students' individual self-concept proved vital to their success as a musician

(Burland & Davidson, 2002). It may be the case that students who believe that music comes naturally to them also have more salient musical identities. For example, Xavier was the only student in this study to describe himself as talented, as well as identify that others thought he was talented, and again, submitted a selfie photo when considering 'someone who *is* a musician'. In contrast, Quinn fluctuated on what it meant to be a musician, hesitated to describe herself as such, and her teacher Elizabeth explained that "… I had to get her to think musically, like it is not always coming naturally." Her concept of 'someone who is a musician' was Mozart, who she described as a prodigy. While any natural ability must still be combined with effort, being able to pick up a rhythm easily, play by ear, sing a melody in tune, or have the dexterity to play a complex instrument seems to also be important for identity formation. A teacher can explain all of the details on the score and teach to a certain level of proficiency, but it is the student's responsibility to make it into music and that comes from within. A lack of natural talent can certainly be overcome with learned skill and practice, combined with effective instruction, but those students who do not need to work as hard to achieve the same result appeared to have a better sense of themselves as musicians.

The topic of practicing came up at such a frequent rate over the course of interviews that it deserves further discussion. Practicing is easily connected with ability and is a product of motivation. Generally, the idea persisted that musicians needed to make music on a regular basis, and practicing was part of that process. Janelle explained that "I have piano lessons every Wednesday, and I practice piano for 45 minutes per day. Since I always have to make time for piano in my life, like every day, I have to learn to use my time wisely. Because if I don't play piano today then I have to play double tomorrow." Xavier also practiced about 40 minutes a day; Quinn practiced about an hour daily. Doing any activity for a comparable length and frequency

would form part of anyone's identity. It seems that practicing and being a musician are inseparable. In a study with teenage musicians, Hallam (2017) found that "valuing music, enjoyment, and practicing strategies best predicted aspirations to be a musician" (p. 479). While this work investigated aspirations which led to a professional musician designation, practicing still provides an important part of *being* a musician even at the intermediate levels. For students, practicing was partially driven by their parents and teachers, however there was increased ownership over their musical goals. Arranging their daily schedules to include practice time displayed that music mattered; it demonstrated the importance of music in their lives. Corina described that her mother "convinced me to practice when I didn't always want to when I was younger, so if I didn't I probably wouldn't still be in piano, so I am very thankful for that." This moment illustrated many of the themes in this section: a shifting ownership from parent to student, that ability is connected to more satisfying experiences, and a gratefulness for a supportive social environment. Corina's suggestion that without regular practice she would have stopped lessons seems to say that ability is connected to continuation, and continuous experiences build identity. As students increased their practice time based on higher levels, they gained expertise and enjoyed higher levels of achievement which was shown previously in this section to connect with more salient musical identities. Similarly, work by Evans and McPherson (2015) demonstrated that more successful music students were better able "to make sense of musical practice and various other learning related activities as being congruent with their personal identity" (p. 409). In fact, previous research (McPherson, 2000) showed that students with equally high levels of regular practicing did not achieve the same scores on a music proficiency test; the ones with high levels of commitment combined with their practice time achieved significantly higher scores (see Figure 10). When this data was reassessed a decade

later, the term 'commitment' seemed too simple and was reconfigured as identity. Evans and

McPherson (2015) found that while practicing was certainly important and helped students reach

higher levels of achievement, the students who had clear visions of themselves as musicians and

how music would matter throughout their lives were more likely to experience successful lessons

and sustain their music learning. Their analysis, combined with the results offered by this study,

suggest that practicing is a critical component of ability, and ability is important for constructing

a musical identity.

Figure 10

Interaction between commitment and practice
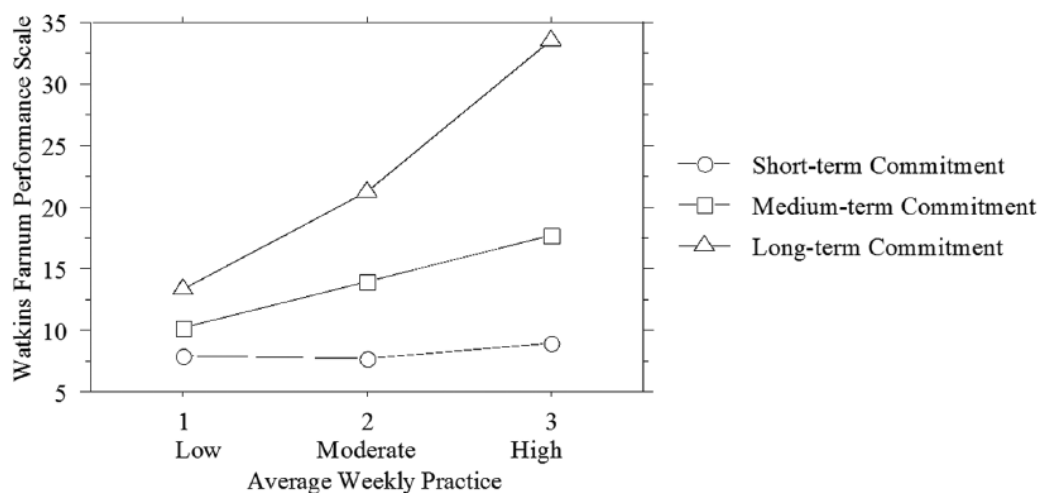
Note. Reprinted from "Commitment and practice: Key ingredients for achievement during the
early stages of learning a musical instrument" by G. E. McPherson, *Bulletin of the Council for
Research in Music Education, No. 147 Winter 2000-2001,* (p. 124)*,* University of Illinois Press.

Choosing a Musical Identity

The concept of choice has been a thread running throughout every section of this

discussion, but it is most closely connected with possible selves. Choice is a key component of

identity questioning, renegotiation, and formation based on where we have been and where we

are going. We choose which identities to accept or reject when building our self-definition, and

identity choice involves giving up some things in favour of others (Josselson, 2017). We are met with choices in every action we take: do you want to play a 2-Part Invention by Bach or the theme from *The Godfather*? Will you spend money on buying an acoustic piano or on a trip to Florida? Will your free time be used to play Minecraft or practice piano? When people know 'who they are', their identity acts to guide everyday choices towards things that further develop their identity. Choices large and small feel identity-based (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). In this way, choice is connected to our past and future selves: the choices we make today are both based on our former lived experiences and also guide the direction towards our possible selves. Choices take us closer towards certain endpoints and away from others.

Ideally, piano lessons can be a particularly good example of agency, where students and parents can choose their piano teacher, the teacher chooses repertoire customized to suit the student, each lesson is taught one-on-one, and together, all three choose which musical experiences to undertake throughout the year, such as festivals or exams. This unique combination of personalities and lived experiences both serve to shape the student's musical identity and feel congruent with the student's identity. If choices were made differently, they would result in a slightly different identity. If choices are made carelessly, this might result in identity incongruence. However, it seems that students do not always choose to study piano, or choose what they play while in lessons. Madeline talked about students who were being forced into taking lessons as if she knew friends who were in that situation. They would not likely consider themselves to be musicians, and these students were missing other opportunities to experience different identities. Later in our interview, Madeline took up the topic of choice in the opposite way to illustrate how choice is an important component of being a musician.

Madeline: I think if… like, there's some people who are forced to do piano – and I hate that people are forced to do something they don't want to do. I hate that idea, because you really shouldn't be doing, you shouldn't be wasting your time. You should be doing something that you love to do and not doing something that you don't want to do.

KG   Somebody once said 'everyone is a musician'. What do you think about that?

Madeline: I think everyone can be a musician, whether that's through a different instrument other than piano, if it's through their voice. I think everyone has some sort of talent with music, whether they want to use it or they don't, that's their choice.

Corina brought up the topic of choice when referring to her photo of 'someone who is a musician'. She submitted a photo of her friend who played trombone in the school band, and also drums outside of school. She talked about how much her friend genuinely enjoyed taking music and that it was her choice to study these instruments in her free time.

KG: So for somebody to be a musician it has to be their choice to play music?

Corina: Yes, I would say so, yeah.

KG: So if somebody is being forced to take lessons, they are not a musician?

Corina: Well if they don't really enjoy it then they wouldn't want to call themselves musician.

The concept of choice has been demonstrated in other work on musical identities, when addressing pedagogy. For example, Evans and McPherson (2017) interviewed a student who described his violin teacher as "awful," because the curriculum allowed for no opportunities to choose music, it was insisted that each piece be learned in a specific order, and the student did not like or did not know any of the music he was learning (p. 223). The lack of autonomy and agency meant that this student eventually quit violin lessons and took up the guitar. Considering that music lessons are individualized experiences, the opportunity for student agency is immense. Of course, there is sometimes a pedagogical sequence which must be followed, and choices within reasonable limits are usually necessary. Teacher, Adele, addressed this topic:

Adele: I really try to give them choices in what pieces they chose… I mean I have to have parameters, and 'this or that' like with kids you can't just say, "Well what do you want to do?" and just let them do absolutely anything, right? But I do give choices and it is interesting what they choose sometimes."

KG: Especially when it is not what you would choose!

Adele: And you think, "I wonder why on earth they chose that one?" and then I ask them and they have their own reasons. Sometimes they just say, "I liked the sound of it."

Providing students with choices has been found to strongly relate to superior learning outcomes (Reynolds & Symons, 2001), and even the provision of quite trivial choices has been found to lead to increases in intrinsic motivation, higher levels of learning, and perceived competence (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). For example, Grace's summer popular music projects, outside of her formal lessons, were pieces she would play unprompted by parents. Her mom, Maura, described that "over the summer she's really enjoyed actually playing pop music. So that's kind of piqued her interest just a little bit more." Even Maura cited that her favourite piece to play after decades away from piano lessons was *November Rain* by Guns n' Roses. When people feel that they know 'who they are' and have the freedom to express it, that feeling directs their choices towards things that are *identity congruent* (Elmore & Oyserman, 2012; Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). Lamont (2017) discusses the role of agency in identity formation and suggests that "choice appears to be a central concept in sustaining a musical identity over time" (p. 185). Agency could begin with something as simple as choosing a recital piece or choosing to practice for an extra five minutes. As students accumulate musical experiences they have chosen, they are also choosing their musical identity.

Identity and Relationships

Relationships are the cornerstone of identity and they are built upon mutual experiences. Identity may be unique from person to person, but we construct our identities based on our

relationships with the people and things around us. Early research suggests that "the child's definition of self both depends on and influences its relationships" (Hinde, 1975, p. 318). The evidence brought forward by this study certainly illuminates this statement: students depended upon their relationships in order to understand their musical identities, and their established musical identities influenced how they formed relationships with others. Hannah submitted a photo of her piano teacher looking down at the keys of her grand piano while playing and explained that Adele is the person she sees actively making music the most often. Hannah admired her role model and inwardly depended upon that image to make sense of what it meant to be a musician. Further, her commitment to becoming a musician also strengthened the outward relationship to lessons and to her teacher. Students often submitted photos of other people in their musical lives that they cared about. In other examples, Quinn submitted a photo of her father and explained that she had not realized how much it meant when her father complimented her playing. Corina submitted a photo of her sister and described that even though she stopped lessons, her sister's ability to play by ear was inspiring and one of the reasons she wanted to keep playing. Grace submitted a photo of her entire family because she thought of them all as musicians. The relationships with important people in these students' lives made a significant impact in how they understood themselves as musicians. Musical identity research suggests that relationships "comprise the basis of belonging and create space for adolescents to experience greater meaning in their lives" (Parker, 2020, p. 107). It is important to consider that the most meaningful musical relationships were with family and friends in informal ways, and typically not with other music students in structured lessons. This is important because the everydayness of students' relationships seems to have a bigger impact on the salience of musical identity than conventional musical experiences.

Previous research has demonstrated that identity "is grounded in relationship to others" (Josselson, 2017, p. 16). Relationships matter because the people we make connections with have a profound impact on who we are, and the interconnectedness of people is based on shared encounters. Research suggests that "insofar as interactions are part of enduring relationships, they are essential for reinstating, reinterpreting, and reconfirming identities" (Habermas & Kober, 2014, p. 154). In other words, it might be said that interactions accumulate to become shared experiences, experiences lead to relationships, and relationships lead to identity. Interactions are essential components of meaningful relationships. For example, Tafuri (2017) demonstrated in early music education that "term 'interaction' is used to indicate those behaviors through which infants show their willingness to establish a relationship with the loved person (parents or other caregivers), and to continue 'the game', smiling, chuckling or laughing, producing some movements and gestures, or some sounds, musical babbling" (p. 198). Musical experiences play a vital role in our earliest and most important bonding relationships throughout life (Collins, 2021; Hargreaves, MacDonald, & Miell, 2018; Tafuri, 2017). Later in adolescence, this is problematic because piano students are so often isolated from others with the same interest and do not frequently interact. Sophia's teacher, Cara, described that "There really isn't much of a community because they don't interact with each other very much except at recitals, so they don't really know each other very much". In contrast, Elizabeth described the musical community and peer relationships within her studio: "I feel like they all know each other, they all keep tabs on each other, what the other person is doing. I have the opportunity to have them play in concerts once a month, like today, well Quinn is coming with three other kids and they are going to perform for each other, and it is just a quick half-hour thing but they all see each other and they all know what the other one is playing… so I try and have a community because that

way I feel like it draws them in more". To extrapolate, this could be why Sophia was generally unable to think of herself as a musician while Quinn integrated that term somewhat more easily into her self-concept. Music is an important catalyst for providing the experiences that relationships are based upon. However, there is less frequent mention of the multi-layered connection between musical experiences, relationships, and identity within music education or musical identity literature, and it is surprising that this connection has not been more prominently taken up by scholars. One notable exception is the recent work by Parker (2020) who extensively discusses that adolescents' "musicking forms a basis of relationships" (p. 224). Relationships based on shared musical experiences seem to be a significant contributing factor towards a salient musical identity and deserves further consideration.

A person's identity cannot be formed in a singular context: those you encounter throughout life necessarily change you, and identity is constructed through those experiences with others (Aron & Nardone, 2012; Dueck, 2017). In other words, identity is socially situated. While identity has been viewed as individualistic concept within this study, "people do not create themselves from air; rather, what is possible, what is important, what needs to be explained all come from social context—from what matters to others" (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012, p. 76). Research often compares individualistic with collective identities (e.g. Green, 2011) and people think of themselves in different ways: an individualistic perspective considers how one in unique and set apart from others while a collectivist perspective considers how we are similar and connected through relationships (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). While identity is certainly individualized, the results of this work suggest that it is most meaningfully formed in relationships with others. Relationships are connected within the social environment and other research supports this idea: "Individuals have interests, relationships, and identities, which they

pursue and express through the various groups and organizations with which they are affiliated" (Kelman, 2006, p. 24). That is to say, the social environment encompasses the many global interactions that we have with others, but relationships exist at a smaller level and it is within these deeper layers that identities are formed. Xavier's piano teacher, Louise, described that her studio community included masterclasses, a final year-end recital, and sometimes pizza parties but admitted that "It's not a warm community but it's a community!". This seems to illustrate the difference between social environment and relationships, where seeing peers at these events is not a meaningful enough interaction to matter for identity. Developing a multitude of small, frequent interactions in different settings so as to create a warm, supportive connection is where musical identities might be better formed.

While relationships form important threads within the social environment, they are not the same thing. The social environment refers to the broader ecosystems in which we live; relationships are a layer deeper because they are more personalized and formed through repeated, daily choices. Research which investigated youth identity formation suggests that the "significance of a meaningful musical experience is reflected by the continued salience over time" (Peck & Grealey, 2020, p. 10). While experiences within the social environment can be brief and inconsequential, experiences within relationships are more complex and have a deeper meaning because of their longevity. Madeline had many musical encounters through early group music education, school music classes, choir, musical theatre productions, and informal music-making with friends but these did not have the same longevity as piano lessons. Experiencing weekly lessons with an attuned teacher over the course of 6 successive years created a valuable relationship between the two. Their caring, long-term connection provided an accumulation of musical experiences, and allowed Madeline to develop a relationship with a trusted mentor.

Katherine explained that "she gets one-on-one time with me, so she can be herself or tell me things if she wants to. We can talk about other things besides music, too. I'm somebody that she could, aside from her family or friends, that it's nice to have somebody that you know very well and for this many years." The deeper layer that separates relationships from the social environment is filled with meaning. We make sense of our identities based on the people, places, and things that matter to us because they are based on meaningful, personalized experiences that shape who we are. Josselson (2017) suggests that "people orient themselves in the world to what they care about – and, most often, care is rooted in relationships to others" (p. 267). We care about things that have meaning to us, and simply because someone or something exists within our social environment does not mean that we develop a relationship with it, or that it impacts our identity. In order for something within our social environment to impact our identity, we must build a meaningful relationship with it.

Living in the world means that students existed in time and space: who they were was a function of where there were and the experiences that occurred. Their identities were a function of their environments and those within it. Benson (2001) suggests that "I am always in relationship with 'the other' and this relationship and its terms change endlessly within the stream of experience" (p. 62). For students, not only the experiences they had with the people around them, but also returning to those same experiences with the same people are the way an identity was formed. Fiona explained the importance of the long-term relationship between Quinn and her piano teacher Elizabeth which had evolved well beyond music and into a caring friendship: "she's known the teacher more than five years and not just like a teacher, maybe like a friend." She described that during a lesson Quinn and Elizabeth would also talk about food and fashion, and lessons became more personalized as these informal moments unfolded. It is evident

that identities are built from experiences, but more importantly from the relationships which develop because of those experiences. Research has demonstrated that transformational experiences actually did not result from the musical activities themselves; rather, "it was the *situatedness* of the activities within particular places and relationships that rendered the music activities meaningful" (O'Neill, 2017, p. 91). In other words, experiences that transform adolescents' identities happen in moments of social connectedness. Critical to this work, relationships become increasingly more important during adolescence (Nurmi, 2004). For students, this was a particularly sensitive time in their lives where their musical identity was being constructed through direct, multiple, and frequent musical interactions with others (Roberts, 2004).

Identity is not just limited to relationships with other people, but with the instrument itself. Some musicians even consider "even consider their instrument as a part of themselves" (Simoens & Tervaniemi, 2013, p. 171). Some people say that each piano has its own voice or its own personality. Returning to the same instrument day after day for many years develops a relationship with the instrument. In truth, it is not so much the piano which has a personality, but the music which comes out of it reflects the student's personality: what they are feeling or thinking about pours out through the fingers, into the instrument, and comes back out as sound. Beautifully put, "the piano is an emotional prosthetic that transforms feelings into sound through the silent actions of my arms, hands, fingers, and feet" (Wagner, 2017, p. 52). It has been suggested that musicians who feel *at-one* with their instruments have an overall better sense of wellbeing (Simoens & Tervaniemi, 2013). In this study, Hannah described that "I want to keep our piano going for as long as we can, because it is already a hundred and fifteen years old!" Hannah had a committed relationship with her instrument, knew its history, and used it as an

important outlet for all of her creative energies. In other parts of our conversation, she explained that her piano helped her process things in a way that other people could not. This seems to say that the student was forming a relationship with herself and using the piano as a catalyst; the relationship with her piano helped her better understand her feelings and her own identity.

This is important to consider since the piano is primarily a solo instrument. The many solitary hours spent practicing alone on a piano bench without immediate feedback from other supporters or collaborative musicians may be why so many students drop out. In other words, learning the piano can be an isolated experience. Grace described that, "Band seems like more of a team thing, whereas piano is more of a solo endeavour. Usually, I am more enthusiastic about Band than just my piano lessons." Without a network of fellow musicians, without a close teacher relationship, and without interested parents, the learning the piano can be difficult and meaningless. McPherson (2021) emphasizes that all music is a social experience; it is meant to bring people together. In this study, teacher Diana also explained it well: "Piano is quite a lonely undertaking; you are all by yourself, you don't have to play with the group, you could make beautiful music all by yourself so you don't have the camaraderie of a trio, or a quartet, or singing in a choir, or playing an instrument in an orchestra." In the previous chapter, Diana also beautifully explained how music can bring people together to build stronger communities and create better citizenship. However, it was not clear if she took any tangible actions, such as outreach projects or student field trips, within her own studio to accomplish these ideals. Lessons which take students beyond the music and into a personal connection with themselves or with others seem to be the most meaningful, long-lasting, and lead to well-being. In my own experience, some of the most meaningful moments with my own piano teacher had nothing to do with music and were spent drinking coffee at her kitchen table. Years after my lessons had

finished, she even attended my wedding. What this says is 'I see you, I value you, and I'm interested in you' which gives space for better learning and making better music. Playing music is a uniquely vulnerable task which – at its most artistic peak – asks the performer to pull from the depths of their emotions. Pouring those raw emotions such as anger or joyfulness into the instrument requires self-awareness and trust, both of which are formed in healthy relationships. There was a moment with Quinn's mom, Fiona, which illustrated the integration of trust, music, and relationships:

> Sometimes we choose a song, I can't remember which one, and she will tell me how the song reminds her of nights we spent together and talking while making a cake. You have no idea that this song will bring a memory back. I had no idea that night meant a lot to her.

This excerpt tells us that music is a pathway for people to get to know one another more deeply, and for relationships to flourish.

Dialogue is considered an essential part of relationships – as well as an essential part of education – and a lack of dialogical interaction during lesson observations was remarkable. Students tended to gain more musical knowledge and advice about how to practice or which parts of their playing needed improvement however, the communication was generally one-sided and dialogue did not form a significant part of most lessons. With one particular exception, Annette described Grace as a student with the "willingness to be guided" and conducted lessons with a strategy of "sharing power". During our lesson observation, Grace was engaged as the lesson unfolded in a dialogue between student and teacher rather than a traditional lecture-lesson style. The interactions during her lesson were warm and respectful. It demonstrated the teacher's belief in the student's ability and the student's trust in the teacher. Even though this lesson was developed within the Royal Conservatory curriculum, teaching classical music and technique did

not come with antiquated teaching methods. In other words, it did not matter *what* was being taught but rather *how* it was being taught. Other research has observed that "the teaching of classical music focussed on intra-musical or 'inherent' technical aspects of the music, that is to say, the notes and how they are composed and performed" (Green, 2003, p. 15). This learning model could be explained by the pressure teachers feel as the 'expert' and that professionals are expected to impart knowledge. It could also be because lessons were a timed occurrence and leisurely conversations meant that other students' lessons would be impacted. One elementary music specialist reflected that "teacher-directed lessons are simply more efficient when a performance is looming and time is of the essence" (Holoboff, 2015, p. 32). However, music making has historically been a shared experience and finding space for students' voices is an important part of that process.

By using questions to draw out students' reasons for their musical decisions, teachers would encourage the kind of reflection that leads to valuable educational experiences and better relationships (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). During the lesson observations in this study, students who provided brief, factual answers to superficial questions only led to short-term thinking and the interaction likely did not have any impact on identity formation. The back-and-forth exchange between an experienced teacher and an engaged student is where learning could be transformative. This one-directional approach could stem from the conservatory system where during exams students do not speak. This is a problem because reflection, critical thinking, and dialogue are important parts of student-centered learning in music (Garrett, 2013). Dialogue not only helps teachers understand the student, but also the wider world in which they live. O'Neill (2016) suggests that "instead of trying to teach in a vacuum by shutting out influences from the world outside, educators can breathe life into lessons by inviting in real-world inquiry through

reflection and dialogue" (p. 609). Education is at the heart of a dialogical process; it is about learning from one another (Biesta, 2013). Fecho, Falter, and Hong (2016) have termed this *engaged dialogical practice* where all of the participants involved "be present, be aware, be open, be critical, be flexible, and be engaged" (p. 10). This kind of dialogical practice would mean that knowledge was co-constructed. It represents a shift towards deeper relationships, which includes sharing of the power and responsibility (Hedeen, 2005). Dialogue confers respect towards all members of the conversation and demonstrates to students that their ideas are valuable. It makes them feel significant. If the goal is to harness a musical identity in students, building relationships where teachers treat students as musicians with important musical ideas is critical.

D.S. al Coda

This chapter explored the three main themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation since they were theorized as being critical components in musical identity construction. The social environment included the role of formal music learning institutions, the importance of home and family culture, and informal influences such as peers. The possible selves focused on the importance of adolescence in terms of identity construction, and how students imagined music would be important to who they wanted to become. Motivation explored a turning point for ownership in lessons from parent to student, the role of repertoire in providing feelings of relevancy, and the importance of feeling like an accomplished learner. The exploratory topics in this section came out during thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and included musical ability, choice, and relationships. These were areas which the literature on musical identities had not thoroughly explored and offer new perspectives to the field. In particular, the importance of relationships became a main finding of this research: who students

surround themselves with and the musical relationships they build impact how they think of themselves as musicians.

Going forward, Chapter 6 will begin by answering the research questions, will address how student thinking changed over the course of the research, and will offer thoughts on what it means to be a musician. The chapter will summarize the work as a whole, address any limitations within the study, and offer implications for practical change.

Chapter 6: Coda

For early-adolescent piano students who are considering significant questions of who they are, or who they would like to become, the role of a musical identity in those questions is important. Research has shown that "successful music learners possess a strong long-term view of their abilities and profile as musicians" (Evans & McPherson, 2015, p. 409), but relatively little was known about how piano students understood themselves as musicians. The topics of private piano lessons and musical identities had never been investigated together. The literature brought forward three main themes which influenced the study: social environment, possible selves, and motivation. However, these three themes had not yet been considered simultaneously in the context of musical identities. I proposed that these three themes were intertwined with one another, and the results showed the interconnected nature of each theme. This is important because it was impossible to consider one without the others. Students effortlessly talked about their social environment and motivation simultaneously; their photovoice submissions blended together the future self with motivation; observing a piano lesson meant viewing part of their social environment and journey towards their future self.

Since this study has always been fluid, I am thinking about the final chapter somewhat differently than a summation. I hope readers will notice that the chapter is titled Coda rather than Conclusion because I am taking my inspiration from musical analysis. In many pieces – especially the larger Beethoven Sonatas – codas are lengthy and do bring in brief, new musical ideas. In fact, "a coda turns away from the conclusion: it may shift to a new key, revisit some of the thematic ideas, or present a new look at the previously given material" (Royal Conservatory, 2016, p. 99). This section will also bring in brief, new ideas from both study participants and academic scholars. More importantly, codas are a release of all tension that was previously built

up to satisfy the listener on their journey. For example, throughout this document, the struggle with 'what *does* it mean to be a musician?' has persisted and will finally be addressed in this chapter. It may be unconventional to use a music composition approach to a written document, but I have intended to be more flexible in my design.

The main research question asked *How do piano students construct their musical identities and understand themselves as musicians?* Findings demonstrated that lived experiences with piano lessons shaped how they understood themselves as musicians. For example, Quinn's framed festival certificates compared to Xavier's original compositions meant that those two students understood themselves as musicians differently; one was a competitive pianist and the other a composer. Hannah's future vision of herself as a choir accompanist presented another musical identity entirely. Every student in this study had a different combination of musical experiences, which meant that they had a noticeably different musical identity. Put simply, musical experiences are the organic beginnings of musical identities (Spychiger, 2017). Because each combination of experiences was different, based on different worlds of learning ecologies, it meant they had 8 distinct identities. As other research suggests, "young people's musical selves are aligned and woven into their experiential worlds and their personal aspirations as they go about "making up" their musical selves within the unique configuration of the music learning ecologies they inhabit" (O'Neill, 2017). It means that identities are only understood in context. It also suggests that an identity does not form from something you do once; it takes multiple encounters with an activity in different ways to incorporate it into your working definition of self. An experience that occurs regularly, over the course of many years, will be strong enough to matter for identity formation. As experiences become internalized over time, students construct an understanding of themselves as musicians. Spychiger (2017) believes that "musical

experience builds up the musical self-concept and that musical identity takes its course from there" (p. 281). Experiences are certainly at the core of all identity: how we experience the world shapes who we are (Deci & Ryan, 2017). To narrow the focus, certain musical experiences correspond to certain musical identities (Peck & Grealey, 2020). Students in this study demonstrated that the experiences they chose for themselves constructed their identity. Within those experiences, meaningful relationships were formed and those are what played a deeper role in their identity formation.

Relationships played a significant role in students' musical identity construction and understanding. It means the state of being sincerely connected. The result of being connected is that "when people are asked about what makes their lives meaningful, what contributes to their happiness, and what they value, they frequently identify close relationships" (Perlman & Vangelisti, 2018, p. 1). Hinde (1975) established that relationships involve ongoing patterns of interactions between two people known to each other, that each person's behaviour is shaped by the presence of the other, and that the effect of one interaction determines the future direction of the relationship. I draw on literature suggesting that relationships with others are the foundation of all identity (Josselson, 2017). The results of this study indicated that a student's relationship with the instrument, with playing certain styles of music, with listening to music, with other students, or with their teacher and parents all serve to construct their musical identity. Relationships are a layer deeper than social environment because experiences can be passing and inconsequential. Relationships signify personal significance and meaning; they make a difference to 'who you are'. Relationships can be long-lasting because they have had an impact on your life. For example, two piano students may have adjacent lessons where they come-and-go from their teacher's studio. They recognize one another and share a common moment in each

other's social environment, but they do not share a relationship. Simply existing in the social environment is not enough to matter for identity. The social environment gives an overlay of the people and places that we might encounter but "relationships require an extended series of interactions over time" (Perlman & Vangelisti, 2018, p. 1). There is intentionality and meaning behind the encounter. To use a personal example, my many experiences performing *The Maiden and the Nightengale* by Granados at music festivals and recitals is not what impacted my musical identity, but rather the deep relationship I built with that piece of music. I loved every note. For relationships to matter when constructing an identity, there must be "ongoing patterns of interactions that involve affectively strong bonds between individuals" (Aron & Nardone, 2012, p. 520). In my *Maiden* example, I adored the music because I spent time with it over many years. If a student is unable to build musical relationships – with the music itself or with other musicians – it is unlikely that they will see themselves as a musician. The musical relationships in a student's life are what lead to a musical identity, and the students in this study who had meaningful musical relationships were more easily able to understand themselves as musicians.

The secondary research question asked, *what kinds of experiences contribute to the formation of a salient musical identity?* These three themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation provided a number of interesting findings. As part of the social environment, I expected that parents, ethnicity, and home culture would provide experiences which led to constructing a musical identity. Those who had family and friends who were interested and involved in their musical lives seemed to have a stronger sense of a musical identity. The conservatory also significantly shaped students' musical experiences, and further, what it meant to be a musician. However, the conservatory model sometimes interfered because the perception of what it meant to be a musician in this context was beyond what students could

reach. There was an interesting discrepancy in the gender of research participants, with all but one participant being girls, and gendered experiences may unfairly play a role in a stronger sense of musical identity. The experiences with other students, their parents and teacher, listening to informal music, working on formally assigned repertoire, frequent home practicing, attending weekly lessons, and involvement in annual exams all determined the importance of being a musician as part of who they were. Experiencing an integrated social environment, where music lessons and the rest of life worked together, seemed to contribute to a more salient musical identity. As previously described, *salient* means 'front of mind' and those students who had accumulated experiences within the three themes of social environment, possible selves, and motivation also had clear and detailed musical identities inside their own minds. However, building relationships as a result of the experiences within the three themes seemed to matter more: a network of relationships with other musical people, a relationship with their future musical self, a relationship with relevant repertoire, and with themselves as accomplished learners. While the social environment, possible selves, and motivation provided relevant experiences towards constructing a salient identity, experiencing strong and active musical relationships were an essential part of being a musician.

As a part of the possible selves, adolescence proved to be a transitional time and a period of intense questioning. Students were experiencing more independence and agency, while asking themselves who they wanted to become in relation to who they were in the past, and also striving to define who they were at that moment. The photovoice submissions provided reflective and thoughtful responses to how music would matter to them in the future, with differing benefits. Corina and Quinn focused on the tangible benefits of better grades and brain development; Madeline, Sophia, and Hannah imagined the more sentimental benefits of teaching others;

Xavier envisioned his own future musical experiences playing other instruments in other settings; Janelle and Grace described that the virtues of learning music can transfer over into all other parts of life. It matters less what the reason is; the exercise of envisioning a future musical self and defining why music will matter provided a better understanding of themselves as musicians. Experiencing a clear vision of a future musical self seems to support a more salient musical identity in the present.

As part of motivation, repertoire and practicing came up frequently in the interviews and suggests that students who identify with the music they are learning – and spend time working on it – also identify themselves more easily as musicians. Experiencing *choice* and *ability* proved to be important. According to self-determination theory, choice – or autonomy – is one of the main characteristics of being intrinsically motivated, and intrinsic motivation is what leads to wellbeing, satisfaction, and ultimately identity construction. Ability – or competency – is also a key component of motivation in both self-determination theory and self-efficacy theory. When students believed they were capable of taking on further challenges, after demonstrating important moments of competency, they were more inclined to do so. For example, Hannah's favourite part of going to piano lessons was that she liked "getting better". Her experience of continuously improving was what drove her desire to attend lessons, and this might demonstrate the link between motivation and identity. People who have strong desires that are autonomously motivated and self-regulated, or "harmonious passions", are those who enjoy identity achievement (Deci & Ryan, 2017). When the intrinsic motivation that certain students displayed towards music aligned with their sense of self, and when actions were intrinsically or authentically driven, they led to wellbeing. Further, when students experienced music in autonomous ways, rather than in controlled ways, they seemed to have a more salient musical

identity. The themes of *choice* and *ability* had not been discussed in the literature and offer new perspectives to the field of musical identities.

This section will go forward to consider how students' thinking about the topic of musical identities evolved, examine what it means to be a musician, make suggestions for practical implications, provide recommendations for future research by other scholars, address any limitations within the study, and offer a few concluding thoughts.

How Student Thinking Changed During the Study

The stories which children tell others is not just a way of sharing important moments in their life, but act to solidify an identity in their minds (Barrett, 2017). It is in narrative that we construct our identities (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). It has even been suggested that narrating our experiences solves the "problem of identity" because telling others who we are creates self-defining moments (Pasupathi, 2014). In terms of this research, the things which students chose to tell me about themselves also strengthened their relationship to their own story. Stories were the ways in which students made sense of how music fit into their lives and its importance. For many, they surprised themselves at the level of importance music actually held, and came to a different place by the end of the research process. Teacher Annette explained that "I think learning to play the piano is an opportunity for them to learn about themselves, for who they are." The music itself helps students learn about themselves, but questions *about* learning music provided valuable learning opportunities as well.

One of the most impressive and encouraging parts of this study was how early adolescent students thought so deeply about the abstract concept of identity. As the interviews unfolded, there were very few 'I dunno' responses, or moments where they were not willing explore a

deeper level of thinking. It seemed that this deeper level of thinking stayed with them long after our interviews had finished, and they continued to consider the questions about how music has shaped their identity as they went about their daily lives. At a time in their lives where these students were already asking big questions of who they were or would like to become, having been involved in a research project with further big questions often helped them gain clarity. I heard more than once that students had 'never really thought about that until now'. They were very open to answering difficult questions; it seemed the simple fact that no one had never asked. There are three examples with Madeline, Grace, and Quinn that stood out among the interviews because they illustrate how student thinking changed over the course of this research.

KG: How has your thinking changed over the course of our time together about music?

Madeline: I kinda thought a lot more about how it started and like, kind of more appreciative of how it… how much it has been important to me.

KG: What have you learned about yourself during our time together and me asking all these really hard questions?

Grace: I feel I realized that piano has been a bit more important to me than I thought it was. Having to think of, oh, how has it changed my life? How has it impacted how I think and how I do stuff? I feel like it had a bigger impact than originally I would think of. It was just like, oh, I just do piano, but then having to answer the questions you realize maybe it is a bit more important than I fully recognized.

KG: How has your thinking specifically about musical identities changed?

Quinn: Most of the time I would just play piano and be done with it. I didn't really consider myself someone who was interested in playing the piano. And then after all of these questions it's like, 'huh, I've done piano for a really long time and I haven't quit yet. That's kind of weird considering I didn't like piano that much." And then I was like, "I do like piano!"

While this research was meant to be investigative, there were inevitably some parts of it that were also educational. Having students learn about themselves in the interview process meant that they left the research in a different place than they had started. The questions were not meant

to be leading, but as students talked through issues of identity, they started to understand themselves and the place of music in their lives differently.

The language we use to describe ourselves is important in terms of identity (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). There is a distinct difference between someone who plays an instrument and is a musician. One describes something they *do* while the other describes who they *are*. It takes an experience and brings it inwards to the centre of self. The regularity of the experience, combined with a commitment to the experience and reflection on the experience, is part of what makes an identity. In other words, musical experiences need to happen frequently, exist in recent memory, and hold a special place in our minds to matter when constructing a musical identity. However, there is not an achievement threshold that must be passed in order to call themselves a musician. Being a musician does not necessarily involve making money. The word 'musician' is not used enough or in broad enough contexts, especially when it comes to student learning (Green, 2008). During this study, students had never really thought of themselves as musicians until the interview questions asked them to consider it. The fact that they played an instrument was not a significant part of how they introduced themselves to others. After some careful thought, most students responded that "yes", they were musicians based on their own definitions. However, it was clear that they had not been asked this before. No one had ever referred to them as musicians, despite many years of lessons, recitals, exams, and countless hours spent practicing. Teacher, Diana explained that "I was reading – or was told or heard – that we should tell our students that they are musicians, that we should use that actively. I sometimes forget to do that because they are musicians." It is not enough that teachers know their students are musicians and treat them as such, they also need to express it outwardly and verbally. In order to incorporate the term 'musician' into students' identity, others must also use that word when describing them.

Parents and teachers need to refer to students as musicians before students will refer to themselves as musicians. Beyond telling them they are musicians, involving adolescents in conversations about their experiences with music and what that means to their lives is where musical identities are solidified. Engaging students in conversations about what music means to them can lead to powerful moments. During this study, it was during the moments of self-reflection that students realized that they were musicians. As discussions unfolded, students had a chance to talk about what music meant in their lives and there was space for a self-definition of 'musician' to exist. Other influences in their lives could easily take the same approach. O'Neill (2017) proposes that "when young musicians reflect critically on their values and make conscious efforts to plan and implement actions that bring about new ways of viewing themselves, others, and their world in relation to music activities, they are actively constructing their musical selves" (p. 85). One action could be a more thoughtful use of vocabulary; more importantly, students should be treated as musicians and have conversations about what music means for who they are.

The language we use to define ourselves matters for how we think of ourselves. Overall, students did feel that they were musicians, and found a clearer understanding of their musical identity over the course of the study, however none of them had never directly used the word 'musician' when describing themselves to others. When students integrate a musical identity alongside all of their other identities, it becomes part of their comprehensive self definition. Identities are performances of who we are, and they link our inner self to our outer world (Josselson, 2017). For example, a student who clears their schedule for daily practice and wears a branded t-shirt from last summer's music camp is performing a certain musical identity. Those who describe themselves as musicians to others also reciprocally confirm it in their own minds.

However, that is difficult when they have never been identified as a musician by others or treated as such. Over the course of the research, students experienced a shift in how they thought about themselves as a musician primarily because they were invited to talk about their identity in new ways. I suggest that parents and teachers should more broadly use the word 'musician' when referring to students and, more importantly, use actions which consider students as independent musicians in order to support their musical identities. The difference between a student saying "I play the piano" and "I am a musician" is subtle but important. The moment a student uses the term 'musician' to describe themselves is the moment they become one.

What Does it Mean to be a Musician: Some Answers

Each of the 24 participants in this study were asked the same question: what does it mean to be a musician? The parents' responses primarily included making music on a somewhat regular basis with some level of proficiency. There must be a certain skill level achieved before someone would call themselves a musician. The word *ability* came up frequently. You could not call yourself a musician by 'mashing around' on an instrument: there had to be an element of intention and a clear goal of producing a good sound. There was a general acknowledgement that being a musician does take deliberate effort on a frequent basis, and some parents considered that making money was a prerequisite for being musician. While some of the parents did talk about desire or joy, there was a skill-based threshold behind those ideas. In students' opinions, there was a stronger sense that musicians still needed to play with skill but mixed with deeper elements. Quinn, Janelle, and Hannah talked about expressing emotions; Corina and Madeline talked about enjoyment; Xavier combined hard work with creativity; Sophia discussed that true musicians have confidence in their craft; Grace talked about connection and that musicians bring people together. In other words, playing music with surface-level skill is not enough to be

considered a musician. Being a musician is something you must feel passionate about and draw out from within. It must serve a bigger purpose where there are life lessons and virtues in question. While adults' definitions typically involve musical skill level, students' definitions of what it means to be a musician capture a sense of enchantment; to be the fullest expression of yourself. In other words, students are concerned with the *affect* while adults are concerned with the *effect*.

Generally, students wanted to use the term *musician* to describe themselves but with serious hesitation. In their minds, they had a picture of themselves as a musician but when asked if they would use that word to describe themselves to others in the future, most disagreed. There were moments of identity conflict: even though students knew they were musicians, they believed that the wider world would not understand. The general public has a definition about what musicians are like, and students believed they would not fit into that definition. It seemed like too large a societal construct to change. Students might use the term in their minds, but likely would not say it out loud to others. The conversation with Grace illustrates how many of the other students' also thought about their own definitions in contrast with larger society, and how conflicted they felt about changing such an entrenched image:

> KG: Do you think you are going to start using the term 'musician' when you start describing yourself to other people?
>
> G: Like when you asked me to define musician – because I remember that question last time – I think my answer was something like 'someone who makes music and then shares it with other people' and then I started to think, I do that! You think of a musician and you think of someone who is famous who everyone knows plays music, but then it could be anyone who was playing music and then helping spread that music and creating something with it.
>
> KG: Yeah, it doesn't have to be just like, Mozart!
>
> G: Yeah, it could be anyone who just found a passion in music and then was able to start doing it.

KG: And that is you! So back to my question, do you feel like you will use that word to describe yourself, or do you feel like that is too big of a word?

G: I feel like I would use it to describe myself, but I also think if I did people would be like. "Huh. Is she a musician?" and then I would be like, based on my definition I guess so.

The teachers' definitions of what it meant to be a musician were quite different because they were living the experience of being a musician. This is something that had come to define their lives and something they had thought about carefully. It was always more than a career; being a musician was a calling. Teacher, Louise described being a musician as "doing what you love. In an ideal world, in my mind, it's the only thing that you wanted to do." Most teachers' initial definitions of being a musician were tied to their own vocation, but they did consider their students to be musicians as well. Once they thought about the question more carefully, most teachers agreed that anyone can be a musician given certain levels of commitment and enjoyment. In one particularly beautiful definition,

> Teacher, Aaron: I think it means you have to have *an active relationship with music* in which you are consistently and in which every day you are thinking about how you deepen that relationship. Whether you're practicing three or four hours a day or whether you're just a hobbyist who does it half an hour a day, you have to be searching for things that you don't know … So for me, it's aspiring after the way the great composers looked at music that they were just interested in. I think hearing things that weren't there before, and hearing things that actually moved them. Debussy's "my ear is my guide and pleasure is my rule", right? Or Debussy's talking of his contemporaries: "these compositions smell too much of the desk lamp and not enough of the sunlight." I think musicians have to understand that music is just like all art. It's a reflection on experience. You must experience life and you must bring it to your work in order for it to be valuable.

The three concepts that persist through this definition of a musician are relationships, ability, and choice. These are also the three subthemes which ran throughout the previous chapter. The idea of an active relationship with anything is an important concept in constructing an identity. Coming back to the same activity day after day shows that it is a valuable part of

who we are. Most people are not generally inclined to spend time everyday doing an optional activity which does not speak to them, and activities which do not form part of our daily lives typically do not hold weight in our definition of self. For example, the fact that I go skiing once every 5 years does not make me a 'skier'. The difference is that skiing is a passive relationship, and identities are formed in active relationships. That habit of returning to practice day after day will, in all likeliness, also build the musical ability which helps to strengthen musical identity. In a phenomenological way, Aaron understood that music, and musical identities, are based on lived experiences. Just as musicians bring their individual life experiences into making compelling music, experiencing the music forms their musical identity. Deci and Ryan (2017) suggest that "identities are acquired through experience" (p. 383). Since identities are built from an accumulation of experiences, those experiences compile into a relationship. Aaron's definition needs to be expanded such that a relationship could be actively practicing the instrument, but it could also be listening to music, composing, writing about music, or teaching others about music. Lamont (2017) agrees that being a musician requires music to hold multiple roles in our lives. The idea is that – in some way – music holds a place with how we spend our time. There are an infinite combination of things to do in a day, and how we choose to fill that space becomes who we are. For students, the place that music holds in their lives "depends on the relationship of their musical identity with other identities and other demands in their lives" (Hallam, 2017, p. 483). Making the choice to include music, at the expense of other activities, is when students choose a musical identity. Making the leap to outwardly express to others that "I am a musician" is when students become musicians.

Implications

The foremost goal of this phenomenological study was to understand how students construct their musical identities, but their experiences also have a number of practical implications for teachers, parents, students, and pedagogy in general. Joubert and Ver der Merwe (2020) argue that "the distinctive aim of phenomenology of understanding the essence and meaning of a phenomenon is not only valuable for researchers but also for music teachers as it informs practice" (p. 347). Phenomenological studies seek understanding based on participants' lived experiences and I have sought to create this deep understanding throughout my analyses. At the same time, I have always felt compelled that my work needs to take this insight one step further and give practical suggestions. This section of implications is a contribution not only to the music community of teachers, but also parents and students. The combination of phenomenological research in music education alongside practical implications has been established in other work (e.g. Kastner, 2006; Koops, 2017; Mercier de Shon, 2012; Strand & Rinehimer, 2018). Admittedly, my suggestions for change are lengthy in comparison to other scholars, but my hope is that these suggestions will help more students think of themselves as musicians, develop stronger musical identities, more rewarding experiences with piano lessons, and potentially less attrition.

Most students begin music lessons with eagerness and enthusiasm, however there is "an alarmingly high proportion" of students who subsequently abandon this effort (North, Hargreaves & O'Neill, 2000, p. 270). The topic of attrition in private music lessons has not been well addressed. More specifically, research has only recently connected musical identity and student dropout (Woody et al., 2021) but it is still largely "unclear why a large majority of children stop playing their instruments" (Lehmann, 1997, p. 157). My previous research

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demonstrated that students who quit lessons had no concept of themselves as a musician or how music would matter in their lives going forward (King, 2016). Other research suggests that "without a strong sense of personal identity as a musician, and an idea where music learning might take them or at least the role it might play in their lives, children may be unlikely to develop long-term motivation for persisting beyond the early stages of music learning" (Evans & McPherson, 2015, p. 421). This study did not directly raise the question of whether developing a robust musical identity may be related to continuing lessons, but it is possible to imagine the connection. Other work with adolescent students found that the decision to continue with an activity, such as music lessons, was dependent on "being in an activity that supports identity development" (Fredricks et al., 2002, p. 94). The students in this study were generally high-achieving and committed to lessons with clear plans for having music in their lives going forward. Forming a musical identity in adolescent students could be viewed as the foremost goal of all music education (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2017; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003).

For Teachers

The experiences that students shared offer a number of significant recommendations for private piano teachers about supporting student's musical identity. First, the lesson observations in this study did not contain noticeable moments where musical identities might have been constructed, but rather focused on building musical skill. This means that there is opportunity for improvement in pedagogy, but more importantly that identity is not necessarily formed in a 30-minute lesson. Asking teachers to outwardly address the enormous concept of identity formation in every lesson – as well as teach repertoire, technique, improvisation, composing, theory, and so on – is just not practical. It is impossible to fit so many components into a single lesson. However, teachers could easily work in the language of musical identity in small but meaningful

ways. For example, "Bravo, you played that piece like a real musician!" or "This is important because musicians need to have this knowledge." In this approach, teachers are treating their students as independent musicians in more consistent ways.

Secondly, honouring the musician within each student also means including them in the decision-making process, being flexible with interpretive demands, and co-creating learning strategies. For instance, what if the student freely chose half of their repertoire? And then created a practice plan of how to learn those pieces? And then hosted their own recital, including making programs and distributing invitations? This example not only requires less direct work for the teacher, but allows the student freedom to choose their own musical experiences, which can still be full of rich learning opportunities. Next, more dialogue would demonstrate a belief in the student as a capable musician. Students come to lessons full of ideas and lived experiences which can fuel beautiful musical performances. Historically, private piano lessons have heavily relied on the master-apprentice approach (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2021; Gaunt, López-Íñiguez, & Creech, 2021), but making space for students' voices to come through is where better learning occurs and identities are constructed.

Lastly, teachers must operate on the premise that music lessons are a multi-year process which is built on relationships, and that the relationship is more important than the repertoire. Over time and through a relationship, a musical identity will form regardless of whether the student ever plays large concertos. Building a relationship based on trust, dialogue, and shared experiences are what lead to a musical identity. For example, Corina's favourite part of going to was "the ability to ask what I need." This signifies a closeness between student and teacher, trustworthiness in the teacher's expertise, and an open space for inquiry. Relationships also extend to those between students themselves, and so creating more space for student interaction

is critical. Previous research has also urged teachers to "provide an environment conducive to the establishment of rewarding peer relationships" (Evans, McPherson, & Davidson, 2013, p. 613). There are questions teachers must ask themselves which allow space for identity development but challenge the mindset within piano pedagogy: could it be that teaching the repertoire is less important than teaching the student? What does it mean to teach the student, and how is this different than teaching the repertoire? The answers to these questions are not only points for future research, but would influence teacher practice and student experience.

For Parents

Parents are one of the most direct influences on how a student understands themselves, and I suggest that the term 'musician' needs to be used sooner and more frequently in their descriptive language. In order to build a musical identity, students need to hear the word 'musician' when others describe them. The ways in which parents talk about their children shapes how children view themselves. For example, if one parent introduces her child as a 'musical genius' and another parent introduces her child as someone who 'takes piano', those two children will likely have different concepts of themselves as musicians. According to Shouldice's (2014) work, parents "should be aware of the influence their words and actions have in helping (or hindering) the musical identity development of their students" (p. 341). If students have never heard someone refer to them as a musician, it will be difficult incorporate this term into their working sense of self. This also requires a broader definition of what it means to be a musician, and the willingness to use the term for students rather than exclusively for those who have made a career in music.

Beyond simply using descriptive language, believing that a child is a musician and treating them as such matters. There is plenty of evidence beyond the scope of this research

which discusses how babies are born with a discerning ear for pitch, rhythm, and tone (e.g. Collins, 2021). In other words, the argument can be made that we are all born musical (Lamont & Hargreaves, 2019). There is some evidence to suggest that more competent musicians have a stronger sense of musical identity; the time and investment in the experience create a clearer picture of themselves as a musician. However, my major suggestion for both parents and teachers is that a musical identity can be created from the first lesson as young children. Giving children choices about which instrument to play or which pieces to study are actions that demonstrate a belief in their independent musical identity. Treating students as musicians from the early stages creates an identity affirmation; to say that "I see you" as a musician and will respect your musicianship is a powerful action that gives agency to the student. It is not just about calling someone a 'musician' – although that is an important first step – but rather giving them the support and ownership to construct that identity for themselves. As one interview came to a close, the student participant emphatically said "thank you for listening". As in, she enjoyed the process of identity exploration and felt gratified that someone in a position of authority would make her feel important. This research demonstrated that adolescent students often think of themselves as musicians, and the interviews showed that students are capable of – and interested in – talking about their identity, their feelings about music, and many other surprisingly existential topics. Research in other areas has demonstrated that even very young children have clear pictures of their abilities, beliefs, and identities. For example, in science education research, five- to six-year-old children's experiences with science before they entered primary school shaped the way the children understood science and believed in themselves as future science learners (Oppermann, Brunner, Eccles, & Anders, 2018). Similarly, young children have many years' worth of musical interactions before they ever begin formal lessons,

such as singing folk tunes, playing rhythm instruments, and listening to music. These experiences contribute to the value of music in their lives and how they understand themselves as a future musician. There is some evidence to suggest that "a child may begin to see themselves as 'a musician' around 8 years of age, when their musical ability becomes differentiated enough from other children for them to become aware of it" (Rickard & Chin, 2017, p. 289). Beyond a simple awareness of ability, if a student's musical education also includes conversations about what it means to be a musician, and proof that parents or teachers believe in the student as a musician, they are already well on their way to becoming one.

For Students

The main implications for students are that their voices matter, their experiences matter, and that having an opinion about 'who you are' is a necessary part of wellbeing. Since piano lessons are typically individual, customized experiences, it is not too much to ask for music that serves their identity. Having an open mind to new experiences that do not fit the student's musical identity and being receptive to different ideas is always important. However, asking for piano lessons that are interesting and relevant to how a students understand themselves is not only possible but essential. Their best interests must come before the demands of skill-based learning if piano lessons are going to have a positive and profound impact on identity formation. In other words, I am calling for more student-centered pedagogy.

For Pedagogy: Student-Centered Learning

The most significant implication of this work suggests that influential music learning institutions need to become more familiar with the concept of student-centered learning, especially in the context of supporting students' musical identities. However, it has been noted that teachers may face difficulties developing a student-centered culture given their training

(Kastner, 2020). To illustrate, Kelly-McHale (2013) urged fellow music teachers to "better serve the student instead of the tradition with which we most closely identify" (p. 212). Since most teachers themselves have been taught within a conservatory framework, it is difficult to amend this approach. Conversations in music education regarding informal learning (Creech, Varvarigou, & Hallam, 2020), critical engagement (de Bruin, 2022) and transformational learning (O'Neill, 2017; Varvarigou & Creech, 2021) have gained recent attention, and questions of pedagogy are starting to be discussed in relation to private music instruction. Recently, a movement away from the traditional master-apprentice approach has increased interest in self-guided learning and student agency, and this has led to "critical questions relating to how learning is achieved in one-to-one contexts" (Gaunt, López-Íñiguez, & Creech, 2021, p. 336). However, these topics are somewhat different than student-centered learning, and have not been strongly connected to musical identity.

Generally, student-centered learning means that the learner's prior knowledge and interests are considered to be an important part of constructing new knowledge. It is more valuable than content-centered learning because it leads to higher levels of engagement and makes students feel as if their voices and experiences matter (Jensen, 2008). The overall aim is to develop the capability for self-directed, lifelong learning by granting students more control and responsibility for the learning process. Student-centered activities are built on learners' ideas – scaffolded by a more expert guide – and allow for experiences that have meaning for the learner (Huhtinen-Hildén & Pitt, 2018). It is an approach that involves learners directly in the educational process, to varying degrees. According to Neumann (2013), two prominent ways of thinking involve centering *on* students, where they work towards pre-established learning goals with choices about the inquiry process, and centering *with* students, where teachers and students

work in a reciprocal relationship and have equal participation. Centering *on* students is the more common model of student-centered learning in school contexts because "allow students choices within curricular frameworks established by or through the teacher" (Neumann, 2013, p. 166). It is a model of learning based on students' interests. This framework still provides a path towards formal learning outcomes, but with malleability suited towards student needs and their input. Students are encouraged to make choices within the learning process, but they do not have complete freedom in regarding topics of inquiry since the teacher is still an important facilitator. This approach can be achieved in piano lessons by asking for student input on learning experiences, within appropriate boundaries. For example, a teacher might ask whether the student would like to play a Bach Minuet or compose their own Minuet. These two experiences both lead to valuable learning but have different implications for identity: one experience contributes to the student-as-Baroque-enthusiast while the other contributes to the student-as-composer. The teacher occupies the leading role, but with flexibility and attentiveness to the student.

In a slightly different approach, centering *with* students is where students and teachers are partnered, knowledge is co-constructed, and students actively participate in directional decisions related to their learning. Here, students have a great deal of freedom and teachers exist in a reciprocal learning relationship. Centering with students includes shared ownership and responsibility because "when the instructor consciously removes herself or himself from the center of the room, students are empowered to exercise their volition and engage in learning activities that meet their interests" (Hedeen, 2005, p. 188). At its heart, learning becomes more democratic. This model has been held as the catalyst to more equitable changes in society. A strong believer in the power of democracy, educational philosopher John Dewey consistently

argued for "the importance of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process" (1938, p. 67). In this learning environment, the authority is shared so that students may equally engage and critique their own work. The space is open and welcoming to their voices. Although music education scholars do not often use the term *student-centered learning*, Westerlund, Partti, and Karlsen (2017) also draw from the idea that students' own musical interests and identities should form the basis for musical instruction. This may mean that teachers are learning the repertoire alongside their students with real-time observations and reflections. Giving up control as the expert may make some teachers and institutions nervous. Green (2008) argues that music education should begin with pieces that the learner has chosen for themselves, which is likely "to be music which they already know and understand, like, enjoy and identify with" (p. 10). The identification component is critical to the discussion on musical identities. However, this is a departure from most formal musical education where the tradition is to expose students to music that they do not know, and which is often chosen by the teacher.

In either model, it requires that teachers and institutions shift away from being the primary source of learning to becoming an educational guide for students. These ideas are not new in public education: a 2010 Alberta education document calls for a system that is more student-centered. It explains that 21st-century education "must make the child the centre of all decisions related to learning and education. Learners should be supported as individuals with learning opportunities to support their unique needs and interests. Furthermore, activities that consider the ability of learnings and encourage creativity and imagination should become the norm" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 25). There is growing acknowledgement in classroom music education that student-centered learning is considered vital to the development of independent

musicians (Garrett, 2013; Holoboff, 2015; Kastner, 2020; Ripani, 2022). In contrast, private music education still persists in the traditional learning approach, with "tightly defined notions of excellence" (Varvarigou & Creech, 2021), despite ample opportunity for flexibility and student-centeredness. The Royal Conservatory of Music's description of its program benefits include rigorous structure, objective assessment, recognition of quantifiable achievement, and a standardized syllabus. The program describes a curriculum that incorporates essential elements of musical training, which includes repertoire, musicianship, theory, and technique. In their concept map, readers notice the one-directional arrows and feel that learning is a smooth, logical progression from one topic to the next (see Figure 11). However, advocates of student-centered learning understand that it "is actually a complicated and messy idea" (Neumann, 2013, p. 161). What is striking about the concept map is that the ideas revolve, but do not revolve around students at its centre.

Figure 11

Royal Conservatory of Music: Overview of the curriculum
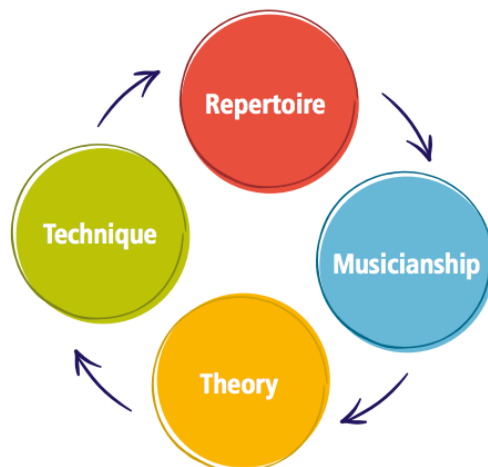
Note. Reprinted from *Program overview: The curriculum*, by the Royal Conservatory of Music, 2021, https://www.rcmusic.com/learning/about-the-royal-conservatory-certificate-program/program-overview#TheCurriculum1-5.

Music conservatories generally have not done well at incorporating student-centered learning, however there is some evidence that this may be changing. In the constraints of exam preparation, many teachers have focused on meeting the standards which leaves little room for student-centered pedagogy. In traditional piano lessons, there may be tensions between the identities that students might like to choose for themselves and those that are imposed on them as legitimate musical identities. For example, jazz improvisation is a part of musicianship which does not fit within a conservatory system. In the recently published 2022 RCM Piano Syllabus, there is a new option for student improvisation during exams, although this is bounded within a classical phrase structure. This syllabus is marketed to "meet the needs of every student" but remains within a traditional program of learning (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2022). Compared to the 2015 syllabus, there is some evidence that pedagogy is changing course, which signifies that my research implications are also recently being thought about by others. In another examination board, an official requirement is an 'Own Choice' piece which gives an opportunity for student identity to be heard (Conservatory Canada, 2022). It seems that institutions are beginning to incorporate student agency and identity. Nevertheless, the conservatory system itself is a standardized exam program which exists in contrast to student-centered learning and can supress students' diverse musical identities. Performing a carefully chosen collection of repertoire pieces, specific to the student's interests and personality, might share a glimpse into who the student 'is'. However, the question is not about what makes each student unique but rather if it *matters* that they are unique. Student-centered environments are not just situations in which they are unique, but situations in which their uniqueness makes a difference – "where it matters that I am I and not someone else" (Biesta, 2013, p. 21).

The threads of my work all come together within the topic of student-centered learning. To be put simply, student-centered learning means that teaching opens new possibilities for identity (Huhtinen-Hildén & Pitt, 2018). Focusing on learners and the pedagogical actions which support them connects pedagogy to identity. The concept map of student-centered learning (see Figure 12) involves the language that this research has also used: choice, autonomy, community, constructivism, personalization, and intrinsic motivation. Since so much of this work has drawn from visual components, I thought it was appropriate to include a visual representation of student-centered learning.

Figure 12

Student-Centered Learning
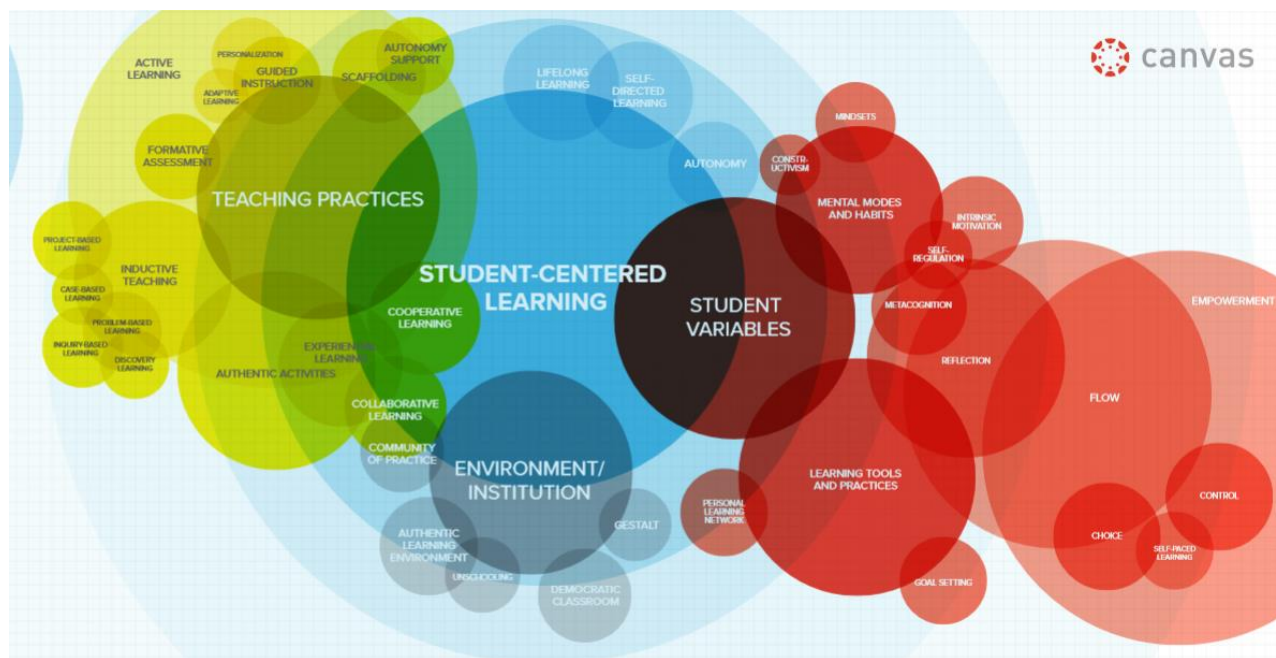
Note. Reprinted with permission from *Student Centered Learning*, by Instructure, 2015, https://online.valenciacollege.edu/courses/26030/pages/student-centered-learning.

The concepts of musical identities and student-centered learning have never been considered together. There is some reference to less formalized and participatory learning (Woody et al., 2021) or a greater emphasis on everyday experiences (Parker, 2020), but not the

specific phenomenon of student-centered learning. This is surprising and problematic since so much of the literature published on the topic of musical identities is written by music educators (e.g. Paananen, 2022). Despite a lack of formal publications, it is not hard to extrapolate that standardized, curriculum-based music learning experiences do not serve to foster an individual's identity development. Generic lessons rarely result in meaningful learning. Student-centered learning is built on the presumption that students already have valuable musical knowledge, rather than a content-delivery approach. In other words, students are not 'blank slates'. Other work in music education research has called for more "situations in which students feel as though they have an input into the curriculum and activities" (Evans, McPherson, & Davidson, 2013, p. 614). This is important in terms of identity because it sees the learner as an autonomous individual with important contributions to make. Further, for music learning to be truly transformative, "learning activities and teacher–learner relationships need to attend holistically to the cultural and political contexts in which music-making is rendered *meaningful"* (O'Neill, 2016, p. 609). This is important in terms of identity because it sees the learner as an individual that exists within a wider social environment, who seeks belonging and wellbeing, and wants the various spheres of life to feel cohesive.

Future Research

Given the increasing number of recent publications regarding musical identity, it seems that this field is gaining momentum and well-positioned for new work. Further research in this field would contribute more evidence about whether forming a strong musical identity in students is important and if so, how to support this shifting identity on the long journey to mastering the piano. The impact of understanding musical identity formation may have a considerable impact for piano students as they navigate thousands of hours of training in their

formative years. The time limitations of this doctoral study did not allow for a full picture of students' musical identities as they transition into their teenage years, high school, and beyond. This research is an incomplete picture of how early-adolescent students shape their musical identities within a certain stage of their lives. Longitudinal work has recently been advocated for in other musical identity research (de Bruin, 2022), and a longitudinal study investigating piano students' musical identities would be equally beneficial.

An important area for further research is investigating the connection between identity and retention. Do students with a stronger musical identity also stay in lessons longer? Do students without a clear sense of themselves as musicians quit more frequently? The results here seem to suggest a connection between a salient musical identity and more rewarding, long-term music lessons, but this extrapolation requires more evidence. Developing a long-term relationship with the piano and expressing oneself through music can be one of the most satisfying parts of life, but requires understanding yourself as a musician during adolescence. Unfortunately, most students leave lessons before this point and it seems that a lack of musical identity could be a contributing factor. Other research has suggested that those without the vision of who they are as musicians, or why music will matter for their future, will likely find it difficult to advance beyond beginner lessons (Evans & McPherson, 2015). Since attrition is a major topic of concern in private studio teaching, the field would benefit from a study which investigates the connection between musical identity and dropouts.

The connection between student-centered learning, musical identity, and piano pedagogy is another area that deserves further exploration. Considering how thoroughly student-centered learning has been adopted in public school systems, it is surprising that this topic has not been more widely taken up by the music education literature. A better understanding of how student-

centered learning matters for piano students and their identity construction may lead to more satisfying lessons and students who can more easily understand themselves as musicians.

Nobody's Perfect: Limitations

There are three major philosophical and methodological limitations that must be taken into account with this study. Choosing the three main themes of social environment, future self, and motivation propelled this study in certain directions. For example, the interview questions which participants were asked had been written with those themes in mind. If another combination of themes were chosen, such as health and wellbeing or practicing, the results of this study would be quite different. Next, this study is predicated on the belief that knowledge and identity are socially constructed, but there are other theoretical lenses with which to view identity. My work assumes that social constructivism is the most appropriate way to approach identity research but I acknowledge that there are other scholars who may disagree. Finally, interpretive phenomenological analysis and thematic coding are only one way of analyzing the data and using another method, for example discourse analysis, may produce slightly different interpretations of the results.

I acknowledge that there were three major limitations within the participants and procedure of this study. Participants were from a privileged section of Canadian society, studying with well-established teachers. Since piano lessons are typically limited to those who can afford both private lessons and a costly instrument, the sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of participants were similar. While the ethnic backgrounds of students were slightly more diverse than anticipated, the level of affluence was generally the same. Next, the students in this work were all learning music in reading-based, conservatory traditions. While this was not originally part of the recruitment strategy, the fact that all students shared this same curriculum

points towards the pervasive influence of established conservatories. If this study had included students learning from Suzuki, Kodaly, Yamaha, or other philosophical backgrounds, the results could be significantly different. Finally, the lesson observation component of data collection was not particularly fruitful and could have been eliminated from the study. While it did provide interesting data in its own right, lesson observations did very little to answer the research questions. This component of data collection could have been replaced by a third interview with students for a more longitudinal nature to the work and a stronger focus on students' voices. Additionally, each subsequent encounter meant that students became more comfortable with the research process – with me as the researcher and themselves as the ones being researched – and the enormous topic of identity. Slightly changing the method and narrowing scope of data collection would have made for even more compelling work.

Authentic Cadence

Music is inherently linked to our sense of identity (Evans, McPherson, & Davidson, 2013). This research examined the current state of the literature on musical identities and found that there was a lack of investigation with piano students. This was surprising since the piano one of the most commonly studied instruments. Evidence from the 8 students in this study suggested that studying piano formed an important role in how they understood themselves as musicians, but private lessons presented challenges in constructing a musical identity. The piano is an individualized instrument and lessons are isolated. This is problematic since identities are formed in context. The essence of this work is that musical identities are built through musical experiences, and more importantly the relationships formed as an outcome of those experiences. One of the central purposes of music is to create experiences that enhance human relationships; the structure of music itself is a reflection of human connections (Hargreaves, Miell, MacDonald,

2002). However, the theme of relationships was an area which had not been thoroughly investigated in the literature and emerged as something that students felt deeply about when considering their musical identities. Musical identities are not formed in brief encounters, such as a weekly lesson or a single piano exam, but rather by developing strong relationships with a teacher, the instrument, and the music itself over many years. Anything you spend time doing necessarily changes you, and relationships are built over time. This finding suggests a shift in pedagogical thinking may be necessary. This research challenged conventional ideas about traditional teaching, including a recommendation for better student-centered pedagogy and a critical examination of institutional influence. The question that persists is the connection between student-centered learning and musical identities.

Even though most of the students in this study believed that they were musicians – and had accumulated many musical experiences to support that identity – very few of them had ever outwardly described themselves as musicians to others. This could have been perhaps because they were not described as musicians *by* others, or treated as musicians by larger institutions. The language we use to define ourselves matters for how we think of ourselves. The moment students were able to say "I am a musician" is the moment they became one. It not only signalled a change in their vocabulary but self-belief and identity achievement.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

STUDENTS: First Interview

Identity (Part 1)

- Imagine you're at a party: how do you describe yourself to new friends you have just met?

- I'm curious to see a piece of music you have been studying lately: tell me about why you enjoy playing it.

- Could you tell me a story about a time when you felt like playing the piano was a really important part of who you are?

- Think back to when you first began lessons: why did you want to play the piano then? Think about your current lessons: why do you want to play the piano now?

- Compared to the other activities you are involved in, how important is piano in your life?

- What do you think taking piano lessons has added to – or subtracted from – your life?

- If you were trapped on a desert island with only a piano, which piece would you practice?
    - Could you play it for me?
    - How did you feel when you played the piano just now?

Social Environment

- Who are the most important influences in your life and how have they shaped your decision to study the piano?

- Do people around you ever call you a *musician*?

- How do you feel about going to piano lessons? What is your favourite part of going to lessons?

- How do you talk to your friends about music?

- Tell me about the music you listen to on Youtube or iTunes. What do you think that tells other people about who you are?

Future Self

- How long do you think you will continue to study the piano? Why?

- What are your long-term musical goals?

- To what extent do you think learning the piano will be useful or important you as an adult?

- What would you like to be when you grow up? Do you think music will help you accomplish that goal?

- Is the amount of time and effort it takes to learn the piano worthwhile? Why?

Motivation

- Could you describe a time when you felt really motivated to practice and play piano?

- What are your strategies to persist with piano when you feel unmotivated?

- What does your piano teacher or family say or do to keep you motivated?

Identity (Part 2)

- Someone once said, "every child is a musician". What do you think of that?

- What has studying piano taught you about yourself?

- What do you think it means to be a musician? Are you a musician?

STUDENTS: Second Interview

"During our first conversation together,   you mentioned … tell me more about that."

,   you talked about … what do you think that means?"

,   you said … what do you think that tells you about who you are?"

,   I noticed you brought up … can you explain that a bit more to me?"

How has your thinking about musical identity changed over the course of this study?

PARENT INTERVIEW

- How would you describe your son/daughter to a relative or co-worker?
- What other activities is your child involved in? How does piano (lessons + practice) fit into their weekly routine?
- Why do you think studying music is beneficial for him/her? How did you come to study piano, specifically?
- How did your child about taking piano lessons in the beginning? How do they feel about it now?
- Could you tell me about your own musical background? How does music fit into your life now?
- Tell me about the things you do to support your child's musical development.
- Could you describe a time when your child felt really intrinsically motivated towards playing the piano?
- What role do you feel music will play in your child's life going forward?
- What has being involved in music taught you about your child? Would you say playing the piano is part of who they are?
- What do you think it means to be a musician? Is your child a musician?

- Why do you think studying music is beneficial for your students? How has is been beneficial in the life of [student]?

- How would you describe [student] if you were to introduce them to another teacher?

- How valuable do you think piano lessons are in comparison to their other activities?

- Tell me about the musical community within your studio. Could you describe a specific example when your studio came together as a community?

- Could you give me a specific example of a motivational strategy you use to keep students engaged? What do you find motivates [student]?

- How do you imagine music might be an important part of your students' lives in the future?

- How long would you estimate that most students take lessons for? What do you hope to accomplish during that time together?

- What do you think it means to be a musician? Are you a musician? Are your students musicians?

Appendix 2: Photovoice

<u>Student Photovoice Prompts</u>

Take a photo of:

- someone who 'is' a musician

- a place where you make music *-or-* a person you make music with

- how you think music will be important to you in the future

- something that motivates you to play the piano

If your photos have other people in them, you must read them the following words:

I would like to take a photo of you for a university research project where I am a participant. You should know that this photo will not be used in any kind of public way. No one except me and the researcher will ever see this picture. Would this be alright?

You must get their verbal consent (they must say 'yes') before you can take their photo. It is important for people to know why you are taking their photo, and what it is going to be used for.

Send your 4 photos by email to k.gerelus@ucalgary.ca or by text to 587-284-1217.

Appendix 3: Demographic Survey

Parent Questionnaire

General Information

Parent's Name	
Student's Name	
Piano Teacher's Name	
Date	

Parent Information

Mother's 　　　Ethnic Background 　　　Occupation	—————————————————— ——————————————————
Father's 　　　Ethnic Background 　　　Occupation	—————————————————— ——————————————————

Child's Piano Study Information

Current Student Age	
Age When Piano Lessons Began	
Number of Years Studying Piano	
Current Playing Level	

Days Per Week of Practice (approx.)	
Minutes Per Practice Session	

Home Musical Environment

1	At home, how often do you (or your spouse) help your child with piano practice?	• Never • Seldom • Sometimes • Often • Always
2	At home, which of the following best describes you (or your spouse) during your child's piano practice?	• I am not really involved • I listen to my child's practice from a distance so I know what is going on • I provide feedback when I hear something wrong or something well played • I sit with my child during piano practice and we work together
3	What kinds of music do you listen to at home? (Circle all that apply)	• Pop & Top 40 • Country • Jazz & Blues • Classical & Instrumental • Rock & Metal • Reggae & World Music • Choral or Opera • Hip Hop & Rap • Techno & Electronic • Spiritual • None • Other: _____
4	Do you (or your spouse) attend professional classical concerts with your child?	• Never • Seldom • Sometimes • Often • Always

Parent's Opinion

1	How long do you anticipate your child will take piano lessons for?	• Intend to stop soon • Until the end of middle school • Until the end of high school • Will continue in university
2	In your opinion, do you think your child will continue to play the piano (somewhat regularly) as an adult?	• Absolutely • Most likely • Probably • Maybe • Not likely
3	How would you rate your child's piano playing abilities?	• Higher than average • About average • Lower than average

Thank you for filling out this important survey!

Be assured that your responses are confidential and will not be shared with your child, their piano teacher, or anyone else.

As soon as your child's interview is finished, I will have a few more questions for you. Please stay nearby and we will have a 15 – 20 minute conversation about musical identities.

Appendix 4: Observation Protocol

UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Teacher Name	
Student Name	
Date	

Duration of Lesson	
Student Grade Level	
Program of Study	
Pieces Under Review	
Summary Sequence of Activities During Lesson	

References to student's musical identity	
References to student's social environment	
References to student's future self	
References to motivation	

Description of learning environment:

_____

_____

Others involved in learning environment:

_____

Activity #1:

_____

Materials Used:

_____

Purpose:

_____

Intended Outcome:

_____

Interactions, Language Used:

_____

_____

Activity #2:

_____

Materials Used:

_____

Purpose:

_____

Intended Outcome:

_____

Interactions, Language Used:

_____

_____

Activity #3:

_____

Materials Used:

_____

Purpose:

_____

Intended Outcome:

_____

Interactions, Language Used:

_____

_____

Overall student attitude, behaviour, and engagement:

_____

_____

Overall teacher emphasis of lesson:

_____

_____

To what extent did this lesson contribute to building or supporting the student's musical identity:

_____

_____

Surprising moments or other notable observations:

_____

Appendix 5: Coding Example

Thematic Colour-Coding Legend

- Yellow highlight: social environment
- Pink highlight: motivation
- Green highlight: future self
- Blue highlight: identity

- Pink text: ability
- Yellow text: choice
- Green text: relationships