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INFORMAL LEARNINGS? YOUNG PEOPLE’S INFORMAL LEARNING OF MUSIC IN AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH SCHOOLS

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: Athena M

Date: 21st March 2015
Abstract

This study examines the informal music learning practices of young people in the UK and Australia. Using a theoretical framework drawn from childhood studies that prioritises the voices of young people, this collective case study design utilised ethnographic methods including video-recorded observation, semi-structured interviews, research conversations, and fieldnotes and sought to document the experiences of children and adolescents aged between 4 and 14. It presents a new way of conceptualising the informal learning of music based on the real-life experiences of young people, and proposes that it may be more fruitful to consider the term “informal learnings”, which acknowledges that multiple forms of informal learning can exist, and co-exist.

By examining some of the different spaces in which the informal learning of music occurs in schools, including the classroom, playground, and after-school clubs, this study found that the fundamental characteristics of informal learning manifest in different ways depending on context. Therefore, in order to compare multiple and disparate spaces and experiences, an analytical lens was devised through the meta-synthesis of 21 pertinent studies. Through a process of inductive coding which included the creation of open and axial codes and constant comparison of the 21 texts, nine key themes were identified which were subsequently arranged across three analytical dimensions: the Structural Dimension, the Playful Dimension, and the Musical Dimension. This analytical lens was then applied to the qualitative data gathered across the four field sites, one primary and one secondary school in England, and one primary and one secondary school in New South Wales.

Much of the current scholarship surrounding young people’s informal learning of music is underpinned by characteristics developed from the study of adult learning practices. However,
the findings of this study suggest that the informal learning of children and adolescents is different from that of adults, and that young people’s experiences are ultimately characterised by decentralised structures, increased learner agency, and meaningful content that draws together intimate, local, and global contexts.
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A PhD can be a lonely experience, and so I am indebted to my fellow students, including Wendy Brooks, Christine Carroll, Michele Benn, and Iain Hart. Above all, I would like to offer my most sincere thanks to Sam Dieckmann, who has spent the last three years supporting me emotionally and academically, whilst completing a PhD of her own. Her critique, comments, and friendship have made this experience far easier than it would otherwise have been.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis examines young peoples’ informal learning of music in the UK and Australia. In the last decade there has been a growth of interest in the informal learning of music, with both scholars and practitioners examining the ways in which learning practices from outside of the school (such as the experiences of amateur rock bands) can be applied in the classroom. In the UK and Australia, pedagogies which aim to provide opportunities for informal learning have been extensively implemented and rigorously researched (Green, 2008; Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2011; Jeanneret, 2010). This study is based on an in-depth, ethnographic investigation into the informal learning practices of children and adolescents at four different schools. Collectively, these schools provide a sample of the full 11-year-span of mandatory music education in two national contexts: one primary school and one secondary school were located in New South Wales, Australia, and the other primary and secondary school were located in England. With this geographical separation, there were inevitably many differences in the school experiences of these young people. However, there were also a surprising number of similarities which culturally connected four otherwise disparate communities of children and adolescents. To date no single study published in English has considered the informal learning of such a diverse range of young people, nor has any study ethnographically examined informal learning from the perspectives of children and adolescents. This thesis uses childhood studies as a theoretical framework to understand the informal learning of children and adolescents, with a focus on their lived experiences and perspectives.

I was first introduced to the use of informal practices in music education during my teacher training year. John Finney, the leader of the secondary music Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme had arranged for a local teacher to come into our weekly workshop to show us a new approach to teaching music: Musical Futures. This first experience of classroom-based informal learning was eye-opening, and I decided then that it was something that I wished to pursue in my own practice. It began a growing personal interest in the opportunities afforded by informal learning practices in the music classroom, which ultimately resulted in this thesis. This introductory chapter outlines the contexts in

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1 I acknowledge that studies published in other languages may have addressed informal learning in similarly culturally diverse communities of young people, using similar ethnographic methods. However, my limited ability in languages other than English has made the effective discovery of such texts inaccessible to me.
which this study was conducted including a brief overview of the English and New South Wales (NSW) school systems and music curricula, informal learning and its place in some classrooms, and the theoretical framework of childhood studies.

**Background to classroom music (4-14) in England.**

The majority of schools across England are either primary schools that cater for children aged 4 to 11 or secondary schools that cater for children and adolescents aged between 11 and 18.\(^2\) Schooling is organised around four age-based “Key Stages”, each of which typically ends with a nationally recognised assessment. Music is taught as a mandatory subject throughout the first three Key Stages (for children up to the age of 14), in schools that follow the National Curriculum. Key Stages 1, 2, and 3 each have their own “Program of Study” for music (Department for Education [DfE], 2013a), which aims for consistent development across the ten years of compulsory music education.

However, not all state funded schools are obliged to follow the National Curriculum. In England young people have access to a range of different state funded schools, of which the most common are maintained community schools, and Academies. Maintained community schools are obliged to follow the National Curriculum, and are funded and supported by a Local Educational Authority (LEA) that mediates funding from the government. In contrast, Academies are state funded independent schools that receive their money directly from the government rather than through an LEA, giving them greater fiscal autonomy. Some Academies are also sponsored by an external body such as a business, university, or another local school. Sponsored Academies are typically schools that have lower than average examination results, and it is the responsibility of the sponsor to improve results (New Schools Network, 2015). Academies are not obliged to follow the National Curriculum, although data suggest that most do (Bassett, Lyon, Tanner & Watkin, 2012). As of the end of 2014, some 4,344 schools in England were open as Academies, including just over half of all state-funded secondary schools (House of Commons Education Committee, 2015). All state funded schools are regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services, and Skills (Ofsted), which typically inspects schools once every three to five years.

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\(^2\) This organisation varies between Local Educational Authorities, with a small minority of areas of the UK using a primary school (4-8), middle school (8-13), and high school (13-18) structure. There are also a small number of Further Education (FE) colleges which cater for adolescents aged 16-18, and which commonly offer vocational courses alongside academic courses. All information is correct as of March, 2015.
In the UK, the majority of primary school children are taught all subjects by generalist teachers who receive minimal specialised training in the teaching of music. Children in Key Stage 1 (typically aged 4-7) and Key Stage 2 (aged 8-11) are expected to receive between 30 and 33 hours of music per year (Qualifications & Curriculum Authority, 2002). In secondary schools, children between the age of 11 and 14 (Key Stage 3) have access to classroom music lessons, taught by a specialist teacher, for an average of one hour per week. At the time of writing, the music curriculum in the UK places an apparently equal emphasis on performing, composing, and appreciating. It explicitly aims to “engage and inspire pupils to develop a love of music and their talent as musicians, and so increase their self-confidence, creativity, and sense of achievement” (DfE, 2013a, para. 1). As well as performing and composing music, young people are expected to engage with “the works of the great composers” (DfE, 2013a, para. 1). Musical analysis is taught through a variety of interrelated concepts: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, and structure, and children from the age of 7 are expected to be taught how to read and write Western staff notation. Following ten years of compulsory music lessons, students can opt to pursue music for a further two years, resulting in a nationally recognised qualification (usually either a General Certificate of Education [GCSE], or a Business and Technology Educational Council [BTEC] National Diploma). However, the number of students who do opt to continue their music education in school is very low, as typically only around 8% of 14-year-olds select music (Joint Council for Qualifications, 2014) leading some scholars to consider music to be the most vulnerable GCSE subject (Wright, 2002).

As a newly qualified music teacher, I was very much affected by this low uptake rate. Indeed, in my first teaching position the school had decided that music at GCSE level was simply unsustainable, leaving me and my colleague to teach it “out of hours” to a small group of students who wanted to continue their study. In my second position I was surprised to find that the same problems with low uptake were present, despite the fact that I believed the music department to have a much more positive relationship with both students and other subject groups. This discrepancy became the basis of my Masters study (Lill, 2011). One of the clearest findings from this project was the stark gap between what the teenagers perceived as “school music” and their experiences with music outside of school. Moreover, the belief that music in school was unrelated to music outside the bounds of the classroom led many of the participants in my study to suggest that they could not see any way in which a music qualification might be useful to their later careers (Lill, 2011). Therefore, “school music” was
not a part of their identity as either current or future musicians simply because they did not find it engaging.

**Background to classroom music (5-14) in New South Wales.**

In 2013, a National Australian Curriculum for the Arts (including music) was approved by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Agency (ACARA), and endorsed by the Australian government\(^3\) (Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Agency [ACARA], n.d.). Although it was made available for schools’ use in 2014, the timeline for implementation was left to individual school authorities (ACARA, n.d.), which are state based. However, in the years in which the fieldwork for this research was conducted (2012-2013), each state wrote and maintained its own curricula and subject specific syllabi which were followed by all schools, both public and private. As in England, schooling for the majority of NSW is organised into primary (for children aged 5-12) and secondary (for children aged 12-18) schools. In 2013, non-fee paying public schools, which received the majority of their funding from the government, accounted for around 70% of all schools, with the remaining 30% divided between independent private and religious (predominantly Catholic) schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Although private and religious schools receive a significant amount of funding from student fees, they also receive money from the Australian government and the NSW government. An increasing number of children in NSW attend private or religious schools, with approximately 35% of children in 2013 attending an independent school. Recent data suggest that this proportion will continue to grow (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). There has been significant concern over the extent to which the private education sector has been funded by both state and federal governments. Some of these concerns were explored in the Review of Funding for Schooling (better known as the “Gonski Report”, 2011), which recommended changing the funding of schools to help alleviate the growing gap in performance between the most and least economically advantaged children. To date, few of the recommendations of the Gonski Report have been put into place, and the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children continues to grow (Bonnor & Shepherd, 2014).

In NSW primary schools in 2013, the music curriculum bore many similarities to the English National Curriculum. From kindergarten (age 5) through to the end of Year 6 (age 12) music fell under the umbrella of the “Creative Arts” syllabus, which provided guidelines for

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\(^3\) Pending further consultation with Western Australia.
the teaching of Music, Drama, Dance, and Visual Art. These four subjects were collectively allocated between 6-10% of teaching time per week, and were typically taught by generalist teachers (although some schools did employ specialist music teachers). Similar to that of the English curriculum, the music section of the NSW Creative Arts syllabus aimed to “develop knowledge, skills and understanding in performing music of different styles and from different times and cultures by singing, playing and moving, and in organising sound into musical compositions using musical concepts” (Board of Studies NSW [BOS], 2003, p. 7).

The emphasis was again placed on performing, composing, and listening with understanding, through a framework of musical concepts (duration, pitch, dynamics, tone colour, and structure, with expressive techniques and texture added into the Years 7-10 syllabi). At secondary school, as in the UK, music lessons were generally delivered by trained music specialists. Because of the difference in age of children starting school in Australia, secondary students had two years of compulsory specialist music lessons (compared to three years in the UK). Despite a shorter number of years spent in compulsory music education at secondary school, students in NSW accessed a similar amount of total hours in music lessons, with the state stipulating that children should receive 100 hours of music instruction over two years. In Years 9 and 10 (adolescents aged 14-16), students who opted to take music followed a state mandated syllabus, but unlike students in England did not receive formal qualification at the end of this period of study. Instead, in the final two years of school (when students are aged 16-18), students could choose to take either “Music 1” or “Music 2” (with the option of an additional “Music Extension”) as part of their Higher School Certificate (HSC). Music 1 was most commonly associated with students keen to study popular music, and aimed to cater “for students who have diverse musical backgrounds and musical interests, including those with an interest in popular music”. In contrast, the Music 2 course “assumes students have a formal background in music” (BOS, 2009, p. 8).

Neither the National Curriculum for music adhered to in England, nor the NSW music syllabi formally address pedagogy to any great extent. Rather, both provide a range of key aims and some core content (which in both cases includes the “concepts” or “elements” of music described above). In addition to the curricula, both Ofsted in the UK and the Board of Studies in NSW provide supporting resources including possible units of study, assessment

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4 Although the primary syllabus in NSW offered some ways of addressing the musical content, it was very brief and not always easily interpreted. The secondary syllabus did not address pedagogy at all.
guidelines, and examples of good practice (BOS, 2003; Ofsted, n.d.). In England, the brevity of the music curriculum was designed to offer flexibility to teachers, who are given the freedom to address the aims of the curriculum as they see fit (DfE, 2013b). In NSW whilst the music syllabus documents are more detailed, ways of delivering the core content are not addressed, again promoting flexibility and adaptability (BOS, 2003). This has led some scholars to examine how different approaches to learning may be employed in order to implement the mandated curricula in novel ways. In the last decade or so, pedagogies based on informal learning practices have been amongst those proposed for use in the music classroom.

**Informal Learning**

It is difficult to find a precise definition of “informal learning” as it relates to music, and a more detailed exploration of this topic is provided in Chapter 2. Most frequently, it is used to describe learning which is not situated in a classroom, such as the exploratory home-based learning of popular musicians, or the transmission of games and songs on the playground (Folkestad, 2006; Fornäs, Lindberg, & Sernhede, 1995; Green, 2008, Harwood & Marsh, 2012; Karlsen & Väkevä; 2012). It is also commonly equated with learning without a teacher, and learning which is self-directed and based upon the interests and aspirations of the learners themselves, as well as learning music by ear (Baker & Green, 2013; Johansson, 2004; Lilliestam, 1996). The study of music learning outside the classroom has traditionally been part of ethnomusicological scholarship, and it is only relatively recently that researchers in music education have begun to examine learning in contexts outside of the school. The different foci of these two scholarly traditions has led to a vibrant reimagining of the study of teaching and learning, with a growing number of scholars bridging the gaps between ethnomusicology, the sociology of music, and music education (see Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Willett, 2011, among others).

The study of musical practices in ethnomusicology and folklore studies dates back to at least the 18th century (Marsh & Bishop, 2014). However, up until the latter half of the 20th century, ethnomusicological researchers were almost exclusively concerned with the study of cultures other than their own, and rarely included the study of children (Campbell, 2010). As scholars of music education during this time examined teaching and learning in the classroom or studio, (most commonly the teaching and learning of Western Classical music) there was a
large swathe of music-making which was almost completely ignored. The musical learning practices of non-professional musicians, often those involved in folk or popular musics, were frequently overlooked (Finnegan, 1989). In contrast, contemporary scholars have been increasingly interested in the learning practices of amateur, popular, and other musicians, those musical cultures that traditionally were considered to be “outside” the canon of high art music. This expansion of the areas of interest for ethnomusicologists and folklorists also included the learning practices of children (Blacking, 1973; Opie & Opie, 1985), bringing anthropological traditions of scholarship into close contact with music education research as both ethnomusicologists and music education researchers found themselves in school playgrounds and after-school clubs (for an excellent overview of the increasing scholarly interest in children’s music, see Campbell, 2010, pp. 6-12). Drawing upon the conventions of the study of musical folklore, popular in the UK and Australia alike since the mid-19th century, scholars who examined the musical traditions of childhood found that children typically choose to learn in surprisingly different ways from those teaching and learning methods used in the classroom. Characteristics such as the holistic learning of complete songs, learning by close, physical imitation, the importance of the body, and an emphasis on recomposition and novelty have all been identified as important features of children’s informal learning on the playground (Marsh, 2008).

More recently, there has also been a growing interest in the ways that popular musicians learn. Many established and successful popular performers maintain that they did not particularly enjoy their school-based music education, and suggest that they learnt very little from a curriculum that was most commonly focussed on Western Classical music (Green, 2001). This has led a number of scholars to question exactly how popular musicians develop their skills, given that many describe themselves as self-taught (Green, 2001). A variety of studies (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) have sought to gain a greater understanding of this through methods including in-depth interviews, narrative studies, and ethnographic, long-term observation of rehearsals and performances. These studies (chief amongst them, Campbell, 1995; Green, 2001; Jaffurs, 2006; and Westerlund, 2006), have found that there are certain characteristic learning practices used by popular musicians that help to define their particular form of informal learning. Most notably, popular musicians appear to learn through the aural copying of favourite pieces of music, and are often driven by a desire to become an “authentic”, real-world pop or rock act. Similarly to learning on the playground, learning
popular music is frequently a highly social experience, with groups coming together to learn, perform, and compose.

As scholars have learnt more about the informal transmission practices of other musical cultures, many of them have sought to apply what they have learnt within the classroom. One approach in particular has been readily implemented across schools in Australia and the UK, that of “Musical Futures”.

**Musical Futures.**

Based on her 2001 study examining the learning practices of popular musicians, Green devised a pedagogical project that she implemented in secondary schools, in conjunction with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (Green, 2008). This project, which became part of a national programme for music education known as Musical Futures (see www.musicalfutures.org) aimed to examine the extent to which informal practices of learning music drawn from the study of popular musicians could be applied to the classroom learning of young adolescents. At the core of Green’s new pedagogy were five key ideas that guided the structure of the project:

- Using music that the pupils choose, like, and identify with; learning by listening and copying recordings; learning with friends; engaging in personal, often haphazard learning without structured guidance; and integrating listening, performing, improvising, and composing in all aspects of the learning process. (Green, 2008, p. 23)

The project involved seven stages, each one lasting approximately four to six weeks of classroom lessons (typically four to eight hours of work). Stage 1 “dropping pupils into the deep end” has received the most scholarly attention (Benson, 2012; Green, 2008). In this part of the project, children and young people involved in mandatory music classes were asked to split themselves into groups of their choosing, select a favourite recording, and spend their lesson time creating a copy using instruments of their choice. In stage 1, young people most commonly chose to replicate popular music, and so often selected appropriate rock instruments such as electric guitars and drum sets. In stage 2 of the project, the teacher selected the music and a CD was provided which modelled the whole song (in the case of the pilot study reported in Green, 2008 this was *Word Up* by the funk band Cameo) as well as including the short riffs which were layered to create the final product, a version of the song

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5 “Musical Futures” began in 2003 as an initiative funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation that aimed to find new ways of delivering the national curriculum for music. Green’s (2008) project was funded in part by the foundation.
rather than the accurate copy that was specified in stage 1. Stage 3 saw a return to stage 1, before the class moved into stage 4: “informal composing”. As with the start of the project, in stage 4 little guidance was offered and the groups were simply asked to compose a piece of music. In stage 5, compositional processes were retrospectively modelled by inviting an existing band (commonly comprised of adolescents at the same school, but a few years older) to perform and workshop compositional strategies with the class. Finally stages 6 and 7 involved using informal learning practices in the study of Classical music (Green & Walmsley, 2006; Green, 2008). While Musical Futures has expanded in the years following Green’s initial research, it still maintains a commitment to the seven stages outlined above.

It was not until my second year as a secondary school teacher in Cambridgeshire that I was able to practise some of the aspects of informal learning that I had learned as a trainee. At that point I was teaching two Year 9 classes, one of which I found particularly challenging to motivate despite a significant amount of musical talent and interest amongst the group. One of the four topics covered in Year 9 was called the “Pop Project”, and it had been eagerly anticipated by this group all year. Although it was designed to be completed on keyboards, I was fortuitous enough to have access to a few practice rooms in their allotted lesson time, so I decided to run the project as stage 1 of Musical Futures. Allowing such a challenging class to work in groups of their choosing felt like a huge risk to me, but I was determined to follow through the project as accurately as possible. While most of the class hugely enjoyed the project (including some students who had previously struggled to engage with classroom-based music) there were two students who seemed to find the whole experience very difficult. Although I had been prepared to handle problematic behaviour, I found myself less ready to deal with two girls, both of whom were talented, articulate, and loved pop music, who were just not enjoying themselves. I had provided the conditions for informal learning outlined in the five principles articulated by Green (2008), but for some reason it was just not reaching the two girls. Foolishly, I did not ask them what was wrong until the end of the project, as I had hoped that given time they would be able to work out their problems. When I finally did discuss it with them, the answer they gave was thought-provoking: “it’s just not the way I’d do it. If I wanted to learn a song I would just do it differently”.

In my effort to follow stage 1 of Musical Futures to the letter, I had neglected to imagine that not all people learn (formally or informally) in the same way. This led me to return to the theories behind Musical Futures, and question them. My experiences in the field began to
suggest the possibility of informal learnings, rather than one singular term. I started to wonder if young people learn informally in a different way from adults, or if our remembered experiences of informal learning (the basis of much of Green’s 2001 study) are different from how they are experienced in practice. A short literature review found that, although many reports on, and studies of Musical Futures existed, few studies questioned, critiqued, or expanded the theories behind informal learning in the classroom. Most fundamentally, I found no studies that examined the school-based informal learning practices of young people from the perspectives of the children and adolescents themselves. This became the driving force of my thesis proposal: to understand young people’s lived experiences of the informal learning of music as it occurred across a variety of school spaces.

**Childhood Studies**

Childhood studies is a multidisciplinary theoretical framework for approaching the study of children and childhood (Corsaro, 2015). Originating from sociology and anthropology, it brings together multiple disciplines and perspectives which collectively facilitate a nuanced view of the experiences of children and the social category of childhood. With roots in feminism, women’s studies, and other emancipatory movements, childhood studies has close links to critical theory and one of its central aims is to promote the rights of children. At its core, childhood studies suggests that “children are active, creative social agents who produce their own unique children’s cultures while simultaneously contributing to the production of adult societies” (Corsaro, 2015, p. 3). Research in this field seeks not only to acknowledge and understand children’s cultures in their own right, but also to promote an understanding of children’s cultures from a child’s perspective, as children have no peer representatives in the academic community (Wyness, 2006). It aims to be “a sociology for rather than of children” (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998, p. 31). As with other critical traditions, it is important to question the emancipatory potential of research conducted within the field of childhood studies. Lather (2007) describes feminist research as “noninnocent” (p. x), reminding readers that research which claims to support the empowerment of less-powerful groups sometimes avoids asking uncomfortable questions about agenda, bias, and assumptions. Researching children (as an adult) raises complex questions about power and representation, and the extent to which young people’s voices can be honestly and accurately presented is central to any research conducted within the paradigm of childhood studies (Young, 2012). Furthermore, while explicitly championing young people as active agents, as an emancipatory movement childhood studies also implicitly acknowledges that children are often socially or culturally
marginalised (Wyness, 2006). It is important to question the extent to which this stance may in fact contribute to the disempowerment of young people, through immediately casting them as a less-powerful, even “invisible” group (Qvortrup, 2015, p. 76).

Central to the understanding of children as an under-represented and invisible group is the conceptualisation of “childhood” as a permanent social category. That is, although “childhood” is a transient state for the individual, it remains a structural form within society; therefore it responds to (and changes) social pressures such as politics and the economy (Corsaro, 2015; Qvortrup, 1994). This is contrary to the more traditional focus on the development of the individual, which tends to ignore the dynamics between children and their macro-social group and the interaction between childhood and other structural forms in society (Corsaro, 2015). This raises an issue particular to childhood studies. Unlike other forms of emancipatory research, where the researcher may have no experience of life as their “researched”, all researchers of children have an intimate understanding of being a child. One consequence of this is a tendency towards viewing childhood as a period of time within one’s own personal narrative. Divorcing the temporality of childhood from its structural bearing therefore requires a further level of critical distancing on the part of the researcher. However, conceptualising childhood as a permanent form allows for the comparison of different cultural and historical childhoods (comparing childhood in 1800s Australia with childhood today, for example), acknowledging that childhood itself has the potential to change. As Qvortrup (2009) argues, “childhood is, in other words, both constantly changing and a permanent structural form within which all children spend their personal childhood period” (p. 26). The conceptual agency that this understanding provides for childhood allows scholars to analyse those fundamental cultural frameworks that impact upon children in a more abstract way. For example, while childhood as a social category is subject to different understandings and interpretations based on cultural expectations, in most societies “school” is a very important social structure both for childhood and individual children. Zeiher (2009) suggests that the historical implications of compulsory schooling for children were that as children’s work was relocated from the workforce to the schoolhouse, schoolwork was inexorably separated from adult work and so childhood’s special and different status was confirmed. As children spend a significant amount of their time in school (often more than 35 hours a week, for about 75% of the year) Zeiher argues that the two main childhood institutions are the school and the home, where “the school is a place of formally organised affiliation, and the family is the place
where the particular child is in focus” (p. 128). The school is focussed on learning and development, and the home is focussed on care.

The effects that the school has had upon adult understandings of childhood are profound. Dalhberg (2009) argues that pedagogic traditions alter the ways in which societies consider childhood and children. She identifies two European approaches to early childhood care and education, the “pre-primary” approach common in much of Western Europe including the UK, and the “social pedagogic” tradition found in the Nordic countries and parts of Central Europe. The pre-primary approach to pedagogy focuses on preparing young children (aged between 2 and 4) for primary school, and is subsequently teacher-directed with cognitive development assessed and documented. In contrast, the social pedagogic approach places more emphasis on play and social development, and is particularly concerned with young children’s social agency. These two pedagogic traditions correlate with two views of childhood, one of “becoming” and one of “being”. Childhood studies typically departs from the developmentalist view of children as “becoming” adults, as it undermines the agency of both children and childhood as a social category. However, Dalhberg cautions that the new paradigm of the “autonomous child” (p. 231) should be critically addressed as it may make children unduly accountable: “freedom, or the “duty to be free”, implies an immense responsibility for each child and it may result in new forms of normalization and marginalization” (p. 232). Although it is important to assess the possible negative repercussions of considering children to be fully autonomous, it still appears to be a more preferable way of understanding children and childhood than a more traditional, developmental view. Certainly, appreciating the agency of children presents an opportunity to consider the cultural worlds of children as unique and separate from adult cultural worlds.

Corsaro (2015) argues that the move from the home to school supports the generation of localised peer cultures, where “peer” refers to a “cohort or group of children who spend time together on an everyday basis” (p. 121). Peer cultures are typically developed through intimate, face-to-face interaction, which means that they are often idiosyncratic and closely bound to their local context. However, these singular peer cultures are embedded within larger social structures, not least a wider, perhaps even global, culture of children and childhood. Like the study of individuals, the study of children’s peer cultures has often been viewed in a developmental and functionalist light (Corsaro, 2015). Children’s cultures were thought to be a means for socialisation, a place to practise the shared values that one day
guide adult behaviour. However, Corsaro suggests that children’s peer cultures are in fact “public, collective, and performative… peer culture [is] a stable set of activities or routines, artefacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers” (p. 122). Peer cultures are therefore a vital part of school as a social structure; embedded within the larger routines and practices of the school, children’s cultures interact with adult cultures whilst simultaneously remaining separate. The ways in which children’s cultures do this can be understood through the theory of interpretive reproduction.

Interpretive reproduction, secondary adjustments, and the underlife.

Corsaro (1992; 2009; 2015) suggests that the ways in which children construct and maintain their unique cultures and the way that these cultures engage with others can be best conceptualised through the theory of interpretive reproduction. Unlike socialisation, interpretive reproduction is not concerned with monolithic development, nor does it directly place adults and children in the binary opposition (redolent of “othering”) that is commonly found in adult conceptualisations of childhood and its cultures. Rather, interpretive reproduction examines the dialogue between children’s peer cultures and other social groups, with a particular emphasis on children’s symbolic and material culture and on social routines. Corsaro (2009) argues that children’s participation in adult routines is often subordinate, but that children’s own routines are rarely examined. Understanding the roles that children take in the unique routines of their localised peer cultures can support the analysis of children’s world experiences, helping to illuminate a more holistic view of children and childhood. Therefore, interpretive reproduction relies on an appreciation of individual and collective agency that is often missing from studies of children in school, where children are often seen to be reacting to a space constructed by adults (Corsaro, 2015):

The term interpretive captures the innovative and creative aspects of children’s participation in society… children create and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively taking or appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns. The term reproduction captures the idea that children are not simply internalising society and culture but are actively contributing to cultural production and change. (p. 18)

Interpretive reproduction also includes an understanding that many of the key features of children’s peer cultures develop as part of a project of resistance against the adult world. This is part of what Corsaro (2009) identifies as the two central tropes of childhood: the desire to gain control from adults, and then to share that control amongst peers. Corsaro identifies
secondary adjustments (Goffman, 1961) as one of the ways in which children appropriate control in adult mediated situations. Secondary adjustments can be described as “any arrangement by which a member of an organisation employs unauthorised means, or obtains unauthorised ends, or both, thus getting around the organisation’s assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be” (Goffman, 1961, p. 189). Corsaro (2000) describes the way that children “work the system” (p. 93) in order to avoid participation in unfavourable tasks such as tidying up, observing a variety of excuses designed to evade tidying up their toys, including moving to another area of the room, claiming sickness or injury, or simply ignoring the command for as long as possible. Corsaro claims that secondary adjustments play a fundamental role in the production and maintenance of children’s peer cultures. Through the collective creation and performance of secondary adjustments, children create an underlife, a culture which exists and responds to the dominant, adult sanctioned culture of an institution. The existence of an underlife is very important to the development of a localised peer culture as it draws children together through the routine resistance of an adult system; however this does not mean that children are actively working to subvert adult rules at all times. Rather, in line with the theory of interpretive reproduction, secondary adjustments can also support adult rules and routines as children can, “through innovative secondary adjustments, infuse meaning in the rules in line with their own productive peer culture. As a result of these activities in the peer culture the children’s social representation of the adult rules have changed” (p. 94). Thus, while the meaning of the rules themselves have changed, the actual rules themselves have not. Therefore the underlife, whilst inherently subversive, actually responds and interacts with adult cultures in a more complex and nuanced way.

Children, tweens and teens.

As a social group, the “children” of childhood studies can be defined in multiple ways, particularly when it comes to suggesting an age-based parameter. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that “Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights in this Convention” (article 1), which infers that any person under the age of 18 is a child. However, many of the young people that fall within this age bracket would contest this, and can find the label of “child” to be a disparaging one (Bickford, 2011). Increasingly, young people label themselves and are labelled as belonging to smaller and smaller groups, including babies, toddlers, young children, pre-schoolers, kids, tweens, pre-teens, teenagers, and adolescents. Although these groups are still defined with age-based parameters to a certain extent, there is an increasing amount of flexibility in their usage: for
example, in relation to the more recently described group of the “tween” or “tweenager”. Bickford (2011) argues that tweens can be considered to be any number of children aged between 4 and 15, and that the “age” group itself is characterised by ambiguity. The role of the media in shaping this particular category is clear, and in part it is the tension between the sexuality inherent in commercial marketing and the perceived lack of sexuality in children that has led tweens to be considered one of the more problematic groups of childhood (Bickford, 2011). Much of the research based within the theoretical framework of childhood studies is able to accommodate this tension by focussing on those children aged between 2 and 13, which Corsaro (2015) considers to be the categories of childhood (2-7) and pre-adolescence (7-13) (p. 217). However, the very nature of distinguishing between these two age-based groups suggests that there are significant and marked differences between the peer culture of younger children, and those entering adolescence.

The young people who participated in this study were all aged between 4 and 14, leading to a serious consideration of the terminology used to define them throughout this thesis. There was a significant variation in the terms used by the participants to describe themselves and their friends, ranging from kids, through children, tweens, and teenagers. Although a structural break can be observed between primary-aged and secondary-aged participants, this was not consistent across the two countries as British students enter secondary school at the age of 11, whereas NSW students typically transfer at the age of 12. Moreover, the schools themselves had an important effect on the ways in which young people constructed themselves. In the Australian primary school, for example, the small number of girls aged between 8 and 12 meant that the friendship group was age eclectic and members defined themselves less by age than by their interests in either “country” or “city” culture (see Chapter 7 for more detail). Therefore, I have chosen to use the more traditional terms “children” and “adolescents” to refer to the participants of this study, where children broadly refers to the primary-school aged participants (4-12), and adolescents to secondary aged participants (12-14). The overlap here is deliberate, and reflects the contested space “in between”. In addition, throughout the text I have also differentiated between “year” as a unit of time, and “Year” as the title of an age-based school category (as in “Year 8”, or “end of Year 9 assembly”).

Although there are precedents for the inclusion of pre-adolescents within research framed by childhood studies (Corsaro, 2015), little existing literature has examined the musical worlds of adolescents using a framework devised for the study of younger children. However,
this thesis argues that the central belief of childhood studies, i.e. that children produce and reproduce their own culture in dynamic interaction with other social forms, can be equally applied to adolescents. Therefore, part of this study will explore the extent to which childhood studies supports an understanding of adolescent musical cultures, particularly through the observation of adolescent interpretive reproduction and secondary adjustments.

The Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are threefold: to establish an analytical lens through which informal learnings in music education can be better understood, to investigate informal learnings as they exist in multiple school contexts, and to examine informal learnings from the perspective of children and adolescents through the theoretical framework of childhood studies.

Thesis outline.

In Chapter 2, “Literature Review” I examine the prior research of young people’s informal learning of music across multiple contexts. It includes a consideration of the developing academic understanding of what exactly constitutes informal learning, and concludes that “informal learning” may be better understood as “informal learnings”, as different characteristics appear to manifest more or less strongly when observed in different contexts. Through exploring studies which have documented informal learning in music in the classroom, in wider school spaces (including the playground), and in the home lives of young people, the literature review concludes that each space is more readily defined by power relationships than by any physical boundaries, that is, the extent to which young people are accorded power and autonomy. It proposes that in order to obtain a more broad understanding of informal learning in classroom-based music it would be useful to devise an analytical lens drawn from literature which examines informal learning across a range of power-delineated school spaces.

The third chapter, “A Systematic Meta-synthesis of Studies regarding Young People’s School-Based Informal Learnings of Music” describes the meta-synthesis of 21 pertinent studies in an effort to define the key characteristics of informal learnings. A full methodology of the meta-synthesis is included in the chapter along with a consideration of the nine resultant key themes. Links between these themes are then established and three dimensions proposed: the Structural Dimension, the Playful Dimension, and the Musical Dimension. Each dimension and its key themes are defined and discussed with reference to the meta-synthesis literature.
In Chapter 4, “Methodology: The Empirical Project”, I outline the methods used to conduct the empirical phase of the study. It includes a further examination of childhood studies, and demonstrates how this theoretical framework shaped the various qualitative methods used throughout both the phases of data collection and data analysis. As part of the description of the design of the study it introduces the four case study schools and demonstrates the benefits and limitations of collective case study designs. It details the process of data analysis and demonstrates how the analytical lens proposed in Chapter 3 was used to frame an understanding of the data collected in the field. It includes a consideration of the processes of reflexivity employed throughout the study, necessitated by my close personal ties to many of the field sites and participants.

“The Structural Dimension”, Chapter 5, brings together the analytical lens of Chapter 3 with empirical data collected from each of the four case study schools. It looks closely at the ways in which informal learnings were organised in both the micro- and macro-scale. This includes a consideration of the fluid social roles which structured the informal learnings of groups, as well as the divergent nature of progression which characterised young people’s developing understanding of music. It also includes a close look at the immersive potential of informal learnings on a micro-scale. It concludes that the Structural Dimension of informal learning in music is ultimately characterised by decentralisation, contrasting strongly to the traditional hierarchical structures typically found in classrooms.

Chapter 6, “The Playful Dimension” examines in depth the playful aspects that characterise young people’s musical informal learnings. This includes an examination of the playful ways in which young people established and maintained ownership of their learning, as well as the types of play and games that characterised learning experiences and the overt physicality of young people’s engagement with music. These three themes are shown to be caught between young people’s desire for authenticity and fascination with subversion. Both authenticity and subversion are used by young people to advance their musical agency, making youth autonomy a clear characteristic of each informal learning experience.

The final findings chapter, “The Musical Dimension” (Chapter 7) addresses the ways in which young people understood and engaged with the music that they learnt informally. Music is shown to bridge the gap between multivariate contexts, bringing together significant spaces in young people’s lives such as the bedroom, the classroom, and the Internet. Young people engage with music in a multimodal way, where visual, aural, and tactile stimuli are
integrated and equally important. This is particularly clear in the praxial transmission of music between young people, wherein music is taught and learned through music making. The chapter shows that the real-life contextualisation of music is vital to informal learnings, and that drawing together intimate, local, and global contexts helps to make both learning and musical experiences more meaningful.

Finally Chapter 8, “The Characteristics of Informal Learning: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications” summarises the main findings of the study and considers how they may affect the teaching and learning of music in schools. It proposes a modified approach to informal learning that takes into account the three dimensions and suggests ways in which such an approach may be applied to the music classroom and beyond.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

What is Informal Learning in Music Education?

As outlined in the previous chapter, in recent decades scholars of music education have become increasingly interested in the “informal learning” of music. In particular, the work of Lucy Green (2001; 2008) has ignited a great deal of debate over the nature of informal learning in music, and the place that so-called “informal pedagogies” may have in the classroom (Allsup, 2008; Cain, 2013; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Harwood & Marsh, 2012). However, the term “informal learning” has been defined in multiple ways, leading to a field in which the same term may denote many different (and not always commensurate) ideas and approaches (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2010). This literature review examines the range of understandings of informal learning in music education both through theoretical texts and those based upon empirical research.

General research into informal learning has an extended history. In 1983, for example, Claudia Strauss wrote “for at least the last ten years cross-cultural research on the cognitive consequences of education has been dominated by the theoretical dichotomy between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ education” (p. 195). Much of this initial research focussed on the differences between schooled (that is, formally educated in a school) and unschooled children, often contrasting Western educational models favourably with the perceived “inferior” education of children in developing countries (Strauss, 1983, pp. 195-196). Throughout much of this time formal and informal learning were seen as oppositional; formal learning was equated with school-based education whereas informal learning was seen as “education that takes place ‘in context’ as children participate in everyday adult activities” (Strauss, p. 195), which is seemingly analogous with the concepts of socialisation and enculturation (Jorgensen, 1997). In the 1990s, Margaret Barrett examined the “natural learning model” (1992) that had been a topic of interest for scholars of language acquisition. Holdaway (cited in Barrett, 1992) described natural learning as:

highly individual and non-competitive; it is short on teaching and long on learning; it is self-regulated rather than adult-regulated; it goes hand in hand with the fulfilment of real life purposes; it emulates the behaviour of people who model the skill in natural use. (p. 27)
This statement draws together the ideas of “real life” socialisation identified by Strauss with a more child-centred approach that places the emphasis on learning rather than teaching. This devolves some responsibility for education from the teachers by placing it in part in the hands of the learners themselves, effectively upsetting the traditional power (im)balance between children and adults in schools.

For much of the 20th century an interest in the informal learning of music was confined to the work of ethnomusicologists and folklorists who explored the musical worlds of a vast range of social groups throughout many different cultures (Campbell, 2010; Marsh, 2008). While much of this research was concerned with the music of cultures far removed from the background of researchers and their readership (for example, Blacking, 1973), the latter half of the 20th century saw a growing proportion of scholars turning their attention to the music of their own cultures and traditions (see Finnegan, 1989; Opie & Opie, 1985). Emancipatory frameworks such as Marxism, Feminism, and childhood studies have helped to direct educational research towards the goal of understanding learning from an “insider” perspective, rather that the exoticising tendencies of some early anthropological research. Subsequently, a growing number of scholars have sought to draw together the traditions of ethnomusicology, socio-musicology, and music education research to provide a more rounded view of education which encompasses all contexts and age-ranges in which the learning of music takes place (Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Emberly, 2009; Green, 2001, 2008; Harwood, 1998b; Karlsen, 2010; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Wright, 2010; Young, 2012). Much of this research integrates in- and out-of-school learning, and is typically achieved by including a multifaceted discussion of participants’ musical lives that is sympathetic to the diverse contexts in which people learn music.

A way ahead for music education?

In the past decade, the resurgence of interest in the informal learning of music in the UK and Australia can be significantly attributed to the work of Lucy Green, particularly her 2001 book *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education*, and the following 2008 book *Music, informal learning, and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*. These works were amongst the first to explore how the informal learning practices of popular musicians could be applied to classroom pedagogy through empirical means. In order to understand how the majority of music educationalists today conceptualise informal learning, it is important to first understand these seminal works.
How popular musicians learn (Green, 2001) explored the learning practices of fourteen popular musicians. Based in London, the musicians ranged in age between 15 and 50; twelve were male, and all were white. All fourteen musicians had been educated in the UK, and all played “Anglo-American guitar-based pop and rock music” (p. 9). Green conducted her research through in-depth interviews, which produced rich, qualitative data from which she drew her findings. Through discussions about the musicians’ musical history, learning practices, and attitudes and values towards learning, Green determined that popular musicians do indeed learn in different ways from classical musicians. In particular, Green identified the informal learning practices which “form the core of most popular musicians’ learning” (2008, p. 5). These include the aural copying of recordings; peer-directed or group learning; learning through performance, jamming, and improvisation rather than through compartmentalised practise of technique; and a high value placed on musical “feel” and social co-operation (2001, p. 216). Green concluded:

Surely formal music educators can create a teaching culture which recognises and rewards such practices and such criteria of success, in the hope of some future day, restoring to people what is already ours: practical musical involvement for the majority. (p. 216)

Based on these findings, Green devised a classroom-based pedagogy that was explicitly modelled on the learning practices of these fourteen popular musicians, in a project that greatly influenced Musical Futures (the structure of which was described in Chapter 1). The dramatic uptake of this pedagogy across secondary schools in the UK led to a significant body of research that explicitly examined Green’s work (Gower, 2012; Hallam et al., 2011; Jeanneret, 2010; Sexton, 2012). Subsequently, in the research context of the early 21st century, many scholars and practitioners equate informal learning in music with Green’s work. However it is important to note that through the scholarship of researchers who have examined different musical traditions, other learning practices and values have been suggested as “the core” of informal learning. Thus, what are considered to be the fundamental practices of informal learning are in fact contested and open to critique, and subsequently informal learning has been characterised in different ways by different scholars.

Content as a Defining Feature of Informal Learning

Some scholars have suggested that it is content (what is learnt, and how it is learnt) which defines informal learning (Finney & Philpott, 2010; Jaffurs, 2006; Sexton, 2012). Most commonly informal learning is associated with the content and learning practices of popular
music. In part, this is due to the contexts in which informal learning has been studied; Green’s (2001) work explicitly examined the learning practices of popular musicians as distinct from the learning practices of classical musicians. A selection of studies that centred on the learning practices of garage bands that perform Anglo-American pop and rock music (Campbell, 1995; Jaffurs, 2006; Westerlund, 2006) also helped to consolidate the links between informal learning and popular music, leading some studies to explicitly conflate informal learning with popular music (for example, Sexton, 2012, p. 8). Allsup (2008) cautions that “researchers must be careful not to make equivalent the notion of informal learning ipso facto with that of popular music” (p. 3), and suggests that this tendency stems from a reading of Green’s (2008) work, as the pedagogy she presents was explicitly based on the learning practices of guitar-based rock musicians. Allsup (2008) goes on to ask “whether pedagogical inspiration from this mostly male, mostly white genre represents a step forward in our efforts to diversify classroom offerings” (p. 3). Despite the fact that many scholars (not least Green, 2008) acknowledge that informal learning does not necessarily preclude genres of music other than Western popular forms, it is important to note that there does exist a “tension between types of knowledge and the ways of knowing strongly associated with each style of music” (McPhail, 2012, p. 3). The links between genres and traditions of music and the way that such musics are transmitted have been examined in depth by ethnomusicologists (Blacking, 1973; Campbell, 2003; Dunbar-Hall, 2009; Emberly, 2009; Marsh, 2008). Dunbar-Hall (2009) argues that teaching any given genre of music in a way which is culturally sensitive to that music is crucial to achieve a real appreciation of multicultural musics. He calls this “ethnopedagogy”, which he describes as “contextualised transmission” (p. 61). Furthermore, he argues that:

in the same way that music differs from culture to culture, and reflects different applications of musical roles, values, meanings and significances, ways of learning and ways of teaching also differ from location to location, and these ways of learning and teaching are also culturally loaded and influenced. Further, these different ways of learning and teaching embody aesthetic positions symbiotic with the music under consideration. (p. 62)

Although this could support the observed links between popular music and informal learning, it simultaneously opens the opportunity to consider that popular music is not unique in its use of informal learning practices. Indeed, using Dunbar-Hall’s framework, it is possible to consider Green’s (2001, 2008) informal learning as a specific ethnopedagogy for Anglo-American guitar-based rock music, as one kind of informal learning amongst many.
Context as a Defining Feature of Informal Learning

Whilst some scholars have identified content as the defining feature of informal learning, others have suggested that informal learning is in fact defined by context. The relatively recent broadening of music education scholarship has led inevitably to a discussion of the extent to which context can define informal learning. The context in which a learning experience is situated is one of four common definitions suggested by Folkestad (2006) in his review of literature concerned with informal learning in music education. Although in another text Folkestad notes that “it is far too simplified, and actually false, to say that formal learning only occurs in institutional settings and that informal learning only occurs outside school” (2005, p. 283), there has been a tendency to assume that informal learning can only happen in non-institutional settings. It is true that a significant number of studies that consider informal learning are situated outside of the boundaries of the classroom, including the study of extracurricular music learning in after-school clubs and the playground (Bickford, 2011; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Harwood & Marsh, 2012; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; 2013); learning at live musical events such as festivals and concerts (Karlsen, 2010); learning in the home, bedroom, and car (Jaffurs, 2006; Koops, 2014; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2013; Young, 2012); and learning online (Bishop, 2014; Jaffurs, 2011; Waldron, 2012). It is also true that formal learning has been frequently situated in the classroom (particularly in Western studies of education). Indeed, Jenkins (2011) argues that “formal learning can be thought of as the attempt to refine, regulate, and control certain aspects of informal learning” (p. 180), thus explicitly defining formal learning as the institutionalisation of informal practices. However, it has also been shown that highly systematised learning also takes place in “informal” contexts (Dunbar-Hall, 2009) suggesting that context alone cannot be a defining feature of either formal or informal learning. Furthermore, Green (2008) and other scholars and practitioners (Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Gower, 2012; Sexton, 2012) have convincingly shown that informal learning can exist in the “formal” confines of the classroom.

Aside from the physical context of learning, several studies have suggested that social context is integral to a definition of informal learning. For example, Feichas (2010) argues that “informal learning can be defined as non-linear, cooperative learning, controlled by a social group rather than by an individual” (p. 50). Furthermore, Green (2008) notes that:
Not only is the informal learner self taught, but crucially, learning takes place in groups. This occurs through conscious and unconscious peer-learning involving discussion, watching, listening to, and imitating each other. This is quite distinct from the formal relationship which involves adult supervision and guidance from an expert with superior skills and knowledge. (p. 106)

Of course, many studies of informal learning have examined the phenomenon within the context of the learning of groups and communities (Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Feichas, 2010; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998a; Marsh, 2008), suggesting that the relationship between informal learning and social learning may be in part due to the sampling structure and methodology of much music education scholarship. However, those studies which have explicitly examined the learning of individuals (for example, Waldron, 2012) have also found that social interaction is important, and in the 21st century, frequently accessed through online communities. Although social learning may appear to be at the heart of informal learning, it is important to note that not all social learning is the same. Complex and often unequal power relations between separate groups and individuals have a large impact upon the learning experience itself. As Green (2008) described in the quote above, the informal learning that she observed in the Musical Futures project was very different from the social learning typically encountered in school wherein adult teachers are in control. This notion of control is reflected in the discussion of “ownership” in informal learning, with some scholars suggesting that informal learning is empowering and motivating because it is the learner who has control of her own learning (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008; Wright & Finney, 2010). Indeed, Folkestad (2006) argues that “as soon as somebody takes on the role of being a teacher, then it is a formal learning situation” (p. 143), which suggests that the power disparity between teachers and learners is integral to defining either a formal or informal learning experience.

The unequal distribution of power in schools is a central concern to scholarship situated within the field of music education, but also to childhood studies. Both the sociological theories of Bourdieu and Bernstein (see Wright, 2010 for an excellent introduction) suggest that the social structures of schools and pedagogy tend to reproduce and subsequently strengthen the dominant culture, making teaching and learning in the school an inherently political act. Moreover, this cultural hegemony disadvantages particular groups of people, typically those who have limited socio-economic advantages (Wright & Finney, 2010). In music education this disparity can be seen in a choice of content which is drawn from the musical world of the teacher (Kallio, 2014) rather than the student. Thus, pedagogy which disrupts traditional power relations by ceding power to young people has the potential to
reimagine the habitus that leads to social advantage or disadvantage. In studies of informal learning, it appears that power relationships function differently from those in formal learning contexts, leading to an understanding of informal learning which is centred on an assessment of learner autonomy (Wright & Finney, 2010).

Together, the studies described above suggest that it is in fact social structure that has the most profound effect on categorising a learning experience as either formal or informal. Those contexts that more frequently support non-hierarchical structures of learning, such as the playground, bedroom, or music festivals therefore are more likely to be considered informal. Thus it is not context, so much as structure, which could be seen to be a defining characteristic of informal learning. However this statement itself could be considered to be too reductionist, as different contexts support and produce different structures. Therefore, the fact that different researchers define informal learning in different ways (sometimes identified with different types of content or context), and that content and contexts are themselves plural, suggests that there may in fact be multiple ways of learning informally.

Reconceptualising informal learning as *informal learnings* presents the opportunity to investigate the similarities and differences of different forms of informal learning, as it exists in different contexts. Although several scholars have engaged with informal learning in different contexts and have produced fundamentally different findings, relatively few have explicitly compared and contrasted the informal learnings of multiple contexts (see Harwood & Marsh, 2012 for an exception). This seems to be an important gap in the literature, particularly given the extent to which scholars identify context and power as key indicators of informal learning.

**Informal learnings in multiple spaces.**

In her study of an after-school play club for girls, Harwood (1998b) demonstrated that the informal learning which occurred in this space differed significantly from the learning that typically occurs in a music classroom:

> Both classrooms and playgrounds offer what seems at first blush a social context for learning, that is, children are learning music in groups, rather than through individual lessons such as private piano or other instrumental study. However, the constraints imposed upon behaviour in school music classes typically serve to undermine the elements of social learning that are effective on the playground. (p. 55)

In the quote above Harwood clearly demonstrates the importance of contextual “rules” to learning, acknowledging that as a rarefied community each learning context contains its own
implicit rules and power distributions. This is particularly evident within schools, where some areas are typically controlled by teachers (hereafter “teacher mediated spaces”), and others by young people (“youth mediated spaces”), away from the (usually) ever-present gaze of adults (Marsh, 2008). There are also liminal spaces within schools where the relationship of power between teachers and students is not as clear-cut, or where power is actively and dynamically negotiated from moment to moment and which may be termed “negotiated spaces”. As well as recognising that the power dynamics of different spaces may alter the experience of an informal learner, it is also important to note that multiple spaces may exist concurrently. For example, young people may create a youth mediated space within a teacher mediated space through subversive activities and secondary adjustments (Corsaro, 2015).

As well as multiple spaces existing simultaneously, multiple forms of learning can exist in one space. Some scholars have suggested that informal and formal learning may exist side by side (La Belle, 1982). Indeed, Espeland, (2010) demonstrates the ways in which formal and informal learning can co-exist within a single learning experience, for example, learning to play traditional Irish whistle tunes using online videos. He states that “the setting is informal, but the pedagogic principle is clearly sequenced…. As a student I am in control in terms of when and where, but I am not in control of the sequencing of video lessons” (p. 134). Similarly, Finney and Philpott (2010) suggest that individuals have the potential to “flip” between informal and formal modes of learning, concluding that “all musicians are constantly engaging in a dialectic between these two moments” (p. 9).

The recognition that multiple modes (formal and informal) of learning can and do exist simultaneously in just one context suggests that it may be possible for multiple types of informal learning to similarly occur in one space. However, this fundamentally relies on an initial acknowledgement that there are multiple types of informal learning that co-exist. Therefore in the remainder of this chapter I shall examine informal learning as it exists in different, power-determined spaces in the lives of children and adolescents, particularly teacher mediated spaces such as the classroom, negotiated school spaces (including the playground and extra-curricular activities), and those spaces in which young people typically have a greater degree of autonomy, such as the home, bedroom, and Internet.
Informal Learnings in Teacher-Mediated Spaces

The previous discussion demonstrated the multiple ways in which the informal learning of music has been explored, defined, and interpreted, providing a broad theoretical context for the understanding of informal learning in the lived experiences of young people. Over the past few years, music teachers in both Australia and the UK have been increasingly encouraged to use pedagogies based on informal learning practices in their classroom (Ofsted, 2012). However, given the contested nature of informal learning in theory, it is unsurprising that the use of informal pedagogies in the classroom has been subject to both praise and criticism. Across the UK and Australia, informal learning in the classroom has become almost synonymous with the pedagogy articulated by Musical Futures, which was outlined in Chapter 1. However, some of the central tenets of Green’s approach, in particular the focus on student-centred learning autonomy and the primacy of content meaningful to young people can be observed in other educational movements throughout the last century.

Historical precedents of Green’s informal pedagogy.

John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American educationalist who was at the centre of what later became known as the “progressive” movement in education. At the heart of Dewey’s philosophy was the belief that the child should be at the heart of learning. Rather than seeing young people as passive receptacles of cultural knowledge, Dewey (1929) recognised the importance of respecting young peoples’ own cultural interests and values. He argued that:

Only through continual and sympathetic observation of childhood’s interests can the adult enter into the child’s life and see what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully… To repress interest is to substitute the adult for the child…to humour the interest is to fail to penetrate below the surface and its sure result is to substitute caprice and whim for genuine interest. (p. 22)

Whilst this philosophy is clearly reflected in Green’s (2008) conception of informal learning wherein young people are free to determine the content of the curriculum, Allsup (2008) notes that Dewey in fact “viewed informal learning as spirited and natural, but worried that its gains were too random, and its outcomes too narrow” (p. 6). Thus, Dewey promoted a formalised (that is, organised and teacher mediated) education, but one in which the curriculum was, at its core, child-centred.

The impact of Dewey’s philosophy on English schools can be seen in the Progressive Education movement of the late 1960s and 1970s (Darling & Nisbet, 2000). The Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967), while not explicitly drawing on
Dewey’s work, certainly shared many of the same aspirations. An integral statement from the Plowden Report, “at the heart of the educational process lies the child” (p. 7) demonstrates the fundamental belief in a child-centred approach. In music education, the influence of both Dewey’s philosophy and the more general Progressive Education movement can be seen in the Creative Music movement throughout the late 1960s and 1970s (Finney & Philpott, 2010). Green (2008) draws several parallels between Musical Futures and the creative music movement, not least an emphasis on small group work that was missing in Dewey’s conception. However, unlike Dewey’s progressive philosophy, the Creative Music movement aspired to place children at the heart of the learning experience by acknowledging their potential as composers of original, serious works of art. Subsequently, the core content of the creative music movement was the composition, performance, and appreciation of contemporary Classical music: a genre of music with which very few students were previously acquainted or ostensibly interested (Green, 2008).

The inclusion of content meaningful to young people is one area in which Green’s informal learning and the Creative Music Movement significantly diverge. Green (2008) suggests that “in order to more thoroughly or accurately reflect pupils’ musical identities, it seems appropriate to give pupils some autonomy to select curriculum content for themselves” (p. 13), which most commonly results in the selection of popular music. The inclusion of popular music within the statutory curriculum of both the UK and some Australian states has been ongoing since the late 1970s (Dunbar-Hall & Wemyss, 2000; Green, 2006, 2008). While the aspiration to include popular music is grounded in respect for the interests of young people, there can be significant problems when adults create a curricular canon of popular works: most obviously, that what is broadly popular amongst young people is subject to swift transformation. In practice, this has resulted in the frequent inclusion of “classic pop”, with music by The Beatles, Elvis, and Queen featuring prominently in many secondary school music classrooms (Green, 2008). Indeed, Kallio (2014) argues that the content of school curricula in Finland is typically “composed of white, predominantly male, Finnish or Anglo-American, guitar-based rock circa 19-the teacher’s hey-day” (p. 8).

Green (2001) also notes that whilst the curriculum content may have changed throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s to include popular music, the methods of teaching did not change substantially enough, leading to a lack of connection between curriculum and pedagogy. This is something that Green’s pedagogy explicitly addresses, through encouraging young people
to model their learning practices on those found in the world of popular musicians (Green, 2008). Chief amongst these learning practices is an emphasis on aural skills. Somewhat incongruously, Green links this to the musical appreciation movement which dominated much of UK state education throughout the 20th century, wherein young people’s listening skills were ostensibly improved through exposure to high quality recordings of Classical music (p. 11). Green suggests that, although the methods employed by this approach and Musical Futures differ vastly (Green invokes the image of ‘school pupils seated in neat rows, passively listening to gramophone recordings’, p. 11), the commitment to the enhancement and centrality of aural skills is shared by both. Thus, while Musical Futures has come to dominate the discussions of informal learning in the music classroom quite recently (Benson, 2012; Green, 2008; Gower, 2012; Jeanneret, 2010; Sexton, 2012), it is possible to see that many of its central ideas are in fact tied to long standing movements in music education.

**Informal Learning in the Classroom: Potentials and Problems**

The inclusion of informal learning practices in the music classroom has raised a huge amount of debate both in theory and practice, particularly in the last decade. In the UK, the uptake of Musical Futures has been phenomenal, with more than 3000 secondary schools implementing some or all Musical Futures approaches in their lessons (Musical Futures Australia, n.d.). The reasons for such strong uptake over a relatively short amount of time are outlined in the overwhelmingly positive reports that have been published over the last decade (Hallam et al., 2011; Hallam, Creech, Sanford, Rinta & Shave, 2008; Jeanneret, McIlenann & Stevens-Ballenger, 2011). Of the many benefits reported by both scholars and practitioners, it is particularly clear that in the classroom the use of informal learning practices raises motivation to learn, and that the resulting musical achievements of learners are higher than would otherwise be expected. Giving young people complete autonomy over content choice ensures (to a certain extent) that the majority will be interested in their repertoire, thus significantly raising motivation to learn. The impact of raised motivation is apparent in numerous ways. Jeanneret et al. (2011) note that in the state of Victoria, Australia, “Musical Futures had a positive impact on students’ attitudes towards music, self-esteem in relation to music, love of music, group work, on-task behaviour, and general behaviour in class” (p. 10). This corroborates the findings of both Green (2008) and Hallam et al. (2011) who found a significant increase in pupil motivation and enjoyment. Indeed, the extent to which young people enjoyed the Musical Futures pilot project was revealed in the comments made by Green’s participants, including “it’s a lot more fun than like normal lessons”, and “I used to
really hate music, but since we’ve been doing this I find it really fun” (2008, p. 96). Green attributes these attitudes to the difference between the content normally delivered in the classroom, and the content which the students chose themselves, as well as the use of pop and rock instruments (perceived by young people as being more “authentic”).

Although some scholars and practitioners initially raised concerns that the removal of formal instruction would result in falling pupil attainment, studies of informal learning in the classroom report that young people actually perform above expectation (Green, 2008; Hallam et al., 2011; Jeanneret, 2010; Jeanneret et al., 2011). Again, this appears to be due to the higher levels of autonomy inherent in the approach, as “being granted autonomy was seen by learners to enhance their sense of personal responsibility and conscious awareness of how to improve their own learning” (Green, 2008, p. 107). It is also possible that the emphasis on integrating listening, performing, composing, and improvising helps to raise pupil achievement (Sexton, 2012; Wright, 2002) as such a holistic approach tends to offer a greater degree of flexibility and subsequently opportunities for personalisation than pedagogic models which compartmentalise these skills.

**Problems with informal learning in the classroom.**

Although many scholars and practitioners have demonstrated the benefits of informal learning practices in the music classroom (Green, 2008; Hallam et al., 2011; Harwood & Marsh, 2012), it is important to note that situating such practices in the classroom is not without criticism. In particular, issues including the problems raised by a content-led curriculum, the changing role of teachers, and the difficulties of practical implementation including fiscal costs have been subject to debate.

At the heart of many of the criticisms of informal learning is concern with the extent to which young people have some control over the choice of curricular content. In striving to accommodate young people’s meaningful music, it is possible that many different styles of music will be ultimately ignored (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010), with popular musics becoming overrepresented. Basing their argument on their experiences of music education in Sweden, a country which has included informal learning practices in music classrooms for many years, Georgii-Hemming and Westvall suggest that “it is not necessarily a positive thing that students with a personal engagement in music have their experiences included in the lessons” (p. 29). They found that arrangements in which young people had complete control over lesson content resulted in the censorship of some more introverted students. As well as
being problematic for classrooms which aim to be as democratic as possible (Mans, 2009),
these arrangements may affect young people who are already subject to stigmatism such as
refugees or newly-arrived immigrants whose musical values are also effectively silenced
(Karlsen, 2012; Saether, 2008), compounding the anxieties of cultural upheaval. There is also
a concern that without any incentive to explore musics outside of their comfort zone, teachers
are failing to provide students with enough opportunities to experience difference (Georgii-
Hemming & Westvall, 2010).

Aside from the problems raised by student-chosen content, many scholars also raise issues
with the changed role of the teacher in informal learning. Green (2008) urged teachers to
“stand back and watch” (p. 31), particularly at the start of the Musical Futures pilot project,
something that she acknowledged many participants (including herself) found difficult. This
act of standing back has been the subject of contention, with some critics arguing that the
diminished role of the teacher in informal learning could have unintended consequences.
Indeed, Allsup (2008) even goes so far as to suggest that:

Green’s research may have the unintended effect of fuelling right-wing critics of
education schools whose efforts to dismantle teacher certification—and public
education in general—are advanced by arguing against the utility of training teachers,
given the inherent ineffectiveness of teacher education programs on the one hand, and
the inherent ineffectiveness of pedagogical theory on the other. (p. 5)

Georgii-Hemming and Westvall (2010) note that “one can never escape the fact that a
school is an institution with some, more or less, defined frameworks and conditions” (p. 23).
By nature of their job, teachers have a responsibility to their students, but also to the school as
an institution. In her view from the classroom, Gower (2012) noted that “music teachers are
coming under increasing pressure to meet rigid targets as a means to measure school
effectiveness in a climate of league tables and the aim to ‘add value’ throughout the secondary
school experience” (p. 13) something that many teachers find difficult to integrate into an
approach which favours informal learning. Indeed, the ethos of informal learning and the
responsibilities of school life are sometimes seen as entirely incongruent. Mans (2009) states
that “informal learning and the school” is an oxymoron, suggesting that the social contexts
and structures implied by school-based learning are incompatible with the informal learning
of music. To explore this further, it is important to examine scholarship that scrutinizes
informal learning practices in contexts other than the classroom.
Informal Learnings in School-Based Negotiated Spaces

Music learning in the classroom is not always mediated by teachers and there are many school spaces in which young people’s music making and musical development is entirely separate from the adult-sanctioned music curriculum. The following section will address the informal learning that takes place in such spaces, in particular, the music making and learning that are located in the classroom but separate from adult control, and the music of the playground. Both of these contexts can be considered a form of “negotiated space” wherein power relationships are shared between adults and children. In the case of the classroom, it is the music itself that can help to create this liminal space, producing a secondary, distinct, and sometimes secretive curriculum.

Musicking, Doodling, and Improvisation

Many studies have shown that music learning in the classroom is by no means limited to the teacher-delivered curriculum (Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Lum, 2007). Indeed, the (often) unsanctioned musical activities of children in the classroom frequently take place at the same time as other tasks. While these activities can be subversive (Bickford, 2011; Lum, 2007) and purposively enacted to disrupt the authority of adults, in other cases such music making is simply an expression of musicality (Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008). Campbell (2010) and Lum (2007) approach young people’s instinctive music making as a sign that children are inherently musical. Both Campbell and Lum use Christopher Small’s concept of musicking (Small, 1998), which validates even the briefest musical utterances of children: “from noun to verb, musicking encompasses all human musical activity” (Campbell, 2010, p. 5). Both short melodic phrases and rhythmic play can be seen as examples of young people’s ongoing participation and enculturation into the musical world (Campbell, 2010; Lum & Campbell, 2007; Marsh, 2008). Lum and Campbell (2007) suggest that musical utterances of all kinds may be used to regulate physicality both in the classroom and the playground, as well as to enhance and support more thoughtful tasks. They cite examples of children using rhythmic chants to help carry heavy loads, for example, as well as creating group compositions to spontaneously accompany a fine art task.

Many of the musical utterances of children are improvised (Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008), and while they may feature musical gestures drawn from other pieces of music (such as a descending minor third figure) each utterance is socially contextualised and articulated in and of the present moment (Campbell, 2010), making it
unique. Improvisation is a common feature of children’s musical play (Harwood, 1998a, Marsh, 2008), and in the classroom many young people appear to use improvisation to work out musical problems (Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008). This suggests that improvisation is an important pedagogic technique amongst young people (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). Apart from improvised musicking, many scholars have described examples of musical “doodling” (Davis, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Green, 2008), or the playing of short phrases from other pieces of music. Frequently this is associated with performers of popular music, and the musical doodles tend to be short riffs or licks from popular pieces of music. Jaffurs (2006) defines musical doodling as “the sporadic and intermittent playing of musical licks and ideas that had nothing to do with the music that the musicians were rehearsing at the time” (p. 55) and noted that it was a common practice amongst her garage band participants. Barrett (2005) notes that children’s improvisation could be considered a form of doodling, and links it more generally to the playful ways in which young people interact with music. Both improvised utterances and musical doodles demonstrate the immediacy with which young people approach music. For most children and adolescents, music is immediate rather than mediated (Bickford, 2011), and an activity rather than a reified object (Campbell, 2010). Moreover, the playfulness with which young people approach music in teacher-mediated spaces such as the classroom helps to define an alternate social context in which they have a greater degree of power (Bickford, 2011; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2013). This is also found more immediately in some of the obviously subversive musical activities of young people. Bickford (2011), for example, found students who covertly listened to music on their Mp3 players throughout class time, and still others who secretly played musical video games under the table. While these activities were not disruptive, they were also not sanctioned. For these young people, as well as those who sang spontaneous improvisations, the act of co-locating “their” music with the music of an otherwise hierarchical space supported the creation of a negotiated area, both physically and musically.

**Informal Learnings on the Playground**

A significant amount of literature has examined the learning practices of children in primary school playgrounds (Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Countryman, 2014; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Grugeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Harwood & Marsh, 2012; Marsh,

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6 While some scholars have included a discussion of adolescent musical play (Marsh, 2008; Opie & Opie, 1985) these were typically still based in primary school playgrounds. See for an exception Dzansi-McPalm, (2004) and Lill (2014b).
2008, 2013; Willett, 2011). This scholarship typically draws on academic traditions based in anthropology, ethnomusicology, and folklore studies, which are combined with perspectives taken from music education. Much of this research argues for the greater inclusion of “playground pedagogy” (Dzansi-McPalm, 2004) in the classroom, a request which has been frequently undermined by the tendency of adults to overlook the importance and ubiquity of musical play in the lives of children. As Marsh (2008) argues, teachers “have much to learn from the detailed and contextualized observation and analysis of the operant processes and characteristics of children’s musical play” (p. 317); however, this requires that teachers must initially “peer out of the classroom and notice children’s musical play” (p. 318).

The literature by researchers who have noticed children’s play provides interesting insights into the transmission processes that young people utilise on the playground. One of the more obvious findings from this body of work is the social nature of children’s musical play (Campbell, 2010; Countryman, 2014; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Grugeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). Children typically learn from other children, most commonly their close peers (Harwood, 1998a). This learning is intimate and often tactile, with children frequently standing very close to their peer “teachers”, facilitating a type of transmission that is often described as a kind of “contagion” where games are “caught” from friends (Marsh, 2008). The importance of physicality is also paramount to learning on the playground. In the classroom, children are generally physically restricted, and the playground may be the only school space in which they have the opportunity to move in a relatively unregulated way. Learning through physical manipulation is a common practice on the playground, and young people’s subsequently embodied understanding of music has been shown to be very important (Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Countryman, 2014; Davis, 2008; Harwood, 1998b, Marsh, 2008). This physical, social learning has been described as a specific cultural example of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

**Legitimate peripheral participation.**

Legitimate peripheral participation is an analytical framework through which learning can be understood which was derived from studies of apprenticeship learning across multiple cultures (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It assumes that “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p. 31), and that within a community of practice “there is very little observable teaching; the basic phenomenon is learning” (p. 92). This theory of situated, sociocultural learning is rooted in a new understanding of the apprenticeship tradition, which
examines the learning that takes place through the interaction of “newcomers” (those new to
the community) and “old-timers” (those who are experienced members of the community).
Typically, the learning that occurs in such a way is socially and culturally meaningful, with
real-world application. Thus, responsibility for learning is shared across the community, and
support for the individual newcomer is likewise shared by a group of old-timers. What is
particularly important, however, is that all contributions to the group are considered to be
legitimate. Even observation is seen to be a contribution that is important to the community.
What is particularly interesting about this framework of learning is the emphasis that it places
on the sharing of power and responsibility amongst a community, rather than the hierarchical
power structures typically found within classroom learning.

Harwood (1998b) describes the playground as a specific type of community of practice
(Lave & Wenger, 1991), in which legitimate peripheral participation provides the primary
demonstrate how legitimate peripheral participation can occur in the learning of playground
games:

Very adept players may be simultaneously singing the complete melody and lyrics,
following the prescribed set of movements and monitoring the performance of other
players. Novices to a particular game may be simply beat keeping or performing only
the handclap and movement pattern, relying on more practiced players to maintain the
complete song and game pattern for them. All contributions are seen within the group
as legitimate forms of participation. (p. 327)

Learning in this way appears to support another core principle of playground transmission:
the holistic learning of whole pieces of music. Typically, rather than breaking a game down
into its composite parts, children learn clapping games through watching multiple repetitions
of the game, and joining in when they feel ready (Harwood, 1998b; Marsh, 2008; Willett,
2011). This makes the importance of a strong model (from an old-timer) particularly
important to the continuation of a playground tradition. Harwood (1998a) calls such children
“master players” (p. 115), and notes that they are the ones who “are allowed to break the rules
in a way that novices… are not” (p. 115). Marsh (2008) describes the extent to which such
players are conscious of the varied abilities of their peers, and demonstrates several instances
of peer-to-peer scaffolding where more expert children explicitly model for their less-
competent friends “behaviours slightly beyond their present level of competence” (p. 312).
Thus, the playground tradition of clapping games is sustained through social support which is
necessarily aware of developmental difference, but still considers any contribution to be valid and legitimate.

The lack of distinction between novice and expert can also be understood by using a framework of performance developed by Thomas Turino (2008). Drawing on a variety of ethnomusicological studies, Turino suggested that there are different types of performance, which he classifies as “participatory” and “presentational”. He outlines the differences between these two modes of performance as follows:

Briefly defined, *participatory performance* is a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role. *Presentational performance*, in contrast, refers to situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing. (p. 26)

Harwood and Marsh (2012) note that “a central value in participatory music is that all participants’ contributions are considered to be of equal importance” (p. 352) a quality shared with legitimate peripheral participation. What is particularly interesting about Turino’s model, however, is that he draws a distinction between the musical styles typically associated with presentational and participatory performances (Table 2.1).
Table 2.1

Musical differences between participatory and presentational performances, (Turino, 2008, p. 59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participatory Music</th>
<th>Presentational Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short, open, redundantly repeated forms</td>
<td>Closed, scripted forms, longer forms and shorter performances of the form available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Feathered” beginnings and endings</td>
<td>Organised beginnings and endings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive variation</td>
<td>Extensive variation available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual virtuosity downplayed</td>
<td>Individual virtuosity emphasised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly repetitive</td>
<td>Repetition balanced with contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few dramatic contrasts</td>
<td>Contrasts of many types as design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constancy of rhythm/meter/groove</td>
<td>Variability of rhythms/meter possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense textures</td>
<td>Transparent textures/ clarity emphasised; varied textures and density for contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piece as a collection of resources refashioned anew in each performance like the form,</td>
<td>Piece as set item (although exceptions such as small ensemble, jazz and Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rules and practiced moves of a game</td>
<td>classical music exist)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the playground, there is often no distinction between player and observer (Marsh, 2008), and musical games are not “practised” but simply “played” (Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008; Willet, 2011). When examined alongside a pedagogical framework which similarly values participation, it seems that the informal learning of music in the playground is underpinned by fundamentally different values to those found in traditional music classrooms, leading Harwood and Marsh (2012) to conclude that “the ways children learn and teach this music differ markedly from those used by teachers… because the goals and values of these two forms are different” (p. 326). This difference in values can also be seen in playground approaches to composition, typically achieved through appropriation,
recontextualisation, and transformation rather that the creation of completely original art works that is more often valued by music teachers (Marsh, 2008).

**Appropriation, recontextualisation, and transformation.**

As well as “sustaining” a traditional repertoire of games and songs, children are also engaged in processes of transformation through composition, appropriation, and recontextualisation (Bishop, 2014; Countryman, 2014; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). While Harwood (1998a) found that deviation from the norm was considered erroneous by children, Marsh (2008) demonstrated many examples where transformation of games and songs was socially valued. Indeed, she suggests that such transformations could be considered a form of “playground composition” wherein formulae from existing games are appropriated and recontextualised to form new pieces of music. Moreover, the tendency of young people to draw from popular media to create new games and songs is well documented (Bishop, 2014; Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 1999, 2008, 2013; Opie & Opie, 1985, Willett, 2011) and shows that the playground is a site of ongoing musical evolution. For example, in her study of the use of popular music in two primary school playgrounds, Willett (2011) found groups of girls who incorporated hooks from popular music into other playground games such as Kiss Chase. Using popular media to structure play is also common, and many playgrounds feature children dancing to popular songs (Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011), playing “pop stars” (Grugeon, 2001), or drawing game forms from music-based television shows (Marsh, 2013).

The transmission of popular songs between children occurs in a somewhat different context to the transmission of more traditional playground games. Typically one or more (and frequently, all) the participants in the game are aware of an authoritative version of any given popular song as it exists in the media, through films, television programs and the radio (Marsh, 1999). Often, a popular song is brought to school and shared through mobile phones, Mp3 players and via websites such as YouTube (Bickford, 2011; Marsh, 2008). However, once on the playground, a simplified version of the song may be constructed and choice phrases or choruses are often repeated several times rather than singing the whole song in its entirety (Willett, 2011). This inclusive practice allows children to join in with the game without necessarily having exposure to the song outside the playground, again supporting a structure of learning akin to legitimate peripheral participation.

To a certain extent, the playground exists as a site within the teacher-mediated space of school wherein young people exert the majority of control at any given moment. This makes
it a fascinating negotiated space where young people’s school-based and home-based experiences are drawn together into a melting pot of musical learning. It is obvious from this short review that the informal learning which occurs on the playground is different from the informal learning of popular musicians outlined by Green (2008). While there are significant similarities, some aspects of learning are prioritised differently, as demonstrated by Harwood and Marsh (2012) in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2

Contrasting Green’s informal learning principles with the typical learning practices of children on the playground. Adapted from Harwood and Marsh, (2012, p. 334)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green (2008) Informal Learning principles</th>
<th>Playground and out-of-school Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners initially choose own repertoire to meet personal goals.</td>
<td>Learners choose repertoire to acquire for social and personal goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying recordings by ear is primary means of learning; unlimited repetitions available within time assigned to popular music learning unit.</td>
<td>Close imitation of aural/oral/visual models by more adept peers or multi-media sources; multi-modal learning; multiple repetitions available over multiple iterations and multi-year time frame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement is central to all music experience and learning; eye, ear, and gestural coordination essential for some forms of play.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning integrates theory, aural skills, performance and composition.</td>
<td>Includes communal improvisation and composition on occasion using accepted conventions: “composition in performance”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is holistic, idiosyncratic and haphazard. Individual and communal learning integrated.</td>
<td>Skills develop as required by repertoire choice. Holistic repetition preferred to analysis or segmentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All learners required to perform within small group.</td>
<td>Repertoire allows for many levels of participation from onlooker to acknowledged song leader. Children participate or withdraw at will and learn at their own pace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning takes place in friendship groups. Self and peer directed learning.</td>
<td>Learning takes place in friendship or familial groups. Self and peer directed learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Today, hand-held and mobile technologies have changed the extent to which young people are able to draw together their school-based and home-based learning experiences (Bickford, 2011). However, there do appear to be further differences between the ways that young people learn in negotiated school spaces such as the playground, and the ways that they learn outside of the school entirely (Bishop, 2014; Harwood & Marsh, 2012; Young, 2012).

Informal Learnings Outside the School

While the majority of studies of young people’s musical learning are situated within the school, a growing body of scholarship is exploring the informal learning of music outside of school boundaries (Bishop, 2014; Green, 2001; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Mesbur, 2006; Young, 2012). Studies which investigate the informal learning of teenaged garage bands (Campbell, 1995; Jaffurs, 2006), as well as the home and bedroom musical practices of children (Lum, 2007; Young, 2012) have been produced. More recently, studies that examine the online learning practices of children have acknowledged that the Internet has created a new musical space (Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Erstad, 2012; Mesbur, 2006). Crucially, examining the processes of informal learning outside of the school may create a broader understanding of informal learning in teacher-mediated and negotiated school spaces (Harwood & Marsh, 2012), and as a result should not be overlooked.⁷

Learning Together: Garage Bands

Studying young people’s informal learning in the home is fraught with ethical difficulties (Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Young, 2012), and so this research often relies on in-depth interviews which report on home learning, but which are not situated in the home. However, there are some significant studies that have examined music learning in the context of children’s homes and bedrooms. Several of these have examined the learning that takes place in “garage bands”, amateur guitar-based rock bands that typically meet and rehearse in spaces such as the family garage (Campbell, 1995; Jaffurs, 2006; Green, 2001; Westerlund, 2006). Often these bands consist of close friends and sometimes family, although there are examples of members being advertised for, or auditioned. In contrast to the research into learning on the playground, which is almost exclusively focussed on children (typically up to around age 12), the research into garage bands more commonly recruits adolescent participants. The

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⁷ There is also a substantial body of work which examines the home-learning of young people learning instruments, both classical and popular. However this is not included in this review as very few participants mentioned their instrumental learning or practice processes, and so it did not become a major theme.
additional autonomy granted to adolescents helps to make the garage band rehearsal an interesting space for learning; as Jaffurs (2006) notes, the garage is a safe place (quite literally, home), and while band rehearsals are scheduled by the members, attendance is voluntary. There is no obligation to participate aside from enjoyment of time spent with friends and music, and no adult in control.

It is therefore interesting that Jaffurs (2006) found that the band rehearsals of her teenaged participants were relatively formulaic: “each rehearsal began with WonTon playing a newly composed piece that he had prepared for the rehearsal. Bill Cosby and Oswald would then arrange a bass and drum part” (p. 126). Each rehearsal was then structured around one song, and once the song was “finished”, the rehearsal ended. Although it was the lead guitarist who provided the new material and stimulus each time, throughout the rehearsal the band tended to work together to create their pieces, without any obvious leadership. This contrasted with the findings of Campbell (1995), who observed two teenaged bands in rehearsal. She found that in both cases the lead guitarist was the de facto leader, often preparing and printing out lyrics and lead sheets for the other members, or providing a set list for the rehearsal. Campbell also found that one or more guitarists would act as a more expert player, leading the rest of the band through each song by calling out chord names or providing a very deliberate performance model by explicitly modelling chord patterns. However, as Campbell notes, “there is no sense among the players that the musical leader is precisely a teacher” (p. 18).

Campbell links this small gap between “teacher” and “learner” to Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the “zone of proximal development”. Vygotsky identifies this psychological zone as the space “between the actual developmental level [of a child] as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 33). He argues that a child’s potential for learning is at its greatest within this zone, which suggests that teaching is at its most effective when the tasks that are set for children lie just beyond their current capabilities, but are reachable with the support of others. In the case of garage band rehearsals, Campbell (1995) identified that the gap in skill between the leaders and the rest of the band was “manageable” (p. 18), so the model presented by the leader provided an opportunity for the others to learn within their zone of proximal development. Furthermore, Green (2008) suggests that young people may be better at judging where this zone is for their peers than teachers are, making peer-to-peer teaching and learning particularly valuable.
Together, these studies of the transmission practices of young garage bands paint an interesting picture of relatively structured learning which takes place within a more or less hierarchically organised social context, but where each individual retains a large amount of musical autonomy. The prime motivator is enjoyment, both socially and musically. Interestingly, both Jaffurs (2006) and Campbell (1995) suggest that the physical space itself is crucially connected to this genre of music making; indeed, Campbell argues that “rock music in a school band room may be blatantly ‘out of context’” (p. 19), whereas in the garage “THEIR music surrounds them and provides them with sonic boundaries that block out the adult world” (p. 20). Thus the enclosed nature of the space (unlike the playground, where children may exhibit similar levels of autonomy) helps to define the band as a group, enveloping them with their own collectively produced music.

**Mediated Learning: At Home and Online**

The ethical problems of researching children in the home have led to a relatively small amount of scholarship which is situated in these private and often intimate spaces (Young, 2012). However, those studies where access has been permitted demonstrate another unique context for the informal learning of music (Baker, 2004; Lum, 2007; Young, 2012). For many children, the musical learning that they experience in the home is framed by family interaction, alongside siblings, parents, and sometimes extended family members such as cousins and grandparents (Young, 2012). Even private spaces such as the bedroom are often shared (permanently or temporarily) with family members. This provides another example of an interestingly negotiated context wherein children have a certain degree of control over a small space which is then embedded in a larger area where they have less autonomy (Baker, 2004). Much of the research that examines the music making and learning of young people in the home documents the vital role of music technology. Both Lum (2007) and Young (2012) demonstrate the centrality of karaoke machines to the musical learning of some children. For some families, the karaoke machine represented “an integration of children’s and parents’ home entertainment equipment and a blended or … sometimes contested use of shared equipment” (Young, 2012). The technologically mediated integration of the musical lives of parents and children was similarly explored by Lum (2007), who found that parents’ carefully curated CD collections had a profound impact on the taste of their children. Creating a shared, home-based musical repertoire was important to both parents and children, who used music as a framework for play and interaction (Young, 2012).
These musical interactions demonstrate the extent to which the home provides an essential space for musical enculturation (Baker, 2004; Young, 2012). Drawing on the work of Jorgensen (1997), Campbell (2001) defines enculturation as “a life-long multidisciplinary approach which honours the reciprocity of culture-specific music and the interaction of music and culture” (p. 218). The frequent repetition of cultural routines (Corsaro, 2015) such as songs, dances, and even particular ways of using technology and media all support the enculturation process through which young people begin to understand their musical world. The use of portable, hand held technologies that have the capacity to play music has altered the ways in which young people interact with music in the home. Music that was typically heard in shared spaces (such as the car) through favourite radio stations (Minks, 1999) can now be brought into the bedroom or classroom, shared with friends or kept private (Baker, 2004). This allows for the further blending of home and school contexts, whilst also providing opportunities for private experimentation. Whereas once children would escape to the bedroom, now they can “escape” through a personal soundscape.

**Online learning and multimodality.**

In the 21st century, Internet accessibility has increased exponentially, due in part to the expansion of mobile media which boast Internet connectivity. Today, many young people in developed countries have access to the Internet, leading to a context in which even geographically isolated children can be “remarkably cosmopolitan in their consumption” (Bickford, 2011, p. 18). Learning online is also becoming increasingly common (Miller, 2012), even amongst very young children and babies (Brooks, 2014). One of the more obvious implications of this is the extent to which music is perceived as integrated with visual representation (Webb, 2007). The association of music with video is not a new phenomenon. Campbell (1995) for example, found that one of her garage bands chose pieces to learn on the basis of the video that accompanied the song, accessed via televised music channels such as MTV. However, the 21st century has seen an explosion in the accessibility of music videos, both those made professionally and those created by fans (Bickford, 2008). Moreover, the ever increasing online tutorials for learning instrumental techniques, particular pieces of music, and even whole genres and traditions (Waldron, 2012) are used by young people both in groups (Bishop, 2014) and individually (Miller, 2012) to support the learning of a self-identified curriculum guided by interest and enjoyment. Bishop (2014), for example, has discussed the transmission of children’s games via YouTube. As with traditional, face-to-face dissemination, clapping games on YouTube are most commonly taught by other children, and
the viewer has “much the same vantage point as the interested observer in offline settings, certainly in terms of angle and often in terms of distance” (p. 65). However, some of the videos that children use to learn games utilise traditional teaching practices not often seen on the playground, including slowing down the tempo, and teaching the game in atomised sections. Interestingly, the children in Bishop’s study did not consider the YouTube version of *Eeny Meeny Dessameeny* to be a definitive version, and happily transformed the game to reflect their friendship group preferences in much the same way as has been observed in the traditional playground dissemination of games (Marsh, 2008). Online access to music has also been shown to be an important tool in the cultivation of musical identity and a link to cultural traditions. Marsh (2013) discussed the online learning practices of two young refugees in Sydney, who used the Internet to cultivate a liminal zone of musical engagement which encompassed “musical associations with the homeland and those of the host country” (p. 503). The two girls used YouTube to find performers from their home countries, as well as performers of Western popular music. This supported their similarly eclectic musical play, which drew upon shows such as *Australian Idol*, and featured songs from across the world. Thus, the Internet can also present new opportunities for enculturation, bringing together multiple home spaces and providing a valuable connection to the rest of the world. Increasingly, the musical space of the home appears to be dominated by new media and technology. The ubiquity of expensive technology in the home in developed countries (Lum, 2007; Young, 2012) actually helps to delineate this space from other contexts for informal learning such as the classroom and playground, where access to technology is limited and mediated by teachers.

**Summary**

It seems apparent that the social structures that underpin different contexts do indeed impact upon the informal learnings of young people. In the classroom, informal pedagogies that are deliberately implemented by teachers encounter issues of decontextualisation, teacher authority, and concerns that other musics are neglected in favour of Western popular music. However, increased motivation, enjoyment, and attainment amongst the students have led to the widening use of such pedagogies in both primary and secondary schools.

Apart from the teacher-delivered curriculum, informal learning exists in many different school spaces. In the classroom the spontaneous improvisation of musical utterances, doodling on instruments, and the discrete use of Mp3 players creates a context in which
young people exert their autonomy and learn through musical exploration. On the playground, where children typically have more control of school space, music is learnt through participation where there is little or no distinction between audience and performer. Games and songs are taught by peers, who may scaffold the learning experience to support their friends. An intimate, embodied, and multimodal understanding of music is paramount.

Away from the school entirely, music learning in the home appears to be increasingly dominated by technology and media. Across shared home spaces such as the living room or car, families co-construct musical practices through the use of shared technologies including CDs, radios, and video game consoles, and media such as television programs, films, and the Internet. In youth mediated spaces such as the garage and bedroom, young people are able to envelop themselves in their music, defining a sonic space for themselves and their friends. In the garage (or similar space), band rehearsals are often hierarchically structured and relatively professional, as members work together towards a long-term, real-life goal. In this context, peer learning is again crucial and the small gap between expert players and their friends is exploited to allow the less able to develop confidently. Increasingly, young people are turning to the Internet to continue a self-directed project of learning, using online videos and tutorials to explore their musical interests. This enables processes of enculturation and allows young people to develop an understanding of their musical world within the context of a vast array of music.

The differences presented above suggest that, rather than searching for a definition of “informal learning”, it may be more fruitful to engage in a dialogue about “informal learnings”. However, in order to do so, it seems pertinent to first explore in more detail the similarities and differences between the informal learnings of multiple spaces. By finding commonalities between disparate informal learning experiences, it may be possible to create a broader framework for understanding the informal learning of music. This could then be applied to learning in schools across a range of contexts and subjects. With this aim in mind, Chapter 3 presents a meta-synthesis of empirical studies of informal learning that results in an analytical lens that was used in this study to guide the analysis of data collected in schools across Australia and the UK.
Chapter 3

A Systematic Meta-Synthesis of Studies Regarding Young People’s School-Based Informal Learnings of Music

Introduction

In 1976, Gene Glass introduced the term “meta-analysis” to describe a method for systematically integrating and analysing the results of multiple quantitative studies. He argued that through integrating the results of multiple studies it would be possible to better understand various phenomena in education: “before what has been found can be used… it must be known. Someone must organize it, extract the message” (p. 4). As a quantitative method, meta-analysis focuses heavily on statistics, typically creating a standard deviation of results, and statistically weighting each study with regard to its effect size (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). Meta-analyses have become common through a wide range of social science disciplines, including education (Arrigo, Kukulska-Holme, Arnedillo-Sanchez & Kismihok, 2012; Glass, McGaw & Smith, 1981). However, the centrality of quantitative data to meta-analyses makes them epistemologically incompatible with qualitative studies (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001).

Instead, the term “meta-synthesis” is used to describe the synthesis of disparate qualitative research, and has been used successfully in educational research (Birnbaum & Saini, 2012; Cooper, Chenail & Fleming, 2012; Riese, Samara & Lillejord, 2012). However as this is a relatively new field, the methods for creating a meta-synthesis of qualitative research studies are not, as yet, universally defined (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). Thus, various studies refer to different methods of meta-synthesis such as meta-ethnography (Birnbaum & Saini, 2012; Noblit & Hare, 1988), meta-study (Cooper et al., 2012), and Critical Interpretive Synthesis (CIS) (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006), which in practice utilise broadly similar methods to synthesise qualitative, empirical studies.

The method described in most meta-syntheses can be divided into several discrete phases, most of which are designed to be as replicable as possible. Firstly, the researcher creates a problem statement, typically a research question or series of questions. Following this, the researcher develops a range of inclusion criteria to characterise the search process; this may include temporal, linguistic, topical, theoretical, or methodological limits (amongst others). After the inclusion criteria have been developed, the researcher lists a variety of related key
words to enable the search process. The search process itself must be systematic, and most frequently utilises common social-science databases. The literature collected through the systematic search process is compared to the inclusion criteria, and unsuitable material is discarded. In some cases, the literature is also subjected to a process of quality assessment, and studies found to be lacking in quality (as determined by the author) are also removed. The final list of studies, usually numbering between three and twenty, are then coded thematically and subjected to a process of constant comparison. Finally, the themes most pertinent to the collected literature are presented in a narrative form as the meta-synthesis.\(^8\)

Although there are many similarities between the multiple methods of meta-synthesis, there are still several notable points of difference. One of the more commonly used methods and the one which I have employed in this meta-synthesis is termed “meta-ethnography”, first described by Noblit and Hare in 1988. The key features of meta-ethnography are the production of an interpretive rather than aggregative synthesis, where cross-literature themes are integrated. This is somewhat complicated by a commitment to adhere to the original language used by the authors of the included studies. Thus, meta-ethnography uses a process called “reciprocal translation”, which involves the constant comparison of terminology and themes that are then synthesised into one term. For example, the term “fad” which refers to the short-lived but intense popularity of particular playground games, can be “translated” into “craze” to bring it in line with other authors’ description of the phenomenon.

Because this is a relatively new field, there are several points of methodological contention that have yet to be resolved within the academic community. Many meta-syntheses advocate the use of qualitative methods of obtaining samples of literature similar to those used in empirical studies. These can include using techniques such as “snowball” sampling, where literature is recruited through the reference lists of items that have already passed the inclusion criteria (Jones, 2004), as well as authorial decisions to include perhaps one item as representative of a group, e.g., one text about playground clapping games out of a much larger field. Although using qualitative methods in this instance can help to uphold the epistemology of the original studies, it can also compromise the replicability of the search, something that is seemingly integral to a systematic review of literature. Dixon-Woods et al (2006) suggest that

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\(^8\) “Meta-synthesis” is both the name of the process and the product (Barroso et al., 2003).
a project of transparency and reflexivity on the part of the author can support the use of less systematic methods of literature sampling. Similarly contentious is the practice of appraising the “quality” of the literature included in the synthesis. In a quantitative meta-analysis, the _effect size_ is a number that is used statistically to weight more “reliable” studies. There are a variety of methods for achieving a similar effect in a meta-synthesis. For example, Attree (2004) subjectively graded each of his studies A-D, and then discarded any D-grade studies and used C-grade studies in a supporting role instead of using them to contribute to the themes generated in the meta-synthesis. Other researchers have created lists of quality criteria based on methodological soundness and reporting rigour, which were then used to exclude some studies (Riese et al., 2012). However, several problems have been raised with creating and applying quality criteria to other qualitative studies, including that it can privilege certain methodologies over others, that judgements of “quality” in research tend to alter over time, and that it is a highly subjective judgement to make, again potentially undermining the systematic nature of the synthesis.

**Meta-syntheses as a framing device for empirical studies.**

Once completed, meta-syntheses are primarily used to help inform policy makers and practitioners (Jones, 2004). However, they have the potential to guide and inform other primary studies by providing a theoretical framework that can be applied to further empirical research. Rather than generating a typical hypothesis, the results of a meta-synthesis can help a researcher to both anticipate the field (Noblit & Hare, 1988), and to create a theoretical lens to aid data collection and analysis. This has been demonstrated in music education by Karlsen (2011), who used three seminal, sociological texts about musical agency: _Music in Everyday Life_ (DeNora, 2000), _Music and Informal Learning in Everyday Life_ (Batt-Rawden & DeNora, 2005), and _Musicking_ (Small, 1998), to create a theoretical lens for the empirical study of the agency of newly arrived immigrants in Nordic countries (Karlsen, 2011; 2012). The meta-synthesis that she performed elicited eleven key themes, which were arranged into “the individual dimension” and “the collective dimension” (Figure 3.1).
Karlsen’s lens enabled her to examine very diverse learning situations whilst retaining an analytic framework that ties the data together:

this proposed lens likewise holds the potential to capture the musical as well as non-musical outcomes of interactions with music ... it allows the researcher to focus on a very wide range of a person’s encounters with music, no matter in which contexts they take place. (p. 117)

In a later article (2012) Karlsen describes how the lens was used to frame the data analysis of an empirical study, where data were first coded inductively, and the resulting codes were divided into eight categories. Following this inductive procedure the theoretical lens was applied and “the content and meaning units of the different categories were analysed [through the lens] in order to educe what forms of musical agency they exemplified and contained” (p. 136).
Following Karlsen’s work, the aim of this meta-synthesis is to provide a theoretical lens to aid the analysis of a primary, empirical study. In this chapter I outline the methods that I used to create this meta-synthesis, discuss in some detail the resulting thematic categories, and describe the theoretical lens that subsequently emerged.

**Method**

Prior to the meta-synthesis described in this chapter, I conducted an unsystematic synthesis as a pilot project (see Lill, 2014a). This initial synthesis used slightly different inclusion criteria which extended the age range of participants up to 19, and included texts that I had been using as part of a traditional literature review in preparation for the empirical stage of this project. It used 12 texts, and developed nine themes. The pilot version gave me some experience of both coding texts and synthesising the codes into a theoretical lens that I was then able to apply to some of the early stages of my empirical research. When I applied this technique further, I was better prepared to handle large volumes of data, and to organise them in a more comprehensive and orderly manner. I was also keen to make the second synthesis as systematic and replicable as possible through utilising a broadly meta-ethnographic approach, as described by Noblit and Hare (1988).

Firstly, I began with a problem statement that arose from the literature review presented in Chapter 2, namely, “what are the common features of the school-based informal learnings of young people?” Creating a set of criteria for inclusion was more problematic, as it needed to be general enough to ensure that no pertinent literature was missed, but also specific enough to ensure that I was left with a manageable number of texts. The inclusion criteria were modelled to reflect the empirical study that I had planned, thus included an age limitation for participants and the stipulation that the study must be based within a school environment. Furthermore, I was concerned that the ethos of childhood studies should be maintained in the literature that would be used to create an analytical lens for my own work, which led to the condition of prioritising young people’s voices. Therefore the inclusion criteria were described as follows:

1. The literature must describe primary, qualitative studies that present “thick” description (Geertz, 1973);
2. The studies must be about children adolescents aged between 4 and 14, and enrolled in school;
3. The studies must prioritise the voices of the participants and present either interviews, research conversations, participant diaries, or other ethnographic methods to ensure that their voices are clearly heard;

4. The studies must include a focus on, or substantial discussion of, the learning of music;

5. The studies must be set within a school and explore some aspects of young people’s informal learnings in either a teacher mediated, youth mediated, or negotiated space;

6. The studies must be written in English, or have a reliable English translation.

Once the inclusion criteria had been finalised, a selection of key words was determined, to begin the systematic, computer-aided search process. Three different databases were searched, ERIC (via ProQuest), A+ Education, and Dissertations and Theses Online (via ProQuest).

Some of the keywords were used in different combinations with the aid of an expert librarian, and the number of resulting “hits” was recorded. Whilst several authors have discussed the difficulties of using databases to search for qualitative literature (Barosso et al., 2003; Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Jones, 2004) I was unprepared for quite how difficult it was. Some databases provided very few ways for focusing searches, and so resulted in overwhelming numbers of “matches” with no way of further refining the search. This meant that both Trove (which returned over 100,000 hits) and Google Scholar (over 220,000) were quickly abandoned. More worrying was the discovery that, despite some very specific key-word combinations, certain articles, books, and theses that I knew were potentially suitable for inclusion (following my initial literature review) were not appearing in any of my searches. As a result of this, I made the decision to combine the database searches with “hand searching” (Jones, 2004) both a variety of journals, and the reference lists of the studies that I had already approved for inclusion. The journals that were searched, Research Studies in Music Education, The British Journal of Music Education, Music Education Research, Journal of Research in Music Education, Update: Applications of Research in Music Education, The International Journal of Music Education, and Ethnomusicology, took a surprisingly short amount of time to peruse due to my prior familiarity with them, and many articles were able to be discarded on title alone as I was already aware of their (unsuitable) content. Following the database and journal hand search, I also checked through the reference lists of the all the texts that had passed the inclusion criteria. Where an article was relevant, I
checked to see if the author had published a more comprehensive description of the project, either as a book or thesis. The process of refining the search is shown in Figure 3.2.

![Flowchart showing inclusion results from database searches]

Figure 3.2. Inclusion results from the database searches.

In total, the databases yielded 905 possible texts (after duplications had been removed), of which 892 were discounted (Figure 3.2). Texts were discounted for a variety of reasons. In 604 cases, it was clear from the title that the text would not pass the criteria, for example, titles that specified an age range outside of the stipulated 4-14, or studies in which quantitative methods were predominantly used. A further 259 texts were discounted after reading the abstract. Finally, 42 texts were scanned in full to obtain further information that was not clear from either the title or abstract, such as the extent to which the participants’ voices were prioritised, and 29 subsequently discounted, leaving a total of 13 texts that passed all criteria and were suitable for the meta-synthesis.
From the journal searches 12 possible texts were identified, of which 10 were discounted. Finally, seven texts were found through either identifying a larger study from a journal article, or from the reference lists of the studies that had already been selected. This left a total yield of 22 studies that passed the inclusion criteria. Despite my initial resolve to avoid discounting texts based upon perceived quality measures, there was one text that I decided to exclude on ethical grounds as it used racially outdated language that I was not happy to include in my project. This left 21 studies, which are outlined in Table 3.1.

Given the difficulties involved in systematically searching for qualitative literature, it is almost inevitable that there are some studies that would qualify for this meta-synthesis that have been missed and I must accept the possibility that these missed studies may have changed the results of the meta-synthesis that I performed (Barroso et al, 2003). Furthermore, the meta-synthesis was performed at the start of 2014, meaning that any texts published in the second half of that year were not included.
### Table 3.1

**Texts included in the meta-synthesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Item type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, K.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Standing &quot;on our own two feet&quot;: A comparison of teacher-directed and group learning in an extra-curricular instrumental group</td>
<td>Journal article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson, F.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>&quot;Thrown in the deep end&quot;: Informal learning in a primary music classroom</td>
<td>Honours thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickford, T.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Children’s music, MP3 players, and expressive practices at a Vermont elementary school: Media consumption as social organization among schoolchildren</td>
<td>Doctoral thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, J.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>&quot;That's how the whole hand-clap thing passes on&quot;: Online/offline transmission and multimodal variation in a children’s clapping games</td>
<td>Book chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnard, P.</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>“Into different worlds”: Children’s experience of musical improvisation and composition</td>
<td>Doctoral thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell, P.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Songs in their heads: Music and its meaning in children’s lives</td>
<td>Book</td>
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<td>Davis, S. G.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Fostering a musical say: Enabling meaning making and investment in a band class by connecting to students’ informal music learning processes</td>
<td>Doctoral thesis</td>
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<td>Dzansi-McPalm, M.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Children’s playground music as cultural expressions in Ghanaian schools</td>
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<td>Green, L.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grugeon, E.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>“We like singing the Spice Girls songs... and we like Tig and Stuck in the Mud”: Girls’ traditional games on two playgrounds</td>
<td>Book chapter</td>
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<td>Marsh, K.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>The musical playground: Global tradition and change in children’s songs and games</td>
<td>Book</td>
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<td>Marsh, K.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Music in the lives of refugee and newly arrived immigrant children in Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>Book chapter</td>
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<td>Minks, A.</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Interculturality in play and performance: Miskitu children’s expressive practices on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua</td>
<td>Doctoral thesis</td>
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<td>Moore, M.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>The musical culture of African American children in Tennessee</td>
<td>Book chapter</td>
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<td>Pitts, S.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Anything goes: A case study of extra-curricular musical participation in an English secondary school</td>
<td>Journal article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willett, R.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>An ethnographic study of preteen girls’ play with popular music on a school playground in the UK</td>
<td>Journal article</td>
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</table>
Coding.

Following the selection of the meta-synthesis literature, the texts were coded using methods drawn from meta-ethnography. Codes were used which reflected the words used by the individual authors (Noblit & Hare, 1988), which meant that several codes were initially in place to describe the same phenomenon. Following this preliminary stage, 257 codes were established, and then subjected to Noblit and Hare’s (1988) process of reciprocal translation where codes such as the aforementioned “fad” and “craze” were synthesised into one code, leaving a total of 251 discrete codes. To ensure that the codes were being correctly translated, it was important to return to the texts to ensure that the author’s original meaning was not being distorted by the decontextualisation of coding. The 251 codes were then checked across all the texts to find those that were most frequently present. At this stage, 92 codes appeared in more than one text, leaving 159 codes that occurred in only one text.

The coding process following the reciprocal translations was modelled on the coding method of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), where the 251 preliminary codes were grouped into 16 core, or “axial” codes. These were then grouped thematically, resulting in the final nine key themes\(^9\) of the meta-synthesis: divergent progression, immersive behaviours, multimodal acquisition, fluid roles, musical pathways, embodied transmission, play, physicality, and ownership. These themes were then arranged over three “dimensions”, the Structural Dimension, the Playful Dimension and the Musical Dimension. (Figure 3.3).

\(^9\) Typically in meta-ethnography authors refer to key themes as “metaphors”, a practice drawn from literary criticism. However, I will maintain the more common practice in music education and sociomusicological research of using the term “key themes” to describe the top tier of coding.
Figure 3.3. The results of the meta-synthesis arranged across three dimensions.

The Structural Dimension

The Structural Dimension draws together those themes which most strongly relate to the ways that the informal learnings were structured by children and adolescents. Fluid roles, divergent progression, and immersive behaviours all refer to the ways in which young people structured their learning both socially, developmentally, and temporally; in essence, these three themes describe the underlying and distinct architecture of informal learnings as they occurred across a variety of contexts.

*Fluid roles* describes the ways in which young people mediated their learning through social roles which were subject to near-constant change. While hierarchies were found to be important social structures, the informal learnings documented by the meta-synthesis texts typically produced a social context where such relationships were fluid and subject to change, which at times proved to be a source of conflict. *Divergent progression* describes the most common way in which young people structured their own musical development. Throughout Westernised models of education, discussions of progression are dominated by linear models, where learners are seen to go from more simple to more difficult tasks at a regular and (often) prescribed pace. However, most of the meta-synthesis texts showed that the young
participants learnt in a highly tangential way, following paths of interest and value rather than those of perceived difficulty. This meant that at times children and adolescents would attempt tasks that were far more difficult than those an adult would have suggested, and at others they seemed to spend a great deal of time repeating something that appeared to be very simplistic. Finally, immersive behaviours explores the temporal structure of learning, wherein young people became completely engrossed in the learning experience. In such cases a linear understanding of progression became irrelevant as young people were caught up in an experience entirely located in the present.

Together, fluid roles, divergent progression, and immersive behaviours present a challenge to the traditional structure of school-based learning, which is most typically hierarchically organised and based on a simple-to-complex developmental model. In contrast, the structure of learning reported by the meta-synthesis texts suggests that informal learnings are based upon a paradigm of decentralisation.

**Fluid Roles**

The localised social context was characterised by the fluidity of social roles; for example there were many instances of young people moving between the role of teacher and learner, and collaboratively negotiating their learning experiences as a group (Andrews, 2012; Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998b; Jaffurs, 2006; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Pitts, 2007). At times, the participation in learning experiences suggested that the young people could be most accurately described as learner/teachers, where both learning and teaching occurred nearly simultaneously and individuals moved seamlessly from one orientation to the other. As Andrews (2012) notes, “though some children provided the model for imitation more often than others, the roles of model and imitator could also be interchangeable, varying between two pupils in a short space of time” (p. 139).

These relationships closely resembled the flexibility of social roles within localised peer cultures, and even in cases where a teacher was present (Andrews, 2012; Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Minks, 2006) members of the peer group actively structured their own learning through networks of support (Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988), evaluation (Andrews, 2012; Jaffurs, 2006), mentoring (Davis, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006) and even discipline (Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Minks, 2006). This close reliance on peers helped to foster an
environment of collaboration, in which community “spirit” was an important motivating and supporting characteristic. For example, Pitts (2007) argues that community spirit was a source of enjoyment which helped to sustain the performers of a school musical throughout their long rehearsal schedule. On a larger scale, Minks (2006) describes how music was used to “perform the nation-state” (p. 263). In a two-day festival celebrating the independence of Nicaragua, the children in Minks’s study performed an elaborate music and dance routine that helped to foster a sense of national pride amongst the young people in the community.

However, the social relationships maintained in localised peer cultures were also consciously policed by the young participants. Dzansi-McPalm (2004) argues that joining in with musical play is so strongly incentivised that children “will do whatever it takes to get along with others and follow the rules” (p. 178). In some cases, musical game such as taunts or chants were used to enforce community rules (Campbell, 2010; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Minks, 2006), as in the song Wo de le hame loo kamina kamina which Dzansi-McPalm’s participants used to “sack” disruptive children from games: “It means he/she is a bully and has hurt someone deliberately” (p. 177). Apart from the sometimes strict instances of peer discipline, there was a strong sense throughout the texts of the young people’s notion of democracy and fairness. The social nature of the informal learnings meant that most experiences of musical transmission occurred in groups and various strategies of negotiation were subsequently employed, including voting (Gruegon, 2001) and impartial “selection” games (Gruegon, 2001; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006) such as Eeny Meeny Miney Moe.\[10\] Many of the described informal learnings presented an ethos of inclusivity and participation, where ability was not often used to discriminate (Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998b; Jaffurs, 2006; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011).

However, this did not preclude some hierarchical structures where natural leaders clearly dominated (Andrews, 2012; Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Green, 2008; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006; Willett, 2011). “Experts” were frequently drawn from the peer group and although ability was sometimes used to determine leadership, as in proficient clapping game players (Harwood, 1998a; Marsh, 2008; Moore, 2013), other culturally valued attributes were considered just as important. In some cases, access and knowledge of the

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\[10\] However, such “impartial” games can certainly be manipulated to obtain a certain result (see Marsh, 2008; Minks, 2006).
media was used to determine leadership. Willett (2011) argues that “the girls with knowledge of the songs and with experience of playing with the songs with other girls [at home] have stronger voices in these performances [at school], determining what and how songs are performed” (p. 348). Other valuable attributes for leadership included strong social skills.

Within a classroom setting this could be a point of tension between adults and young people. For example Green (2008) documents a case in which a very disruptive student was removed by a teacher. However, rather than improving, the group declared that they couldn’t work without him and upon his return Green noted the extent to which he led the group, despite not being seen to be particularly musically adept by his teachers. As with other social roles, leadership itself was often decentralised and different leaders frequently emerged and shared power (Andrews, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Minks, 2006; Willett, 2011).

**Traditional teaching practices.**

Interestingly, throughout the accounts of informal learnings in school many young people were found to employ what could be described as traditional teaching practices that appeared to utilise social structures drawn from the classroom. For example Marsh (2008) noted the occasional use of atomisation in playground games, where children specifically broke down a game into smaller, composite parts that were learnt slowly. This was also seen in other contexts, including school and rock band rehearsals led by children and adolescents (Davis, 2008; Green, 2008). Moreover, some young people actively scaffolded the learning of their peers by isolating particular skills that needed improvement (Bishop, 2014; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). However, these practices, possibly appropriated from more traditional experiences of learning in the classroom, were recontextualised by the decentralised social learning practices that characterised the informal learnings of the young participants. This was particularly evident in the role that was ascribed to adults in such contexts, who typically acted as facilitators rather than authoritative teachers (Andrews, 2012; Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006). The teacher-as-facilitator was commonly valued by the young participants, and was treated in very different ways to traditional teachers. Although such teachers were not seen as equal members of the peer group, the help that they offered was seemingly valued equally to help supplied by peers. Jaffurs (2006) observed a drum teacher facilitating a group, and noted that although he was clearly the “expert”, “there was an easy flow of communication between the instructor and drummers in the class and no sense of a power imbalance in the classroom” (p. 144). The
drum teacher had made a conscious decision to facilitate the group through teaching them things that they had asked about, ensuring that the group valued the information, and felt a degree of ownership of the learning experience.

**Divergent Progression**

The extent to which a linear understanding of progression has imbued education can be seen in many psychological models of development, which frequently position children and young people as moving inexorably from more simple to more complex. However, this linear model of progression was largely disregarded by the texts in the meta-synthesis. Instead, following tangents was found to be the most pervasive structural model, wherein progression was attained through following diverging lines of interest and motivation. In the informal learnings that were facilitated by adults in the classroom, children and adolescents frequently digressed from their supposed task (Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006), which sometimes led to the appearance of either not making any progress, or even going backwards. Several studies remarked on the “slow pace” or “slow progress” of the learners (Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008), which was often exacerbated by young peoples’ indecision (Burnard, 1999) and sometimes unnecessary talk (Benson, 2012; Green, 2008).

However, several authors suggested that musical tangents were an important part of the informal learning experience, and that ultimately following such tangents created a strong musical network that helped to support understanding. In Davis’s (2008) study, for example, a pair of middle-school students diverged from the adult-set task of aurally “figuring out” the Christmas carol *We three kings*, to instead working out the melody for a popular song, *In the end*. Instead of halting and refocusing the activity, Davis encouraged the girls to explore further. In her analysis she later realised that the popular song they had worked out shared several musical similarities with the initial stimulus of the carol suggesting that the girls were aurally building bridges between two entirely different genres of music, something that music teachers work hard to achieve in classroom lessons.

In contexts where progression was not structured by adults, for example on the playground, many authors observed that children rarely conformed to adult conceptions of musical difficulty (Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008; Minks, 2006). As Harwood (1998b) notes, “hand clap games, once you are past the simple patty cake version, are not easily or casually acquired” (p. 54). Clapping games in particular can be highly sophisticated pieces of music, and require considerably advanced rhythmic skills coupled with physical dexterity. Marsh
(2008) notes that children as young as six were able to master complex polyrhythmic performances, where songs in duple time were performed with claps in triple time. Interestingly, she also found that children moved from more complex games to simple and back again depending on the preference of their partners, suggesting that mastering games of increasing difficulty was not the main motivation of the players.

**Improvisation.**

Musical tangents were often initially explored through improvisation (Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Harwood, 1998a; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006). At times improvisation occurred as an obvious result of direct musical stimuli (Davis, 2008; Marsh, 2008, Minks, 2006), and at other times seemed to be wholly unrelated; for example, in the improvisations of a 2nd Grade girl in Campbell’s (2010) study who sang made-up songs into the wind for over 10 minutes. At times, such improvisations became fixed compositions (Bishop, 2014; Burnard, 1999) some of which entered a cultural canon maintained by a localised peer culture (Bishop, 2014; Marsh, 2008). Burnard (1999) describes this process as one of “finding”, “focussing”, and “fixing”, suggesting that young people’s musical experimentations can become compositions through the focussed repetition and subsequent memorisation of particularly valued improvisations. Once memorised, the improvisation/composition can be taught to others. In Marsh’s (2008) study, composition through improvisation was often a social activity, which immediately aided dissemination throughout the peer group. As one of her nine-year-old participants suggested, “you don’t usually make it up on your own. You usually make it up with a group so they know it” (p. 202).

Several authors reported musical “messing about” (Bishop, 2014; Burnard, 1999; Green, 2008; Minks, 2006), where learners performed and improvised upon known musical fragments. This is a phenomenon that Jaffurs (2006) calls “doodling”: “he would ‘doodle’ during rehearsals, playing licks and sections of pieces that he had heard on the radio or from his own music collection” (p. 170). Recontextualisation of known musical fragments was often improvisatory, and complex intertextual performances were created through experimentation with known material (Bishop, 2014; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Moore, 2013; Willett, 2011). Willett, for example, describes the complex generation of a dance routine that was composed by a 7-year-old girl who appropriated and transformed dance moves from many different sources. By bringing together moves from television shows, movies, music
videos, and her school dance club, Willett’s participant was creating musical bridges through composition in much the same way that Davis’s (2008) participant did through her aural connection between *We three kings* and *In the end*.

**Immersive Behaviours**

The informal learnings in which the young people engaged were highly immersive (Bishop, 2014; Lum, 2007; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988). Several texts documented instances of learners clearly in a state of what Csikszentmihalyi would term “flow” (Andrews, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Green, 2008), where repetition and challenge were balanced to create a highly enjoyable and absorbing experience. Losing track of time was shown to be a common phenomenon, suggesting that informal learnings create a temporal structure dominated by immediacy.

Immersion was frequently identified through a commitment to repetition (Benson, 2012; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988). In Bishop’s (2014) study, for example, two participants described watching the same YouTube video four or five times in a row. Several participants professed a preference to learning through holistic repetition. In Harwood's (1998b) study one girl stated “well I guess my favourite is hearing the song over and over like on the radio, when they play it every once in a while and you start learning the words as you go along” (p. 56). Although Harwood acknowledges that such a system would appear inefficient to teachers, she suggests that allowing children the space to listen to whole songs on repeat helps them to learn “in a sequence of parts that is meaningful to them” (p. 56) which increases both their musical agency and subsequently the value that they place on the activity. Although in most cases young people repetitively listened to music of their own choosing, Green (2008) demonstrated that when adolescents were tasked with copying a classical piece of music they utilised similar repetitive strategies. At the end of her project, most of the participants reported an increased appreciation for classical music, purely because of the repetitive exposure they had received and the value they placed on completing the task they had set for themselves.

In some cases repetition was actually deliberate musical practice with the aim of improving performance (Green, 2008; Marsh, 2008; Minks, 2006; Willett, 2011), where particularly difficult sections of music were isolated and repeated multiple times (Davis, 2008; Marsh, 2008). Marsh suggests that on the playground atomisation can be caused by mistakes that disrupt or break the flow of the games, forcing the players to begin again at the start. In
contrast, Willett’s (2011) study documented a group of girls specifically practising dance moves before performing them for the camera, demonstrating their awareness of conventional performance practices that dictate rehearsal periods.

Although repetition was used to facilitate mastery, in many cases it instead indicated a musical comfort-zone (Davis, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Marsh, 2013). The same games, songs and recordings were performed and listened to over and over again, until they became part of a canon of cultural routines maintained by the localised peer groups (Willett, 2011), or part of the life-history of an individual, as in the case of a young participant of Marsh’s (2013) study who sang the same song each day to remember her deceased father. Some authors suggested that repetition was used by the young people as a means of reflection on their learning (Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008), allowing them to move beyond physical consolidation to something more analytical. Moreover, the repetition of familiar musical phrases was used to give respite from particularly challenging learning experiences (Davis, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Marsh, 2008, 2013). In this context, musical “doodling” could be seen as active reflection, that is, that the repetition of a familiar musical routine could allow the young people a musical space within which they are able to process new information.

**Challenge.**

Key to achieving an immersive experience was the right balance between familiar repetition and novel challenge (Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Green, 2008; Marsh, 2008; Pitts, 2007). This is similar to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, where learners need a degree of difficulty relative to their experience in order to progress. However, unlike the zone of proximal development, the challenges that the learners engaged with were often far more difficult than activities with which they were already comfortable (Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008). As discussed above, adult concepts of challenge and difficulty with regard to progress can be significantly different from those held by young people. Throughout the texts, if completing a challenge was seen to be a valuable and desirable thing to do, then the children and adolescents would accomplish it despite its perceived difficulty. For example, in Benson’s (2012) study, two boys attempted to recreate a full orchestral scoring of a march from a Star Wars film, using just their voices and body percussion. Despite significant barriers, the boys worked diligently to complete their self-imposed task. Of course, in some cases, attempting to accomplish something highly challenging led to frustration amongst the participants who found themselves unable to attain
their goal (Andrews, 2012; Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Green, 2008) due to various limitations. Other frustrations came from group repetition, when one or more of the participants felt that they were able to move on, but were held back by the group (Pitts, 2007).

In other social contexts, challenge occasionally took the form of competition (Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Harwood, 1998a; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006), which appeared to heighten enjoyment for the performers. This can be seen in the popularity of elimination games, where children who lost were still “eager to re-enter” (Dzansi-McPalm, 2004, p. 176) the competition, to take part in the group challenge. In games without an elimination structure, competition was at times expressed through a desire to “outdo other performers” (Harwood, 1998a, p. 118) for example in particularly fast, virtuosic performances of clapping games (Marsh, 2008). Although competition appears inherently aggressive, there were some examples of competition that occurred in supportive contexts. In one playground game recorded by Harwood (1998a), support for competitors was built into the song text, even as each player attempted to outperform the last.\footnote{The text for “Jump in the Car” (Harwood, 1998a, p. 119) contains the lines “Oo, ah, look at that beauty/ Oo, ah, ain’t she cutie/ Oo, ah, know you want her/ Oo, ah, ain’t gonna get her” which are sung as the competitor dances down a line created by the other players.}

**The Playful Dimension**

The Playful Dimension draws together three key themes, play, ownership, and physicality, which are described by Marsh (2006) as important characteristics of children’s playfulness. In her 2006 work, Marsh describes the difference between “playlike-ness”, those characteristics of play that are recognised by adults, and “playful-ness”, the actual characteristics that define many childhood interactions. Playfulness, Marsh argues, can be seen in highly physical play situations, which include structured games and imaginary play, as well as in children’s desire to claim ownership and mastery of their culture through the appropriation and subversion of cultural artefacts. Within the meta-synthesis texts, the three themes of ownership, play, and physicality were found across all ages, children and adolescents alike.

When learning informally the young people in the meta-synthesis texts typically adopted a playful attitude, often learning directly through play or framing their work within a playful context. Social interactions between the learners also tended to be playful, adding to the informality of both the context and the learning. As well as play itself, one of the defining characteristics of the Playful Dimension is its highly physical nature. Throughout the texts,
the physicality that encompassed the informal learnings of young people was clear, from unconscious rhythmicking to carefully choreographed dance routines; indeed, using the body to understand music was a fundamental part of informal learnings for most participants. Finally, young people’s aspirations for autonomy were enacted through playfulness. Within the meta-synthesis, young people’s desire to assert their musical agency was particularly clear, and was often expressed through subverting adult culture in playful, parodic, and creative ways.

**Play**

Many of the texts that examined informal learnings outside of a classroom context were explicitly focused to some degree on children’s play (Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Grugeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006; Moore, 2013; Willett, 2011). Play filled the spare time of many of the young participants in the meta-synthesis studies, and was seen as both a way of decompressing from the pressures of school (Campbell, 2010; Lum, 2007) and as a serious form of work, both social (Bickford, 2011; Minks, 2006) and musical (Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). Marsh (2008) demonstrated that many playground compositions are, in fact, framed by play with children using games to create new compositions (pp. 202-205). The playful nature of the composition of playground games is further supported by the fact that most new games are co-constructed by groups of friends (Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). To a certain extent, the desire to create new games was influenced by children’s strong attraction to novelty. Novelty of games and play was found to be highly prized by the young people in the meta-synthesis texts (Bishop, 2014; Marsh, 2008; Pitts, 2007), demonstrated by children who were clearly motivated to try and learn games that they did not already know. Musical games were disseminated in a variety of ways, including by children who had moved school (both locally and internationally), by adults, and through sources such as books for children, and the Internet (Bishop, 2014; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Willett, 2011). In general, the corpus of clapping games (both traditional and modern) played on the playground was one explicitly associated with childhood culture, from which adults were either highly peripheral members, or excluded altogether (Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Grugeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998b; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988).

Away from the playground, play still permeated and framed the informal learnings of children and adolescents. Other playful cultural routines included the use of musical
exaggeration, often using heightened language to communicate with others (Bickford, 2011; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Lum, 2007; Minks, 2006). Sing-song chants were common both inside and outside the classroom, and at times were used to demarcate membership of a social group or peer culture. A clear example of this can be seen in the rhythmic chanting of the kindergarten children in Lum’s (2007) study, who demonstrated their allegiance to their peer culture by excluding the researcher through chanting “Mr. Lum! Mr. Lum!” repeatedly until he became uncomfortable and asked them to stop. Songs and melodic chants were also used by young people to playfully communicate with each other (Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Lum, 2007; Minks, 2006), as in the case of a seven-year-old girl in Campbell’s study, who improvised a melody for the words “Cheryl, I got something for you!” (p. 23).

Away from more structured play such as clapping games, many texts documented cases of imaginary play (Benson, 2012; Bishop, 2014; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Green, 2008; Lum, 2007; Minks, 2006; Pitts, 2007; Willett, 2011). One of the most common types of musical fantasy play involved performances to an imaginary audience (Burnard, 1999; Jaffurs, 2006; Willett, 2011), for example, an “Aussie audience” of toys that Burnard used in her study to help build bridges between herself and her participants. Similarly, children in particular used toys to facilitate imaginary performances; for example a group of girls in Willett’s (2011) study used a collection of My Little Pet Shop figurines that performed on a “stage” made from the stump of a tree. Jaffurs (2006) describes an interesting case that demonstrates the use of imagination being supported by a real situation. As part of her study she observed an adolescent rock band performing to a (real-life) middle-school audience. Although the band members were actually performing, it appeared that they were overlaying their performance with a fantasy of an adult rock-band performance, as if they were playing a stadium gig or similar. As Jaffurs suggests, “I got the feeling that both the performers and the students were not sure how to act; these were their friends, not really a “real” rock band that had come to play for them” (p. 121), however “they looked like a rock band; they stood with one leg forward and backs arched as they brought their guitars into playing positions” (p. 121).

**Ownership**

Being recognised as autonomous musical agents was very important to the children and adolescents in the texts (Andrews, 2012; Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008). Feelings of responsibility empowered young
people, who almost always responded positively to adults who allowed them to take ownership of their own learning (Andrews, 2012; Green, 2008). For example, Andrews (2012) documents a case in which her students were clearly motivated to work because of the autonomy they were granted by their teacher:

K.A: What did you most enjoy about this project?

SIMONE: Erm, probably, like, having to figure out the notes and listening to new music without any help and being able to do it by ourselves. (p. 143)

Interestingly, when given autonomy, children and adolescents often became increasingly concerned with the authenticity of their musical work (Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998a; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008). Many of the measures of authenticity that the young people used referenced adult culture in some way, from the rock power stances adopted by Jaffurs’ teenaged rock band, to the comment from one of Burnard’s (1999) 12-year-old participants: “before the performance, she announces that she has ‘made an actual piece like the pieces [she] practise[s] at home’” (p. 171).

However, there were other examples where authenticity was determined by a performance adhering to the cultural norms of children’s music (Grugeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998b; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988). This was most common in clapping games on the playground, where children would defer to acknowledged child-authorities, the children who knew “all the games” (Marsh, 2008, p. 126). Children who could not produce a culturally authentic performance (perhaps performing a variant unknown to the playground, or games from other countries) could at times be teased by their peers. Marsh (2008) documents one such case where a girl in a group of three 6-year-olds gets increasingly frustrated, telling one of her friends, “you’re dumb at it [the game]”, and the other “you’re wrong!...you don’t know how to do it” (p. 111).

Musical ownership was also expressed by children and adolescents who were in situations where they were not able to act autonomously. In these cases, the young people were most likely to keep their music private, and refuse to share it with either adults or their peers (Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Green, 2008; Marsh, 2008, 2013). In some cases, private music was strongly related to the participants’ home cultures, particularly if these home cultures were significantly different from school cultures. For the refugee children in Marsh’s (2013) study, many children lived “private musical lives” (p. 501) alongside their “public”
musical life in school. These musical lives were often conducted within the family, and rarely brought to school. This was demonstrated by one child who played games from the Democratic Republic of Congo with her brother, but had not taught her (largely Sudanese) group of friends. Furthermore she repeatedly refused to show any member of the research team any of the games she remembered. This suggests that personal and musical agency is important enough to young people that they will willingly self-censor themselves in order to maintain their private autonomy.

**Subversion.**

Subversion was one of the most important ways in which young people were able to assert their autonomy and claim ownership of their music and musical learning (Andrews, 2012; Benson, 2012; Bickford, 2011; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Green, 2008; Grugeon, 2001; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006; Moore, 2013; Pitts, 2007; Willett, 2011). Both musical and behavioural subversion were characterised by transformation and creativity, although many examples retained negative undertones.

Undermining or subverting the implicit “rules” and accepted power distributions appeared to bring a great amount of pleasure to the young people in the texts, and helped to foster and strengthen the bonds of peer culture (Bickford, 2011; Harwood, 1998b; Lum, 2007). In some of the texts, children and adolescents clearly implemented secondary adjustments (Corsaro, 2015), as in the case of students in Bickford’s (2011) study who surreptitiously listened to popular music in their lessons by threading ear buds through their sleeves, and then leaning on one hand to listen whilst they worked. Other frequent subversive behaviours included young people’s delight in the inappropriate (Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006). In some cases, inappropriate or risqué language was built into games and songs, as in the game *We are the teenage girls* reported by Grugeon (2001) which includes the lyrics “I met a boy last night/He paid me 50p/To go behind a tree/To have it off with me” (p. 110). Unsurprisingly, the girls who sang this for Grugeon immediately told her “we never tell teachers. We never do” (p. 111).

However, there were some cases where children and adolescents delighted in sharing their knowledge of taboo subjects with adults. Swear words and scatological subject matter were common examples, as in a 10-year-old boy who “with a grin” asked Benson (2012) if he
could perform a song with swear words: “Miss the only word is… A-hole” (p. 27). Young people clearly enjoy the subversive nature of listening to, or demonstrating knowledge of, popular songs that would be considered by many adults to be inappropriate for children and pre-adolescents. In Bickford’s (2011) study, for example, a group of girls shared with him one of their favourite songs, *The Bad Touch* by the Bloodhound Gang. This reasonably graphic song about sex includes the chorus “You and me baby ain’t nothing but mammals/So let’s do it like they do on the Discovery Channel” (Pop, 1999). Bickford was somewhat embarrassed (perhaps the girls’ intention), and quickly handed back the ear buds to the girls, who appeared nonplussed.

Apart from taboo topics, young people frequently subverted appropriated musical fragments, transforming and subsequently claiming ownership over them (Bishop, 2014; Burnard, 1999; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). Subversive transformation can most clearly be seen in children and adolescents’ enjoyment of parody, which goes hand-in-hand with a childish interest in exaggeration (Campbell, 2010; Grugeon, 2001; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008). Generally, subversion strengthened the bonds of peer culture, defining children’s cultures through appropriating and occasionally ridiculing adult culture. Subversion also allowed the participants to claim ownership of their music and their work, which ultimately appeared to intensify and make more meaningful their learning experiences.

**Physicality**

Bickford (2011) argues that a children’s cultures can be “characterized by playful physical interaction” (p. 172) and tellingly, children and adolescents conducted their informal learnings through movement and the body throughout the texts (Benson, 2012; Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Green, 2008; Grugeon, 2001; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Moore, 2013). Both Campbell (2010) and Lum (2007) mentioned the unconscious rhythmicking of the children in their studies; describing a school lunch room Campbell wrote, “they bobbed their heads rhythmically or manipulated lunch boxes, cardboard lunch packs, foil tins or milk cartons across their table space in recurring patterns” (p. 37). The many descriptions of children and adolescents’ movement throughout the meta-synthesis literature suggests that physical expression is not only central to young people’s cultures, but also to their learning.

Several authors described how their participants “thought” with the body. Davis (2008) found evidence that children tended to articulate their musical understanding through the
body, as one of boys in her study argued, “I just felt it in my fingers 'cause I know the way
the song goes” (p. 250). This echoes the sentiment suggested by a participant of Marsh’s
(2008) study who described the transmission of clapping games as “your hands just glide into
it” (p. 141). Kinaesthetic memory seems to be deeply rooted within children’s informal
learnings (Bishop, 2014; Harwood, 1998a; Marsh, 2008), with many young people relying on
their peers’ ability to spot similarities in physical patterns to facilitate the fast learning of new
games or musical practices. Physical virtuosity was prized within the young people’s musical
cultures, and performances were often praised for speed or volume (Burnard, 1999; Davis,
2008; Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988) rather than for expressivity. Davis
(2008) also noted an interesting practice of speed being used to “fix” ideas, as at the end of a
rehearsal period she heard band-members performing individual parts at high speed, just prior
to a whole group performance.

Pre-teens’ preference for understanding music through the senses was something that
Bickford (2011) discussed at length. In one situation, Bickford conducted an interview with
two girls, in which the girls repeatedly refused to even attempt to verbally describe the music
of a favourite band. After some consideration, he later concluded that “it had not occurred to
me that kids might be unwilling, uninterested, or unable to talk about music—that such talk
served no particular function and therefore had no real place in their peer culture ” (p. 244).
Bickford here draws attention to the difference between an adult value of analytical
decontextualisation and critical reflection (supported by appropriate vocabulary), and
children’s acceptance of embodied, physical, and sensory understanding.

Dance.

As well as more unconscious forms of physical expression and embodied understanding,
many young people created and performed dances as part of their informal learnings (Bishop,
2014; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Green, 2008; Grugeon, 2001;
Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Minks, 2006; Pitts, 2007). Dances often drew
on young people’s observations of the world around them, from the hyper-stylised world of
popular music (Grugeon, 2001) to seemingly mundane everyday activities, “we are imitating
the woman who prepares banku\textsuperscript{12} at the lorry station. Her pot is big and she opens her leg
wide and goes left right, left right but we decide to go left, left, right, right” (Dzansi-McPalm,
2004, p. 134). In the quote above from Dzansi-McPalm’s study, a girl describes how she had

\textsuperscript{12} A fermented maize meal from Ghana.
altered the appropriated movement to choreograph her dance. Similarly, in Willett’s (2011) study a group of girls appropriated dance moves learned from music videos and integrated them into traditional playground games such as kiss chase. By doing so they were able to both revitalise a traditional practice and simultaneously use dance to consolidate the identity of their social group. Alongside made-up dances, there were several examples of both boys and girls learning whole dance routines from the media and reproducing them on the playground (Gruggeon, 2001; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Willett, 2011). Gruggeon describes a “spontaneous” performance of a dance to the Spice Girls’ song *Wannabe* as “impressively imitated and sung with gusto” (p. 111). Similarly, Marsh (2008) comments on the accuracy of the performance of a dance sequence from the Bollywood film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001) suggesting that achieving a precise and authentic performance of favoured popular dances is important to young people; consequently, it can be assumed that a significant amount of time is spent learning the dances from an original source such as a music video or film.

Alongside complex dance routines there were also many examples of children and adolescents engaging in mimetic movements (Benson, 2012; Campbell, 2010; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Minks, 2006; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988). These movements were often spontaneously performed to accompany music and frequently responded to either instrumental or textual stimuli, such as air-conducting, or singing into a pretend microphone. These mimetic movements were often the most immediately visible form of the young people’s physical and intimate engagement with music, indeed, many of the descriptions of mimetic movement in the texts seem to imply that the participants simply could not keep still when music was playing (Benson, 2012; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Marsh, 2008). Furthermore, mimetic movements were also common in clapping games (Bishop, 2014; Gruggeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008, 2013) and in some cases may have been used by the children to explicitly enact and psychologically process harmful experiences, as in the case of a group of refugee girls who included actions based upon police violence in a clapping game recorded by Marsh (2013). The integration of music and movement in cases like this subsequently takes on a more profound and serious character, one that is highly personal and culturally expressive.

**The Musical Dimension**

The final three key themes of the meta-synthesis, musical pathways, multimodal acquisition, and praxial transmission, form the Musical Dimension. Referring to young
people’s understanding and transmission of, and engagement with, music, all three themes were characterised by the complex layering of intimate, local, and global contexts. This reflects a 21st century musical context which is dominated by globally produced music appreciated on a local and intimate level. Musical Pathways\textsuperscript{13} refers to the both ways in which music was transmitted from one space to another, and the ways in which it was able to draw together multiple and disparate contexts. Such music was considered to be highly valuable by many of the participants of the meta-synthesis texts. This theme also encompassed the importance of both the media and technological advances to the musical worlds of young people, and many of the texts demonstrated the ways in which media and technology were utilised by young people to build musical bridges. Multimodal Acquisition demonstrates the importance of multiple modes of musical understanding to the learning processes of children and adolescents, showing that many young people combine visual, aural, and kinaesthetic approaches to the understanding of music. Finally Praxial Transmission draws upon the praxial philosophy of David Elliott (1995), and shows that learning by doing was fundamental to the transmission processes of both children and adolescents.

**Musical Pathways**

The informal learnings of young people were framed by a complex web of musical pathways, where music both moved between, and connected, a variety of contexts including the classroom and the outside world. The formal context of the classroom can be seen to transform and even devalue “outside” music (most commonly pop music, see Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010), but when young people learn informally this transformation does not seem to diminish the music (Green, 2008). Rather, the connections demonstrated by the meta-synthesis texts showed that drawing together the public space of the school and the private space of the home strengthens the learning experience, making it more meaningful for the participants. Valuable music, commonly music from outside of school (such as the music shared with parents, siblings, or friends), was at the heart of all the informal learnings in the

\textsuperscript{13} I note that the term “Musical Pathways” is also used by Ruth Finnegan (1989), although her usage somewhat differs from my own. In *The Hidden Musicians*, Finnegan uses the metaphor of a musical pathway to describe something akin to a career pathway, that is, the “route” by which amateur musicians participated in music making and subsequently constructed their musical identity. She describes it thus, “local musical pathways were established, already-trodden and, for the most part, abiding routes which many people had taken… they were also a recognised channel for self-expression in many senses, for drawing on personal networks, for growing up through the various stages of life… and, not least, for providing meaning for personal action and identity” (pp. 306-307).
school. Moreover various forms of media, the means by which such musics were disseminated, were also highly valued by the young people across many of the studies.

**Valuable music.**

The integration of music that the young people valued was very important throughout the texts (Benson, 2012; Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Green, 2008; Grugeon, 2001; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006; Willett, 2011). Music was “brought in” to school from home in a variety of ways, through portable technologies such as mobile phones and Mp3 players, to games that were learnt at home and then taught to others at school. Valuable music was highly diverse; for example in Campbell’s (2010) study alone genres such as contemporary pop, music from 1930s films, nursery rhymes, and classical art music were included. Some of these musics were considered socially controversial, and so shared with only very select and close friends, as in some of the musical games and songs played by the refugees in Marsh’s (2013) study. Others, however, became a school “craze” and were swiftly transferred between friendship groups and sometimes an entire school (Bishop, 2014; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Lum, 2007; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988).

The role of the family was especially clear when the young people discussed the music that they valued, particularly the influence of siblings (Bickford, 2011; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006; Moore, 2013). Siblings influenced taste, sometimes going as far as to have almost complete control through determining which songs would be stored on an Mp3 player (Bickford, 2011). Moreover, music shared by siblings at home could be used to support social and ethnic identities. For example, in Willett’s (2011) study, one girl became the leader of a group in a dance routine that she had made up and practised at home because her younger sister was also able to perform the moves fluently and so supported her candidature for leadership. In Marsh’s (2013) study, a young girl told the researchers that she played games from her home country, but only with her brother.

**Media.**

Media influences were particularly important to children and adolescents, who went to considerable lengths to incorporate popular culture into their informal learnings (Benson, 2012; Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Davis, 2008; Harwood, 1998a; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006; Moore, 2013; Willett, 2011). Most obviously, media had
an important impact upon young people’s musical choices, for both play and performance. For example, Grugeon, (2001), Harwood (1998a, 1998b), Marsh (2008, 2013), and Minks (2006) all document games that have been influenced by the media, from choreographed dance routines based on “MTV dance video moves” (Harwood, 1998a, p.177) to clapping games that reference popular singers such as Britney Spears (Marsh, 2008). Interestingly, the media also appears to be playing an increasingly large role in the dissemination of traditional games and songs, with children and adolescents continuing to learn from TV shows and films (a practice that has been documented for many years, see Marsh, 2008) but also using the Internet to research and improve their repertoire (Bishop, 2014).

The high cultural value placed on current media and popular culture could be used to delineate membership to a particular group (Bickford, 2011; Davis, 2008; Willett, 2011), both on a microcosmic level of friendships to a wider, localised peer culture and even beyond: to a global youth imaginary. This is demonstrated by the high rates of media use by the participants of Bickford’s (2011) study, who used common global referents such as the characters portrayed on the Disney Channel as a way of negotiating and renegotiating friendships. Furthermore, gendered, age-related, and racial norms disseminated through the media were actively performed and transformed by children and adolescents in both the playground and the classroom (Bickford, 2011; Green, 2008; Grugeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006; Moore, 2013; Willett, 2011). From groups of girls enacting the “Girl Power” message of the Spice Girls through performative play (Grugeon, 2001) to pre-adolescents using hyper-masculinised rap music to develop friendships (Bickford, 2011), the influence of the media was clear. However, rather than merely copying music from the media, young people both subverted and transformed popular culture. Both Marsh (2008) and Moore (2013) describe the ways in which popular culture has been influenced by music from the playground, suggesting that the relationship between the media and the playground (or indeed, any space in which children have some degree of ownership) is highly complex and inter-referential.

**Multimodal Acquisition**

Media were also seen to play a large part in another key theme of the meta-synthesis, multimodal acquisition. The meta-synthesis texts consistently demonstrated that young people learn music in a multimodal way (Benson, 2012; Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Green, 2008; Marsh, 2008; Minks, 2006; Willett, 2011); that is, the children and
adolescents in the studies simultaneously used a variety of stimuli to support and focus their learning. For example, many of the playground games described by Bishop (2014), Grugeon (2001), Harwood (1998a, 1998b), and Marsh (2008) were learnt by players through a combination of close visual and aural observation, physical mimicry and active modelling, where the learners’ bodies were physically manipulated by their peer teachers. The use of many different stimuli both on and off the playground led to a seemingly chaotic environment which required the learners to alternately layer and focus their attention (Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010). In Bickford’s (2011) study, for example, young people regularly engaged with listening to and appreciating music with a friend, at the same time as holding conversations about different musics with another group.

At times this extensive hybridity appeared very chaotic; however, many of the studies in fact demonstrated the centrality of a seemingly chaotic multimodal environment to learning (Benson, 2012; Bickford, 2011; Green, 2008; Lum, 2007). For example, in Benson’s (2012) study two students intent on performing the Imperial March had initially been drawn to the music by their appreciation of a YouTube video clip which featured an animation of Lego® Star Wars characters performing as an orchestra, conducted by a Lego® Darth Vader. The boys worked well for several weeks using YouTube to learn the piece, but their progress was negatively affected when they were asked to work with just an audio recording. Benson describes the result:

The subsequent transformation that occurred in Elliot's attitude was astounding. The learning mode had changed from visual-aural to purely aural, and this removal of the familiar and entertaining Lego images was manifested in an extremely negative way. A fixed camera documented Elliot withdrawing himself fully from the task, choosing to sit with his head on his desk while Anthony continued to be consistently engaged in the performance. Elliot stayed immobile in this way for the rest of the lesson. (p. 45)

Although the student described had been diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome, and so his reaction was perhaps more extreme than those of other children, it is clear from the meta-synthesis texts that engaging with music in a multimodal way was very important to both children and adolescents. Within the classroom, Campbell (2010) describes one 7-year-old boy who liked to adjust the lighting to achieve the “right mood” (p. 151) for his performances: “scary music can be scarier with the lights out. Sometimes we even have a kind of strobe effect, when I turn the lights on and off to the beat” (p. 151). Bickford (2011) suggests that young people in fact conceive of music itself in a multimodal way, where
“sound, songs, and recordings [are] integrated into the physical, spatial, and embodied world” (p. 198). This, he argues, is reflective of young people’s integrated and holistic experience of the world.

**Complex soundscapes.**

One of the more surprising findings of the meta-synthesis was the almost ever-present background of a complex and sometimes overwhelming sonic environment (Bickford, 2011; Burnard, 1999; Davis, 2008; Grugeon, 2001; Lum, 2007). The informal learnings described by the studies frequently included vivid descriptions of the “carnivalesque” (Grugeon, 2001, p. 113) noise and aural chaos that accompanied many of the learning experiences. In many cases, the rising volume of young peoples’ interactions and musical play was prohibited by adults who deemed it inappropriate. Campbell (2010) described one such instance, in which a lunchtime supervisor criticised the children in the school’s lunchroom: “I want indoor—not outdoor—voices. No shouting, no singing, no playing the tables like drums” (p. 39).

However, such soundscapes were not only present in lesser-regulated areas such as the playground or lunchroom (Bickford, 2011; Lum, 2007). For example, when adults did not regulate volume in the classroom, young people were able to work surprisingly well within a noisy environment, and appeared to relish the freedom of being loud (Green, 2008).

The meta-synthesis texts also revealed children and adolescents’ preoccupation with sound itself, suggesting that the complex soundscapes they worked within were, to a degree, purposeful. Children in particular were shown to be highly interested in the timbre of voices and instruments, suggesting that the sound that an instrument makes is an important consideration for children preparing to make music (Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Lum, 2007, Minks, 2006). Burnard (1999) describes the time that one of her 12-year-old participants spent in choosing an instrument for improvisation:

> Lia spends several minutes exploring the sound possibilities of a gong. She trials the timbral effects of mallets’ sound dampening techniques, methods of controlling dynamic levels and sound patterns. She also spends a few moments “trying out” Chloe’s flute and Katya’s clarinet as if to evaluate and test as many instruments as she can. (p. 143)

Moreover, as well as purposefully selecting particular timbres to add to the soundscape, children were also shown to interact with their sonic environment suggesting that it is not just a simple backdrop. Lum (2007) describes a group of children in a kindergarten class in
Singapore who interacted with each other through the noisy soundscape of their classroom, including an instance where two children started to sing nursery rhymes together as they heard them being played through the overblown headphones of another child.

**Praxial Transmission**

Praxial transmission, or learning by doing, was shown by the meta-synthesis texts to be a fundamental informal learning practice. Musicking and rhythmicking were clearly the immediate choice of young people aiming to either teach or learn music. Almost every informal learning experience was mediated through music making (Benson, 2012; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Minks, 2006), and most of the teaching practices utilised by the young people were based on some form of performance (Andrews, 2012; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006). While the somewhat exploratory learning which is facilitated by musicking and performing may be seen by adults as a less economical way of acquiring skills and understanding, many of the texts showed that making mistakes was an important part of the process. Merrill-Mirsky (1988), for example, describes the learning of two young girls of about 5 and 7 playing a variety of clapping games, “they played slowly, with a lot of mistakes, but they got in a lot of practice before their mother noticed and told them to stop making noise” (p. 193). Learning predominantly through performance meant that non-verbal communication was prevalent throughout the learning experiences (Burnard, 1999; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988). This took the form of both bodily communication that used gestures and facial expressions, communication through music, or both. The close attention paid to communicative gesture relies on a complex encultured understanding of socially appropriate physical and musical signals, further confirming the interwoven relationship between informal learnings and social context.

Perhaps because of the use of non-verbal communication (which demands at least a minimal amount of eye contact), praxial transmission tended to be intimate, using both physical and social closeness (Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Harwood, 1998a, 1998b; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). Local and global musics were thus recontextualised within an intimate framework, helping to make such music more meaningful. For some, this physical intimacy was achieved despite certain barriers. Indeed, two girls in Bickford’s study actively delighted in overcoming physical barriers (in this case, a swing set) to maintain the intimate and tenuous connection of sharing
earbuds: “as they swung higher and higher they laughed and cheered each other on, coordinating their leg pumps to stay connected by the precariously balanced iPod earbuds in their ears” (p. 139).

Learning practically was often achieved through active modelling, where observation was combined with performance (Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988). Andrews (2012) describes this process in action, “Ella is at first unsure of the second half of the phrase. By the last repetition, she is playing the correct notes, but with a slight delay, as she copies the other girls” (p. 139). Learning through an integration of observation and praxis seemed to be the transmission process of choice for most young people, and at times it was consciously selected as a pedagogical technique. As one participant in Bishop’s (2014) study explained “she [another child] just said, ‘Right, just copy me, girls.’ … and she, like, just learned us” (p. 63). The extent to which young people learned through observation and imitation led some of the authors to conclude that the learners were engaged in a process of legitimate peripheral participation (Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Harwood, 1998b; Minks, 2006), a theory which integrates both social and practical learning. Interestingly, there were some instances of embodied transmission that did not fit the model of legitimate peripheral participation, and those were the cases in which the authority figure was not a person. Bishop (2014) describes an increasingly common phenomenon, where a pair of girls learnt a clapping game from a video posted on YouTube. Whilst there was obviously no immediate interaction between the “teachers” in the video and the learners at home, the learning experience did contain many of the processes discussed in this section: learning through observation, modelling, non-verbal communication, and learning through performance. Bishop suggests that “children’s use of amateur clapping game videos on YouTube has much in common with their face-to-face practices of teaching and learning” (p. 54), it is merely mediated through a computer or similar device.

Performance.

As previously discussed, the informal learnings documented in the meta-synthesis texts were conducted almost exclusively though performance. Therefore, it is possible to analyse these informal learnings using Turino’s (2008) theory of presentational and participatory performance, to help understand the aesthetic behind the performers. Indeed, several authors used Turino’s theory in their work to explain the performances that they observed (Benson, 2012; Campbell, 2010; Willett, 2011). Interestingly, rather than always being obviously
presentational or participatory, the nature of these performances appeared to exist on a continuum, with some demonstrating features of both types of performance (Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Grugeon, 2001; Jaffurs, 2006; Marsh, 2008; Minks, 2006; Willett, 2011). This was particularly clear in the performance of choreographed and non-choreographed dances on the playground where the pleasure of the performance is derived from participation (particularly as this affirms membership to certain friendship groups), but at the same time the performers are engaged in a fantasy about performing for an audience (Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). Although it is possible to argue that the pre-rehearsed nature of choreographed performances makes them exclusive, and thus non-participatory, there were also many examples of choreographed dances that were inclusive as their moves were drawn from readily-accessible popular culture or playground culture and so facilitated participatory performance. One such example was the can-can dance recorded by Grugeon (2001) which “involved dancing in a chorus line with synchronised high kicks… ending with a defiant display of knickers” (p. 109).

Creating a performance for presentation to an audience was a clear motivator in many cases (Benson, 2012; Burnard, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Marsh, 2008, 2013; Minks, 2006; Pitts, 2007), and performance “buzz” was seen as an important emotional reward for time spent practising (Pitts, 2007). Young people had a clear understanding of the role of an audience (Davis, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Pitts, 2007; Willett, 2011), including the different types of audiences commonly associated with classical and popular musics. Jaffurs, for example, describes how an audience of middle-school children in an assembly “packed together” and “screamed” (2006, p. 121) as they were treated to a rock band performance by some of their peers:

Students brought out signs they’d been hiding behind their backs. Some were painted scraps of cardboard with the band members’ names painted in red and blue. One was done on a computer and had the band’s name emblazoned in red. (p. 122)

The children and adolescents’ attitude towards concepts of performance and audience demonstrate a fluid blending between what we may think of “traditional” Western practices, and those that are a little more raucous and less structured, drawing from both local and global models of performance practice.
Summary

The nine key themes identified across the meta-synthesis texts demonstrate the complexity of learning music informally across a range of contexts. The Structural Dimension showed the extent to which young people prefer decentralised structures, wherein traditional hierarchical social structures were overturned in favour of fluid and dynamic concepts of organisation and progression. Fluid roles, divergent progression, and immersive behaviours all created a context and structure of learning which destabilised typical, teacher-led classroom practices. Furthermore, the hierarchical implications of using practices drawn from more traditional ways of teaching and learning (such as repeating short sections or demonstrating individual musical phrases slowly), were recontextualised within a youth mediated, decentralised structure which fundamentally altered their social consequences. Adult concepts of progress and development were shown to be consistently challenged by the lack of hierarchical framework. Young people’s preference for following lines of interest and value, rather than those of increasing difficulty, led to a diverse and sometimes fragmentary learning structure. This was supported by the consistent use of exploratory improvisation that enabled both children and adolescents to expand their musical understanding in many different directions. Finally, immersive behaviours and a predilection for challenge and repetition further undermined linear concepts of progression by temporally locating informal learnings in the present.

The Playful Dimension brought together three of the characteristics of “playfulness” as described by Marsh (2006): ownership, play, and physicality. Ownership of both music and learning was shown by the meta-synthesis texts to be vital to young people, and methods of subversion were frequently used to undermine adult authority. Having wrested control of their own learning, young people were then seen to be very concerned with the authenticity of their musical practices and performances, where measures of authenticity were drawn from a wide range of cultural contexts. Play itself, including both structured games and imaginary play, was found throughout the texts concerned with younger children. In the primary school, games and imaginary play are clearly important leisure activities, but the texts also showed the extent to which structures of play were used to frame more serious learning activities. Outside of the primary school, examples of play were found in the complex layering of real and imaginary experiences, particularly in the performances of young rock bands. The final theme in this dimension, physicality, was found throughout all the meta-synthesis texts.
Learning through the body was seen to be a fundamental characteristic of informal learning across all contexts and ages. Moreover, many children and adolescents expressed themselves through their bodies, creating and improvising dance routines to help explore and define their musical worlds.

Finally, the Musical Dimension included themes which described the ways in which young people understood, engaged with, and transmitted music through processes that drew together intimate, local, and global contexts. Musical pathways were shown to be created when music passed from one context to another, and the value of music increased in proportion with the amount of contexts that it brought together. In this way, musical bridges were created which spanned multiple contexts as globally produced pop songs were performed in the intimate space of the bedroom, or reimaged in line with local traditions and understandings. The role of 21st century media was shown to be highly important to this process, and swiftly developing technologies were seen to support a hyper-connected youth culture. Such technologies also enhanced the multimodal acquisition of musical skills and understanding, wherein young people actively combined aural, visual, and kinaesthetic ways of learning. Such sensory complexity was further observed in the highly complicated and multi-faceted sonic landscapes described throughout the meta-synthesis texts. Finally, young people were shown to learn most frequently through praxial transmission: learning by doing. Musicking dominated the learning of all young people, who were often seen to turn to performance as a means of developing skills and enhancing musical understanding.

Together, the three dimensions and nine key themes described in this chapter create an analytical lens, which can be applied to empirical data in order to facilitate a new understanding of informal learning as it exists across a broad range of contexts and ages. In order to manage the analysis of the empirical phase of this project, it was vital to include an analytical framework which could accommodate such a diverse range of data (Karlsen, 2011). Therefore, this analytical lens was determined through a meta-synthesis of texts which themselves included a consideration of children aged between 4 and 14, and were set in a large range of school-based contexts. However, it is important to note the limitations of such an approach. As previously mentioned, despite the systematic method of acquiring literature for inclusion in the meta-synthesis it is highly likely that some texts were missed, which could have potentially altered the results. Moreover, any one of the inclusion criteria stated at the start of this chapter will have had an important effect on the outcome. Including texts which
examine informal learnings outside of school-based contexts, or the informal learnings of adults, or indeed, including texts not published in English, could well lead to a different set of key themes. However, I believe that the steps taken to ensure the transparency of my searching methods, as well as the relatively large\textsuperscript{14} sample of literature, have helped to make this analytical lens more robust. The following chapter will describe the methodology of the empirical phase of this study, including the ways in which I applied this lens to the analysis of data drawn from four case-study schools. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will then return to the three dimensions, and the meta-synthesis themes will be examined in light of the empirical data.

\textsuperscript{14} In comparison to other qualitative meta-syntheses
Chapter 4
Methodology: The Empirical Project

The aim of this study was to establish a theoretical framework to address school-based informal learnings, and then to investigate the informal learnings of young people in four schools, paying particular attention to the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants themselves. Therefore to fully address this, the empirical phase of the research relied on gaining a deep insight into the lives and musical cultures of young people, and the research methods described in this chapter were selected to facilitate this need.

Childhood Studies as a Methodological Framework

In this section I will be discussing the theoretical framework that guided this research project. This includes a consideration of the methodological consequences of choosing to frame the study through childhood studies, the epistemological foundation of the study, and the consequent choice to pursue qualitative data.

The three central tenets of childhood studies, that children create and curate their own unique cultures (Corsaro, 2015), that childhood constitutes a permanent structural form in society (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998), and that this structural form is marginalized by other, more powerful groupings had a profound effect on the methodological choices I made in this project. Firstly, projects that utilise childhood studies need to be aware of the emancipatory roots of this theoretical framework, and subsequently employ sympathetic methods of data collection which foreground the voices and experiences of participants. As discussed in chapter 1, delicate consideration of both methodology and methods needs to be given in order to most accurately present children’s lived experiences. As all researchers of childhood studies have a deep and formative understanding of childhood, ensuring that it is the voices of participants that are heard, and not the latent voice of one’s past childhood requires constant effort and awareness. Furthermore, the commitment to interdisciplinary research which is found throughout childhood studies (Young, 2012) suggests that it is important to include the perspectives of multiple disciplines as part of the methodology. For the meta-synthesis described in the previous chapter, childhood studies had a profound effect on the inclusion criteria and prompted the exclusion of any study in which young people’s voices and experiences were not distinctly presented. In the empirical methodology this was extended to ensure that the participants in my study were kept at the heart of the data collection, analysis,
and reporting processes. Central to this was the decision to ground the study in a constructionist epistemology and the use of qualitative methods, as outlined below.

**Epistemology**

When conducting a research project, a researcher will maintain certain assumptions about the nature of knowledge that will impact upon their choice of methodology, methods, data analysis, and dissemination (Roulston, 2010). Most simply these assumptions can be stated as a fundamental divide between the belief that knowledge is not reliant on humans and exists independent of human intervention (objectivist), and the belief that knowledge is inherently bound to human interpretations and is, in fact, constructed by humans (constructionist). In an objectivist epistemology, unambiguous knowledge already exists in the world, and can be “found” and subsequently understood through careful experimentation (Crotty, 1998). This epistemology is most closely bound to a positivist theoretical perspective and quantitative methodologies. In contrast, a constructionist epistemology believes that “truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 8-9). Constructionism, and the closely related subjectivism, typically underpins qualitative methodologies. Making such epistemological assumptions explicit is of paramount importance in the reporting of research (Burnard, 2006), as without fully understanding the researcher’s fundamental beliefs it is impossible for a reader to make judgements about the validity of the research project.

Epistemology not only impacts upon the researcher’s choice of methodology and methods, but is also tightly bound to the theoretical perspective guiding the research. In this case, childhood studies’ concern with the subjective realities of children and adolescents places paramount importance on sympathetically understanding the ways that the participants engage with their own unique worlds. Furthermore, it acknowledges that the ways in which the participants engage with their world may be different from the ways in which I as a researcher engage with their world, thus undermining a positivistic belief in a singular, objective “truth”. Therefore, this research subscribes to a constructionist epistemology which enables the potential of uncovering multiple realities and, moreover, respecting the authority and equality of such realities. Ensuring that no single reality is privileged within this research is also associated with perspectives that are typically associated with emancipatory research, a tradition which includes childhood studies scholarship.
Qualitative research.

A constructionist epistemology, which is anchored in a concern to understand the musical cultures of young people on their own terms, strongly recommends the pursuit of qualitative data. Merriam (2009) suggests that qualitative research is typically concerned with “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). Most qualitative research focuses on meaning and understanding, where inductive processes of gathering and analysing data are used to produce richly descriptive data sets, and the researcher is acknowledged as the primary instrument for data collection. Moreover, qualitative research often has an emergent and flexible research design that is able to accommodate the changing situations and contexts that are posed by social research (Merriam, 2009). Although it is possible to use the term “qualitative research”, it is important to acknowledge that there are many different traditions located under this one label. The most common qualitative methodologies include ethnography, narrative enquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case studies (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011), all of which use methods of data collection that produce qualitative data.

Research Design

This empirical study can be described as utilising a collective case study design that used traditional ethnographic methods of data collection, including observation, interview, and the collection of relevant documents (Stake, 1995).

Ethnography

Historically, ethnography grew out of anthropology and involved researchers spending prolonged amounts of time “in the field” (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Bresler & Stake, 2006), typically in societies very different from that of the researcher. Burgess (1984) argues that such ethnographies often contained a distinct overtone of colonialism wherein the researchers viewed their informants with considerable contempt, as “primitive savages” (p. 12). Indeed, many methodological texts cautioned ethnographers against undermining their research by “going native” (Tedlock, 2000). More recently, many ethnographers have moved their attention away from “the other” and located themselves as researchers of their own cultures and societies, although they still retain a commitment to fieldwork.

Because ethnography is a non-prescriptive method of research that is subject to change depending on the theoretical framework that is assumed by the researcher, it is difficult to
determine an all-encompassing definition. However, following the work of Bronislaw Malinowski naturalistic participant observation was advocated as the foundation of ethnography, and indeed, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that “ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions” (p. 3). More recently, some scholars have claimed that all social research, including ethnography, should be critical research committed to social change and the emancipation of the less powerful (Bassey, 1999; Blommaert & Jie, 2010). This makes ethnography particularly pertinent to studies that maintain an allegiance to the principles of childhood studies. Indeed, there are significant precedents that advocate using ethnography as a primary research approach in the study of children’s musical cultures (Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Lum, 2008; Marsh, 2008, Young, 2012), all of which prioritise the voices of children and adolescents.

**Collective case studies.**

Case studies are popular in both qualitative and quantitative research designs and are often used to both investigate and illustrate the key themes of a project. However, using a case study design in empirical research can be contentious. Generally, criticism of case study research typically focuses on the subjectivity of the researcher and the generalizability and reliability of findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Defining exactly what case study research is can be difficult as the design can imply different methods across different academic fields (Bassey, 1999), including both quantitative and qualitative designs. Stake’s (1995) typology of qualitative case studies would appear most appropriate for this project, as it is located within a qualitative tradition. He identifies three different types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. For Stake, an *intrinsic* case study is one in which the research is interested specifically in the case itself. In contrast, an *instrumental* case study is used to help to understand an existing phenomenon. By this definition, the case studies in this research project are best described as instrumental case studies, as they aimed to specifically examine the informal learning of music. Finally, a group of instrumental case studies is classified as a *collective* case study.

There are multiple benefits to using a collective case study design. Primarily, the additional perspectives offered by more than one site can contribute to a “refinement of understanding” (p. 7), which Stake claims as one of the primary aims of all case study research. Moreover,
the use of multiple cases can mitigate the alleged subjectivity of the researcher by providing the opportunity to recontextualise the researcher’s position in the field. It also allows a researcher to consolidate, critique or even test key themes through multi-site observation. However, in order to conduct a successful collective case study project, it is important to retain a strong instrumental focus, as well as to make explicit the boundaries of each case (Yin, 2009). Stake (1995) also recommends the use of multiple methods of data collection to aid triangulation and thus improve the subsequent validity of findings.

**Introducing the Cases**

The four cases that were included in this empirical study were located in NSW and England, and comprised two primary and two secondary schools. Within each school, particular areas were targeted to provide a range of teacher mediated, youth mediated, and negotiated spaces. These areas included classrooms, practice rooms, corridors, playgrounds, school assemblies, and school trips to the local theatre, church, and sports carnivals. The age range of participants differed in each school and the recruitment procedure also differed depending on context. This reflected the unique situations encountered in each space, and was accommodated by a qualitative research design that was sympathetic to disparity and flexible enough to withstand changes between field sites (Bassey, 1999). The differences between each case study and the challenges of working within a dynamic research design are examined in the following section.

**Sampling.**

The case studies were selected in a process that is best described as a combination of “purposive sampling” and “convenience sampling” (Cohen et al., 2007). The limited time that I had to spend in the English schools meant that I sought out schools that could offer easy access (convenience sampling), and also which I knew to contain knowledgeable people who had an in-depth understanding of informal learning and music (purposive sampling). I was able to rely on a strong network of school partnerships that I had developed during my time as a student and teacher, which meant finding schools that were willing to participate was an easy task. This was an advantage that I did not have in Australia, and subsequently I found I had to rely on connections I had made through both family and my colleagues at the University of Sydney. However, the two schools that I eventually included in the study both contained similarly expert people, thus facilitating direct comparison with the English schools.
Within each school, different numbers of young people participated. Both the primary schools contained a small number of students, and so the majority of students were involved in some form. In the secondary schools, the participants were drawn from students enrolled in their final year of compulsory music education: Year 8 in Australia, and Year 9 in the UK (students typically aged between 13 and 14). In both instances, these Year groups were chosen as they were following a music curriculum that was strongly influenced by informal learning and Musical Futures, and so presented an interesting insight into teacher-planned informal learning in the classroom. For both schools this was a unique project for these Year groups, and it was unlike the curriculum followed in the earlier years of compulsory music.

While a large number of young people provided informed consent from their guardians and themselves to be involved in both observations and research conversations, a smaller number took part in group, semi-structured interviews (Table 4.1). These participants were self-selected, and often participated in interviews with their friends. Of all the students who approached me to take part in an interview, only one student withdrew.

Table 4.1

*Numbers of participants by school*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Participants (observation and research conversations)</th>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oakwood Primary, England&lt;sup&gt;15&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Hills Public School, NSW</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellamy Secondary, England</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Margaret’s School for Girls, NSW</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4-14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>15</sup> Throughout this thesis, pseudonyms for both participant schools and individuals have been used in order to protect anonymity.
Access to the field.

Following a sampling process that was built upon prior relationships, access to each case study school was mediated by a gatekeeper: either the school’s Principal or a music teacher. Following ethical approval from the University of Sydney and the NSW Department of Education, each school was supplied with information sheets for teachers, parents and students, consent forms for teachers, parents and students and a dialogue statement for any participants or parents who did not have fluency in English (see Appendix A). To ensure that the project met standards for ethical conduct in the UK, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) were closely consulted. In both primary schools, the teachers distributed and collected parental consent forms before I arrived in the school. In both secondary schools, I was in charge of distributing and collecting parental consent forms from the students who had agreed to participate. Ensuring that the participants were able to give their own informed consent was achieved by explaining both the purpose of the research and the research methods to each participant at the start of my data collection period in each school, and then also before conducting interviews.

The Schools

The case study schools presented four unique contexts, with some similarities and many differences. In order to fully understand the findings and discussion presented throughout the rest of this thesis, it is important to firstly be aware of the context in which the participants were situated.

**Oakwood Primary School, England.**

Oakwood Primary school is an old Victorian schoolhouse surrounded by woodlands, in a small village on the English/Welsh border. The school has three classrooms, and a shared library and music space. It is set within a large play area, including permanent climbing equipment, a tarmacked area, a large field, and a special area for children aged 4-5. At the time the research was conducted, Oakwood had 75 students enrolled over three classes, and employed five teaching staff (four of whom worked part-time) four teaching support assistants, one administrator, and one caretaker. The majority of children at the school were white British, and came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Those who lived in the village tend to be fairly affluent, but there were also a substantial number of children who
attended the school from a local housing estate. In addition, several children lived in temporary accommodation (such as caravans) as their parents worked as farm labourers.

As a small village school Oakwood faces some particular problems, including providing adequate provision for children with severe special needs, and a constant threat of closure or amalgamation due to fluctuating numbers. There is no specialist music teacher, although the head teacher trained in creative arts at university. Several peripatetic staff teach instruments at the school, including violin, keyboard, and drums. The violin teacher is also employed directly by the school to run an “orchestra” made up of any keen instrumentalists, and one of the generalist teachers runs an extra-curricular choir. As a school, Oakwood has been known to me for many years. I grew up in the area, and for the last seven years a close family member has been the head teacher. As a university student and then an aspiring music teacher with long holidays I spent many weeks volunteering in the school and the local community, allowing me to get to know many of the families who live in the area. As a result, I have known many of the children who took part in this study for many years. I also know most of the staff very well, and the violin teacher who runs the school orchestra was my violin teacher before I went to university. This complex network of personal relationships meant that I had to be vigilantly aware of my susceptibility to bias, both throughout my time in the field, and in the subsequent period of data analysis and writing.

**Blue Hills Public School, New South Wales.**

Blue Hills Public School is the local school of a very small, rural community in NSW. Of the 18 children enrolled at the school when this research was conducted, eight commuted for around half an hour to get to school each day, whilst the rest lived in a town of around 100 people close by the school. The town is surrounded by rolling agricultural lands, mainly devoted to farming cattle. The school is similarly set in a large space with fields, tarmacked areas, climbing equipment, and a popular sandpit available for all children at play times. The school is a relatively old building with two large classrooms, a demountable that houses the library, and outside toilets. As well as the 18 children at the school, in 2012-2013 Blue Hills employed three part-time teaching staff, four part-time teaching support assistants, and 1 part-time administrator. The majority of children at the school were Anglo Australian and came from relatively poor families, with very few parents being employed full-time. Several families relied solely on government support, and so the school regularly found itself in a position of feeding and clothing some of its students. As with Oakwood, the challenges still
faced by Blue Hills are often related to its small size, but also remote location. These range from a substantial loss of students (since 2013, when the fieldwork was conducted, the school has dropped to only 13 children), to having to close the school to remove a nest of venomous snakes. The school did not have access to a specialist music teacher, but a guitar teacher was intermittently employed to teach group guitar lessons to the children in Class 2, aged between 8 and 12. As with Oakwood, I have a strong familial relationship with the head teacher at Blue Hills. However, unlike at Oakwood, I had not visited the school before the first period of data collection there, and so did not know any other members of staff, or any of the students.


Bellamy Secondary school is a large comprehensive school for girls and boys, located in the East of England. The school is spread over several multi-storey buildings, and contains a number of large playing fields, as well as sharing some on-site sports and arts facilities with the local community. At the time that this research was conducted, the school had over 1,800 students (including those in the optional 6th form, aged 16-18). The majority of the students at Bellamy are white British, with many coming from housing estates near to the school. At the time of the fieldwork, the music department was made up of two full-time teachers, one part-time teacher and a part-time administrator. There were many peripatetic staff who taught instrumental lessons at the school, and efforts were made to provide for any instrument. In 2013, this included all orchestral instruments (including harp), voice, keyboard, piano, and rock band instruments. The department also ran a vibrant extra-curricular program, including multiple choirs, orchestras, and guitar groups, as well as groups for steel pans, samba, and gamelan. Once again, I had an interesting and somewhat complex set of relationships with the adults and teenagers at Bellamy. In the year before I moved to Australia, I had taught full-time at Bellamy in the Music and Personal, Social, and Health Education departments, meaning that I taught a large number of the students who took part in this study. The head of music at Bellamy is both my previous employer, and my close friend.

St Margaret’s School for Girls, New South Wales.

St Margaret’s school for Girls is private school located in a highly affluent Sydney suburb, spread over several buildings. At the time that this research was conducted, around 600 girls were enrolled, from Years 7-12 (aged between 12 and 18). The school population was highly ethnically diverse and multicultural, with many girls spending some part of their childhood living overseas. The music department (which also supported the primary school branch of St
Margaret’s) had three full-time teachers, and a part-time pianist. The department ensured that their students could access instrumental tuition for any instrument, and so many peripatetic staff also taught at the school. Several peripatetic music teachers were also directly employed by the school to run extra-curricular music clubs, which included choirs, various orchestras, string-groups, and wind brass/percussion bands. This school was the only case-study where I had no prior relationships with any members of staff or students. The school was recommended to me by my supervisor, who knew one of the teachers very well and was aware of the strong focus on informal learning that was built into the Year 8 teaching syllabus.

**Methods of Data Collection**

Stake (1995) suggests that the most successful case studies use multiple methods of data collection, as this can help to ensure the reliability of findings. Within this study, video recorded participant observation, semi-structured interviews and research conversations provided the bulk of data, which was then supplemented by fieldnotes and the collection of additional documentation. In the following section, these methods will be discussed in detail.

**Observation**

Brewer (2000) argues that “observation is an inherent part of many types of research” (p. 59) both qualitative and quantitative. However, *naturalistic* observation, where data are gathered by observing participants in their usual environment, is most commonly associated with ethnographic research and is regarded as an “integral part of ethnographic fieldwork” (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011, p. 467). As a method for obtaining data, observation encompasses a continuum focussed on the role of the researcher, from a state in which the researcher acts as an entirely unobtrusive observer and where observations are covert, to one in which the researcher is an integral participant in the group being observed, and observations are overt.

In ethnographic observations (Gillham, 2008), researchers will typically find themselves somewhere between an observer-participant and a participant-observer (Merriam, 2009), making such research a “schizophrenic activity” (p. 126) in which researchers are constantly trying to balance their position within the community they are studying (Brewer, 2000). The role that the researcher takes in observational situations can have important implications for any other research methods that are employed; as Angrosino and Rosenberg (2011) state, “observation-based research is not simply a data-collection technique, it forms the context in
which ethnographic field-workers assume membership roles in communities they want to
study” (p. 470). Thus, relationships that are developed and maintained in participant
observation will go on to have a profound effect on any subsequent data collection including
interviews and the creation and collection of documents, as both participants and the
researcher will have been altered by their experiences of observing and being observed. This
was particularly pertinent to my study, as observations were conducted before participants
were interviewed or documents collected. In this study, I moved between being an observer-
participant and a participant-observer with a tendency towards the latter, particularly as the
research progressed. Generally I was present for all the video-recorded observations, although
there were some points where I left a video camera with one group of participants, and then
observed and made fieldnotes about another group. I also varied my participation in the
school communities, at times being a passive observer (particularly of teacher-led lessons),
and at other times participating more fully by leading music workshops, or playing on the
playground. The multi-faceted nature of my relationship with the schools and participants
(and its implications) will be addressed more fully later in this chapter.

While I did not intend to be a covert observer at any point, there were times in which I
spotted something from a distance and quickly recorded it in fieldnotes. However, in these
cases I followed up with the participants as quickly as possible. The following extract from
my fieldnotes describes such an instance;

1.10pm Crossing the bridge over the playground towards the photocopy room I just
observed four girls in the playground playing a clapping game. Sat in a circle, it looked
to be halfway between a clapping game and a musical handshake/chant. Will follow
up.

1.25pm I just asked them about it and they confirmed it was a handshake. They say
that they made it up at school and at Manly on the weekend a few weeks ago. They
seemed a bit embarrassed but laughed a lot, and demonstrated it again for me three
times. (Fieldnotes, St Margaret’s, 4 November 2013)

The benefits of using ethnographic observation to collect data include the opportunity to
observe the “natural” interactions of participants, the chance to develop something closer to
an *emic* or insider understanding of cultural phenomena, and the opportunity to facilitate
social change by empowering the voiceless and maligned (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011)
making it a strong choice for research guided by childhood studies. By maintaining a critical
distance, the observer can seek to see the ordinary as extraordinary, and thus render that
which is invisible, visible. However, there are also drawbacks to using ethnographic observation including the potential for observer bias, which increases as the researcher spends more time with the participants (Yin, 2009). In this study, the benefits of using such an approach greatly outweighed any drawbacks. Although it could be possible to understand the musical worlds and practices of children and adolescents through interview alone, employing ethnographic observation allowed the development of a deeper understanding of the day-to-day interactions of the participants. Additionally, ethnographic observation helped me as a researcher to see and understand aspects of children’s worlds that they may not have been able to fully articulate for themselves in an interview situation (Gillham, 2008).

**Videography.**

The majority of observations in this study were recorded using a Sony Handycam, a small, handheld, high definition video camera that could also capture still images. The use of a video camera has clear advantages over the use of fieldnotes alone, as it is able to capture an accurate record that can be revisited multiple times. However, the researcher must not assume that such data are more “truthful” than other methods of recording observations. As Gillham (2008) suggests, “what is put in front of the camera is still a matter for choice” (p. 77) and thus is open to observer bias. To limit this bias, I employed various video approaches throughout the study:

1) a stationary camera that was supervised by me;

2) a dynamic camera that I carried around as I talked to the participants, in areas such as the playground;

3) the camera supervised by the participants themselves, without me in the room.

Typically, styles 1 and 3 were used to capture observations of the participants creating music and for the semi-structured interviews, and style 2 was used to conduct research conversations in the field. While most of the participants seemed initially shy of the camera, with several teenagers asking me “please don’t film my face”, over the course of the time I spent in each school the camera became familiar. Many of the participants were keen to see their videos played back to them and some were eager to take away videos of themselves on a USB, suggesting something closer to a shared ownership of the data.

Although allowing the students to record themselves did help to include them as co-constructors of the research project, the limited extent of their responsibilities meant that they
could not be accurately described as co-researchers (Mazzoni & Harcourt, 2013). However, the data collected this way provided an interesting perspective; away from the pointedness of the researcher’s gaze, the children and teens were able to focus on things that they found interesting. In some cases, this shed light on the things that the peer group found funny, for example zooming in on each other in an attempt to make others uncomfortable or making short mockumentaries about the teachers that they could see coming and going outside of the window. For other groups, the camera was used as a tool to facilitate their own priorities, such as making a music video of their band for YouTube. Angrosino and Rosenberg (2011) suggest that researchers’ access to sophisticated technology compared to that of their participants could increase the disparity of power in research contexts. Sharing technologies in this project thus helped to facilitate the autonomy of the participants, in an attempt to address this potential imbalance, and was a decision influenced by the methods employed by J. Marsh (2012) who gave video cameras to children so that they could capture playground activities.

Interviews

There are many different forms of interviews, which are typically categorised on a scale ranging from highly structured to entirely unstructured. Roulston (2010) argues that the character of interviews employed in any given piece of research is governed by the “theoretical assumptions” (p. 3) of the researcher. She describes the purpose of ethnographic interviewing thus: “to explore the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, expressed in their own language” (p. 19). The precedence granted to the language and words of the participants means that highly structured interviews and closed questions are unlikely to yield the rich data that can be obtained from unstructured interviews in a “conversational style” (p. 19). However, conducting “guided conversations” (Yin, 2009, p. 111) without any prior structure can lead to superficial or irrelevant data. To avoid this, before each interview I drew up a schedule (which varied from specific questions to bullet-point foci) which I was able to consult throughout the interview. Although I made sure to cover the points I had initially wanted to talk about, each interview was also flexible enough to focus on the areas that the participants found interesting and valuable (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007).

The opportunity to explore tangents was supported by my decision to interview most of the participants in friendship groups of two or more. The decision to conduct group interviews
was taken firstly to help the participants feel more comfortable (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011) but also to enable the observation of the “ways that people talk about and make sense of topics, and the kinds of issues they see as relevant” (Roulston, 2010, p. 38). In addition, by interviewing groups of children and adolescents I was able to further disrupt “the asymmetrical relationships usually assumed by researchers with participants” (p. 39). This asymmetry of power is compounded when adults study children, and so group interviews were seen to offer the participants the security of friends and gave individual participants a greater chance to either decline to answer a question, or to lead the discussion towards more meaningful topics. Group interviewing thus resonates with critical theoretical perspectives, as it invites discussion, agreement and disagreement and consequently can validate frequently marginalised voices.

The interviews with children and adolescents were generally situated in a classroom or other vacated quiet space in the school. Often, the interviews used objects that helped generate discussion, such as mobile phones, iPods, musical instruments, or toys (Stewart et al., 2007). Following these interviews, the video data were indexed similarly to the observational data, and then transcribed.

**Research conversations.**

Research conversations (Wood, 2005) are another form of unstructured, ethnographic interview. They occurred throughout the data collection period as unplanned conversations in naturalistic settings, such as the sandbox at playtime. Often, these research conversations touched upon topics that would later be used as the basis of a group interview. The informality of these conversations added to the comfort of the participants who would often drop in and out of the conversation at will. As the participants became familiar with the format of this research method, they would often invite me to join a conversation that they felt I might find interesting, or tell me about a conversation in which they had participated earlier in the day.

As with group interviewing, research conversations are susceptible to a variety of criticisms including the small number of participants that are involved, the potential for researcher bias based on the researcher’s relationship to the participants, and the fact that the participants may alter their behaviour and answers to reflect what they believe to be socially acceptable answers (Stewart et al., 2007). This last point is further compounded when such conversations are recorded, and researchers must be aware that they are potentially recording
a “disembodied cultural reality” (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011) rather than the truth. Moreover, the short length of the research conversations meant that they were liable to collect only superficial data, as it was sometimes impossible to develop or explore ideas due to limited time and space. However, the opportunity to learn about the values of the young participants in real time compensated for these problems, and steps were taken to mitigate for shallow data by making fastidious notes after the event, which could then be explored through focus group interviews. Taking part in mostly naturalistic conversations also helped to remind me that ethnographic interviews should not simply be viewed as research instruments designed to collect pre-existing data, but rather as an important part of a multi-faceted research journey which could be as transformative for the participants as it was for me (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). Both observations and interviews are social interactions, and it is important not to reduce them to “tools”, particularly within a study that utilises a constructionist epistemology and prioritises the voices of real people.

Documents

The collection of various documents including “written, visual, digital, and physical material” (Merriam, 2009) is common in ethnographic research. Such documents provide an additional pool of data that can help to crystallise the findings of the research project. By involving participants in the selection of these documents, the researcher may also gain a further insight into the values and interests of the group being studied.

There were many different kinds of documents that were collected throughout this research project. Some related to the classroom space such as the collection of schemes of work, school improvement plans, timetables, children’s compositions, and music. Equally illuminating were the non-traditional “popular culture documents” (Merriam, 2009) which helped me to gain a better understanding of the musical worlds of young people. These included photographs of fan t-shirts and posters, lists of top-played artists on iPods and phones, screen grabs of Twitter and Facebook accounts and comments, and videos downloaded from YouTube. The participants also introduced me to several apps and games, and spent time teaching me how to post on Instagram, send Snap Chats, and play popular computer games such as Papa’s Pizzeria. These experiences were recorded or written up as fieldnotes, and the apps themselves were downloaded onto my phone or tablet computer. They provided a deeper, experiential insight into the lives of children and adolescents and became a non-physical addition to the scrapbook that typifies ethnographic research.
In addition to the collected documents, there were also created documents: the fieldnotes that I recorded in varying degrees of detail throughout the research process. Upon my initial visits to the sites I recorded my first impressions, which included trying to look at very familiar places though the eyes of a researcher. Although I relied heavily upon the video recorded data, I used fieldnotes to help record things that I could not capture on camera, either because the camera was recording something else or because using it may have been inappropriate. This was especially useful in the secondary schools, where there were often groups in which some students had given consent but others had not and so fieldnotes were able to record the participants with consent, without capturing those who were not happy to take part in the research. Moreover, a video camera is unable to record the thoughts, feelings, and impressions of the researcher; indeed, as Angrosino and Rosenberg (2011) note, “as our technological sophistication has increased, ethnographers have begun to realise that the technology helps us capture and fix “reality” in ways that are somewhat at variance with our lived experience as fieldworkers” (p. 472). Again, this stresses the danger on relying solely on technology to record observations, as the camera does not always afford us the “wide angle lens” that our senses naturally provide.

The data collection methods employed in this study took place over the course of a little more than a year. While there were no clear-cut phases of research, my use of these methods assumed something of a regular pattern in each school, beginning with a period of observation supplemented by short research conversations and the generation of fieldnotes, followed by ethnographic interviewing which included the collection of various documents. However, following the first few days in each school, for the most part all research methods were applied concurrently. This enabled me to begin a process of data analysis early on, using observations and research conversations to lead ethnographic interviews, and vice versa. This is typical of ethnographic research, where “the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 205). However, following my exit from the field data were analysed more systematically, in a process outlined below.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis process drew together the two central aims of this project, using the analytical lens developed in Chapter 3 and subsequently analysing the qualitative data which illuminated the lived experiences of the young participants. Therefore the data analysis process was relatively complex as both the lens and the data illuminated each other in a
process of reciprocal definition. Whilst the first stage of analysis was deductive as the lens was applied to the data, the second stage of the analysis used inductive analysis of the empirical data to explore previously unanticipated links and themes within the lens itself.

**Preparing the data.**

Before the data analysis began, the data were extensively prepared and re-organised. Firstly, all the video recorded data were indexed and loosely transcribed to record specific descriptive detail such as the date and place of the recording, the participants featured in it, and the general detail of each video which included some short verbatim transcription (see Appendix B). Each index also compartmentalised the data into smaller “events”, or units of analysis, which were determined by holistic breaks in the flow of activity or conversation. Following this stage, the indices were examined to ascertain pertinent events for more extensive transcription, which included most of the interviews and research conversations. This occurred in order of the date in which the data were obtained, usually within two weeks of the original recording.

Following this extensive preparation, the indices, fieldnotes, and transcriptions were uploaded to the online program Dedoose (http://www.dedoose.com/). This program, designed by a group of mixed methods researchers, aims to support the analysis of a range of source material. Text, audio, and video files can be analysed through the application of codes that are “dragged and dropped” over relevant sections. Data can then be organised by code occurrence, as well as by case, date, or participants. This proved particularly effective in the early stage of analysis.

**Deductive analysis: Applying the analytical lens.**

The first stage of analysis entailed applying the analytical lens to the empirical data. This was done by identifying the themes generated by the meta-synthesis as they occurred in the qualitative data gathered from the four case studies, in a form of content analysis. Content analysis is a deductive method of analysis in which data are tested against pre-existing categories which may or may not have been determined by the researcher (Ezzy, 2002). In this case, the categories were the nine key themes of the meta-synthesis. This method of data analysis has multiple benefits, including providing an equal platform for the comparison of disparate cultures (Merriam, 2009). However, there are important limitations, not least that “it severely limits the extent to which the ‘other’ can have a voice as part of the research process” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 85). For this reason, several researchers recommend content analyses to be a
A useful stage of data analysis in ethnographic studies (Ezzy, 2002; Grbich, 2013; Merriam, 2009), but one that is supported by a further inductive analysis. This was particularly pertinent to my study, as the data analysis design employed in this project inherently upheld a separation between the researcher and the researched through the use of an analytical lens derived from the ideas of adult scholars, rather than one inductively generated from the qualitative data. While each study included in the meta-synthesis was chosen because of the sympathetic way that the voices of young people were represented, it is important to note that the analysis of data could have been biased towards the perceptions of adults rather than young people simply through the use of such a research tool. Therefore it was of paramount importance that I maintained an awareness of the extent to which the experiences of children and adolescents may have been marginalised throughout the analysis of research findings. To address this, I included an inductive phase in the analysis design.

**Inductive analysis: Listening to the participants’ voices.**

In order to be consistent with the theoretical framework of childhood studies, an inductive analysis of the data was conducted. This phase of analysis aimed to illuminate the nine central themes of the meta-synthesis and subsequently better understand the three dimensions, as well as to interrogate similarities and differences between the informal learnings of disparate contexts (Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1.** The deductive/inductive data analysis process.
This secondary analysis was performed by drawing together multiple examples of the same
code, and comparing them (aside from the analytical lens) in order to find similarities and
differences. Where there were large numbers of examples of the same code, it was possible to
identify patterns that were not immediately obvious in the meta-synthesis. This had the result
of both supporting some aspects of the lens, and contesting others, leading to a more robust
understanding of both the central research questions and the lens itself. In most cases, this
inductive analysis led to a more highly nuanced understanding of the meta-synthesis themes,
which is discussed throughout the three findings chapters (Chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively).
Therefore, although the findings of this study were not generated in an inductive way, a form
of inductive analysis did play a large part in understanding the raw data. Using multiple
methods of data analysis can be a strength, especially when it comes to improving the
reliability of research. Indeed, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) suggest that approaching
data analysis from multiple angles could be considered a form of triangulation. Moreover,
drawing from multiple analytical traditions is reflective of the cross-disciplinary approach
favoured by childhood studies. However, approaching data analysis in an unorthodox way
leaves the researcher open to criticisms of paying “lip service” to inductive techniques
(Brewer, 2000, p. 108), where the overall findings lack cohesiveness as multiple perspectives
have been applied. To address this, I have tried to make my analytic method as clear as
possible, and to present the findings in an integrated manner. Indeed, it is hoped that the
multiple perspectives offered by the use of a variety of analytical methods lend themselves to
the concept of data crystallization (Richardson, 2000) and are an extension of using multiple
methods to collect data throughout the study as well as being sympathetic to the paradigm of
childhood studies.

**Crystallization.**

In her discussion of post-modern ways of presenting research, Laurel Richardson (2000)
stresses the importance of imagination and metaphor to research and researchers. Within
methodological texts, it is most common to discuss “triangulation” as a marker of reliability
of research, that is, the extent to which readers can trust the research to be an accurate
representation of the world. The term triangulation is drawn from geometry and
cartographical surveys, and refers to the way in which a fixed point can be predicted given the
knowledge of two or three additional points. As a metaphor this has clear application for
research, and it is generally assumed that research findings are improved by obtaining
multiple perspectives. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) discuss several different types of
triangulation, including space triangulation, where multiple sites are included as part of the research design, investigator triangulation, where more than one researcher takes part in the study, and methodological triangulation, where more than one method of data collection is used. Within this project I have attempted to incorporate both space triangulation and methodological triangulation within the research design, as well as the use of multiple data analysis techniques. However, I feel that the metaphor of triangulation does not adequately cover the complexity of the data that I collected. By definition, triangulation assumes that each point is fixed, which neglects the multi-faceted and often contradictory data that are collected through each method, or in each space. However, the metaphor of the crystal can help to overcome this semantic issue. As Richardson explains, “crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose” (p. 934). Crystallization thus more accurately describes the way in which I developed the findings of this project; rather than treating all the observations as a fixed and discrete point, I moved forwards and backwards between data sources and levels of coding, checking and critiquing along the way in an organic process of discovery. In part, this was due to my personal and emotional investment in both the project and the data. As Brewer (2000) notes “ethnographic data are personal to the researcher in a way that numerative data are not” (p. 104), an understanding that has inevitable consequences for both the process of data analysis and the metaphors that we as researchers choose to describe our process.

Situating the Researcher and the Researched

In the final section of this chapter I discuss a theoretical understanding of reflexivity, insider- and outsider-ness in fieldwork, and the power dynamics that characterise researcher/participant relationships. It is clear that my relationships with the participants of this study, both as a “betweener”, an “intimate insider” (Taylor, 2011), and an excluded outsider had a very large impact upon both my fieldwork and the subsequent data analysis. While I have endeavoured to weave my project of reflexivity throughout this thesis, in line with recommendations from Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), who caution against isolating and subsequently belittling this central concern, I felt it was important to include a more extended examination of the ways in which I addressed the personal nature of my research.
Reflexivity

At its heart, reflexivity in research implies a researcher’s concern with the ways in which social contexts and identities of the researcher and participants impinge upon the research process (Brewer, 2000). As the main instrument of data collection and analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), the ethnographer is intimately bound to the social phenomena that she purports to describe and consequently, it is important that the researcher consider the facets of self that may have impacted (positively or negatively) upon the participants (Blackman, 2007). By making these aspects of the researcher’s identity explicit to the reader, reflexivity can also be used as a strategy to improve the reader’s confidence in a piece of research (Merriam, 2009).

Roulston (2010) argues that reflexivity has two dominant aspects: a consideration of the insider/outsider status of the researcher in the field, and a consideration of the ways in which the research claims to represent the “reality” of the participants. Both of these aspects are bound to a concern for the self/other dichotomy and the effect of perceived power discrepancies in research. Reflexivity can thus be seen as a major part of research grounded in critical traditions, including childhood studies. Roulston goes on to acknowledge that the type of reflexivity that a researcher practices is likely to be influenced by her field of research as well as by her theoretical framework. Considering this, I began to understand that I had been mostly concerned with my insider/outsider status and power discrepancies when considering the young people that were involved in this project. Subsequently, I found that I had neglected to consider my relationships with many of the other aspects of my research, including the schools, teachers, other adults, and even the musics that were fundamentally a part of my research. The following section attempts to provide an overview of the many different relationships that I had both on and off the field, and the extent to which I could be considered both an insider and an outsider throughout the research process.

A (brief) biography.

To allow readers to fully understand and interpret the research, it is important that I disclose pertinent details relating to my personal life and demographic information which may have altered the course of the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I am an English woman, born in the UK midlands in the mid-1980s. In the UK I would be described as typically middle class, having come from a family where several generations have attended university, and upheld traditionally valued jobs in manufacturing, science, and education. I
attended local state schools for both primary and secondary schools, before attending a prestigious university where I completed an honours degree in music. This was followed by a year of teacher training, and then a part-time master’s degree in music education. This, coupled with my doctoral study, means that I have spent a significant proportion of my adult life in university. I spent two years teaching music full time in the UK in state secondary schools, before working part time in a private performing arts school in Australia. I have also spent a large amount of time working in primary schools, as a general music teacher and instrumental teacher. My experience with primary school education dates back as far as I can remember, as until recently both my parents had been long-term primary school teachers and I had gone into their schools to “help” (teach music, act as a teaching assistant, fetch tea) for extended periods of time from the age of 16. I am grounded in a family history of education (as both my parents and my aunt are teachers) and as I was growing up, educational policy and pedagogy formed many dinner-table discussions. I moved to NSW in 2011 with my partner, an Australian scientist who had just completed his doctoral research. I am a keen fan of popular music, and sing regularly with an Australian choir that mostly performs classical repertoire. Prior to moving to Sydney, I played violin in several chamber and orchestral groups, and regularly attended local samba and gamelan ensembles.

Many dimensions: The privileges and pitfalls of being an insider/outsider.

Today, many scholars refute the idea that a researcher is either an “insider” or an “outsider” when in the field, arguing that such a binary opposition is too simplistic (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Hellawell, 2006; Taylor, 2011). Traditionally, an insider was a researcher who was a member of the group that she studied, or at the very least, shared significant commonalities with her. An outsider, in contrast, was not a member of the group that she was researching, and shared very little in common with the research participants. Generally, being an outsider was seen to be the more desirable perspective, as it was thought to offer a greater critical and analytical distance, which added validity to research findings (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Being an outsider became the de facto aspiration for ethnographic research, indeed “going native” was anathema to the principles of anthropology and early ethnography (Hellawell, 2006). However, following criticisms of ethnography and sociology from critical and post-modern theorists (particularly feminist scholars) it is now generally acknowledged that maintaining an outsider perspective is next to impossible in social research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Taylor, 2011). An important part of being a reflexive researcher, then, is identifying the complex tangle of insider- and outsider-ness that characterises relationships in
the field. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) demonstrated, it is quite possible to be both included and excluded from a group simultaneously, as relationships have multiple aspects that are constantly in a state of flux and renegotiation.

Throughout my research I could have been described as a “betweener”: both an insider and an outsider, depending on the context, the people around me, and the conversations we were engaged in. At times, I believe I was judged to be an insider by two opposing groups simultaneously, for example, when I interacted with both teachers and students. This provided a delicate, political web that I had to subtly disentangle, to ensure that I did not diminish my relationships with any of the participants. However, at other times I was clearly seen as an outsider, and excluded from full group membership by both adults and young people alike. During the course of my fieldwork, it was common to go from feeling like an insider to feeling like an outsider (and back again) many times in the course of one day.

Being an insider has many advantages. Hockey (1993) lists these as being a lack of culture shock for the researcher, the ease of access to the field, the likelihood of increased rapport with the participants, the ability of the researcher to be more closely aware of subtle nuances and false truths, and an intimate understanding of the history of the group (p. 199). However, along with these benefits, there are significant problems to which the insider-researcher is susceptible. These include a clouded vision of the field which is a result of her prior knowledge (Paechter, 2012), and that the researcher may be too emotionally invested and so closed to interpretations of data that cast a negative light upon the participants (Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, the participants themselves may have pre-conceived expectations of what the research might show, which could put undue pressure on the researcher.

Similarly, being an outsider has both advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage is the opportunity to view what would be familiar to an insider as strange, one of the central focuses of ethnographic research (Hellawell, 2006). Without preconceptions, the outsider is able to view the field in a more detached manner. Furthermore, participants may be more likely to disclose negative information to a researcher with whom they do not have emotional ties (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). However, it is difficult to determine the extent to which any researcher of social groups can truly be an outsider, as even the most disparate groups can still have things in common. Claiming to be an outsider, then, can be as problematic as claiming full insider-ness, as the very act of researching a group is distancing (Taylor, 2011). Rather, researchers all occupy “the space between” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 54), which I would
argue is far from a simple continuum. The idea of “between-ness” certainly characterised my research position throughout the fieldwork, data analysis, and final writing stages of this project.

**Being an “intimate insider”: Researching friends and family.**

The schools that took part in this study were recruited exclusively due to personal relationships between either myself and a member of the school, or my supervisor and a member of the school. In three of the participant schools (both the NSW and English primary schools, and the secondary school in the England) I have long standing relationships so in these cases I could certainly be described as an “intimate insider” (Taylor, 2011), that is, a researcher observing close friends and family. Most of the literature on relationships in the field focus on friendships that are developed in the field as the researcher gains empathy and emotional investment in her participants (Hellawell, 2006). Very little research has explored the unique positives and negatives that are encountered by the intimate insider. Jodie Taylor (2011) provides one exception, in her reflexive consideration of her experiences researching friends in the Brisbane Queer scene. She notes that the positive benefits of being an intimate insider include a highly tuned understanding of participants’ body language, an historical understanding of participants’ belief systems and values, and an intimacy that may allow participants to disclose information to the researcher that they would otherwise hold back. However, the negative aspects of such relationships to research are also apparent. Quite apart from the challenges faced by insider-researchers, intimate insiders must also follow both the ethics of research and the ethics of friendship.

Friendship (like research) has rules of engagement and being an ethical friend may mean not betraying confidence imparted. However, being an ethical friend may also at times compromise one’s research, particularly what you allow yourself to see as a researcher and what you choose to communicate with outsiders; that is, what you say and what you do not say. (Taylor, 2011, p. 13)

Taylor documents how she at times tacitly understood certain statements from her friend-participants to be “off the record”, and the ethical dilemmas she faced when her friends talked to her in a friendly capacity, seemingly forgetting that they were being studied. In my project I attempted to mitigate this by following her communicative model, for example sending interview transcripts and sections of material that I intended to publish featuring my friends and family to them for member-checking (Jorgensen, 2009), a process by which participants are given the opportunity to review and amend their contribution. Alongside these problems
there is the reflexive predicament of realising that, as well as these participants being an important part of the researcher’s personal history, *the researcher* is equally an important part of *their* history. The participants have an intimate understanding of the researcher’s personal views and values, which may give them a heightened ability to anticipate what she might want to see or hear in fieldwork. Finally, when studying friends and family, the capacity of the researcher to overlook negative aspects of practice and philosophy is almost infinite, and scrutinising the data with any critical distance becomes particularly difficult. I found that one way to alleviate the problem was to consult another researcher (typically my thesis supervisor) who could offer a different perspective or interpretation. However, becoming open to this process was itself difficult, as I found myself reluctant to accept anything that might be framed as a critique of my friends or family. Fortunately, although it was important to unpick the potential bias I held because of my prior relationships with the adults of each school, most of my research concerned children and adolescents. Therefore, the majority of my ethical concerns were focussed on the relationships I developed and sustained with the young people who participated in this study.

**Empathy and power: Researching young people.**

Researching young people presents difficult ethical negotiations of power. Whilst I have attempted to discuss the ways in which I mitigated this in the sections of this chapter dealing with research methods, it is also important to note the different ways that my prior relationships with my younger participants may have impacted upon my findings.

In Oakwood, the English primary school, I had known many of the participants for most (if not all) of their school lives. Their perceptions of me as a researcher were thus coloured by our previous relationships: as their music club leader, or field trip supervisor, or summer fete stand-holder, and not least, daughter of the head teacher. In Bellamy, the English secondary school, I had taught a number of the participants music, or personal, social, and health education for a year when they were in Year 7. In both these cases, it is possible that the participants may have participated in the research project because they felt that not participating might have damaged our relationship (Hockey, 1993). For those secondary school students that I taught, it was difficult (for all of us) to move beyond a remembered teacher/student relationship, which was exacerbated by the school’s policy that they address me with a formal title. Moreover, the participants drawn from the English secondary school were exclusively those with whom I had previously shared a positive relationship. This means
that there may have been many voices that were missed because some adolescents remembered me in a negative light, and so chose not to participate. However, this did not mean that I involved a limited number of critical voices as several of the students who participated in this study were considered by their teachers to be “difficult”, whereas I remembered them very differently. Thus, whilst I could be seen to have the majority of the power within our research-relationship (I was older, I carried the weight of having been their teacher, I remembered them from a time in which they were younger and more vulnerable, and I was a researcher), they also were able to use our prior relationship to influence me. They used me as a sounding board for their current grievances with their teachers, and took advantage of my sympathetic ear and memory to validate some of their more outlandish behaviours and opinions.

Relationships like this present interesting power dynamics, as the researcher and participants attempt to renegotiate a new relationship whilst remembering an old one (Hellawell, 2006). However, new researcher/participant relationships can have equally complex and dynamic power characteristics. In the schools in Australia where I did not have prior relationships with the younger participants, I was often initially mistaken as a new member of staff. In St Margaret’s, the Australian secondary school, I was often thought to be a student teacher, and it took a long time before the teenagers accepted that I was something different. However, despite a discrepancy in age and perceived power within a school context, throughout my time in the field I developed what Blackman (2007) describes as a “grounded empathy” (p. 703) for my young participants, and began to share their world view on many of the issues that we discussed. At times, this led to conversations that may have been considered inappropriate had I been a teacher, including discussions about their opinion of other teachers, their subversive behaviour in school, and even their experience of online pornography. Occasionally this relationship with the participants caused problems with my relationships with their teachers, who may have seen me as sowing the seeds of disaffection amongst their classes. It also may have set up certain expectations of the outcome of my research amongst the students, with some of them assuming that I would be able to instigate changes that were not in my power to accomplish. This is one of the most problematic situations of research within a critical tradition: questioning who ultimately benefits from the research. Oliver (1997) suggests that in emancipatory research, researchers are inevitably on either the side of the “oppressors” or the side of the “oppressed” and cautions against research that only benefits the researcher. However, I found that my position was ultimately more
nuanced than a simple “for” or “against” position, and I believe that through my research multiple groups have benefitted to greater or lesser degrees.

Throughout this project, maintaining an awareness of the power discrepancies between the researcher and the researched became paramount to ensuring that the data that I collected truly represented the views of the young participants. Moreover, becoming a reflexive researcher was an ongoing project that I found impacted significantly on all stages of the research, from the initial meta-synthesis, through planning and conducting the empirical project, and analysing and presenting the findings.

Summary

The empirical stage of the project was deliberately designed to be flexible and responsive to accommodate the differences of the four distinct case studies. My methodological decisions were guided throughout by the theoretical framework of childhood studies, which led me to embark on an ethnographic approach to data collection in order to understand the lived experiences of my young participants, and to provide them with the best opportunity to express themselves. This extended to the choice of design that accommodated four different case study schools, the methods that I selected, the ways that I behaved in the field, and the ways that I chose to analyse, interpret, and report the data and findings. The decision to use a collective case study design was driven by a desire to explore the multiple worlds of young people, and to compare and contrast the experiences of children and adolescents in two different countries. Restrictions on time (particularly on the amount of time that I could spend in the UK) meant that to a certain extent I was reliant on pre-existing relationships to find the case study schools. However, whilst this raised some ethical concerns, not least of bias, I believe that the benefits of researching schools already known to me outweighed the drawbacks. Moreover, I was able to purposively select schools that I knew to be good examples of different types of cultural contexts that included urban and rural schools, as well as collectively providing a wide range of average economic access.

The use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis reflected the eclectic approach that characterises childhood studies, as well as accommodating the differences in my approach to each of the four schools (including time in the field and prior relationships). Furthermore, the variety of ethnographic methods used meant that I had the greatest opportunity to invite participation; that is, those young people who were not comfortable to attend an interview were often happy to participate in a less formal research conversation.
Observation and fieldnotes were similarly invaluable, particularly to record background ambience and my feelings and impressions which I may otherwise have missed, or misremembered. Having such a large range and variety of data meant that data analysis was a complex task. Therefore approaching the analysis deductively, through the application of the analytical lens described in Chapter 3 allowed me to clarify my thoughts and look purposefully at the large amount of empirical data that I had obtained. Within the size and time limitations of a doctoral thesis it was not possible to inductively analyse all of the observations and transcripts; therefore, I chose to look in particular depth at those aspects of the empirical data that illuminated the key themes. This allowed me to gain a deeper insight into the analytical lens itself, in a process of reciprocal consolidation wherein both the data and the analytical tool were clarified.

Finally, an important part of the methodology of this project was an awareness of myself as a researcher in the field. The relationships that I upheld (and continue to uphold) with many of the participants and their teachers shaped this thesis in a vast array of ways. Transparently acknowledging bias, and addressing the complex ways in which I acted in the field helps to provide the reader with a greater understanding of my position and subsequently the findings that I present. Characterising myself as a “betweener”, I have found that researching friends, family, old students, and strangers can be as rewarding a task as it is fraught with complexity. The rich variety of young peoples’ musical cultures that I was allowed to observe, participate in, and come to understand became the basis of the findings that I report in the following chapters. Although the narrative of each case study is fragmented to allow for an analysis framed by the analytical lens, I hope to have maintained a sense of the vibrancy of these young people’s musical lives, the immediacy of their musical experiences, and my personal gratitude to them for including me, even for a short time. Throughout the following three findings and discussion chapters, much of the data are illustrated with short video clips. These are contained in the DVDs included in Appendix C.
Chapter 5

The Structural Dimension

Introduction

The Structural Dimension is comprised of three major themes that arose from the meta-synthesis (see Chapter 3) that together examine the ways that informal learnings are structured on both a social and personal scale. The three themes, fluid roles, divergent progression, and immersive behaviours all demonstrated an underlying structure of learning that was decentralised, mobile, and frequently non-hierarchical. Smilde (2009) argues that “within informal learning, all aspects of learning—what to learn, how to learn and for how long—are in the hands of the individual learner, in general without interference of teachers” (p. 3). The autonomy that this grants to informal learners results in structures of learning that are individually crafted to fit immediate, personal needs which often do not necessarily take into account long term progression. This chapter explores these key themes in more depth with reference to the findings of the meta-synthesis, the empirical data collected in the field, and the theoretical framework of childhood studies. In fluid roles, I discuss the various ways in which relationships of power were accommodated by young people who often worked within malleable and dynamic hierarchies, despite an apparent commitment to egalitarianism. In divergent progression I investigate the ways that young people structured the content of their learning, including a consideration of youth concepts of difficulty and progression. Finally, immersive behaviours explores the ways in which a balance between challenge and progression encouraged young people to enter a state of flow wherein they became completely engrossed in the learning experience. In such cases a linear understanding of progression became irrelevant as young people were caught up in an experience entirely located in the present. The extent to which decentralised structures of learning were found, including in adult-mediated, youth-mediated, and negotiated spaces, suggests that such structures are fundamental to informal learnings.

Fluid Roles

In the field, a fluid social structure was clearly demonstrated throughout the peer communities of the four schools. Many of the young participants expressed a strong preference for equality, and stated that amongst themselves there were no leaders or followers. Throughout all age groups young people reiterated the belief that friends should be
equal, and that leadership was not (or should not be) necessary. For example, in a group interview at St Margaret’s school, two friends made these comments about their group work in a class project:

ATHENA: Do you think you had a leader in your band?

ALIYAH (13): [Jokingly] I think I was the leader. [The group all laugh].

SKY (14): We don’t have a leader. We are all equals in our own environment. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013)

However, despite repeatedly articulating a belief in equality, in practice most of the informal learnings of young people were based on broadly hierarchical structures. Many instances demonstrated the different ways that hierarchies were formed, sustained, or destroyed. Indeed, individual leadership appeared to be fleeting and power was passed amongst friends (or seized) in a fluid manner. Interestingly, there were distinct differences in the attitude towards hierarchies expressed by young people in the different spaces of each school. For example, although few young people were allowed to behave in an overly-authoritative or dictatorial way in adult-mediated or negotiated spaces, in more clearly youth-mediated spaces such as the playground young people appeared far more accepting of strong leadership. The degree of acceptance also appeared to be strongly tied to the ways in which young people attempted to assert themselves as leaders. Those who appropriated “teacherly” behaviours were more likely to be rebuked or ignored by their friends, whereas those who led through other means (for example, through musical communication) were more readily accepted. This caused particular tension in cases where a child or adolescent was trying to explicitly teach his or her peers, as balancing teaching practices without displaying too many teaching behaviours could be difficult.

Whilst many young people acknowledged the presence and need for leaders, few categorised themselves as followers. This was further supported by many of the participants who expressed a desire for adult leadership to support discipline, particularly in negotiated spaces. The empirical data suggest that while young people maintain a theoretical allegiance to equality and the sharing of power, in reality leadership is prized and fiercely negotiated. The preposition of childhood studies, that a significant project of youth is to appropriate power from adults and share it between the peer group, is consequently challenged as it is demonstrated that such power is not always freely or simply shared. Indeed, whilst many
young people acknowledged the presence and need for leaders, few categorised themselves as followers. Furthermore many of the participants expressed a desire for adult leadership to support discipline, particularly in negotiated spaces, suggesting that arguments about youth leadership could be difficult to overcome.

**Hierarchies**

In all three types of space, adult-mediated, youth-mediated, and negotiated, peer leadership broadly encompassed two different kinds of responsibility: musical support, and disciplinary control. The social hierarchies themselves tended towards a simple structure which upheld one leader, sometimes supported by one or more of her friends, but frequently acting alone. Often leaders emerged organically; however there were also many cases in which a leader was explicitly elected by her peers. The value of deliberate election processes\(^{16}\) appeared to reside in their inherent potential to allow groups to uphold their belief in democracy, whilst simultaneously devolving responsibility onto someone else. Once established, leadership was often short-lived. The responsibilities and sometimes isolation faced by peer leaders meant that being a leader was not always a particularly enjoyable position; moreover, few young people were comfortable with abdicating any part of their own agency for too long and so leaders were often faced with being undermined by the friends who initially voted for them. Nevertheless, many young people felt compelled to lead their friends at times where there was a distinct pressure to progress or perform. This meant that fraught leaderships were often established in adult-mediated and negotiated spaces, where the tension between self-governance and traditional ideas of progress were the most acute. However, the ongoing cycle of leadership promotion, acquisition, consolidation, and subversion meant that these spaces typically saw the most rapid rate of leadership change, resulting in a context in which hierarchies were unstable and friendships tested.

**Leadership and conflict.**

In all four schools I observed cases of small group work in music where young people were given a musical task by their teachers, and were then left alone in groups of between two and seven people to complete it. In both secondary schools, some of these group-work tasks were based on activities drawn from Musical Futures (see Chapter 1: Introduction). At St Margaret’s, in Sydney, I was able to track several groups from the very start of the “In the deep end” phase of Musical Futures through to the Battle of the Bands contest that the school

\(^{16}\) This is in contrast to random election via elimination games, as discussed by Dzansi-McPalm, 2004.
held to mark the end of the project. Over the course of around 12 weeks, some of the groups found that establishing and maintaining leadership was highly problematic and caused more difficulties than any of the musical challenges that they faced. The chief problem centred on individual students’ unwillingness to share or concede power, or recognise the leadership of their peers. This resulted in a highly fractious social context where leaders were made and destroyed in a matter of minutes.

The members of one group at St Margaret’s, comprised of four 14-year-old girls, were frequently brought into conflict with each other due to their highly extroverted personalities. This was compounded by their relative lack of experience in playing instruments and the subsequent problems that this caused for their perceived progress. Typically, leadership of the group fluctuated between Lola, the drummer/singer and Maisie, the lead guitarist. The two other members, Freya and Leanne, tended to stay away from leadership disputes, but nevertheless were confident enough to make their voices heard. Having spent several weeks working together, the girls were unhappy with the extent of their improvement, a problem that was exacerbated by their teacher’s perceived lack of confidence in their ability. In one session where I had placed the camera and then left the room, the girls tried to think of a leadership strategy to remedy this:

Maisie: You guys, we are going to be so embarrassed, everyone is going to be so good and we’re going to be bad.

Freya: We just need to get this first…

Leanne: We need to do this, we need to get a manager.

Maisie: Let’s vote. Who votes for Leanne? [Maisie puts her hand up, Leanne laughs]

Lola: What, for manager?

Maisie: Who votes for Lola? [Freya and Leanne put their hands up].

Lola: What’s a manager, what’s [notices that Maisie has not put her hand up, and so claps her drumsticks together in the general direction of Maisie’s face] Bitch! [Maisie laughs] Who votes for Maisie, no-one dare put their hands up! [Freya and Leanne put their hands up].

Freya: I don’t want to be manager, and why do we even need a manager?

Maisie: Because we need, not a manager, but we need someone to put us…
LOLA: I’ll be in charge, ok, Maisie, you need to grab a guitar…

MAISIE: No but… Bitch please! (Observation, St Margaret’s, 10 April 2013)

In this exchange, the girls demonstrated a variety of strategies to establish some sort of order. In using the terminology “manager” Leanne referenced the structure of pop bands who operate under the direction of a manager; this is both in keeping with their project where they were told that they would be working like a pop or rock band, but is also a potentially less divisive term than “leader”. Following an attempt at democracy, the contest for leadership devolved into a power struggle between Maisie and Lola. Although much of this exchange was framed as humorous, particularly the direct insults, there was an underlying tension that pervaded the conflict. Green (2008) notes that in group-work “if co-operation breaks down beyond a certain point, so will music-making, and with it, learning” (p. 122). This group spent around fifteen minutes arguing about leadership, and then undermining each other whenever a leader was (briefly) established. Despite the apparent appreciation of democracy evidenced through the repeated votes, it seems that the girls’ preferred way to deal with conflict involved tense argument, verbal insults, and allusions to physical violence. Interestingly, Green found similar examples of such strategies being used in negotiated spaces to settle disputes, such as a pair of boys wrestling because they could not agree (p. 119). Unfortunately for the girls, their strategies for appointing a leader did not resolve the situation and their pressing concern that they were falling behind other groups meant that they felt trapped until a leader emerged. This prompted the group to attempt another strategy:

[Leanne starts to sing the opening of the group’s song in an intentionally funny voice]

FREYA: [Ironically] Leanne can be the manager, because of her beautiful… um…singing…?

LEANNE: Hey!

FREYA: Sorry, slightly offensive.

MAISIE: We need someone that, everyone needs to shhh…

LOLA: I don’t even want to be the manager.

MAISIE: So let’s vote, that’s why we need to figure it out now.

LEANNE: Ok, Lola or Maisie.
FREYA: Yeah, Maisie. Maisie plays in time most of the time so it will be easy to stay in time.

LEANNE: Ok, Maisie…

LOLA: You two stay in time? No you don’t!

MAISIE: Ok then guys, I’m the manager.

LOLA: No you’re not, I vote you out! (Observation, St Margaret’s, 10 April 2013)

In the excerpt above, Freya identified that the leadership role should be decided on a basis of ability. This is a strategy that has been clearly documented in literature concerning power relationships on the playground (Countryman, 2014; Harwood, 1998a; Marsh, 2008). Because Maisie was the only girl in this group who had any kind of formal instrumental tuition, as she had played the flute for a short time in primary school, she constituted the closest thing to a “master player” (Harwood, 1998a, Merrill-Mirsky, 1988) in the context of these friends. Moreover, as the lead guitarist she was also one of the loudest instrumental contributors to the groups’ sound, and so her bid for leadership was also supported by the perceived authority equated with her status as the lead guitarist (Burnard, 1999). Therefore Maisie fulfilled the brief for leadership as both an authoritative and organisational body, but also as a strong musician and musical presence. Whereas on the playground the leadership of master players is frequently accepted (Harwood, 1998a; Marsh, 2008, Merrill-Mirsky, 1988), in this context it continued to cause problems due to the implication that the leader should be the best musician. Therefore, Lola was doubly upset as she was overruled as a leader on both social and musical grounds, suggesting that she was neither the most socially popular, nor the best musician. Subsequently, Lola rejected this strategy and the group continued to argue without resolution.

After the project had concluded, I revisited St Margaret’s to conduct group interviews. I was particularly keen to understand exactly how the girls in this group conceptualised leadership in hindsight:

ATHENA: Do you think you had a leader in your group?

FREYA: Maisie and Lola shared it. They were both really… leader-y.

MAISIE: Well at first everyone was talking and so we needed to put a leader in role. And so I said a few things and some people didn’t agree with what I said…
FREYA: [To herself] Lola. [To the group] You and Lola sometimes had a bit of conflict. Because you are so similar.

MAISIE: Yeah, we both have, like, our own opinions...

LEANNE: Maisie was the leader.

ATHENA: So, did you feel like followers?

FREYA: No, we were all leaders, not followers. We were all equal.

MAISIE: We all had our own parts to work on. I guess I just helped everyone. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 23 October 2013)

Throughout many of the groups at St Margaret’s there was a general feeling that leadership was necessary. Despite the fact that few young people explicitly wanted to be acknowledged as leaders, and fewer still as “followers”, many groups maintained the fact that a leader was beneficial. However, the need for a leader to be an authority figure clearly caused tension amongst groups of friends who aspired to be (at least on the surface) equal:

EVE (13): I don’t think it’s a good idea to have a leader within your group. I think, like, people don’t really want to have a leader who is your friend; it is better if it’s a teacher. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 23 October 2013)

It seems that the fluidity, or perhaps uncertainty, of rules within negotiated spaces extended to young people’s perception of power relationships. In a space ostensibly controlled by a teacher, young people found it difficult to adopt leadership roles, or to support their peers who did. The desire for artistic ownership and self-governance did not seem compatible with the pressure for progression imposed on groups due to the fact that they were in “lesson time”. Subsequently, deferring responsibility for discipline and organisation to an adult appeared to be a preferable option for many of the participants in this study.

In contexts where young people were more in control, taking charge of discipline and organisation was far less socially fraught. Those who were assigned to a leadership position often found it to be difficult, but nevertheless felt obligated to maintain it for the sake of the group. At Bellamy Secondary, a group of 13- and 14-year-olds created a band called Back to Nothing, a rock band which had formed independently, but rehearsed in school classrooms and practice rooms. Intent on behaving in as professional a way as possible, the band was surprisingly strictly organised and kept a “band book” (Figure 5.1) where they documented their meetings, song suggestions, and works in progress. Paul (13) the lead singer explained:
ATHENA: So when did Back to Nothing start?

PAUL: I think we formed on the 17th of July… I’ll look in the band book thing… Yep, [reads] Thursday 12th July. Band meeting. All members present. [Stops reading] I was voted early on as band leader, which was because no one else wanted to take responsibility. It didn’t mean much, just that I booked the rooms and organised everything, so it was more of a burden than anything. And I still do it now, book the rooms. And get his [Keith’s] guitar. So I ended up doing it. (Group Interview, 26 June 2013)

Figure 5.1. Back to Nothing’s band book (Fieldnotes, 26 June 2013).

In this case, leadership was not a particularly desirable social position and although it was deemed necessary by the group none of the members were keen to be the leader. This suggests that even when leaders did not face issues with friendship and discipline, being a leader was socially uncomfortable. On the playground, this was not the case.

**Playground leaders.**

On the playground, leadership is determined in a variety of ways. There are many competitive playground games where leadership is an inherent part of the structure of the game (Harwood, 1998a; Koops, 2006; Marsh, 2008), and where leadership is contested and determined by the outcome of the game. However, the playing of such games is also frequently led often with one or more children acting as custodians of a game (Harwood, 1998a, Merrill-Mirsky, 1988), and who socially regulate its playing. In some cases, such leadership is determined by a young person’s mastery of the game (Grypeon, 2001; Harwood, 1998a, Merrill-Mirsky, 1988, Moore, 2013), whereas in other cases leadership is assumed
because a child had introduced the game to their peers (Marsh, 2013). Although there are some exceptions (Countryman, 2014) leadership on the playground generally seems to be more regularly accepted than it is in less stable negotiated spaces. At Oakwood Primary, for example, one girl behaved almost dictatorially in her leadership of one particular game, and yet was not chastised by any of her peers.

When I first arrived at Oakwood in December 2012, I appeared to find little evidence of clapping games being played on the playground at break or lunch time. I had been pre-warned by my supervisor about this phenomenon, and she had suggested that I talk to some of the children and perhaps suggest some games that they might know in order to open up the channels of communication. This worked very successfully, and I was soon chatting with a group of girls about a variety of games from my own past, and games that I had seen played on Australian playgrounds, and comparing them with the games and songs that the children at Oakwood knew. Many of them were very similar, but one game I mentioned, My Aunty Anna (Musical Example 5.1), was not known by the girls and they asked that I teach it to them. My Aunty Anna is a simple, competitive clapping game where interest is added by the physical challenge of jumping incrementally towards performance of the splits: on the word “split” both players jump their legs apart slightly, getting wider and wider as the game progresses. The first person to fall over loses.

Musical Example 5.1. My Aunty Anna

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{My Aunty Anna, plays the pi-an-na, twen-ty four ho-urs a day. Split!}
\end{array}\]

The girl who asked me to teach this to her was 9-year-old Bella. Over the next few days, Bella took it upon herself to teach (and police) the game:

Bella is teaching My Aunty Anna to Charlotte, a 7-year-old girl from Class 2. Bella seems very confident with the clapping pattern, but less sure of the words. Rhea (7) also in Class 2 and Charlotte’s best friend, watches the two girls and chants along with the words. However, Bella clearly is unhappy with Rhea’s participation and stops the game, turning to Rhea and saying “No! You need to wait!” Bella then asks me to chant the words for them, which I do, with Rhea very quickly joining back in. The game

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17 Notation conventions adopted from Marsh, 2008, pp. 342-349. See also Appendix F.
finishes when Charlotte falls over. Immediately Charlotte’s younger sister Emmy (5) asks Bella to show her, but Bella tells her that they will play later, and instead chooses to play the game with her classmate Becky (9). I continue to chant the game, supported by a growing group of onlookers. This time Bella stops the game to complain that Becky is not jumping wide enough on each turn. Having corrected this, Bella once again goes on to win the game, and declares herself the champion. (Fieldnotes, Oakwood Primary, 20 December 2013)

It was interesting, in this instance, to see the ways that Bella controlled the social ordering of the game. Despite the small number of children, on the Oakwood playground it was most common to see children playing clapping games with others in their own class. In this case, Bella first played with Charlotte, who was in the class below her, making Charlotte an unusual selection, particularly as there were other girls in Bella’s class in the group. Her initial selection of Charlotte as a partner may then have been motivated by a desire for challenge, as Charlotte was well known for her ability to do the splits. Despite this initial leniency with regard to age-based social rules, Bella was unhappy with Rhea taking over the chant (perhaps seeing this as a challenge to her authority) and effectively silenced her by asking me to chant instead. With a researcher’s hindsight I would have handled this differently and supported Rhea’s participation, but at the time I did not and instead provided a regular chant for the girls. Following this Bella decided to teach her older friend Becky, rather than the younger Emmy, a decision more in keeping with the playground practice of Oakwood. What I found particularly surprising, however, was the fact that the other girls in the group around the players did not start a game themselves, but instead continued to observe Bella and Becky. This appeared to be a relatively unusual behaviour, as it was common (in all four schools) to see multiple dyads performing the same game separately within a small area, a playground behaviour that has been well documented (Marsh, 2008). Refraining from playing, despite demonstrably knowing how the game was played (evidenced by Rhea’s chanting) suggests that there was a tacit agreement to cede control of the game to Bella: an agreement that was probably supported by my own actions. This contrasts with findings from other playgrounds. In her study of a Canadian elementary school playground, Countryman (2014) found that one girl’s attempt to exert her agency through organising a game ended in the ultimate failure of the game. Countryman’s 8-year-old participant behaved in a similar way to Bella, directing her peers very forcefully (both verbally and physically). However, her friends (also 8 years old) did not respond in as pliable a way as the younger girls surrounding Bella, suggesting that at Oakwood, Bella’s slight age advantage meant that she was able to wield power more authoritatively.
When I visited the school six months later Bella was still the “champion” of the game; however its play had spread somewhat and new game strategies had been developed by Bella and her friends. I observed multiple cases of the game being played by Bella and Becky and their Year 5 friends, as well as by Charlotte, Rhea, and their Year 2 friends. Bella was still teaching the game to other children, and had developed a modification for playing with 5-year-old Emmy: whist Bella performed an “air-clap” and chanted the words, Emmy only joined in with the splits. Becky had also taken on a leadership role, and had developed a version where the game could be played in threes by substituting the R/R and L/L claps with an open clap\(^\text{18}\) (Video Example 5.1). On a microcosmic level, the girls had also developed strategies of game play that supported hierarchical relationships by emphasising the competitive structure of the game. In one example, I observed Bella and Becky incorporating very forceful claps in order to destabilise each other. The intention to dominate the game with such tactics ended up disrupting the metric regularity of the chant, and towards the end of the game as Becky was losing, Bella slowed the game down (Video Example 5.2):

**ATHENA:** Why did you slow down so much at the end?

**BELLA:** So, I slowed down, like, to make them like, ’cause they… when their legs are hurting you slow down ’cause then it makes them more painful and then they’re actually slipping. (Research Conversation, Oakwood Primary, 20 June 2013)

Bella’s domination of the game was thus realised in both the larger social organisation of the players, and also in small-scale performance. The other girls who played the game appeared to acknowledge this, and she was never challenged for not jumping enough on each “split” (the most common complaint of other players) despite the fact that she ensured her continuing success by extending her splits by tiny increments each time. Harwood (1998a) suggests that adapting games and bending the rules is something reserved for master players, “masters are allowed to break the rules in a way that novices and regular folks are not” (p. 115). Although I had anticipated finding leaders on the playground, I was somewhat surprised at the willingness of other children to accept the sometimes autocratic behaviours of their peers, particularly when compared to the challenge faced by aspiring leaders in other negotiated spaces.

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\(^{18}\) R/R is a right hand to right hand clap between partners, L/L is a left hand to left hand clap. See Appendix F for full notation conventions.
It appears that playground leaders are more socially accepted because they do not operate within a pressurised context. When compared to the problems faced by Lola and Maisie, Bella’s authority can be seen to have been derived from her “ownership” of the game. By the good fortune of having learnt the game first, Bella became a de facto leader and her slight age advantage among the group in the first instance of her leadership helped to consolidate her position. As well as socially dictating the game, Bella’s leadership had also begun to alter the game to distinctly support her dominance over the other players. However, despite displaying what could be seen as highly negative social behaviours such as barring some players, stopping other girls from joining in and silencing them, and refusing to accommodate other “winners”, Bella’s leadership was condoned and both tacitly and explicitly supported by her friends and many of the other girls on the playground. This may be because the girls’ curiosity about and consequent desire to observe the game outweighed their irritation at Bella’s behaviour. Moreover, while their agency was undermined to a certain degree by Bella’s leadership, they all retained the ability to remove themselves from the situation without facing negative social repercussions. Therefore, the social structure of the playground supports the potential for hierarchies as fluid as those in the classroom, but ones wherein it is the followers who (literally) move, rather than the leaders. If one person’s leadership becomes too overbearing, the rest of the group simply walks away, effectively ending overly dictatorial regimes. In the social leadership of playground games, this appears to be a highly effective way of regulating hierarchies. However, there were some cases in which playground leadership was complicated by young people’s desire to learn from their peers. As with the external pressures felt by the girls at St Margaret’s, the tension between a desire to learn new skills or content, and the potential frustration at overly-controlling behaviours provided a large number of social complications, leading to fluid and dynamic hierarchies.

**Peer Teaching**

The informal learnings of young people frequently rely on peer teaching and learning, rather than a more traditional age- and experience-based hierarchical structure involving adult teachers. Green (2008) describes peer learning as occurring along a continuum, from “unconscious, implicit learning via group interaction, towards a more conscious approach in which knowledge or skills are learnt through being explicitly and intentionally imparted from one or more group members to one or more others” (p. 120). In the classroom, the use of informal learning practices reframes the traditional role of the teacher, aligning teachers more closely with facilitators or mentors (Allsup, 2008; Andrews, 2012; Finney & Philpott, 2010;
Gower, 2012; Green, 2008; Sexton, 2012). The removal of a traditional teacherly presence caused some young people to compensate by adopting familiar teaching and learning practices. As seen earlier in this chapter, trying to appropriate power could at times lead to social difficulties, particularly when a young person was seen to be attempting to usurp the power traditionally accorded to a teacher. Conversely, peer teaching was an important pedagogical tool in many informal learnings, leading to a delicate balance of power between teaching, and appearing to behave like a teacher (Andrews, 2012). In this study, there were many cases where the traditional teaching practices of adult teachers were distorted, sometimes considerably, by young people’s attempt to claim leadership through teacherly behaviours.

In my first visit to Blue Hills Public School in February 2013, I had taught the children to sing Mary Mack (Musical Example 5.2), a tongue-twisting folk song I had learned back in the UK.

Musical Example 5.2. Mary Mack

Mike (10), a boy in Year 5 with significant social and behavioural difficulties had particularly enjoyed learning the song, and delighted in showing me how quickly he could sing the words. When I returned to the school later that year, Mike had asked me to teach him the chordal accompaniment on the school’s piano. Around a week after this, I found Mike trying to teach some of the other children in the school how to play the chords, demonstrating
a hand position that he had devised himself. At first, he taught through a combination of explicit modelling and physical manipulation, similar to the teaching practices of studio instrumental teachers. Although this appeared to work at first, Mike became quickly frustrated when the other children did not learn quickly, or when they started to play other things on the piano. This further devolved into Mike shouting at his peers when they started playing the chords for *Mary Mack* before he wanted them to.

MIKE: [To Jess] Look at my fingers! Ready? Start… no, look! See how my fingers are there like that?

[To Sunita, who is playing the chords at the bottom of the piano] Stop.

[To Jess] Ready?

[To Sunita] Stop! Stop, Sunita! (Observation, 29 August 2013)

In this example, Mike’s irritation at Sunita appears to be somewhat unfair, as after earlier learning how to play the chords from Mike, Sunita was only trying to practise. Possibly in response to this, after Mike became cross with her Sunita appeared to consciously decide to continue this behaviour, undermining the authority that Mike had presumed. It is possible that the subversive desire to diminish the power of overbearing peers (observed across the various spaces of all four schools) was in fact the catalyst that led to the signature fluidity of power relationships in informal learnings. As soon as “teachers” emerged they were overwhelmed by the undermining behaviours of their peers and their power was thereby diminished. Because of this, leadership was necessarily changeable and young people demonstrating teacherly behaviours rarely maintained their position for long (Andrews, 2012; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). As 14-year-old Mae explained:

ATHENA: What do you think you learned in this project?

MAE: We all learned to not boss each other around because it causes problems, and you just want to stuff up on purpose just to annoy them. And so you learned not to do that, because then you don’t get anywhere. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013)

**Collaboration and composition.**

Although assuming the authority of a teacher could cause problems for some young people, there were cases where explicit peer teaching was welcomed. In these examples, the children and teens who taught their friends tended to avoid domineering behaviours, instead
helping to guide their peers through more subtle means. A clear example of this sort of teaching was seen in a relatively new band at Bellamy Secondary that was in the process of creating an original composition. This band was comprised of a group of 13- and 14-year-old boys, who had been playing together on and off for around six months. They had created a few original compositions together, and were more interested in creating their own sound than playing covers of music by other bands (Video Example 5.3).

Chris (13), Luke (13), and Stan (14) are in the largest practice room at Bellamy Secondary, having a band rehearsal. They begin almost immediately after I leave the room; Stan plays a few licks on his electric guitar before settling on the main riff of their composition. Luke quickly joins in on his bass, and Chris enters on the drums with a quick fill. The three play their piece through to an improvised solo by Stan, (around 50 seconds into the piece), when Luke stops, looks at the camera and asks if it is recording. The band members stop, but almost immediately start again: Chris says “yeah, it’s been recording from the start. Right, shall we go from the beginning?” The band start again with an introduction and this time play the entire piece, which lasts for just over two minutes. After this performance, Stan says “Guys, we have got to play in that concert”, and Chris agrees, “yeah, it’s pretty good. But we need something else to add to it.” (Observation, Bellamy Secondary, 10 June 2013)

Having played together for a number of months, these three boys were experienced at working together and were able to communicate very well. As Green (2008) describes, the bands in the schools she observed communicated both verbally and non-verbally, frequently relying on musical gestures rather than technical language. Bickford (2011) suggests that non-verbal communication is both more immediate and more intimate (and thus more meaningful); he also demonstrates that musical rather than verbal communication is typically preferred by young people. The fluidity with which the boys in this band were able to communicate through music can be seen in the following exchange, where it is clear that music dominated communication and in turn facilitated the development of a collaborative context wherein one boy took a leadership role. The boys had decided that what they needed was a “change” in the piece, and so set themselves the task of composing a new bass line.

STAN: We need a chorus or something, a change. At some point. I’ve got the solo, and then…

CHRIS: I think we should change, let’s change, like the bass for a minute. So instead of like going… [sings Musical Example 5.3]

Musical Example 5.3. Rock composition: start of the original bass line
It goes… [Sings Musical Example 5.4]

Musical Example 5.4. Rock composition: sung alternative bass line

…Or something. Just like going down.

[Luke plays the start of the original bass line on his bass (Musical Example 5.5), before stopping as Stan starts to improvise on the electric guitar (Musical Example 5.6)].

Musical Example 5.5. Rock composition: the original bass line (full)

Musical Example 5.6. Rock composition: first improvisation

CHRIS: [To Luke] If you could do that, that would just be… amazing.

[Luke starts to play the opening of Stan’s new bass line, before stopping at the start of the third bar. As Stan starts to play the new bass line again, Luke watches him intently, shaking his head as Stan plays the new fourth bar slowly. Following this, Stan improvises a modified version (Musical Example 5.7) as Luke attempts to recreate Musical Example 5.6].

Musical Example 5.7. Rock composition: second improvisation

LUKE: I can’t, I can’t do that!

CHRIS: Just go, do that… go up instead of down.

[Stan improvises another modified version of his new line (Musical Example 5.8), and continues to improvise different variations as Chris and Luke discuss their ideas].

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Musical Example 5.8. Rock composition: third improvisation

Although communication through musical gestures appears to help establish a collaborative and co-operative approach to musical composition, it is also clear in this example that Stan emerged as a leader of the group through his authoritative improvisations. Despite the fact that it was Chris who initially suggested changing the bass line, it was Stan’s playing that dominated the group exchange. This was not necessarily surprising as Stan was a virtuosic guitarist with many years of experience of classical, popular, and jazz guitar playing; he also had extra-curricular guitar lessons. Davis (2008) shows the ways in which particularly proficient instrumentalists were able to be seen as both part of the larger group, and also as leaders. In one case, a young saxophonist helped the others in his section learn a new part through a combination of aural and visual modelling, leading Davis to describe him as “a broker for musical understanding for his classmates while simultaneously an investor in his band community” (p. 209). I believe that it was a tacit acknowledgement of this investment from his fellow band members that allowed Stan to lead the group without conflict. Throughout this exchange Luke did not appear to be alienated by Stan’s virtuosic display or by Chris’s admiration of Stan’s ability. Although he told the others that he would find playing the new part too hard, he did attempt to play it both with and without Stan’s support.

Green (2008) suggests that young people find learning from their peers “less threatening” (p. 131), as even the most gifted are perceived as being only slightly ahead of the friends who learn from them. This is also supported by Miller’s (2012) analysis of “A2A” or amateur to amateur learning that she examined in the context of YouTube tutorial videos. She argues that A2A learning “destabilizes teacher-student relationships…. Established ideas about expertise, authenticity and authority become subject to public debate grounded in idiosyncratic individual experience” (p. 218). A2A learning often involves somewhat unconventional teaching practices, such as modelling technically dubious methods for obtaining certain notes or a particular tone. However, it also tends to teach more than just technique: A2A teachers provide a model of lived experience, showing how a tradition can be incorporated into the lives of the learners. In her fieldnotes Miller wrote “when I play along with David, I watch his face as much as his playing, trying to mirror his confidence and comfort with the guitar”
In the previous exchange, Stan not only models the new bass line for Luke, but also provides a model for rock composition: creating multiple improvisations that vary only slightly in order to refine new melodic and harmonic ideas. Burnard (1999) describes this as a cyclical process, whereby an improvised idea is repeated and expanded until it is internalised; “ideas are largely conceived in action and assembled through reflection” (p. 172). A further insight into the group’s compositional practices can be seen in the following example.

CHRIS: You know that [sings start of the original bass line, Musical Example 5.3]. Instead of doing that, go up instead. So... [sings Musical Example 5.9]

Musical Example 5.9. Rock composition: sung improvisation

Or something. We just need to change something about it.

[Luke plays the old bass line (Musical Example 5.5)].

STAN: [Stops improvising] Ok, we’re gonna change, like... we’re going to change to like a chorus, we’re going to change the rhythm. So it will go like this...

[Stan nods at Chris, and they both begin with the opening riff, Luke joins in after a couple of notes. Stan then improvises a complex melodic line over a new chord progression, and although Chris continues to drum along for a few bars, Luke stops. As Stan’s improvisation becomes more difficult to follow, Chris stops drumming, but nods encouragingly at Luke to join back in].

STAN: [Suddenly stops playing, mid-bar]. Yeah, so it’s gonna go the chorus when he [Chris] gives the signal it’s gonna be A, E, then B, then C sharp. [Stan plays Musical Example 5.10 through slowly].

Musical Example 5.10. Rock composition: modified bass line

Again, Stan clearly emerges as a leader in this situation, and his style of composition through improvisation was once again the primary means of generating musical material. However in this case the division between action and reflection is less clear; rather, Stan improvised a constant stream of melodic material before stopping in the middle of a phrase and telling the others what the new bass line was going to be. Rather than directly working out a new bass line as he had been doing before, it appears that in this example Stan was
improvising over a new chord progression that he was imagining, which in turn implied a new bass line. Burnard (1999) described the ways that some of the highly proficient performers composed in her study: “many of the ideas initially seemed to fall out from under his fingers as familiar patterns” (p. 173), where the participant was actively “seeking to ‘find’ a chord…through improvisation and its manipulation” (p. 173). In this instance, the musical communication that had served the band so well up to this point began to break down as Chris and Luke failed to comprehend the inner workings of Stan’s process.

Moreover in this example it became more apparent that Chris desired some sort of compositional input, but was limited by his choice of instrument. Sitting at the drum kit he was not able to demonstrate his intentions on a melodic instrument, and was forced to sing his thoughts instead. Although Chris was a highly proficient trumpet and guitar player he did not consider himself to be a strong singer and thus being forced to sing rather than play his ideas may have limited his ability to contribute to the group’s compositional efforts. Burnard (1999) also comments on the importance of instrument choice when it comes to collaborative composition. In her study she found that “the selection of [an] instrument in which to facilitate an aural-based composition is an important decision. The norms governing their choice of instrument…appear to set up a train of obligations” (p. 170). The band in this case do appear to follow the conventions associated with their instruments; the lead guitarist Stan takes control of melodic ideas whilst Chris literally and figuratively “takes a back seat” despite his musical proficiency and experience. In this way the hierarchy established and maintained by the band reflects the status accorded to particular instrumentalists in rock bands.

The final point of interest concerns the way in which the band drew confidence from the supportive and collaborative environment established by their fluent musical and verbal communication. Stan in particular was keen to perform in front of an audience of peers, and was confident in the strength of their composition.

**STAN:** Guys I’ve just had an idea. You know what is coming up in a couple of weeks?

**CHRIS:** What?

**STAN:** The end of Year assembly.

**CHRIS:** No! I’m sorry but…
STAN: Yes! Come on! Why not? Guys, come on. We’ve got weeks to practise. And it already sounds good enough. Come on. It would be so good!

LUKE: Yeah, I would.

STAN: And immediately we would become so popular. [Chris laughs] Sorry, but last year straight after Billy Smith did his impression of Michel Jackson, everyone wanted to be with Billy.

CHRIS: [Thinks, then speaks cautiously] End of Year or end of school? (Observation, Bellamy Secondary, 10 June 2013)

Although he finally agreed to at least consider performing in front of an audience, Chris’s reluctance to perform was somewhat surprising as he was an experienced performer who seemed to enjoy performing in other contexts, even as a soloist. This could be because the music that he had helped to compose was more meaningful to him, and subsequently more risky; he lacked Stan’s confidence that such a performance would only result in positive feedback. However, it could also be attributed to an underlying concern that changing the context of both their performance space and intention might also change the collaborative relationship that the band had established. In this exchange, Stan moved from leading the band through music, to attempting to lead the band socially. In her study of a teenaged rock band, Jaffurs (2006) noted that there were significant differences “in the power relationships in basement rehearsals, the camp, and the middle school gig”, (p. 146) and that the “generally equal balance of power” (p. 147) that her participants maintained in their basement rehearsals was jeopardised by their agreement to perform in a school concert where an external authoritative body (the teachers) became involved. It is possible, therefore, that Chris was concerned with keeping their music to themselves, although he was able to contemplate the idea of performing to other people. This suggests that the collaborative generation of the composition provided enough security through shared responsibility to alleviate some of his concerns. For this band the collaborative approach to composition (despite being led by one member) was important as both a structure for rehearsal and as a structure for their conception of themselves as a band. They communicated as both musicians and friends, and the composition that they created was meaningful enough to warrant both protection and celebration.

Through their musical practice the group were able to consolidate a structure of leadership which was relatively stable, but in which all members felt that they had an important and valued role (Pitts, 2007). This was achieved primarily through the existence of a shared goal,
to compose rock music together, which was contextualised within a culture of positive exploration and a flexible attitude towards change. The extent to which the musical exploration of valuable music (accomplished primarily through improvisation) can be considered a characteristic of informal learnings is examined in more detail in the following section, which explores the decentralising potential of divergent, rather than linear, progression.

**Divergent Progression**

When young people were engaged in informal learning, progression rarely occurred in the linear way typically associated with school practices. In both the English and NSW music curricula, young people are expected to develop skills, moving from the simple to the more complex. However, young people who learn informally repeatedly take a more tangential approach to progression, whereby the skills that they develop are those pertinent to the music that they are trying to learn (Andrews, 2012; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Koops, 2006; Marsh, 2008). This means that the self-directed curricula of young people are more frequently content based, and can be highly eclectic. Moreover, few young people necessarily distinguish between simple and complex skills, instead focusing on the content that they find to be the most engaging at any one time. Skill development is subsequently incidental, where skills which are fundamental to completion of the task are prioritised over those that are more peripheral, regardless of their perceived difficulty or long term application (Harwood, 1998b; Marsh, 2008).

Learning within a curriculum directed by content rather than skills led to some interesting decisions on the part of the participants in this study. For example, as previously discussed in this chapter a strong motivation to learn a new playground game could lead to children tolerating negative behaviours from other children. Furthermore, many children and adolescents in this study professed to having spent lavish amounts of their spare time learning new pieces of music, sometimes braving social stigma from their peers or families in order to do so. Taken as a whole, the self-controlled curricula of the young people in this study were vast and wide ranging. From the 7-year-old boy in England who had taught himself *Danse Macabre* on his violin, to the Australian teenagers learning to rap in Korean to sing along with the hit *Gangnam Style*, young people of all ages developed a broad and eclectic set of musical skills. In all cases, skills were seemingly incidental to the task of learning a piece of music, and those skills that were developed were contextualised within the performance of the
music itself. This preference for holistic learning was confirmed by the extent to which young people disliked traditional teaching practices involving skills-based atomisation. In the English primary school, a group interview with some children in Class 3 (aged between 9 and 11) demonstrated a strong awareness of such pedagogical practices, and equally strong opinions about it:

ATHENA: When you learn music in school, how do you learn it? What’s the teaching process?

BRAINTH (11): We normally learn it, like the teacher will say a line, the teacher will read through it and they’ll say a line, and we have to copy them.

ATHENA: Do you like that?

MATTHEW (10): No.

JULIAN (9): No, I just like doing it all in one.

MATTHEW: Yeah, I’m the same as him. Because if it is a song you already know, and you’re just, say a line, repeat a line, it gets really annoying.

ATHENA: How often does that happen? How often do you feel like you already know it?

JULIAN: Um, probably most, most of the time for me. Because when you do it, you learn one line and you practise it over and over, and then you do the next line, and then you put them together so you have to do them again and so you are always doing lines you already know. Again and again and again and again. It just gets so boring.

GENNA: Yeah, it gets a bit boring when you just do the same lines and the same lines. And like, Mrs S said that we didn’t know Walking in a Winter Wonderland, but most people do know it! And I thought we knew that one the easiest. (Group Interview, Oakwood Primary, 19 December 2012)

Corsaro (2015) argues that adult concepts of linear progression are rooted in an individualistic and deterministic model of childhood. He suggests that “in the linear view, the period of childhood consists of a set of developmental stages in which cognitive skills, emotions, and knowledge are acquired in preparation for adult life” (p. 23); however, such a view therefore sees childhood as a state of becoming, rather than being. Young people are constant participants of multiple cultures, and the extent to which children and adolescents are consistently involved in a process of mediating between adults’ and children’s cultures is often imperceptible. However, the differences between adults’ and children’s views of progression and development appear to be one area in which there is very little overlap.
A Content Based Curriculum

Wright and Kanellopoulos (2010) suggest that informal learning supports “the creation of non-traditional social learning environments, combining interactive, non-linear, and self-directed processes” (p. 73). Throughout the four case study schools, self-directed processes of learning were based upon an appreciation of content. This led to a decentralised curriculum that supported learner autonomy by destabilising the hierarchical structure of learning typically found in the classroom, wherein one moves from a simpler to a more complex task. In her discussion of the problems and potentials of implementing a program of informal learning in schools, Gower (2012) suggests that she aims to “facilitate the skills and understanding that learners identify they need to move forward, rather than impose a ‘one-size-fits-all’ set of skills for everyone” (p. 14). Therefore skills are acquired on a “need to know” basis, identified by the learner based on his current content needs. In the field, current content needs often changed very quickly, as groups or individuals abandoned one piece of music in favour of another. One example of this was seen in the playground practice of the girls at St Margaret’s, in NSW.

A group of around 13 girls from Year 8 are sitting in a rough circle, eating their lunch and chatting. After a few minutes, Lola (14) starts to organise her friends by asking them to choose a song, and begins to patsch her thighs to establish a strong pulse. Following some discussion, someone starts to sing the opening of Don’t Stop Believing. Without any further verbal discussion, around a third of the girls settle into singing the accompaniment, as the rest of the girls sing the melody and lyrics. After singing up to the chorus the song breaks down as the group forgets the words. A girl outside of the group shouts the lyrics but by this point it is too late and the song has finished. Most of the girls eat some of their lunch whilst other girls from outside the circle shout in suggestions. After around a minute, Lola once again takes control and says “right, we need a new song”. One of her friends says “do you know Pumped Up Kicks?” After a few false starts, the group begins again, singing for around a minute before tailing off to eat more lunch. Some three minutes later the girls start a new song, Thrift Shop. (Fieldnotes, St Margaret’s, 2 May 2013)

The three different songs performed by the girls in this vignette all required similar, but subtly different skills including hocket, syncopation, and three different drum beats performed on the girls’ laps. Each song represented a distinct musical genre, rock, pop, and funk, and the girls altered their performances accordingly. However, despite the different challenges presented by each extract of music, throughout all three songs the girls worked in at least three parts, practising both their ensemble skills and their ability to sustain their own part. In less than seven minutes the girls had effectively developed a variety of musical skills through the performance of content that they found engaging and enjoyable.
An eclectic repertoire and swift movement between different pieces (or more commonly, parts of pieces) was also found in the classroom, when learners had control of their own learning. Often, the fragments of music that the young people engaged with appeared to have very little in common apart from their temporal proximity. Despite this, the exploration of seemingly unrelated tangents improved the learning experiences of young people on several occasions, resulting in enhanced musical development. A clear example of this occurred in a group at St Margaret’s school as they attempted to replicate the song Breezeblocks by British band Alt-J. This group of 14-year-old girls was classified by their teachers as having low to middle musical ability, with no member taking instrumental lessons. They were also considered to be relatively disruptive, and two of the members had a “reputation” for not participating in other lessons and never completing homework. Discussions with the girls showed that although none of them had had formal lessons, the group’s drummer Jen played the guitar at home and had a father who owned a drum kit, and that the lead singer and most “disruptive” member Tilly participated in a weekly musical theatre workshop. Despite the negative profiling of these girls by their teachers, the group tended to work together well and over the course of the informal learning project were identified as a very successful group. Around two weeks into the project the girls were becoming relatively comfortable with their own parts and were trying to assemble the piece. As a group however, they often went musically “off topic”, swapping instruments and playing snippets of different songs before returning to their chosen piece. Although they stopped at times to chat about entirely unrelated things (as did most of the groups I observed) it was musical exploration that most frequently “interrupted” their progress, as demonstrated by the following vignette:

The Breezeblocks group have one of the better equipped practice rooms and have set themselves up with electric guitar, bass, drums, a microphone, and a keyboard. When I walk into the room to check the recording around ten minutes into the lesson, the group are listening to a recording that they made of themselves, using Tilly’s phone. Once the recording finishes, Jen starts alternately practising her part on the drum, and improvising new parts. After around four minutes of playing their own parts, improvising, swapping instruments, and trying to play together, Tilly is on the drums where she starts to play a distinctive drum beat, which the others seem to recognise straight away. The pianist, June has the mic, and Tilly shouts “ready?” She begins the drum beat again and without any further verbal communication the two girls start to chant “Oh Mickey you’re so fine you’re so fine you blow my mind, Hey Mickey! Hey Mickey!” (Fieldnotes, St Margaret’s, 28 March 2013)

At this point, the rest of the girls stopped trying to work on their own parts, and joined in with Tilly and June for a rousing rendition of Mickey. For the following ten minutes, Tilly,
June, and Jen worked on their version of the new song; Tilly on the drums and June and Jen singing, whilst the two remaining members of the group Celia (the bass player) and Olivia (the lead guitarist) recorded their friends and offered constructive criticism. The girls worked together fluently at this point, and rather than trying to practise individual parts in isolation as they had been doing to learn *Breezeblocks*, they started putting both the drum and vocal parts together from the start. In particular, Tilly spent a significant amount of time working on playing the drum beat and singing at the same time, something that she found difficult but was motivated to achieve. The girls were really impressed with their progress, and when they finally decided to go back to working on *Breezeblocks* they all agreed to keep *Mickey* as a “reserve”. Over the course of the next few weeks, whenever the group became frustrated with *Breezeblocks* someone would start singing *Mickey*, and it became a way for the group to collectively relieve tension. In particular, what the girls appeared to derive from their time spent playing *Mickey* was a feeling of success. Although they did not find it easy to play, it was certainly perceived to be easier than *Breezeblocks* and the girls felt that they presented a more authentic performance as they were able to capture the “cheerleader” style of the recorded performances. The two songs that the girls alternated between appeared to have little in common, which could lead some observers to assume that the girls were “off task” when playing *Mickey*. However, there were some distinct similarities between the two pieces, suggesting that the girls were in fact consolidating important skills as they performed either song. The first time the group performed *Mickey*, for example, occurred after a drumming improvisation that encompassed both the drum patterns for *Breezeblocks* (Musical Example 5.11), and the distinctive swung beat of *Mickey* (Musical Example 5.12).

Musical Example 5.11. The “*Breezeblocks*” drum pattern

![Musical Example 5.11](image)

Musical Example 5.12. The “*Mickey*” drum pattern

![Musical Example 5.12](image)

This suggests that the girls may have been making a rhythmic link between the two pieces, reminiscent of the children in Davis’s (2008) study (discussed in Chapter 3) who drew together a Christmas carol with a popular song because they shared a melodic contour. This identification of musical similarities may be indicative of young people’s holistic approach to
learning music. In both the playground example of singing popular songs, and the classroom example of diverging from the set task, the songs performed by these groups of girls were played as a musical whole. This is not to say that the whole song was performed but rather, the composite musical parts were all performed together; in the case of Mickey this included the drumming part, and the lead and backing vocals, and in the case of the playground singing it included a melody (with lyrics), accompaniment, and body percussion.

Children’s tendency to approach learning new pieces of music in a holistic way can also be seen as indicative of divergent progression. Whereas teachers tend to break learning down into discrete chunks and then dedicate additional time and energy to teaching the more difficult sections (Feichas, 2010), young people are more likely to learn whole pieces (Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2001, 2010; Green, 2008; Harwood & Marsh, 2012; Koops, 2006; Marsh, 2008). This approach necessitates the frequent repetition of whole pieces, something that adults may view as time-wasting. Green (2001, 2008) identifies this way of learning music as one of the key approaches taken by popular musicians, subsequently marking it as one of the central features of informal learning in school. This suggests that teachers implementing informal learning in their classroom may need to alter their view of what constitutes an appropriate use of learners’ time and accept that short-term progression may not be apparent (Andrews, 2012). This can cause significant problems within a classroom environment. Green (2010) notes that in unfixed curricula where teachers and learners are afforded high levels of autonomy, concern about the lack of progression made by students tends to surface. Indeed, in her discussion of some of the challenges facing teachers who emphasise informal learning in their classrooms, Sexton (2012) writes:

I have continually had to address the issue of regular assessment and the monitoring of progression. My main concern has been that if pupils are choosing the curriculum and the instruments that they feel comfortable with then I could be giving them the opportunity to practise what they already know. (pp. 9-10)

However the concern that many teachers appear to feel about progression often does not take a long-term perspective (Green, 2008; Koops, 2006). Reconciling a view of learning that acknowledges that young people (and indeed adults) learn at different speeds with a politically determined curriculum which demands constant progression is perhaps one of the most significant challenges facing teachers who wish to implement informal learning practices in their classroom (Gower, 2012; Sexton, 2012). This is further complicated by the
different measures by which young people and teachers judge and approach levels of difficulty.

**Difficulty and progression.**

It is interesting to note that the girls in the *Breezeblocks* group had chosen to rehearse and perform a song that they acknowledged was difficult, despite clearly having easier options. This lack of concern for adult-identified levels of difficulty is something that was explored extensively by some of the meta-synthesis texts (Benson, 2012; Davis, 2008; Green, 2008; Marsh, 2008). Different measures of difficulty contribute in part to the eclectic repertoires of young people (Harwood, 1987), where highly sophisticated and complex pieces of music are valued equally with compositions that a linear view of progression would categorise as far more simple. While this is clear in the longitudinal examination of the rehearsal practices of the *Breezeblocks* group above, it was also possible to observe on a much smaller scale, in the generation of dance routines on the playground of Blue Hills Public School.

At Blue Hills in rural NSW, four girls in Years 4, 5, and 6 (aged between 8 and 12) spent most of their break and lunchtimes dancing to popular music on the veranda outside the classroom. They danced to a wide range of pop songs, some of which had set choreography, and others to which the girls typically improvised dances. In order to perform fluent improvisations (which often appeared to the unknowing observer to be as polished as choreographed performances) the girls had created a complex generative matrix of dance moves. Some of these were drawn from other dance contexts, for example, hip hop videos rented from the library, Zumba classes at school, choreographed performances taught to them by a dance teacher in performing arts week, and moves drawn from popular videos and favourite artists. These were collectively “held” in the imagination of the dancers along with moves that they told me they had created themselves that were typically associated with particular lyrics; for example movements of the hand around the heart commonly indicated love.

When observing the girls practising their dance moves there was little evidence that they progressed from the easier moves to the more difficult; in fact in many cases it was the more difficult moves that were used the most frequently. Moreover, whilst the girls repeated such moves many times, they did not seem to be specifically practising them in a way commonly associated with the rehearsal of instruments by breaking down more complex areas. Rather, the moves were appreciated in the wider context of the dance, just as Marsh (2008) describes
in the performance of clapping games. In cases where individual moves were deliberately isolated it appeared to be because the girls particularly enjoyed performing those moves. Again, there was little consistency in the technical complexity of the most enjoyed moves, with some very simple moves repeated multiple times alongside those that were technically difficult to perform. However in the vast majority of cases, whole dances were practised/ performed, rather than stopping and starting. This holistic approach to development, whereby whole dances were repeated to improve them rather than small sections, is common across informal learning both in and out of the classroom (Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Green, 2001, 2008; Marsh, 2008). The repetition of full dances helped the girls to further consolidate individual moves, which were then incorporated into the generative matrix for use in both choreographed and improvised dances. Moreover, the repetition and subsequent improvement of discrete dance moves was facilitated by the girls’ improvisatory practices. Across all four schools, improvisation was the means by which most children and adolescents explored and subsequently developed their musicality.

Improvisation

Improvisation was a fundamental part of the decentralised nature of young people’s divergent progression. The links between improvisation and informal learning have been well documented (Burnard, 1999; Green, 2008; Kanellopoulos, 1999; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010), indeed Wright and Kanellopoulos suggest that improvisation is a particular type of informal learning. In the examples I encountered in the field, improvisation was certainly the primary means through which young people followed interesting tangents, leading to musical development over time. There were hundreds of instances of improvisation that I observed throughout my time in the field, from fleeting musical utterances (Campbell, 2010) through to extended instrumental explorations lasting over half an hour. Improvisation also appeared to be critical for facilitating musical flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and examples of this are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. As spontaneous song-making featured prominently in both the meta-synthesis and the empirical data (particularly in the two primary schools that I visited) I have limited the discussion in this section to young people’s improvisation of songs.

The improvisation of songs appears to be a common musical practice of childhood (Campbell, 2010; Davies, 1986, 1992; Koops, 2012; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Young 2003). Koops (2012) suggests that “children’s invented songs can be an expression of their agency”
(p. 22), and that “this sense of agency was also linked to having time and space for exploration” (p. 22). In the field I too encountered many examples of improvised songs, most of which were inspired by the actions and activities of the singers at the moment of inspiration. One clear example of this was an “ice-cream song” that I recorded 5-year-old Will singing at Oakwood Primary (Musical Example 5.13):

Musical Example 5.13. Improvised ice-cream song with indeterminate pitch (Fieldnotes, 14 December 2012).

This song was clearly inspired by the imaginative play of Will and his friends, who had turned a maths activity using inter-connecting 3D forms into a game about ice-cream (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2. Will and a friend play “ice-creams” with maths equipment (Observation, Oakwood Primary, 14 December 2012).

The unconscious way that Will sang his song is described by Campbell (2010) as a musical utterance, “the seemingly effortless flow of melodies and rhythms that exude from children as they play” (p. 244). Interestingly, when I asked Will about the song (which I had failed to capture on camera) he found it difficult to talk about:

ATHENA: Will, what song were you just singing?
WILL: Um, I made it up.

ATHENA: You made it up? How did it go?

WILL: Um, I can’t, I can’t remember. (Research Conversation, Oakwood Primary, 14 December 2012)

Musical utterances are further explored by Campbell, who suggests that such songs could be described as “musical daydreams… semi- or sub-conscious voices declaring themselves without their awareness” (p. 244). As seen in this example, children’s imaginative musical utterances were frequently influenced by the occupation of the child at the time. This once again links to a content based curriculum devised around the day-to-day (or even hour-to-hour) interests of young people. A curriculum based on the fluctuating interests of children and adolescents can enhance their musical agency, and Koops (2012) notes that “following children’s interests in certain subjects empowered the children to take a greater interest in music making” (p. 23). Capitalising on moments of musicality, such as the one demonstrated by Will in the example above, could help to develop young people’s musical ability. This strategy could be difficult to implement, as it relies on taking the opportunity to teach or learn music at any given moment rather than waiting until the time for an allotted music lesson. However, the benefits of doing so could be significant, particularly given the highly meaningful and personal nature of some children’s musical expressions.

Fluent and fluid outpourings of music have been shown to be common across many different contexts of children’s informal learnings (Campbell, 2010; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008). Despite often seemingly flippant, such utterances may actually be highly personal and important; as Campbell (2010) suggests “these musical utterances offered intriguing glimpses of children’s musical thoughts” (p. 244). This certainly appeared to be the case for 7-year-old Lachlan at Blue Hills in rural NSW. Lachlan had told me that he made up songs at home which he liked to sing to himself. I asked him to sing one to me, and at first he said that he couldn’t remember any. However, later in the interview he began to sing (Musical Example 5.14) “A boy got no family, what’s he gonna do? Is he gonna get a family or not?” (Observation, Blue Hills, 30 August 2013).
Musical Example 5.14. Lachlan’s song

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A boy got no family.} & \quad \text{What's he gonna do?} \\
\text{Is he gonna get a family or not?}
\end{align*}
\]

This spontaneous performance was particularly poignant, as I was aware that Lachlan’s family had significant problems with alcohol abuse and that he often spent time living with other families in the local area. While it may not be Lachlan’s direct experience that influenced his song about the boy, it certainly served as a reminder of the expressive power of improvised song in the lives of young people. Taking the opportunity to build on this spontaneous moment of song could have important musical and social consequences. Apart from the personal and social benefits of developing moments such as Lachlan’s, there were other songs which demonstrated the ways in which improvisation explicitly contributed to the development of musical skills.

**Emmy’s cat song.**

In many cases, the link between an improvised song and a child’s imaginary play was very clear and the use of costumes, props, and characters all contributed to the generation of spontaneous music and lyrics. However, there were also examples of children using existing music as another stimulus for improvisation, as in the case of Emmy’s cat song (Musical Example 5.15).

Emmy (5) is in the karaoke corner with Leo and Dean. She is dressed in a furry cat costume, and sits on the central chair holding the end of a skipping rope like a mike. In the background a Christmas CD plays, and the carol *We three Kings* can be heard distinctly. While Leo and Dean sit on the floor at her feet, chewing on toys, Emmy sings an improvised song, as a cat. (Video Example 5.4, Observation, 18 December 2012)
Musical Example 5.15. Emmy’s cat song (approximate pitch throughout).

The link between Emmy’s costume and her improvised song is clearly apparent. It appears that the three children may have been playing an imaginative game of “cats and dogs” evidenced by the behaviour of the boys: as well as chewing on a plastic toy, Leo went on to perform a very short “dog” song after Emmy had finished. Unlike the musical daydream (Campbell, 2010) of Will’s ice-cream song, Emmy’s cat song was not unconscious; rather it was an integral part of her imaginative play. Her use of a skipping rope microphone suggests that she was taking full advantage of the play situation afforded by the karaoke corner, albeit modifying it through her imaginative inclusion of a feline performer. What is also interesting is the extent to which Emmy’s song was influenced by both the music that was playing in the background and her growing knowledge of typical structures in Western music.

The carol playing in the background (from a CD selected by the three children) was We three kings, a carol that begins in the key of E minor before modulating to G major for the chorus (Musical Example 5.16).

Musical Example 5.16. We three kings chorus

The extent to which this piece influenced Emmy’s improvisation is quite clear. The compound time signature is made clear through the combination of crotchets and quavers.
which pervade both pieces, and although the frequency of indefinite pitches precludes the identification of a definite harmonic structure it is clear that Emmy drew upon the pitches that she could hear. Moreover, her improvisation increasingly aligned itself with the tonal centre of the Christmas carol, including a strong perfect cadence in bar 8 of her song. While the perfect cadence that Emmy confidently delivers at the end of her improvisation can be mostly attributed to the carol she could hear, it is likely to also be a product of Emmy’s growing enculturation into Western musical conventions. Young (2003) suggests that the singing play of children “reflects absorbed experiences, from home and the wider musical culture” (p. 92), and Campbell (2010) calls this learning “enculturative”, a process that occurs “informally through children’s immersion within and exploration of a culture” (p. 230).

As a middle-class child growing up in the UK, Emmy had been exposed to a great deal of both popular and classical music. She had talked to me at length about enjoying musical films such as Mamma Mia (2008) with her family, as well as her older sister Charlotte’s (7) attempts to teach her to play the violin. Indeed, Charlotte had told me that part of their family routine in the morning involved her doing ten minutes of violin practice after the three children (Emmy, her twin brother James, and Charlotte) had eaten their breakfast, and that Emmy often joined her to watch, listen, and sometimes try the violin for herself. Along with this, Emmy and James both described the musical toys that they owned and the way that their parents would listen and sing along to popular songs on the radio. This composite description reveals just part of the extent to which Emmy had access to music in the home. With Emmy engaged in a process of enculturation, her cat song can be read as a deliberate experiment with the musical conventions of harmony and structure found in Western music. Once again, this raises interesting questions about adult concepts of difficulty. The UK’s National Curriculum for Music states that children of Emmy’s age “should be taught to… experiment with, create, select, and combine sounds” (DfE, 2013a, p. 2). The evidence presented here, alongside the texts of the meta-synthesis, demonstrates that this practice is something that the overwhelming majority of children just do, rather than something that needs to be explicitly taught. Moreover, there is certainly no discussion about advanced concepts such as compound rhythms, tonal centres, or perfect cadences, all features found within Emmy’s improvisation. In this improvisation, Emmy was clearly experimenting with formal structures as part of an engaged response to an existing piece of music. It is not in line with the sort of progression expected by the formal curriculum, and yet could have provided an exciting opportunity to develop her musical understanding by following a line of enquiry established by her personal
interest and engagement. The extent to which Emmy herself was willing to explore and develop her own musicality can be seen in the following section, where the immersive potential of informal learnings is examined.

**Immersive Behaviours**

On a microcosmic level, the decentralising structures of learning that seemed favoured by young people were present in their total immersion in learning experiences. By focussing wholly on the present, young people appeared to temporarily lack concern for future development. This phenomenon appeared to be facilitated by a delicate balance between challenge and repetition. As previously demonstrated, many of the self-directed challenges that the young people attempted were highly complex and intricate; from learning difficult dance routines to complicated hand-clapping patterns, as well as challenging, multi-part performances of popular music. However, such challenges were tempered by often seemingly excessive repetition, whereupon what was once challenging became something more like a musical “comfort zone” due to intense repetition. Interestingly, the empirical data suggested that it was the delicate balance between challenge and repetition that supported a state of flow\(^1\) for the learner (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). There were many examples of young people choosing a more difficult musical task in order to challenge themselves. Ensuring that a task was at a suitable level of difficulty was not always easy, and at times both children and adolescents found that the task that they had attempted actually became demotivating because it was too hard to complete satisfactorily. This problem was compounded by many young people’s disregard for difficulty when choosing a task, meaning that many of them began to learn pieces of music without considering how difficult it might have been. At St Margaret’s, this was particularly clear in the songs that the girls chose to learn for their rock song project. On reflection, many groups felt that they had chosen songs that were too difficult, however few professed to regret their decisions:

**Athena:** Do you think you chose an easy song to do?

**Freya (14):** No

**Leanne (14):** No!

\(^1\) See Chapter 3 for a brief discussion of the concept of flow. This will also be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
MAISIE (14): We kind of went through songs, and then we were like, we all just knew it, and we all liked it, so we did it.

FREYA: We kind of just jumped in at the top. We could have just done an easy song and made it better, but instead we did a hard song and just tried our best. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 23 October 2013)

When musical challenges became too difficult, many young people turned to repetition. Generally, short phrases of music were repeated multiple times, for example the chorus of a popular song. The repetition of musical licks or riffs, described by Jaffurs (2006) as “doodling” was another frequently noted example of repetition. As well as providing a respite from the challenging repertoire with which the young people were often engaged, repetition also had an important learning function. Repetitive listening to complete pieces of music was often used to learn songs, which many of the children and adolescents did in their spare time. When discussing how to learn a song for their school music project, two girls offered this advice to a friend in their group:

SUZANNE (14): Just put it on your computer and listen to it over and over while you’re doing your homework. Then you’ll just kind of like get used to it.

LEI (13): It will stick in your head. (Observation, St Margaret’s, 12 March 2012)

Challenge, Repetition, and Flow

Where musical challenge and repetition were present in an experience of informal learning, participants in both the meta-synthesis texts and the empirical phase of this study had the potential to enter a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The psychological state of flow is characterised by nine dimensions: a balance of challenge with available skill, the merging of action with awareness, the presentation of clear goals, the availability of immediate and unambiguous feedback, utter concentration on the task at hand, a sense of full control, a loss of self-consciousness, the transformation of time, and the feeling of having engaged in an extremely rewarding activity (Sinnamon, Moran & O’Connell, 2012). Participants in a state of flow are often intrinsically motivated by the positive psychological feedback that flow provides: “an activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult or dangerous” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 71). Csikszentmihalyi has suggested that some people are more likely to enter a state of flow than others, and that children are more likely to access flow than adults.
Although theoretically any activity could induce a state of flow, several scholars (Custodero, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Diaz & Silveria, 2012; MacDonald, Byrne & Carlton; 2006) have argued that music is particularly apt for inducing flow. Bowman (2006) has suggested that this may be due in part to the immediate aural feedback that music provides (particularly when a participant engages in performance), whereas Westerlund and Juntunen (2005) argue that it is because of the close link between mind and body in the production and appreciation of music. A substantial amount of research has focussed on experiences of flow in music education (Byrne & Sheridan, 2000; Custodero, 2005; Diaz & Silveria, 2012; Green, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2006; Sinnamon et al., 2012); however the psychological nature of flow, and the methods used in Csikszentmihalyi’s original body of research (1990) has meant that much of this research has been conducted using self-reporting questionnaires in which participants identify the moments that they feel they are in flow. Observational studies of flow are less common, and few disclose the ways that they identify flow behaviours in others (Custodero, 2005). For the purposes of this study, the nine dimensions of flow (Sinnamon et al., 2012) were used to identify the flow experiences of young people. Following the methodology of Custodero (2005), I assigned a potential behavioural indicator to each dimension, to aid in the identification and observation of young people in a state of flow (Table 5.1).
Table 5.1

*Flow dimensions and their possible behavioural indicators (adapted from Custodero, 2005)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flow dimensions</th>
<th>Possible behavioural indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge/skill balance</td>
<td>Young person is challenged by the task, but is able to overcome challenge in time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/awareness merging</td>
<td>Young person performs tasks unconsciously, movement is easy and fluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear goals</td>
<td>Young person has a clearly articulated goal, either self-imposed or externally-imposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate feedback</td>
<td>Young person responds and adjusts according to feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>Young person is concentrating on the task and is not distracted by other things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Young person is calm and in control of the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of self-consciousness</td>
<td>Young person moves in a way s/he would normally self-censor, perhaps dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation of time</td>
<td>Young person loses sense of time, perhaps missing routine activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically rewarding experience</td>
<td>Young person appears happy and self-satisfied, does not want to stop performing the task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following section, I discuss the flow states of young people engaged in a variety of musical experiences including improvising, composing, rehearsing, and performing. Within this analysis I will focus in particular on the balance of, and dialogue between, challenge and repetition.

**Finding flow: Emmy and James.**

Using the nine criteria stated above, it was possible to identify many different instances of young people entering a state of flow across all four case study schools. However, the clearest example of flow (and certainly the longest-lasting) occurred in the improvisations and compositions of two of the youngest participants, perhaps supporting Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) proposal that younger children more easily access flow. The flow state that the children shared clearly facilitated their informal exploration of music, and the extent to which
their experience matched the categories established by Custodero (2005) can be seen in Appendix D.

Emmy and James, five-year-old twins in Class 1 at Oakwood Primary, were invited to take part in an interview with me about music at home. Both were bright and articulate children who had shown an interest in music, Emmy in particular spending a significant amount of time singing and dancing both in the classroom and on the playground. I had chosen to conduct the interview in the school’s library/music room space, as it was free and relatively quiet. As we walked into the room, James asked “can we play some instruments then?” Although this was not on my schedule, I realised that it could present a fantastic opportunity to stimulate discussion. As soon as I agreed, Emmy and James busied themselves with gathering together a large variety of instruments before absorbing themselves in over an hour of improvisations and compositions. (Fieldnotes, Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

Video Example 5.5 includes just some of the many behavioural identifiers that Emmy and James enacted whilst in their state of musical flow. Throughout the 70 minutes in which the twins created music, there were many pertinent examples of both Emmy and James balancing challenge with repetition. One of the clearest examples of challenge could be seen in the children’s choice to notate their compositions (Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

![Figure 5.3. James’s first notated composition, using the letters printed on his xylophone.](image)

Figure 5.3. James’s first notated composition, using the letters printed on his xylophone.
Neither of the two children had instrumental lessons, and neither had been formally taught to read music. However, they had been exposed to several different notational models, including the writing and decorating of poetry and songs in class, and the notation that their older sister Charlotte used to play the violin which included a combination of Western notation and letter names. James’s decision to notate his first composition (Figure 5.3) using the letter names printed on the Orff xylophone (hence the inclusion of “h” and “es”) was certainly a very challenging one. He spent a significant amount of time moving between the instrument and the paper to accurately record his music (Video Example 5.6) and although there appeared to be times in which he became frustrated he continued to work at the task until he had completed it to a standard with which he was satisfied. Similarly, Emmy’s first composition (Figure 5.4) was challenging, evidenced by her first performance (Video Example 5.7). A few seconds into her first performance of the piece Emmy referred to her score, shook her head and announced “got it wrong” (Observation, Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013). After consulting the score further, Emmy began her piece again. In the second performance the contours of the pitch remained the same, although the notes changed somewhat suggesting that Emmy had a clear goal in her mind of how the composition should sound. As well as challenging themselves, there were also many examples of repetition in the twins’ improvisations and compositions. As well as repeating notes, or short phrases that they found pleasing (either aurally, kinaesthetically, or both) the twins also repeated enjoyable
activities. Both created two notated compositions, and spent a significant amount of time decorating their work with stars and pictures. They also returned many times to their favourite instruments, particularly the very large xylophone that both enjoyed playing. Periods of challenge were noticeably bisected by periods of musical repetition and familiarity that appeared to support the more difficult tasks that the children set for themselves.

Although this particular example focuses on two very young participants who arguably have a higher than average access to the flow state due to their age (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), this was not an isolated incident. Throughout my time collecting data in the four schools that participated in this study I observed many different examples of young people in a state of flow. For some flow was fleeting, but still an important and powerful experience. However, in most of the cases of flow that I documented, young people were not in an absolute state of flow for the whole time. Even as Emmy and James seemed completely captivated by the flow of their music-making, there were times in which they seemed to disengage. Although these moments were sometimes caused by an external interruption (such as my asking of a question), there were several times when either Emmy or James stopped themselves for no clear reason, before returning to the flow state they had established earlier. Some of these respites demonstrated that the twins were still clearly musically engaged, such as the time that James stopped (unprompted) to explain to me the difference between hitting the bars on the edge or in the middle of the instrument:

I think it only works if you do it in that bit [the centre]. It’s not very good if you do it there [on the edge]. But if you... get a good rhythm on this bit, it’s a big boomy sound on this, in the middle and then not so much... (Research Conversation, Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

At other times, however, it was not clear that the twins were still thinking about music, as when James was distracted for a few minutes by a toy screwdriver that had been left in the hand-held percussion box. These breaks in flow experiences were common across all of the age groups that took part in this study, but in all cases, although they interrupted the flow they did not completely stop the experience. Indeed, in some instances, these interruptions appeared to actually help extend the flow experience, just as switching between Mickey and Breezeblocks had helped the girls at St Margaret’s. On this personal microcosmic scale, the phenomenon is perhaps best described as “ebb and flow”, where the “ebb” is in fact integral to the extended flow experience as a whole.
Ebb and Flow

“Ebbs” in flow experiences took various forms, including being distracted by other young people or items in the vicinity (such as James’s screwdriver), talking, browsing the Internet, or playing other pieces of music. In the following example, two students at Bellamy Secondary demonstrated the importance of ebb periods as a refocussing and consolidating time between states of musical flow (see Appendix E for a full transcription).

Keith and Lana, two 14-year-old students, are sitting at a keyboard in the middle of their music class. Keith has a guitar on his lap, and both have music books that are open on the keyboard’s music stand. Keith is a guitarist who plays in several bands in his spare time; he also makes a lot of music with his dad when he goes to visit him in Scotland. Lana used to play the drums, but stopped a few years ago. Both Keith and Lana are committed “alternative rockers”, who spend a significant amount of time and money attending gigs, buying albums, and listening to music. Both have aspirations to work in the music industry, as either performers, roadies, or stage crew. They are currently engaged in a music project in which they must prepare a performance of a pop song (of their own choosing), which they will present to the rest of the class in a few weeks. They have chosen to learn Many of Horror by the Scottish band Biffy Clyro, a favourite of both of them. Over the course of around fifty minutes, the two constantly pass in and out of musical flow, interrupting themselves with discussion about music, bands they have seen, aspirations for the future, and musical “doodling”.

(Fieldnotes, Bellamy Secondary, 12 June 2013)

Both Keith and Lana demonstrated many of the behavioural characteristics discussed in the previous section, strongly suggesting that they had reached a state of flow in their work. For example, Lana was clearly challenged by the task of aurally recreating the melody line of their chosen song, Many of Horror, but through extensive practice was able to learn a significant amount of her part in around thirty minutes. For both teenagers the goals were clearly stated and flexible according to their changing needs, which were determined by the immediate feedback that they gained from listening to themselves play. Both Keith and Lana were also concentrating for a significant amount of time, and in control of their own progress. Due to the nature of the camera placement in this example (which had been determined by Keith and Lana before the filming began) it is impossible to see Lana’s physical behaviour, which limits the extent to which conclusions can be drawn about the other categories catalogued by Custodero (2005). The visual information about Keith, however, demonstrates fluent playing that moved effortlessly between various riffs and improvisations on the guitar. Physicalisation of his flow experience was also evident in the places where he appeared to unconsciously dance to the music, or gesture to emphasise his musical point. Although the two students seemed content enough to pack away at the end, they were still playing the same
piece right up until the point that their teacher called the lesson to a close, and finished with a positive self-assessment of their work. Throughout the 50 minute period, Lana and Keith concentrated on developing their project for a full 32 minutes without a significant break. It was during this initial period that the majority of the flow indicators were found. This was followed by a 14 minute break in which they discussed a variety of musical topics, finishing with a five minute return to Many of Horror. It was interesting to note ways that Keith and Lana sustained their flow state through ebb periods. Chief among the strategies that characterised ebb periods were the use of musical doodles (Jaffurs, 2006).

Whilst the initial 32 minutes concentrated predominantly on Many of Horror, from around 18 minutes into the lesson Keith began to intersperse his practice with performances of riffs and chords from other songs, and improvisations on various scales. This can be identified as musical doodling (Davis, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006). Jaffurs defined doodling as “the sporadic and intermittent playing of musical licks and ideas that had nothing to do with the music that the musicians were rehearsing at the time” (p. 55), a phenomenon that she observed when watching a teenaged garage band conduct rehearsals. Keith frequently diverged from the chords and melodies of Many of Horror to circle through a wide range of riffs and hooks from other popular songs, some of which he was rehearsing with his bands, others which he simply enjoyed playing; indeed, there seemed to be little linking the melodic fragments together other than personal preference. The action of doodling itself seemed almost unconscious for Keith as his physical performance appeared disconnected from his consciousness. In many cases, Keith continued playing whilst sustaining a conversation, only stopping to play when the conversation became too animated for him to remain constrained behind his guitar. Unlike the guitar part for Many of Horror, the riffs that Keith played in his “breaks” did not appear to be musically or mentally challenging. They represented something close to a musical “comfort zone”, which allowed Keith to remain on the edge of his flow state whilst recuperating enough energy to re-enter full flow. Unlike Keith, Lana did not play an instrument with enough proficiency to doodle according to Jaffurs’s definition. Rather than structuring her flow through musical doodles, Lana instead spent her ebb periods talking about music. Her topics were varied, including favourite bands, her uncle’s musical career, the outfit she wore to the last concert, but were consistently focussed on popular music. The conversations which she instigated were generally short, rarely lasting more than a few minutes, but they seemed to give her the mental break she needed.
On the surface, Lana and Keith appeared to be engaged in a very different informal learning experience to Emmy and James; however both groups exhibited similar behaviours. For Lana and Keith, the challenge was presented and policed by an external authority (their teacher) and external motivation was provided by an imminent assessment. However, the musical agency granted to them through the options to choose friends to work with, choose their own song without restrictions, and work through the song at their own pace, transformed their experience into something quite similar to the total musical freedom granted to Emmy and James. In contrast to Emmy and James, Keith and Lana used each other to both structure and sustain their flow. Their “ebb” periods often coincided, resulting in both of them engaging in conversation or musical diversion. Indeed, the moments in which one appeared to be in flow and the other did not were rare, suggesting that the social aspect of their flow experience was important rather than distracting.

Using unrelated musical doodles may help young people to sustain flow by providing a mental break from the intensity of such an immersive experience. Although this could appear counterintuitive (as such breaks seemingly interrupt flow) it can be compared to the huge variety of songs and games that children perform on the playground in very short spaces of time (Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 2008, Merrill-Mirsky, 1988). Rather than breaking up the overarching experience of play, jumping from game to game demonstrates the ways in which young people follow multiple paths of interest and engagement. Thus, just as the repetition of familiar and favourite songs and games challenged traditional conceptions of progress as linear, so too do the diverse musical riffs, licks, and conversations that both interrupted and sustained flow experiences in these examples. This suggests that, as with divergent progression, it is important for adults to be cautious in what they classify as “off task” behaviours. Indeed, it may well be that such breaks in concentration are in fact fundamental to productivity when engaged with informal learning, and should be encouraged rather than censured.

**Summary**

The three central themes of the Structural Dimension, fluid roles, divergent progression, and immersive behaviours all highlight the extent to which informal learnings in music are organised around decentralised structures. This was first demonstrated in the social structures that were found throughout informal learning in a variety of contexts, where young people were unlikely to uphold static hierarchies for extended lengths of time. Instead, leadership
was fluid and dynamic as an individual might lead for short periods before being undermined or superseded by one of their peers. Social interactions in contexts such as the playground tended to absorb such interactions with limited conflict; however, where externally imposed conditions demanded a degree of progress, fluctuating power dynamics led to some groups breaking down. Despite a desire to advance (something that most young people felt was enabled by strong leadership) a concurrent commitment to peer equality meant that many young people felt compelled to undermine any one leader. This was particularly clear in groups where a leader was self-imposed rather than elected. Thus, a dynamic, largely horizontal social structure was established and generally maintained in contrast with the vertical, hierarchically-based structures typically found in the classroom.

This non-linear structure was similarly found in the ways that young people structured the content of their learning. Rather than focussing on the development of skills from simple to complex, the self-imposed curriculum was organised by content. This meant that young people’s informal learning followed lines of interest and value; if a piece of music was valued, then young people would strive to learn it regardless of how difficult it appeared. This meant that skills were accumulated in a haphazard manner based on the needs of the content, sometimes resulting in skills (such as holding a guitar, or playing chords on a piano) being learned incorrectly but adequately enough to perform the task at hand. It is also important to note that young people did not value simple and more difficult skills differently based on the extent to which they were challenging, but rather discriminated between them with regard to the whole pieces of music with which they were associated. If a simple piece of music was valued more highly than a complex piece of music, then those simple skills were likewise prioritised. On a more personal level, divergent progression was evident in the constant improvisations that were observed throughout all four schools. Music was frequently explored through improvisation from brief musical utterances right through to extended songs and instrumental solos. On this microcosmic level, improvisation again interrupted the linear progression most frequently associated with learning music and instead provided mini-avenues of exploration based upon the present interests of the learner. Because of this attention to the present, improvisation was seen to offer important potential for musical immersion.

The self-directed nature of informal learning clearly provides immersive opportunities where young people can become completely engrossed in their activity and enter a state of
flow. While flow experiences once again emphasise the decentralised structure of informal learning through the lack of emphasis on long-term progression, it is interesting to note that these were also disrupted by periods of inattention, or ebbs in the flow state. Rather than undermining the experience, however, the ebbs actually helped to consolidate the periods of intense work experienced when young people were in flow. Musical doodling of favourite riffs and pieces, as well as talking about other music, became a period for reflection which ultimately supported the long-term progression of individual learners.

When considered together, fluid roles, divergent progression, and immersive behaviours demonstrate that decentralised forms dominate both the social and musical structures of informal learning. Consequently, by committing to structures of learning that are directly at odds with the structures associated with the sorts of formal learning typically found in traditional classrooms, young people are able to exert their agency and musical authority, something explored further in Chapter 6: The Playful Dimension.
Chapter 6
The Playful Dimension

Introduction

The “Playful Dimension” of young people’s informal learning in music addresses the playful ways that young people approached music learning. This includes both structured and fantasy-based musical play, as well as a high level of physicality (including dance and exploration through movement), and young people’s ongoing desire for ownership often expressed through subversion. Throughout all four case study schools, the Playful Dimension enabled the transformation of adult-led learning experiences into experiences over which children and young people had greater control; in other words, playfulness allowed the young people in this study to exert their musical agency (Karlsen, 2011; Karlsen, 2012; Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010). “Musical agency” typically describes “individuals’ capacity for action in relation to music or in a music-related setting” (Karlsen, 2011, p. 110). This can include performing, composing, or listening to music (Elliott, 2005), indeed, musicking in any form. Musical agency has been linked to musical identity (MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002), social empowerment (DeNora, 2000), and even political transformation (Small, 1998). With regard to music education, both Karlsen (2009) and Green (2008) link increased personal agency to informal pedagogies and informal contexts, as both provide young people with the ability to self-regulate their actions.

This chapter explores the three key themes derived from the meta-synthesis in more detail, paying particular attention to the links between playfulness, agency, and the theoretical framework of childhood studies. Play is examined through an in depth consideration of the “Cup Game”, a seemingly ubiquitous (in 2012-13) musical game played by children and adolescents alike. Young people’s agency is seen to be enacted by the playing of this game through a delicate balance of authenticity and transformation. In Ownership, I explore the tension between authenticity and parody in more detail, using Bakhtin’s (1984a, 1984b, 2004) theories of carnival and double-voicing. Finally, Physicality explores the highly robust, physical, and embodied aspects of young people’s informal learnings, in which knowledge and understanding were often expressed through physical performance. Playfulness was observed throughout all three categories of space, and the secondary adjustments (Corsaro, 2000) that were made to adult-mediated spaces through play helped to promote youth agency
by establishing an underlife (Goffmann, 1961) in which young people were culturally powerful.

**Play**

One of the more unexpected findings of this study was the extent to which adolescents played musical games (Lill, 2014b). Most of the meta-synthesis literature (and indeed, of the wider literature associated with children’s musical games) focussed entirely on play found in primary school contexts. However, in both the secondary schools involved in this study, musical play thrived and both adolescent boys and girls were found to spend time playing. As well as alleviating stress, filling time spent waiting, and postponing boredom, musical play also allowed young people to exert their musical agency. Musical games were valued by both children and adolescents, particularly those with strong links to popular culture such as the cup game (the media-laced history of which is discussed below). This value subsequently supported the agency of young people, who were able to become more socially powerful in the eyes of their peers through both authentic performances (that is, those in line with the media source through which most young people knew the game) and transformative performances. Perhaps most important was the feeling amongst young people that the game belonged to them; whilst adults were sometimes aware of its existence, few were able to perform it with the fluency achieved by many children and adolescents. Furthermore, there was an often-repeated belief that *all* young people knew the cup game, making it a cultural signifier that had the capacity to bring together children and adolescents from across the world.

**Athena:** Is there anyone in Year 8 who doesn’t know the cup game?

**Aliyeh:** No.

**Sky (14):** If they hear it, they’ll know what it is.

**Athena:** So if you met someone who didn’t know it, would you think they were strange?

**Sky:** No, I’d just think they’d been living under a rock or something! [The group laugh].

**Aliyeh (13):** Seriously, even my brother knows it. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013).
The Cup Game: A Musical History

The cup game is an eight beat rhythmic ostinato (Musical Example 6.1) that is performed with a cup or similar implement, normally accompanied by a song (Video Example 6.1).

Musical Example 6.1. The Cup Game, “cups” rhythm

[Diagram of rhythm pattern]

In all of the case study schools it was most frequently performed with the song “When I’m Gone”, which featured in the 2012 film *Pitch Perfect.*

I’ve got a ticket for the long way round
Two bottles of whisky for the way,
And I sure would like some sweet company,
And I’m leaving tomorrow, what d’ya say?

When I’m gone, when I’m gone,
You’re gonna miss me when I’m gone.
You’re gonna miss me by my hair, you’re gonna miss me everywhere
Oh you know you’re gonna miss me when I’m gone.

I’ve got my ticket for the long way round
The one with the prettiest of views.
It’s got mountains, it’s got rivers, it’s got sights to give you shivers
But it sure would be prettier with you.

When I’m gone, when I’m gone,
You’re gonna miss me when I’m gone.
You’re gonna miss me by my walk, you’re gonna miss me by my talk,
Oh you know you’re gonna miss me when I’m gone.
(Carter & Gerstein, 2012, track 4. See Appendix G for a full transcription)

This song was originally written and performed by the Carter Family in 1928 (under the title *Will you miss me when I’m gone?*), and was subsequently covered by several other early artists.

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20 Throughout all four schools, many of the children and adolescents referred to the game as “The Cup Game”, but the rhythm as “The Cups Rhythm”. Notation conventions adopted from Marsh, 2008, pp. 342-349. See also Appendix F.

21 *Pitch Perfect* follows the story of an all-female a cappella group as they enter and compete in a national competition. The song is featured in an audition scene where the female lead (played by Anna Kendrick) performs for the two leaders of the group.
country artists, including J.E Mainer’s Mountaineers, and Charlie Munroe (Dobbins & Fields, 2013). In 2009, Louisa Gerstein of the British act Lulu and the Lampshades substantially reworked the song, adding several new verses and coupling it with the “cups” rhythm (Musical Example 6.1). The group then filmed a performance of themselves at home that they uploaded onto YouTube, where it inspired several cover versions. This included a performance by teenager Anna Burden whose video became so popular it made the front page of the community-generated popular culture website Reddit, whereupon Anna Kendrick (star of Pitch Perfect) came across the game, leading to its inclusion in the film (see Figure 6.1).

![Figure 6.1. Anna Kendrick performs the cup game in the 2012 film Pitch Perfect.](image)

Although the Pitch Perfect version of the song is relatively new, the “cups” rhythm that accompanies it is much older. The first recorded evidence of the rhythm can be seen in a video performance by Rich Mullins, in his song Screen Door (1987). However it is unclear if Mullins was the original composer or simply using an existing clapping game rhythm (Dobbins & Fields, 2013), as part of a cycle of appropriation and reappropriation (Marsh, 1999). Although the underlying rhythm itself is very simple, the complexity that makes the cup game challenging and subsequently entertaining is achieved through the physical manipulation of the cup itself. The game can be performed either individually, or as part of a group, and a further layer of sophistication can be added by passing the cup along a line or around a circle (Figure 6.2). This turns the game into a difficult and rewarding group effort,
requiring the maintenance of a strong pulse and individual rhythmic dexterity (Video
Example 6.2).

Figure 6.2. Passing the cup along a line (with pencil cases as well as cups).

**The cup game in schools.**

The cup game shares many similarities with children’s clapping games, both in musical
form and function (see Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Opie & Opie, 1985). It involves a
repetitive, driving rhythm that is most commonly accompanied by a song and a combination
of simple and complex hand movements, which at times create cross-rhythms with the text.
The game therefore provides many different entry-points for players, who can perform all or
part of the rhythm, with or without a cup, or can sing (or any combination of the above)
meaning that the game is a suitable vehicle for legitimate peripheral participation (see Chapter
7: The Musical Dimension). It can be competitive, where players are eliminated if they cannot
accurately perform the rhythm, or non-competitive; therefore it lends itself to being tailored to
suit the needs of any number of social groups and social situations. Furthermore, the cup
game is played in similar locations to traditional clapping games, certainly on the playground,
but also in waiting spaces (Marsh, 2008) such as corridors, or classrooms (Lill, 2014b).

There are some significant differences between the cup game and other clapping games.
Unlike many clapping games, the cup game can be played individually, and often is played
this way. It is located in an interesting space somewhere between a game and a performance,
and this is reflected in young people’s use of interchangeable names: the cup *game* and the
cup song. Part of the reason that it occupies this liminal space is due to the players’ strong commitment to presenting an “authentic” performance that often defers to the authority of the media text. This concern for authenticity is also reflected in the transmission of the game, which though often face-to-face, is also marked by frequent references to either the film or other screen media such as YouTube. The “known” provenance of the game appears to impact upon the way it is played, and whereas many traditional clapping games are played in highly diverse ways across the world (even locally, from school to school, see Marsh, 2008), examples of the cup game remained remarkably similar in both Australia and the UK throughout the empirical data collection phase. Despite the importance of presenting an authentic performance, there were still examples of transformation and change through which young people made the game their own. There were some small variants in the rhythmic part, as well as examples where different songs accompanied the rhythmic part; however, the variants were in no way as diverse as many of the games recorded by other scholars (Marsh, 2008; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988; Opie & Opie, 1985). While it is possible that this was due to the relatively young history of the game, it also seems due in some part to the means through which the game was disseminated across the peer group. Although young people in all four schools frequently played the cup game in school time, the majority had learnt the game away from school.

**Authenticity and Transmission: On- and Offline Practices**

The cup game is a particularly interesting case study for the transmission of 21st century playground games as many players first encountered it through the media, either as part of the film or on social media sites such as YouTube or Facebook. In all four participant schools the cup game was learnt from multiple sources, including new and social media, older siblings, and friends. Interestingly, there was a significant difference in the transmission processes found in primary and secondary schools; in primary schools children were much more likely to have learnt the game from a person in real life, whereas the adolescents at secondary school were more likely to have used YouTube or repeated viewings of the film.

Marsh (2008) describes the typical transmission of traditional clapping games:

> Within a friendship group, children “catch” the game elements from each other, often literally turning and catching hold of a partner to impart a game movement or to join in and learn a new movement, game, or game variant. Children move in close proximity to each other to facilitate the contagion. The learning process is marked by close observation, physical contact, and modelling of new game behaviours. (p. 138)
Many of the data that I collected relating to children’s traditional musical games support this assertion, as demonstrated in Figure 6.3.

*Figure 6.3. “Traditional” clapping game transmission practices; *Down down dare.*

In Figure 6.3, one girl is having her hand manipulated into the correct position by another whilst a third girl observes closely, attaching herself to the group through physical contact with the “teacher”. Moreover, the game is learnt within the context of play, that is, the learning of the game is not particularly distinct from the playing of the game. Indeed, this scene took place as part of a playing session where many favourite clapping games were played and some new ones were learnt. Marsh also notes that although learning is generally aggregative, it tends to be “in relation to whole performances” (p. 142). The game is not typically broken down by the teacher into smaller steps, but simply played multiple times until the whole (or at least the majority) is learnt. This was certainly the case here, as the game in question *Down down dare* had been played several times by both this dyad and another two girls in close proximity to each other.

Despite the formal similarities between the cup game and other structured clapping games, peer-to-peer transmission of the cup game in primary schools was markedly different. This is demonstrated in Figure 6.4, where some of the same girls are learning the cup game from another friend, Jess.
Figure 6.4. Learning the cup game.

LAURA: So you clap twice and then you go… [bangs four crotchetts on the top of her cup]

JESS: No, you go 1-2, 1-2-3 [Jess demonstrates on her cup]

[The other three perform the first half-bar on their cups]

JESS: Then you go 1, 1, 1

[The girls try the second half of the first bar together. Jess then demonstrates the second bar one move at a time, waiting for each girl to copy her before moving on to the next move. Finally, she performs the whole game at speed whilst the others watch]

JADE: I don’t get it.

[SJess goes through the whole game, very slowly]

SUNITA: Let’s do it in slo-mo! (Observation, Blue Hills School, 28 August 2013)

As can be seen in Figure 6.4, although the girls are still close to each other they lack the intimate physical contact often present in the transmission of other clapping games. Unlike the example in Figure 6.3, the “teacher” (Jess, closest to the camera) sits slightly apart from the others, and demonstrates the routine in broken-up segments; the first two beats, the next two beats, and then the final bar. Similar to the girls’ learning Down down dare, learning was aggregative however this was in relation to short pre-determined sections rather than the whole game. This methodical mode of transmission was very similar to many of the “cup
game tutorials” posted to YouTube, which was surprising because (of the girls in this example) only Sunita had seen *Pitch Perfect*, and none of the group reported having watched cup game tutorials online. Instead, Jess had been taught the game by an older friend, and this may have been the reason for her adoption of a transmission mode more frequently found with older participants.

Amongst secondary school participants, learning the cup game by watching tutorials posted on YouTube was very common and several participants reported spending significant amounts of time watching video tutorials:

**Kia (13):** I have a really embarrassing story... so like one night, after I was like so bored, I was on YouTube and I was learning it for like, ages, and then, I kept on doing it till like 12 o clock at night, like OMG. (Research Conversation, St Margaret’s, 13 May 2013)

In her study of the on- and offline transmission of traditional clapping games, Bishop (2014) suggests that there are many similarities between YouTube tutorials and real-life transmission practices. She describes typical clapping tutorials online:

Children and young people feature in the videos... usually in pairs, and these performers are evidently friends or sometimes relatives in the offline world. They are generally filmed in the kinds of offline spaces where clapping takes place. The viewer is positioned by the webcam or video camera at much the same vantage point as the interested observer in offline settings, certainly in terms of angle and often in terms of distance. (p. 65)

This suggests that online transmission practices draw upon traditional, offline practices as described by Marsh (2008). However, in the case of a relatively “new” game such as the cup game that has largely been disseminated through social media such as YouTube, it appears that the opposite may be the case. The transmission practices that have been examined appear to be closely modelled on the many tutorials that can be accessed on YouTube (Figure 6.5).
Figure 6.5. YouTube cup game tutorials. From left to right: Tutorial: Pitch Perfect Cup Song (thesunicornfly, 2013); The Cup Game Tutorial (mariealexandraaa, 2013); Cup song/game tutorial (Sperazza, 2013); The cup song—slow tutorial (Corney, 2013).

In these tutorials, the teachers (often children and young adolescents, but sometimes older) tend to face the camera with the cup prominently displayed for ease of learning. In many cases, teachers do not reveal their faces, preferring to focus all attention on their hands, which often move in an exaggerated way. The game is typically played once in full, and then the teachers provide a fragmented version often presenting the first two beats, followed by the second two beats, followed by a highly slowed down final bar: just as Jess did in the playground example. Looking at a sample of the vast body of YouTube tutorials that now exist, it is also striking to see the consistent reproduction of brightly coloured plastic beakers, being manipulated by performers who sit cross-legged on the floor (Figure 6.5). I believe that this common transmission practice can been seen as reflective of Anna Kendrick’s performance in the media text (see Figure 6.1). It is possible, therefore, that even playground performers who have not seen the film (such as Jess) are replicating transmission practices drawn directly from the film itself, mediated through YouTube tutorials and finally imitated in face-to-face teaching and learning.

It should also be noted that the overwhelming majority of tutorials on YouTube, as well as the instances of face-to-face transmission recorded in my data, focus solely on teaching the rhythmic movement of the cup. Both on- and offline the rhythm was taught without the song, which tended to be added in at a later point once performers were confident with the rhythm.
Unlike the rhythmic part, the song was given no special treatment; it was not broken down into smaller parts, nor was any explanation or guidance given for the ways in which the song and rhythm interacted. This is much more typical of the ways that both popular music and traditional clapping games are learnt, where the song is “picked up” over time. Despite the apparent lack of concern for “teaching” the song when compared to the rhythm, producing a culturally authentic performance of the song was key to the game’s performance aesthetic. Indeed, those performances deemed to be successful could help their performers to accumulate cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). For Bourdieu, cultural capital is the powerful cultural currency achieved through the acquisition of skills or knowledge that are deemed to be culturally valuable. Cultural capital can be an important differentiating tool for social stratification (Wright & Davies, 2010) where dominant social classes (such as the middle- and upper-class) maintain their privileged position through regulating access to “high” culture and education. However, it is important to note that the concepts of cultural capital can also be applied to the cultures of children. In the four case study schools, those cultural artefacts which were considered to be culturally valuable (such as the cup game) could help to support a social and musical hierarchy (as seen in performances of *My Aunty Anna*, in Chapter 5). Moreover, the cultural significance attached to the cup game also altered the game itself, with most young people prizing authenticity and longevity over transformation.

**Longevity and transformation.**

Given the primacy accorded to the media text by young players, it was not surprising to find that longevity of “knowing” the cup game appeared to be more highly prized than presenting an innovative transformation of the game. This was particularly illustrated by some of the adolescents at St Margaret’s, in Australia. In this school, the cultural capital acquired through performance of the cup game could be increased through a performer’s knowledge of the “original” cup game, a variant of the more common *Pitch Perfect* version:

SKY (14): I learnt it in about Year 5, but we learnt the original cup song. And then I saw *Pitch Perfect*, and I was like “I already know this!” (Research Conversation, St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013)

The “original” cup game in this instance was the cups rhythm performed alongside the song *Call Your Girlfriend* (Robyn, Kronlund & Åhlund, 2010) (Video Example 6.3). Only the girls at St Margaret’s who had attended the sister primary school knew this version (or at least, they were the only ones who tended to perform it), and its performance subsequently
supported a local playground history. The “original” cup game was viewed by the girls as a
local tradition, a special precursor to the more popular version that they believed to be unique
to their school. Interestingly, this belief existed concurrently with a further history of
transmission that directly contradicted their seemingly unique position. One of the girls I
talked to told me that she had first learnt it from YouTube, suggesting that its original
introduction into St Margaret’s local peer culture was from a global source. The Call Your
Girlfriend (hereafter CYG) variant can be traced on YouTube to the Swedish girl group
Erato, who uploaded a video of their performance in 2011 (Cheung, 2011). The CYG variant,
as performed at St Margaret’s, included both the obvious change of song and a change in the
cups rhythm, incorporating simple crotchet beats and rests to increase the musical impact of
the more complex cross rhythms (Musical Example 6.2, see Appendix G for full
transcription).

Musical Example 6.2. CYG variant (first 8 bars)
Apart from the CYG version, I found very few variants of the cup game in any of the participant schools, a surprising contrast to the high level of variation of more traditional clapping games (Bishop, 2014; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Marsh, 2008). Although several students (particularly in secondary schools) pointed out that the game can be played with “any song in 4/4 time, really” (Harriet, 14, Research Conversation, St Margaret’s school, 13 May 2013), I observed very few times in which students actually did perform the game with a different song. One notable exception again occurred at St Margaret’s, where a group of girls decided to experiment with different songs and proceeded to perform the cups rhythm with a variety of pop songs including *One Thing* by One Direction (2011), *Roar* by Katy Perry (2013), and *Some Nights* by Fun (2012). However, this performance was transient and I did not see it repeated at the school at any other time unlike either the *Pitch Perfect* or CYG versions. Similarly, apart from the CYG version I found few examples of young people musically altering the cups rhythm, with only one recorded case where the rhythm was performed with an anacrusis, resulting in an altered pattern of accents (Musical Example 6.3).

Musical Example 6.3. Varied cups rhythm

![Musical Example 6.3](image)

Despite the limited number of musical variants, there were several examples of different modes of performance, many of which revolved around the implement used to perform the rhythm. Throughout all the schools, a cup was the preferred choice for performance, particularly beakers made from hard plastic. Once again, this appears to be a reference to the media text where Anna Kendrick uses a bright plastic beaker for her performance (see Figure 6.1). If such a cup were unavailable, a soft plastic disposable cup was the second choice (as seen in Figure 6.2), followed by any other small, hand-held object. Most commonly, the game was performed with pencil cases, lunch boxes, or water bottles, all of which were commonly objects available in close proximity (Figure 6.6). Finally, young people in all field schools also played the cup game with no objects, substituting body percussion for the cup. In some cases, this added to the inclusivity of the game as it provided a level of entry for young people who struggled to manipulate the cup (or other object) successfully, particularly amongst primary school students. Such clear preferences expressed in the selection of objects for
playing the game suggest once again a concern for authenticity over transformation and change.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 6.6. The cup game performed with pencil cases and water bottles: the pencil cases in the foreground had been initially used, and then discarded in favour of the bottles.*

**Gender, the Cup Game, and Musical Agency**

It is perhaps clear that the majority of players that I observed playing the cup game were predominantly female. This was, in part, due to the sample of students that participated in this study as one of the two secondary schools was an all-girls school. However, in both of the British schools, the cup game was characterised by boys as being “for girls”. In Oakwood Primary, for example, a group of boys aged between 9 and 11 discussed the game:

NICK (9): It’s all girly, it’s like blah blah blah…

JAMES (8): It’s girly because it’s a girl, it’s a girl that does it.

ATHENA: Oh, do you mean it’s girly because it’s a girl that does it in the film?

JAMES: Yeah.

NICK: No, it’s just kind of a girly song, though.

PAUL (10): It’s the song that goes with it.

ATHENA: But what about the cup bit, the drumming bit, that goes with it?
JAMES: It’s actually pretty amazing. Pretty cool. [Other boys agree]

JORDAN (10): Yeah, but it’s doing it with a cup. It’s just a bit girly, really.

MISS F: Is that because you can’t do it, Jordan?

JAMES: Yeah, it’s probably because he can’t do it. (Research Conversation, Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

From this discussion, it seems that the emphasis on singing and the use of a song most popularly performed by a female singer is perhaps one of the reasons that boys tended not to openly play the cup song. However, within this male friendship group there was one further boy, Karl (aged 10) who could perform the cups rhythm very fluently, having learnt it from his 13-year-old sister. Prior to this conversation, Karl had performed the rhythm in front of a group of mixed gender and mixed age children, and had been celebrated around school by both girls and boys as a “good” player. Moreover, several other boys at the school told me that they could perform the percussive part, suggesting that a gender stigma was only actively applied to the game when the song was performed. This meant that, at times, boys’ musical agency was actively limited by social pressures. In the case of Karl, this was made distressingly evident by my insensitive approach to the discussion of gender. Following his performance of the cup rhythm to just the above group of boys, myself, and their class teacher, I instigated the discussion about gender and “girliness”. Hearing some of the negative comments made by the other boys was clearly upsetting for him, despite some of the positive comments made by his close friend James. Karl, then, found his agency compromised by his gender, and the gendered assumptions made about singing and game-play by some of the other boys in his class.

Surprisingly, given the large amount of gender-specific assumptions made by the children at Blue Hills, NSW in other musical areas (see Chapter 7: The Musical Dimension), I recorded no gendered discourse associated with the cup game at any point. Many of the boys at Blue Hills knew the game, having learnt it from friends and siblings, and one boy even joined in with the showcase of the game at performing arts night. However, very few students sang the song that accompanied the cups rhythm, with both boys and girls preferring to perform just the percussive part. In both primary schools, then, it was common to find boys who knew of the game and were happy to demonstrate at least the percussive part. This is similar to the findings of Marsh (2008), who suggests that, contrary to earlier literature (see Knapp & Knapp, 1976; Lindsay & Palmer, 1981; Russell, 1986), boys and girls are equally
familiar with the local traditions of clapping games. Marsh argues that part of the reason for the diminished gender differences in her study (conducted throughout the 1990s and early 2000s) may be the presentation of boys playing clapping games in the media, for example, the inclusion of two teenage boys playing *Down Down Baby* in the film *Big* (1988). As has already been demonstrated in relation to both transmission and musical practice, the cup game has certainly been influenced by its presentation in the media. It is not, therefore, surprising that the media would socially influence the gender of its (public) players. Indeed, it may be that one of the reasons that the game was popular with boys in Blue Hills was because only one person at the school had seen the film, and the majority of participants had learnt the game from friends or siblings. This contrasts with Oakwood, where the film was well known and boys were reluctant to participate publicly. Once again, this appears to be an endorsement of the authority of the media text.

Although Marsh (2008) found significant evidence of boys playing clapping games, she also found that their participation diminished with age. In her study, not only were boys less likely to play as they reached the upper level of primary school, they also became less proficient than their female counterparts. However, this was not the case with the cup game. Younger boys (as with younger girls, aged between about 4 and 6) who attempted the game found the cup difficult to manipulate, and quickly appeared to lose motivation to learn the rhythmic part without the showy props. Boys in the higher primary school grades, however, were able to maintain the rhythm with a cup, and were subsequently more likely to be able to perform the game. Throughout this older age group, there were no obvious differences with regard to proficiency. Perhaps even more surprising, however, was the popularity of the game amongst boys at Bellamy Secondary. Although the game was still described by some boys as a “girls” game (see later in this chapter, “Musical Movement: Physical Double-Voicing”), many were willing and able to demonstrate the game for me. The film was well known to both boys and girls aged between thirteen and fifteen; however, this did not appear to have the negative impact that was observed at Oakwood, perhaps because the film was enjoyed and frequently quoted by both boys and girls. To some extent, the observation of boys playing the cup game in secondary school may have been distorted by the methods of sampling, as the boys who agreed to participate demonstrated an interest in the study and in music, and tended to be highly confident and so potentially less concerned about compromising their masculinity. However, the fluency with which many boys were able to perform the game
suggests that, like their female counterparts, a significant amount of time and energy had been expended to learn the game and present an accurate performance.

The sudden popularity of the cup game, and its players’ strict adherence to adult-disseminated measures of authenticity, demonstrates the complex relationship between youth cultures and the media. It could be argued that, in the case of the cup game, a practice traditionally associated with children was co-opted by a media text that changed the way the game is both performed and transmitted amongst young people by providing a definitive, authoritative version. Unlike children’s clapping games, which are subject to a large variety of local variation and spontaneous transformation, the cup game remained uncannily similar across both schools and continents, as children and adolescents alike attempted to reproduce the popular film. However, it is possible to understand the tradition in an alternate way. The desire to produce an authentic performance was one that acted as an important motivator for the participants of this study. Significant amounts of time were expended in learning and perfecting the game, often through a multimodal combination of on- and offline resources including YouTube, the film itself, friends and siblings. Young people used these “authentic” performances of the game to accrue cultural capital within both their peer group and the wider school communities, further validating the time they spent learning informally and demonstrating their musical agency. Throughout all four field schools, the cup game occupied the blurred border between game and performance, where authenticity was prized over transformation, but where youth ownership of the game in all forms was seen as paramount.\footnote{However, it is notable that the data presented here were collected in 2012-13, when the cup game was at its most popular in schools following the release of \textit{Pitch Perfect}, and so the media text and its perceived authority were fresh in the minds of the participants. Further research may present more examples of transformation as the media text becomes less dominant.} These values were then conveyed when young people performed the game in adult-mediated spaces such as the classroom, where it helped to create a musical space in which individuals could assert their agency.

**Ownership**

The empirical phase of this study revealed that comic parody was the most common means by which young people were able to exercise their musical agency, in ways that ranged from the crude and vulgar to highly complex and intertextual. Parody has an extensive body of theoretical research, some of which has been applied to the study of children’s musical cultures and practices. In order to contextualise the analysis of ownership through parody
explored below, it is first necessary to describe a broad overview of some theories of parody, and particularly the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Dentith (2000) defines parody as “any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice” (p. 9). Parody can be cutting, political, outrageous, or silly. However, its inherently subversive and anti-authoritarian nature means that it is an important tool in the development of local and global peer cultures, particularly amongst communities that are traditionally less powerful, such as children. The young participants in all four case study schools used parody to sustain and develop their core peer relationships, as well as to create a liminal space where traditional hierarchies were temporarily overturned. In effect, parodic exchanges (musical, verbal, and physical) were used to promote a childish culture within the school, one that frequently excluded adults. As with the decentralisation of traditional structures of learning outlined in Chapter 5, the destabilising effect of parody contributed to the creation of a context in which children were culturally powerful.

The work of Mikhail Bakhtin deals extensively with parody, both in literature and in dialogic interactions. In the context of the data presented here, Bakhtin’s theories of “carnival” (1984a) and “double voicing” (1984b, 2004) are especially pertinent. Bakhtin’s theory of carnival, first explored in his book *Rabelais and His World* (1984b), is centred on the carnival traditions of the European middle ages where parody was used to temporarily overturn the traditional hierarchies of the ruling families and the church, and the less-powerful majority were allowed to revel in their (brief and relative) freedom. Closely associated with the parody of carnival is Bakhtin’s theory of double-voicing (2004), where two often opposing positions are articulated by one voice (discussed in more detail later in this chapter). Although this has been explored most thoroughly in literature its potential as a framework for understanding dialogue, particularly in schools, has been more recently utilised (Baxter 2014, Blackledge & Creese, 2009; Iddings & McCafferty, 2007). Unsurprisingly, given its political capacity, parody in schools occupied a position of tension between adult- and child-centred cultures within the school. Just as in Bakhtin’s depiction of carnival, children and adolescents frequently utilised parody to undermine the cultural hegemony of adults, often in full view of the adults who they were undermining. In the first part of this chapter, I will be discussing young people’s use of parody as a destabilising, transformative, and unifying tool that furthered the youth-oriented project of playfulness across all four schools.
Parodic Interactions: Embodying Carnival

Throughout the four case study schools there were many examples of short, parodic exchanges that were used by the participants to explore, critique, and contextualise their musical interactions. Frequently, these musical exchanges served to undermine traditional power-relations, such as the hierarchy that exists between teachers and children. However, they were also used to explore differences in class, gender and ability. Bakhtin (1984a) argued that the dark-edged playfulness of parody fundamentally embodied the carnivalesque, and consequently it “celebrate[s] temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; [and] it mark[s] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions” (p. 10). Thus, parody has become a means of communication that is implicitly understood by school-aged children as a subversive but apparently harmless mode of interaction that lies beneath the “official” school-life and adult-centred social field. Parody, therefore, helps to maintain what Corsaro (2015) terms the “underlife”. As with the carnival, the underlife of school children is mostly tolerated by adults on the grounds that it is not generally harmful to the accepted social order. Furthermore, the distancing and humorous effect of parody means that subversive musical interjections can be socially compartmentalised as play, and thus their political effect can be mitigated if necessary (by either adults or children).

One commonly used parodic tactic in both primary and secondary schools was the inappropriate use of “silly” voices. In Oakwood Primary, in the UK, silly voices were frequently used by Arthur (aged 5) and Anwyn (aged 7) to amuse their peers, especially when involved in singing activities led by adults. Both were regarded by their friends as being “funny”, and both worked hard to maintain the status that this conferred on them. For Anwyn, most of her musical joking was based around singing in a loud operatic voice, which used a great deal of over-the-top vibrato, and was often out of tune. Moreover, during my first period of data collection at Oakwood (December 2012), Anwyn repeatedly made her friends laugh by saying the word “darling” in a similarly operatic fashion, which had been stylised to such an extent that it had become a musical utterance; starting on a high pitch with a heavy vibrato for the drawn-out “dah…” and then falling in a large glissando to a very low pitched “ling”. For Anwyn, this parody was contextualised within her own high musical ability, (making the out-of-tune operatic singing especially funny for her peers), her middle class-ness, and her aspiration to be a performer. Of course, part of the enjoyment was the extent to which the poor singing irritated her teacher, both in class and in extra-curricular choir rehearsals.
However, as well as allowing Anwyn to subvert the assumed power of her teacher through disrupting group performances, the choice of an operatic voice suggests that she was simultaneously challenging adult conventions of “good” singing; e.g., opera. This is typical of a carnivalesque desire to enact inversion (Halnon, 2006), whereby “the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, [or] abstract,” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 19) is achieved. Anwyn’s “operatic” singing can be subsequently read as a double attack on the “high”, through the way it undermines both her teachers and classical art music. It may also have been used as a “distancing” tactic by Anwyn, to bring her closer into line with her peers and their interests by explicitly mocking an easily recognised symbol of “poshness” (a trait she might otherwise have been accused of).

Similarly to Anwyn’s politically charged parody, Arthur’s silly singing also concentrated mostly on playing with pitch. In several examples, Arthur sang with either a very high, overly nasal voice, or with a very deep voice, both of which were clearly outside of a comfortable vocal range for him. In one example, the class was rehearsing a Christmas carol, which Arthur himself had identified as a lullaby, a “sweet one for the little babies, to calm the little babies down for to go to bed” (Observation, Oakwood Primary, 18 December 2012). In the final chorus, Arthur’s teacher prompted “best voices now, look at me…” which Arthur took as a cue to sing in a very low, harsh, and quite loud voice. Arthur clearly understood that this was not his best voice, and that it certainly did not fit with the style of the music. Throughout his performance he looked around at his peers, inviting them to appreciate his parody. The teacher responded by saying to the class:

MRS S: I want you to remember two things… first, sing it with a sweet voice, with your sweetest voices. Second thing, take a nice breath to get to those high notes. [Chants in a low, growly voice] I have somebody singing down there, like a big brown bear. (Observation, Oakwood Primary, 18 December 2012)

In this case, the parodic intention of Arthur has been missed by his teacher, who actually responds with a parody of her own. The class (including Arthur) laughed both at Arthur’s parody and at their teacher’s parody, creating a fairly complex web of humorous dialogue realised through performative language and song. In this case, Arthur’s performance could be read as a direct challenge to authority, indeed, as the very essence of carnival, as he knowingly undermined his teacher’s intentions. Additionally, his parody could be seen as successfully subversive, as his teacher (representing the undermined authority) was seemingly unaware that the parody had taken place, assuming instead that the poor singing was a result
of someone unable to reach “those high notes”. Arthur’s delighted laughter at this point, as well as the laughter of the other children who had shared his parody at the time, can be read as both rebellious and congratulatory.

However, Arthur’s parody also demonstrated a carnivalesque fascination with the body. Bakhtin argues that the body, particularly the grotesque body, is central to carnival (Halnon, 2006), and that playing with physical taboos is key to the subversive nature of the carnivalesque. Whilst singing very high or very low may not immediately appear as taboo, especially when compared to Bakhtin’s vivid description, “the grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs” (1984a, p. 318), Arthur’s parody could arguably be seen to be at least “transgress[ing] the ordinary limits between itself and the outer world” (Halnon, 2006, p. 37). By pushing his voice to the limits, Arthur embodied his parodic intentions in a very real way, and also used his body in a way that he knew was inappropriate to the situation. Whilst neither Arthur nor Anwyn were explicitly parodying their teachers, they both used parodic interjections to disrupt the typically adult-dominated hierarchies that were present throughout the school: bringing the carnival into the classroom. This transformation of space to promote youth autonomy was further echoed in the way that many children and adolescents altered music to demonstrate and extend their ownership of learning experiences.

**Transformation and Autonomy**

One of the key characteristics of subversive behaviours are their transformative capacities. In the meta-synthesis texts, as well as in the empirical phase of the study, transformation most frequently occurred through appropriation and recontextualisation for example, the use of popular songs as clapping chants on the playground (Lill & Dieckmann, 2013; Marsh, 1999, 2008, 2012; Willett, 2011). Corsaro (2000) describes appropriation as a “productive-reproductive process” (p. 94) and suggests that recontextualisation that transforms appropriated material allows young people to “infuse meaning” (p. 94) into situations that they may not otherwise control. Marsh (1999) identifies cycles of appropriation and reappropriation as common characteristics of children’s musical play, which is facilitated by “children’s communal knowledge” (p. 6) of musical formulae. This not only stresses the centrality of both performance and composition to the musical transformations of young people, but also its social nature. This is further reflected in Willett’s (2011) consideration that such recontextualisations can allow children to repurpose “media and cultural texts,
[providing them with] a way of playing with the structures and using them for different kinds of interactions—for example, exploring femininity, friendships, fantasies or positions of power” (p. 351). Thus, appropriation and recontextualisation can be seen as a strong expression of musical agency, with practices of playground-subversion providing young people with a strong sense of autonomy.

However, recontextualisation was by no means the only way that the young people in the UK and Australia transformed music. In Oakwood, the English primary school, an important child-initiated transformation led to the empowerment of a whole school body.

The whole school is collected together for their first run through of the Christmas Carol Service. The music has been chosen by the teachers, and comprises of a range of traditional and modern Christmas carols and songs. Each class will present one song, and Class 3 (children aged between 9 and 11) will be singing Winter Wonderland (1934). In general the children don’t seem to harbour strong feelings about the song, and in rehearsal they sing without especial enthusiasm, but without seeming bored either, until they get to the end of the first chorus. At this point the children sing the final refrain “Walking in a winter wonderland” followed by a spoken echo “Wonderland”. On the spoken “wonderland” the enthusiasm palpably rises, and the children look around and grin at each other. The phenomenon occurs at the end of every chorus, and as the song goes on the spoken word gets louder and louder, and the use of a pronounced American accent becomes clearer. Although only Class 3 are meant to be singing this song, by the end of the run through the rest of the school has joined in, including some of the teachers. As I walk back to Class 1, I follow behind Harry (4) and Claude (4), who repeat the final refrain on a loop; “Walking in a winter wonderland (Wonderland!” (Fieldnotes, Oakwood Primary, 12 December 2012)

Over the next few days of rehearsal, this situation was repeated, even exaggerated. In some performances, a group of boys avoided singing any of the song apart from the spoken phrase which became increasingly extravagant. However, at no point did a teacher step in to correct the class by removing the echo, or even to rein in the obviously parodic use of an American accent. In a later interview with a group of children from Class 3, I raised the song as a topic of discussion.

ATHENA: You know in that song, where people are going “wonderland”, who made that up?

BRAITH (11): [shouts] Me!

BILL (11): Braith started it.

BRAITH: Me and Rhian [Braith’s older sister] made it up. We were sat at home and we just started doing it, and then everyone copied it.
ADAM (9): But I, I was the first one to copy.

ATHENA: So you and Rhian were just doing it at home, what, when it…

BRAITH: When it came on TV, we were just doing it then.

ATHENA: And then you brought it to school and everyone copied?

BRAITH: Yeah. (Group Interview, Oakwood Primary, 19 December 2012)

Braith was clearly very proud of her contribution, and pleased that something she did for fun at home with her sister had proved so popular at school, amongst her friends. Clearly, there was a link between the parts of the song that had been transformed by children, and the parts that the same children valued the most. The fact that it was tacitly approved by the teachers at the school made it even more socially valuable, as rather than regulating the spoken interjection the teachers empowered the students’ autonomy by allowing their transformative subversion to be incorporated without teacher input. The interjection made the song more enjoyable, and increased the ownership that the students felt over an adult-directed performance. However, this subversion could also be read as a critical commentary from the children on the choice of song. Certainly, some of the class were dissatisfied by the manner in which the song was taught, as demonstrated in Chapter 5: “Mrs S said that we didn’t know Walking in a Winter Wonderland, but most people do know it! And I thought we knew that one the easiest” (Genna, 11, Group Interview, Oakwood Primary, 19 December 2012).

Further evidence of dissatisfaction with the song could also be seen in the increasing use of an American accent for the “wonderland” addition. At multiple times in the observation period at Oakwood, children in the older Year groups (aged between 9 and 11) suggest that Americanisms were “cheesy”, a mildly derogatory term: “I just find the cheesy ones [songs] really annoying… I find that American artists are normally cheesier” (Lauren, 11, Group Interview, Oakwood Primary, 20 June 2013). Thus, the association of “cheesiness” with an American accent could suggest that the use of an overblown American accent was an indication that the children considered the song choice to be “cheesy”. Moreover, the repetition of the word “wonderland” called to mind the exaggerated enthusiasm of children’s performers, perhaps suggesting that Class 3 thought the song was “too young” for them. The insertion of the “Wonderland” refrain, particularly with its potentially critical undertones, is
an example of the ways in which young people used secondary adjustments to create a youth-mediated underlife.

**Secondary adjustments and a playful underlife.**

Secondary adjustments combine subversive behaviours with the creative co-construction of school life, leading to the creation of a space in which children are more empowered and can exercise a greater degree of agency. Children’s attempt to gain control of their lives is identified by Corsaro (2000) as one of the fundamental projects of childhood. The use of secondary adjustments allowed young people to gain a certain (in some cases, considerable) degree of control over the situations in which they found themselves. Typically secondary adjustments are established and enacted by groups of children, making it a social form of subversion with strong means to help consolidate peer cultures. This can be seen in the other children’s support (demonstrated through smiles and laughter) of Arthur’s silly singing, as well as the collaborative development of the “Wonderland” refrain. Corsaro (2000) argues that young people’s ability to “work the system” relies on their intimate knowledge of the ways that the system normally works. Subverting adult rules that appear to young people to be “arbitrary and restrictive” (p. 93) is an important part of developing a peer culture that sees itself as a powerful collective. This was demonstrated in a teacher-led music lesson in Blue Hills.

Class 1 (nine children aged between 5 and 8) are having a music lesson. Miss N has decided to start with a warm up song, and immediately the class ask if they can sing the Bumblebee song as it is a particular favourite. Miss N says no, as she has already chosen the song.

**MISS N:** We are going to start by singing some songs that we already know.

**NISHA (8):** Bumblebee! Bumblebee! Bumblebee!

[Other children in the class join in, and the noise level begins to rise substantially]

**MISS N:** No, we are going to sing another song instead.

[Large chorus of groans, interspersed with children still asking for the Bumblebee song, the noise level continues to rise]

**MISS N:** Right, hands on heads! You need to copy me and be quiet!

[She starts to perform some actions which the children copy, but others are still pleading for the Bumblebee song]
MISS N: If I see better behaviour then we might sing the Bumblebee song [a chorus of “yesssss!”], but we are going to start with the song I have chosen. Who remembers the Penguin song?

NISHA: [Sings] I’m a penguin! Penguins, attention!

LACHLAN (7): I don’t see why we couldn’t have just voted.

MISS N: We will sing the Bumblebee song after. (Fieldnotes, Blue Hills, 5 February 2013)

In this example, the group of Class 1 children led by Nisha and Lachlan subverted their teacher’s decision highly effectively through a combination of behaviours designed to disrupt normal classroom practice: talking over their teacher, ignoring her normal disciplinary signals such as copying actions, and generally being loud and rumbustious in what was usually a calm space. Moreover, Lachlan’s calculated allusion to democracy was designed to appeal to ideals normally upheld in the classroom. In the end, the class got what they wanted and were allowed to sing the Bumblebee song, despite the consequence of the main body of the lesson being shortened due to time constraints.

Not all secondary adjustments were quite so overt. Many young people found that small changes made to the adult-imposed rules were generally accepted, or at least ignored by their teachers. An example of this was seen in both secondary schools over the possession and use of mobile phones. Technically, none of the children in this study were meant to have a mobile phone in school, and certainly, none were meant to use phones in class time. However, there was a casual acceptance amongst teachers that mobile phones were permitted if they were not seen. Despite this tacit agreement I documented a vast number of examples of mobile phone use in lesson time, particularly at times when young people were in practice rooms and thus away from their teacher’s potential eye, but also in some cases in front of adults. In both secondary schools, the use of technology in schools was a significant part of the social psyche of the underlife as many adolescents saw the use of mobile technologies as a typically youth-oriented practice that helped to distinguish them from the adults of the school. Throughout all four schools, those practices most commonly associated with children and adolescents were used effectively to subvert adult rules and contribute to a thriving, youth-mediated underlife. One such youth-oriented practice was the demonstrable and innate physicality of young people, and their tacit acceptance that embodied understanding was as legitimate as verbal articulation.
Physicality

Across all four schools, young people’s musical movement was ubiquitous. In one art lesson, for example:

The whole school is using watercolour pencils to colour and paint a range of animal pictures. The whiteboard is streaming YouTube, and the teacher in charge is taking requests. *Chicken Fried* (2008), a well-loved country song is playing, and the children across the classroom variously sing along, nod in time with the music, or perform small dance moves. One girl rocks her feet forwards and backwards in time with the music, co-ordinating the movement with her pencil strokes. (Fieldnotes, Blue Hills, 5 February 2013)

The paramount importance of movement and the body to learning was evidenced in the many examples of embodied understanding which were found throughout the meta-synthesis texts. Allusions are frequently made to the fact that the participants often knew or understood more information than they could articulate verbally. This wordless understanding was eloquently and personally explored by Davis (2008), “there are things that I know through my body that, through the experience of living, I no longer need to articulate in words, or for which articulation is redundant” (p. 69). Unfortunately, in some cases, embodied understanding proved a barrier between children and adults as young people were unable to articulate their understanding in a way that teachers found appropriate. Bickford (2011) suggests that, at the heart of the miscommunication between teachers and children is a tendency for children to accept embodied understanding, whereas schools value “instrumental communication” (p. 219) the essence of which is decontextualisation and critical reflection (supported by appropriate vocabulary). Throughout the informal learnings documented in the meta-synthesis literature, embodied learning and embodied understanding were verified as important and valid forms of learning and understanding, providing a contrast to the instrumental communication that is commonly equated with more traditional pedagogies. This paradigmatic shift, when enabled, allowed young people to engage personally and meaningfully with music in ways which supported their developing musical agency. Within this section, I consider the ways that young people used their body to both engage with music and extend their musical agency, a phenomenon once again characterised by the tension between parody and perceptions of authenticity.

Musical Movement: Physical “Double-Voicing”

In the case study schools, movement, both stylized and spontaneous, was one of the primary ways in which young people engaged with music. Movement was used to convey
engagement as well as mood, emotion, and sociability; furthermore as a social tool, movement was clearly invaluable and aided communication between peers as well as between children and adults. Finally, musical movement was able to assert and support musical agency, even in spaces where young people’s agency was limited. As with other forms of musical expression, movement was subject to parody as a manifestation of autonomy. Indeed, physical parody was very common throughout all the case study schools where popular clapping games, dance moves drawn from popular culture, and gestures appropriated from teachers and other influential adults were all subjected to appropriation and recontextualisation. To explore this further, I focus on two examples: one from a group of young dancers in Australia, and the other a group of boys in the UK.

At Bellamy Secondary, in the UK, I conducted an interview with three 14-year-old boys who had expressed an interest in the project, and had allowed me to record their classroom music lessons for the previous few weeks. I invited them to take part in an interview to learn more about music in their everyday lives. At one point in the interview, I asked about games that the boys knew and played, including the previously described cup song.

ATHENA: What about the cup song?

BEN: My sister… God, I’m so sick of it!

LUKE: Only girls do the cup song…

BEN: I actually think that the cup song’s alright. But it’s just so annoying ‘cause my sister does it like 24/7, and there are all these videos on Facebook of, like, girls who think they’re hipster…

JOSH: I can do it!

ATHENA: Can you?

JOSH: Yeah, I can do the actual cup, but I can’t…I don’t want to sing…

BEN: Go on then.

[Josh demonstrates the cups rhythm, but gets lost after the first bar]

BEN: [to Josh] Ok, show me. [To all, shrugging his shoulders like a boxer] Ok, get in the zone. I’m going to make it up, OK? (Interview, Bellamy Secondary, 25 June 2013)

After Josh’s serious attempt, and upon Ben’s cue (“I’m going to make it up”) the boys turned their attention to creating ever-more elaborate parodies of the complex hand
movements involved in the game, until the substitute cup (a toy drum) eventually fell off the table (Figure 6.7, Video Example 6.4). At several points, Ben asked Josh to teach him, and Josh also tried to intervene when Ben (purposefully) “went wrong”; however, Josh simultaneously enjoyed and contributed to the parody even as he tried to correct the performance.

Figure 6.7. Cup game parody. From top left to right; Image 1, Ben asks Josh to teach him, and then purposefully turns the “cup” on its head; Image 2, Josh continues to teach, Ben incorporates body percussion instead of using the “cup”; Image 3, Josh gives up and Ben tries an even more elaborate “wrong” move; Image 4, Luke tries to juggle the “cup”, which ultimately results in the drum falling to the floor.

This particular physical parody can be seen as a way of distancing the boys from something that they had already acknowledged was a “girls’” game. However, the parody was somewhat more complex than this, as the boys were also demonstrating self-deprecating humour: after they had finished, Ben complained “it can’t be that hard!” despite their demonstration of the contrary. As well as parodying the tradition and their ability, the boys also present a parody of learning, positioning themselves as distanced from people who spend their time learning the game and at the same time acknowledging that they inhabit that position. Blackledge and Creese (2009) noted the same affirming/distancing tendency amongst heritage language learners in a secondary school in Manchester. They suggest that
the contrast of positive and negative views, couched in humour, is an example of Bakhtinian “double-voicing”. Double-voicing describes cases in which “in one discourse, two semantic intensions appear, two voices” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p.189). Traditionally, double-voicing has been used to analyse and critique literature, but more recently it has been used to frame an understanding of every-day, real time dialogue (Baxter, 2014; Blackledge & Creese, 2009; Iddings & McCafferty, 2007). In the case of the physical parody performed by the boys in their interview, it appears that they drew upon multiple physical “voices” to express their conflicting positions. Although Josh and Ben presented themselves as “teacher and learner”, with Josh demonstrating gestures designed to support Ben’s learning, this relationship was subsequently subverted by Ben’s performance of the “wrong” moves: using the cup wrongly (images 1 and 3) and resorting to body percussion (image 2) to maintain the rhythm. However, despite the use of incorrect movements, Ben’s performance was actually very confident and the rhythm was performed correctly, demonstrating a physical presentation of a competent performer of the game. Thus, musical movement helped Ben to articulate his complex position as a non-learner/learner, not-able/able performer of a girls/not-girls game.

Inclusive parody: “Wings”.

Within the data there were other examples of complex, intertextual physical double-voicings, which not only explored individual conflicting positions (as in the previous example), but also contributed to and affirmed the development of both friendships and a strong peer community. One example of this can be seen in data recorded at Blue Hills Public School, where it was the habit of one group of friends to dance in their break and lunch times. Each day, they used the classroom interactive whiteboard to access YouTube, from which they selected songs that they used for dance performances on the veranda. The core of the group comprised of four central dancers (all girls), with the inclusion of other dancers (both boys and girls) on an intermittent basis.

Laura was a relatively new addition to the group, despite being the only one of the group to have attended the school continuously since kindergarten. She was described by her friends as being a “good little cowgirl”, implying that she was more interested in steers, riding horses and farming than in popular music, fashion and boys. However, according to the girls (including Laura), throughout the year before I arrived at the school Laura had been joining the dancers more and more frequently. At the time of data collection at Blue Hills, Laura

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23 A “steer” is a bull that has been castrated, also commonly called a bullock.
joined in with the other girls on most occasions although she rarely danced seriously for any long period of time. More often than not, Laura engaged in dance through parody, carefully choosing parodic dance moves that made fun of popular music or her own lack of prowess rather than the other dancers. One such example occurred during a spontaneous dance to the song “Wings” by UK girl band Little Mix. Prior to the song being played, the girls had an involved discussion about the choice of song for dancing:

JESS: What song do you want on?

LAURA: Wings. Do Wings.

SUNITA: Ohhh, Natural!

LAURA: No!

LEXI: No, that’s not…

JESS: How about Beauty and the Beat?

LAURA AND LEXI: [in chorus, drawn out] No!

SUNITA: [sings] Beauty and the Beat! Beauty and the…

LAURA: [authoritatively] Taylor24 or Wings.

JESS: We’ll try Wings.25 (Observation, Blue Hills, 5 February 2013)

This exchange clearly demonstrates the extent to which Laura was involved and invested in the choice of music for the dance. Although Jess remained in control of the situation (as the eldest she frequently took on a leadership role) it is Laura’s voice that was ultimately heard, over and above the others’. However, when the song began to play, Laura remained standing to one side whilst the other girls reproduced dance moves appropriated from popular culture (Video Example 6.5). Instead of dancing seriously, Laura started to bob her head up and down, seemingly like a chicken (Figure 6.8, Image 1). This was quickly imitated by Lexi, and the two girls performed this move intermittently throughout the song. However, rather than just re-voicing Laura’s move, the other girls were inspired to attempt parodic moves of their own, including a “Walk like an Egyptian” move (Image 2). At the chorus, Laura introduced a

24 Taylor Swift, a country/pop singer from the US.
25 The songs referred to in this dialogue are Wings (2012); Naturally (2010); Beauty and a Beat (2012).
new idea, jumping up and down and flapping her hands at shoulder level each time the word “wings” occurred in the song (Image 3).

![Image of Laura performing her “wings” move](image1.jpg)

*Figure 6.8. Wings parody. From top left to right; Image 1, Laura (front, left) performs her “head bobbing” move; Image 2, Jess (in the red top) responds with a “walk like an Egyptian” dance; Image 3, Laura performs her “wings” move, jumping up and down and flapping her arms; Image 4, Jess performs a risqué “sexy” move.*

This initial affirmation then led Laura to try a second parody, one that involved more physical commitment. Interestingly, at this point Laura was not only parodying the words of the song, but also engaging in physical double-voicing; she was commenting on her own status as a dancer as well as her position as an integral member of the friendship group, who was able to mock their primary leisure pursuit without offending the others. Moreover, she was physically referencing a dance move performed by one of the members of Little Mix, albeit sped up for comic effect, and also, perhaps, the popular advertisement for Red Bull energy drinks that features a cartoon man flying in a similar style, adding layers of intertextuality to her performance.

Towards the end of this performance, the parodic framework established by Laura was exploited by Jess and Sunita, who started to perform parodies of more highly sexualised dance moves including an imaginary “grinding” move where the hips are moved from side to...
side, and an arm is waved as if slapping somebody else’s imaginary buttocks (Figure 6.8, Image 4). This move was repeated several times, accompanied by lots of giggling, and dramatic faces. By doing this, Jess and Sunita inhabited an interesting position within Laura’s parodic world. Clearly, they were making fun of the dance move itself, but also of themselves as serious dancers compared to Laura. Moreover, in this instance the girls used parody to explore the tension that they felt as young women on the cusp of adolescence, who had an unsanctioned interest in boys and sexuality. Therefore they both affirmed their own “official” position of taking dance-time seriously, and of being “grown up”, whilst simultaneously confirming their alignment with Laura and her desire to use dance humorously (Blackledge & Creese, 2009). Although there are many examples of children parodying adult culture (Bickford, 2011; Blackledge & Cresse, 2009; Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Harwood, 1987; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011), this is an interesting example of children simultaneously parodying adults’, tweens’, and children’s cultures, all in one double-voiced physical dialogue contextualised within a playful cultural routine of lunch-time dancing.

Physical double-voicing appears to be an important way through which young people are able to negotiate their sometimes complex social and musical positions. As a form of embodied expression, physical double-voicing helped young people to explore their musical agency through promoting multiple dialogic positions without compromising the articulate nature of their expression. Physical parody could be used as a form of security, helping children and adolescents alike to express themselves without fear of retribution. This had a fundamental impact on their informal learnings, enabling young people to learn and practise music that they may not otherwise have been able to access. In effect, parody created a safe context for musical, social, and physical exploration. As a result, physical parody was highly empowering. However, in adult-mediated spaces physical expression was not always seen in such a positive way, with young people often being asked to express themselves verbally rather than physically.

**Embodied Understanding: Being Physically Articulate**

In the examples documented above, we can clearly see the extent to which young people use physical action to articulate themselves, sometimes in ways that are highly nuanced and complex. Bickford (2011) argues that the tendency towards physicality is conceptualised by Western society as inherently “childish”. He claims that children’s experience of music is “ontologically immediate” (p. 246), which could explain to a certain extent why the body
plays a crucial part in young people’s learning of, and engagement with music: learning through the body is immediate, and thus is an innately obvious way of learning music. On an even more fundamental level, music is contextualised by the body; sounds processed by ears and brains are made meaningful by the reaction of the body. Constricting the body can, therefore, decontextualize musical experiences leading to the “general disembodiment of experience in relation to knowledge” that Westerlund and Juntunen (2005, p. 113) suggest is endemic throughout Western culture. However, as well as dividing the body from the mind, the constriction of the body in schools (generally achieved through spatial and behavioural limitations imposed by teachers) is also a tool of power, the demonstration of which can limit musical agency. As Bickford (2011) suggests, although “the contrast between ‘talking-about’ and ‘showing’ is one that broadly maps onto ‘adults’ versus ‘kids’”, in reality “these modes [exist] as resources through which individuals orient in relation to one another” (pp. 248–249).

The extent that some teachers decontextualize music was clearly demonstrated by Ben and Josh (performers of the comedy cup game), who were working together on a project based on Musical Futures, learning to play a song by pop artist Bruno Mars.

I walk up to Ben and Josh, who are sitting at their keyboard. Ben is wearing the keyboard headphones around his neck with the volume turned up so he can hear what he is playing, whilst simultaneously listening to the song through ear-buds connected to his mobile phone. Both boys look up as I approach. I ask them if they are enjoying themselves, and they both say yes. I ask how it compares to other topics they have covered in music.

**Ben:** It’s better. I prefer playing it to writing it. Because you don’t learn anything with writing, but when you play it you sort of like, I don’t know…

**Athena:** But what exactly do you think you are learning right now?

**Josh:** [As if I am an idiot] How to play the song…

**Ben:** [Laughs] Because I don’t really care like, about what pitch is, ‘cause, we already know so I think just playing it, if we keep playing it it’s much better, all the kids prefer it.

**Athena:** What do you mean? About pitch?

**Ben:** Because we all know what it means, so why go over it? And how it makes a difference to a song, because I don’t really care about that.

**Athena:** [Jokingly] Go on then, what does pitch mean then?

**Ben:** [Mock sighs] High and low.
ATHENA: And when did you learn that?

BEN: When I was about five. (Research Conversation, Bellamy Secondary, 10 June 2013)

This vignette demonstrates the (somewhat obsessive) tendency some teachers have to consistently repeat appropriate vocabulary, and young people’s desire to subvert this decontextualisation by avoiding the use of language that they consider to be un-meaningful. In the case documented above, we can see that the disdain with which Ben treats teacher-imposed vocabulary, and his questioning of its relevance to his understanding of music. That his teacher spends too much time “going over it” suggests that the teacher in question is unhappy with his students’ use of appropriate vocabulary, and concerned that they do not know what the terminology he uses means. However, Ben argues that this knowledge is internalised, and moreover irrelevant, and subsequently his time would be better spent engaging with the music rather than talking about it.

Throughout the empirical phase of this study, it became increasingly clear that embodied understanding was a fundamental part of young people’s overall understanding of, and engagement with, music. Furthermore, embodied learning, that is, learning through physical, non-articulated exploration, appeared to be a highly empowering act. Fundamentally, learning through the body is a deeply personal and subsequently meaningful act, and one that does not invite easy verbal articulation. That the “thinking body” is key to personal musical agency is an idea developed by Westerlund and Juntunen (2005), who argue that “the body is not only an instrument through which musical thinking takes place; the body can be taken as a conscious and explicit object of transformation” (p. 113). This emphasises the active role that the body takes in both exploring, processing, and internalising musical understanding, and examples of young people engaging with music in these ways were found throughout the informal learnings documented in the four case study schools. The musical empowerment offered by the opportunity to learn through the body was demonstrated in particular by the case of Peter, a 6-year-old boy at Oakwood in the UK, who found it difficult to play the chime bars (Figure 6.9).
Figure 6.9. Peter, (second from right) is concerned by the sound his chime bar makes.

Class 1 are rehearsing for their part in the Christmas carol service next week, a song called *It was on a Starry Night*. Mrs T has chosen a group of Year 1 children (aged between 5 and 6) to play tuned chime bars in the chorus, and Peter is one of them. The children had been given no direction, other than to play the bars “in the middle” when Mrs T conducted them. To rehearse this, Mrs T asks the chime bar group to play on their own; however, halfway through this performance, Peter begins to look concerned. At the end of their run-through, Peter looks up and says “I’ve been putting it [the beater] in the middle but it doesn’t even make a sound!” He demonstrates his problem for Mrs T, who identifies his beater grip as faulty and demonstrates holding the beater towards the middle, so that it can “quiver”. Peter tries this, but as the main problem is his deadening of the sound by not allowing the beater to bounce back after striking the instrument, changing the beater grip does little to help. Mrs T tells him “that’s better!” which is not strictly true, and moves on. (Observation, Oakwood Primary, 13 December 2012)

However, Peter was not happy with this outcome so over the course of about a week he engaged in an innovative and solitary exploration of his chime bar and beater, using some novel experiments until he was able to obtain the sound that he desired (Video Example 6.6). This included behaviours that would not usually be sanctioned by his teachers, including hitting the chime bar against the floor, and playing it loudly and very close to his ear (sadly not caught on camera). Perhaps because this exploration was conducted privately Peter’s behaviours were not challenged by his teachers and so he was empowered as he developed his musical skills, driven by his desire to creatively solve a problem. It seems clear that for Peter, as well as Ben and Josh, (indeed, for most of the young people who participated in this study) learning about music primarily through physical engagement was a natural and sensible way
of developing understanding. How teachers responded to this could either suppress or promote musical agency, which had a direct impact upon the meaningfulness of the experience.

**Summary**

The three central themes of the Playful Dimension demonstrated the extent to which musical agency was important to the young people of this study. Being able to control certain aspects of their learning experiences meant that both children and adolescents became more invested in the learning experience. Youth autonomy was often enhanced through the transformation of typically adult-mediated spaces into negotiated, or even youth-mediated spaces, through the use of secondary adjustments. By establishing a playful underlife, young people were able to create a context for learning in which they were culturally powerful.

Play was one of the primary means by which young people were able to exert their musical agency. One of the more remarkable findings was the extent to which adolescents engaged in musical play. Few studies have examined the playful practices of teenagers, and so the large amount of musical game playing that I encountered in the field was somewhat unexpected. Interestingly, the musical play of adolescents remained relatively similar to that of younger children, as teenagers opted to play games in similar contexts (such as the playground or corridor), for similar reasons (for fun, to alleviate boredom), and in a similar repetitive way. The case study game used to examine this, the cup game, was an unusual, 21st century example of the ways in which media can transform the transmission and performance practices of young people’s games. A tension between authenticity and transformation was examined and demonstrated that young people’s engagement with musical play is often complex and multifaceted. As well as the transformative potential of play, young people were shown to assert their ownership of both spaces and learning experiences through humorous parody. Parodic interactions were found across all four schools, where young people used parody to undermine and subvert adult-mediated spaces. Using carnivalesque strategies of verbal and physical parody, young people were able to develop their individual and group projects of agency throughout a variety of contexts. Moreover, those experiences in which young people had a greater degree of ownership were seen as more meaningful and valuable. Finally, physicality was shown to be intrinsic to young people’s understanding of and engagement with music. The integration of movement with music was shown to be so fundamental that many children and adolescents explored significant aspects of their
musicality exclusively through their bodies. Again, agency was expressed through an embodied understanding of music, which was accepted by young people as an entirely valid form of knowing. The use of physical parody, such as double-voicing through gesture and body language supported the extension of young people’s musical autonomy by allowing them to examine and critique their own and others’ musicality within a safe context mediated by their own bodies.

Although being playful performed different social work across the three categories of space, it retained the primary function of asserting youth agency through behaviours typically associated with childhood. Music that was learnt within a playful context became more meaningful and as a result, young people tended to enjoy learning more and to feel like they understood what they had learnt more fully. The vital importance of meaningfulness to informal learning is examined in the following chapter, “The Musical Dimension”.

Chapter 7
The Musical Dimension

Introduction

The Musical Dimension encompasses the major themes that arose from the meta-synthesis described in Chapter 3 that demonstrated young people’s understanding of, engagement with, and transmission of music. Throughout the meta-synthesis literature, the themes of the Musical Dimension were characterised by the complex layering and interaction of intimate, local, and global frameworks, and the ways in which such layering made music more meaningful for young people. Furthermore, the interpretive reproduction (Corsaro, 1992) of typically adult-mediated culture helped the young people of this study to create, curate, and consolidate unique peer cultures that were separate from but interacted with local and global adult cultures.

This chapter will examine the primary themes of the Musical Dimension in more depth, with reference to both the meta-synthesis texts and the empirical data collected in the field. In the discussion of Musical Pathways, the music that was valued by the young participants is examined for its potential to draw multiple and disparate contexts together, thus helping to produce new meaning in the lives of the children and adolescent participants. Furthermore, media is discussed as both the primary channel for the “movement” of music, and as a fundamental influence on engagement with and production of music in the lives of young people. In Multimodal Engagement, the ways that new media has informed musical understanding is furthered through an examination of the multisensory way in which young people engage with music, both on a personal and social level. An emphasis on the layering of the senses is then explored through the complex soundscapes that characterised the musical learning of both children and adolescents. Finally, in Praxial Transmission the musical and multimodal transmission of music is analysed, encompassing ideas of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and participatory performance (Turino, 2008), both of which emphasise the importance of situated action to the learning process. Throughout all three key themes, the ways which young people create and sustain their peer cultures is examined through a consideration of the production and practice of cultural routines, as well as the ways in which young people “creatively appropriate” (Corsaro, 1992, p. 168) artefacts and routines from the adult world.
Musical Pathways

The term “musical pathways” describes the routes that pieces of music took across intimate, local, and global contexts; from home to school, friend to friend, and bedroom to the global stage via YouTube. It also encompasses the ways in which music is able to join these disparate and multiple contexts together, and the social value that is generated by the musical celebration of meaningful connections between people and spaces.

It is clear that music has the potential to draw together multiple spaces. Marsh (1999) demonstrates that cycles of appropriation are characteristic of children’s songs, and shows how many different playground games draw upon popular music both in content and form. However this appropriation is not one sided, and Marsh describes several cases in which popular songs and media texts have drawn upon the music of children’s cultures. Both appropriation and reappropriation support the musical agency of young people, once again helping to define a musical space in which children and adolescents are culturally powerful (Marsh, 1999, 2008). Moreover, recontextualisation and the subsequent transformation of appropriated texts further consolidate young people’s cultural power (Grugeon, 2001; Lill & Dieckmann, 2013; Marsh, 1999; Willett, 2011). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, heightened musical agency makes content more valuable to young people. Thus, the recontextualisation of appropriated materials may lead to young people imbuing certain music with more value.

An example of heightened meaningfulness supported by recontextualisation can be seen in some of the performances of the cup game. As discussed in Chapter 6, performances of the cup game across all four school tended to replicate the performance of the game given by Anna Kendrick in the film *Pitch Perfect*, a practice which was supported by a vast number of online tutorials which reproduced her performance. However, despite this allegiance to an ostensibly adult-mediated performance (Anna Kendrick was 26 at the time of the film), the game itself was firmly associated with youth-mediated spaces and cultures. This led to some interesting examples of recontextualisation where the game was performed in adult-mediated or negotiated spaces. For example, a small group were invited by their teachers to perform the game to a large audience of both adults and children at Blue Hills’ annual performing arts night (Figure 7.1).
Figure 7.1. Performing the cup game on stage at Blue Hills’ Performing Arts night.

In this instance, the extent to which these children valued the cup game was acknowledged by the adults in the school, demonstrating a negotiated dialogue between a youth-mediated game, and an adult-mediated space. This performance could also be seen as an example of “glocalization” (Robertson, 1995), a phenomenon which Götz, Lemish, Aidman and Moon (2005) describe as the “consumption of global texts within a local context and the process of endowing them with meanings made relevant to one’s own situation” (p. 153). In this case, the act of performing a globally disseminated song in a locally valuable context added new layers of meaning for the performers, who proudly talked about the performance for some time after the event. Across all four case study schools, glocalization was observed as an important social and musical process that was manifest in a variety of ways, from the individual recontextualisation of globally disseminated music to the overarching frameworks of musical categorisation that dominated social and musical discourse.

Making the Global, Local

Glocalization refers to the process of adapting global texts through the introduction of local meanings (Robertson, 1995). This phenomenon is well documented within the context of the school playground (see Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 1999, 2008; Opie & Opie, 1985; Willett, 2011), where children have been shown to draw from globally disseminated popular culture to provide both content and frameworks for their musical play. Through the layering of local meanings, glocalization can support the formation and maintenance of social groups (Götz, Lemish Aidman & Moon, 2005; Lill & Dieckmann,
2013) and this was seen clearly in all four of the case study schools where local, social identifiers were adapted from global media. Local recontextualisation occurred in a variety of ways. Most common was the frequent repetition of global texts in local spaces, leading to the association of a particular song with a particular space over time. However alongside more simple repetitions were many examples of creative appropriation and transformation, where global texts were “localised” through a complex web of intertextual local and global referents. Some interesting examples of this practice were found in the “Camp Raps”, rap songs composed and performed by a group of girls at St Margaret’s.

The first rap that the group shared with me had been devised by four girls when they were at school camp the previous autumn. It was performed by three of the authors, alongside three other girls who had been at the camp, but had not been a part of the “rap” group (Video Example 7.1, see Appendix H for full transcription).

```
Eshays (mmm, yeah what?)
Eshays (mmm, yeah what?)
Eshays in a kayak
Eshays up a rope
Eshays doin’ shiz like
Mmm so dope
Eshays (mmm, yeah what?)
Eshays (mmm, yeah what?)
Eshay Tammy!
Eshay Millie!
Eshay Viv… yeah what?
Eshays they like… glamping
Eshays they like… camping
Eshays they like… stamping
*Stamp, stamp, stamp* Huh!
```

TAMMY (13): When we were camping out for the second night, Annie, Millie and Jen were pretending to be like lads and eshays, and it was really funny. So then we decided they were like the main eshays and that they should rap for our talent quest.

ATHENA: What’s an “eshay”?

TAMMY: A lad. Like a lass, do you know what a lass is? Like that but a lad.

CRYSTAL (14): They’re like rebels. (Research Conversation, St Margaret’s school, 13 May 2013)

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26 Part of the rap has been edited out of the video example to maintain anonymity of the participants.
Upon further research, an eshay\textsuperscript{27} was revealed to be Australian youth slang for a young, urban male, often one associated with drugs or street culture. In this rap the girls thus both appropriated and subverted urban rap culture, by replacing its common content (frequently misogynistic and violent) with the activities they had enjoyed together over the course of their time in camp: climbing ropes, kayaking, and “glamping” (glamorous camping). The use of words like “shiz” (stuff) and “dope” (good) also make reference to slang terms used frequently in rap and hip hop, which turned this cultural routine into a sophisticated parody that both confirmed their social identity as friends with a shared past through its content, but also as young, white females who are not “eshays” through the process of othering inherent to the parody. This othering was highlighted by the performance itself, in which the girls utilised physical gestures common to rap artists, such as bobbing the head up and down languorously in time with the music, and sweeping hand movements. They also adopted a stylised American accent, and a lower pitched voice for the performance. The combination of text and its realisation presented a multimodal intertextual composition that was both parodic but also locally meaningful to the girls. This meaningfulness was apparent through the rap’s social and deliberate composition, and its refinement over a period of time. The group effort expended in composing the rap as well as its later performances worked to consolidate the friendship group. Interestingly, whilst the authorship of the composition was attributed to three girls, additional friends were welcomed into the performance, suggesting a mutual feeling of shared ownership. This perceived shared ownership may have been due to the existence of other camp raps, making this performance just one of a larger genre of localised composition.

Whereas the first rap that I observed played on the parodic juxtaposition of a collective understanding of urban culture with a shared experience, the second rap that the girls performed to me (which had actually been composed a year earlier) drew together a large variety of cultural references into a highly intertextual performance (Video Example 7.2, see Appendix H for full transcription). By bringing together many different popular cultural references the girls created a musical bricolage (Bishop, 2014) of memories and in-jokes which consolidated their friendship and their attitude towards the school-organised camping trip, as well as localising shared global texts (Table 7.1).

\textsuperscript{27} It seems likely that “eshay” is a pig-Latin term, a shortening of the phrase “eshay adlay”, or “lad sesh” (short for session).
Table 7.1

*Intertextual referents in the second camp rap.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Additional Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dun nun nun nun nun nun nun nun we’re so funky fresh, we’re so,</td>
<td>The tempo increases, and the girls use an affected voice that appears to be copied from female hip hop/rap artists such as Nicki Minaj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun nun nun nun nun nun nun nun we’re so funky fresh, we’re so,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun nun nun nun nun nun nun nun we’re so funky fresh, we’re so,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh, fresh, fresh, fresh, fresh, fresh, fresh, fresh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put it in your cup, put it in your cup (woo!)</td>
<td>The words are delivered very quickly, and the “woo” is considerably higher in pitch, typical of electronic dance music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put it in your cup, put it in your cup (woo!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put it in your cup, put it in your cup (woo!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put it in your…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cup cup</td>
<td>The chant breaks down a little as the girls seem to forget what comes next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Nonsense sounds(^{28}) in the same rhythm as the previous section)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything’s in a cup!</td>
<td>Sung as a dramatic line, reminiscent of musical theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cup, cup, cup-cup cup, cup, cup!</td>
<td>Sung to a “punchline” melody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read between the lines…</td>
<td>The girls each hold up their middle three fingers, and sing over a minor third, imitating Jack Black’s character in <em>School of Rock</em> (2003).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{28}\) Based on the girls’ discussion of the lyrics, these nonsense sounds may be the word “carbonara” repeated very quickly, but it is difficult to discern.
When I asked the girls to explain this rap to me, they elaborated on its complex integration of cultural references.

CRYSTAL: Penthouse 10, these lovely girls made it up. (Crystal gestures to her friends).

VIV (13): Because Maddy was crying…

CRYSTAL: Yeah, Maddy was crying because she wasn’t in our cabin, and so we were trying to make her laugh by calling it Penthouse 10

TAMMY: Their house was like a penthouse. They called it their penthouse.

CRYSTAL: And then there was “read between the lines” in this movie that we watched in camp, and so we all picked it up. And what else? Oh yeah, carbonara. There was this horrible carbonara that we were given in a cup.

VIV: Everything was in a cup!

TAMMY: We had the carbonara in a cup and it was really gross.

CRYSTAL: It was basically all in-jokes. (Research Conversation, St Margaret’s school, 13 May 2013)

The various local and global references contained within one rap musically drew together the local and global contexts in which these girls conduct their musical lives. The positioning of the risqué “read between the lines” at the end of the rap recontextualises this quote. In the film, Jack Black’s character (who is frequently aligned with childishness and children’s culture) uses the line to vent his frustration at a rock band that had just fired him. In the girls’ composition, the line becomes the dramatic culmination of the whole rap: the last thing that the audience sees. As this was presented at a camp talent show, this gives the rap a distinctly challenging tone; rather than being aggressive, the quote becomes an invitation to the girls’ peers (the majority of the audience) to join in with the joke. Whether or not this was at the expense of the camp leaders is not clear; however, the last line was certainly seen as a tongue-in-cheek moment by the girls who relished its more controversial aspects. This is a clear example of the potential for recontextualised material to support young people’s appropriation of adult power (Marsh, 1999) through the localising of global texts. Moreover, the process of creating an intertextual composition not only imbued globally disseminated music with local meanings, but was valued by the girls for its potential to enhance social inclusion. In other words, both the process and the product of composition helped members of the local peer group to define their cultural values.
This is an example of what Corsaro (1992) calls a cultural routine. He argues that in the production and practice of cultural routines “social actors link shared knowledge of various symbolic models with specific situations to generate meanings while simultaneously using the same shared knowledge as a resource for making novel contributions to the culture” (p. 164). A shared understanding of cultural routines actively produces peer culture through establishing collective frameworks of interpretation. In the case of the second camp rap, for example, shared knowledge of popular culture is used to make a new piece of music. The knowledge of this piece of music was shared by a group of girls, whose repeated performance of the song made it into a routine. The repetition of those performances subsequently enabled a new interpretation of the original source material (including the “read between the lines” quote), which in turn fed back into the peer culture as a collective “in joke”.

**Local frameworks: Country versus City.**

As well as using songs and chants to delineate social groupings, young people in several of the case study schools also created large-scale frameworks of social and musical classification drawn from globally disseminated music. The most predominant of these was the perceived musical and social divide between “country” and “city” in the small rural school in Blue Hills.

**ATHENA:** So, what is “city slicker” music?

**JADE (8):** I don’t know. I know there’s Pink, and I know there is Kesha... ‘cause I don’t like them. If I don’t like them then it’s city slicker music, because I’m not a city slicker. (Research Conversation, Blue Hills, 7 February 2013)

The discourse surrounding “city slicker” or “city” music was repeated by most of the children at Blue Hills, both those who liked “city” music, and those who did not. It comprised part of a city versus country rhetoric that dominated many aspects of the children’s cultural lives. However, the ways that children used the terms differed slightly, particularly between boys and girls.

For the “country” boys at Blue Hills, the city appeared to predominantly represent bodily danger, “life in the fast lane”, and overcrowded urbanisation:

**BRODY (7):** You could get killed! You’ve got a better chance of living on a farm than in the city.

**TIM (10):** There are mad people in Sydney, you could walk home and get shot or stabbed... Of a morning you get woke up by traffic, but here you get woke up by birds
and that. I think we have had a lot of better opportunities… We can do a lot more things better than city kids. You can’t really do anything in the city unless you have a big back yard. (Group Interview, Blue Hills, 28 August 2013)

The “city” appeared to represent all the things that were not associated with their rural life, which was centred on the outdoors, farm work, and rural pursuits such as pig hunting, which were in turn framed as overtly masculine. Their understanding of the city appeared to be drawn from their parents (all of whom were born and raised around Blue Hills) and also from urban hip hop music, which they strongly categorised as a “city” genre:

**KENT (11):** ‘Cause all the city music, has like the rapping in it, and not much words. It’s all, like, fast music.

**TIM:** I prefer it when it’s slower, and not fast words in it. (Group Interview, Blue Hills, 28 August 2013)

Gibson and Davidson (2004) discuss the fluid movement of the moniker “country” in their study of Tamworth, a city in NSW that designates itself “the country music capital of Australia”. They argue that the slippage between a musical style imported from North America, and “country”, signifying rural Australia, is a crucial one… Discourses within country music—linked to its appeal to roots, the importance of “directness” and “honesty” in lyrics, and its succinct musical form—have become features of marketing Tamworth as “country” in a more generic way. (p. 390)

Thus, country music is aligned positively with a rural lifestyle that is seen as more “pure”, and “free from urban ‘nasties’ such as crime and ethnic diversity” (p. 390). This was certainly reflected in the ways in which the boys at Blue Hills discussed country music and “country” people.

However, the girls at Blue Hills tended to use the term in a slightly different way. They categorised city music as predominantly female pop, and seemed to associate a preference for city music and a city way of life with becoming more grown up. Younger girls at the school were far more likely to thoroughly reject being described as city: according to Jade for example, a city slicker is “a person that lives in the city and is dumb, and I’m not dumb and I don’t live in the city, so…” (Research Conversation, Blue Hills, August 28 2013). “City slicker” was frequently used by Jade as an insult, particularly against the older girls with whom she had a sometimes fraught relationship. Jade’s relationship with the country/city divide was particularly complex, as she appeared to regard the “city” girls with a certain
degree of longing, and she conceded that there were some non-country songs that she enjoyed: “there’s Just the way you are, there’s Set it off and... the only reason I like some of these songs is that when I’m bored I go into my [14-year-old] sister’s room and listen to some of her music. She’s like cross country, cross city” (Research Conversation, Blue Hills, August 28 2013). It appears that, for Jade at least, city music was associated with an age and lifestyle that could be defined as tweenage (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005).

For those girls who were categorised as “city slickers” by Jade, popular music was still roughly divided into “city” and “country”, and the two terms were frequently used to describe music and musicians. This led to particularly interesting conversations about performers such as Taylor Swift, whose “country” credentials but “city” songs meant that she somewhat bridged the gap:

Laura (11): I was mad about Taylor Swift. Even ask Jess, I was mad about Taylor Swift, wasn’t I? I was crazy about her. Jess put on a song

Jess (12): We are never ever getting back together

Laura: and I just kept asking her when we had to pick songs to play it, and then I listened to all other city songs.

Jade: I don’t like her, the only song I like is Our Song [Swift’s first international hit, which has a strong country style]

Sunita (11): She sings lots of good songs, some are hip and some are country.

Athena: Is “hip” the same as “city”?  

Sunita: Um, yeah.

Athena: Jade, what’s wrong with Taylor Swift? Why don’t you like her?  

Jade: She’s too city.

Laura: I’m country, and I like her.

Sunita: She [Swift] rides horses, she’s like Laura, she’s like Miss Athy, she rides horses and plays the guitar and sings...

Jade: She’s not baaaad bad...
SUNITA: She has some really good country songs, but now she’s melting into city. She started more country and she used to write songs like Love Story, but now she’s all like “never ever, ever!”²⁹ (Group Interview, Blue Hills, 28 August 2013)

This exchange demonstrates the somewhat complex ways that country and city were used as both musical and social markers. For the older girls, it was possible to be “country”, but like “city” music, as in the case of Laura. Musical preferences then became a powerful statement; through her overt allegiance to all things “country” Jade asserted her dislike of Swift in strong terms, only to back-track when the older girls pointed out Swift’s hybrid city/country persona, and compared her to Laura (whom Jade strongly admired), and myself. The creation and maintenance of the country/city framework in Blue Hills can certainly be described as an example of glocalization, in as much as it describes the mapping of local concerns onto global texts and discourses. This only serves to highlight the complex relationship between local and global musical contexts, as despite the position of resistance against homogenous, urban life that was adopted by many of the “country kids” at Blue Hills, they were using a global musical framework to articulate their social and cultural identity.

Thinking Locally, Acting Globally?

The appropriation and local recontextualisation of globally disseminated music was a common phenomenon throughout all four case study schools, in line with other studies of young people’s musical practices in school (see Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Grugeon, 1992; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 1999, 2008, 2012; Willett, 2011). However, I also frequently observed young people adding to a global pool of local texts by uploading videos to social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram (Figure 7.2), and also to video sharing websites such as YouTube.

²⁹ A line from the Swift song We are never ever getting back together, which Sunita sang in a quasi-parodic tone.
For most of the participants in this study, YouTube was used as a tool to view music videos or watch TV or movies. However, a small number of adolescents at the two secondary schools were also active creators of YouTube videos, and had their own page to distribute their work. Most of these pages were created socially with one or more friends, and were made up of a range of video types including online tutorials for playing music, cover versions of songs, comedy shows, and original compositions. Many adolescents saw YouTube as a viable financial prospect. When describing one teenage YouTube star, Tara (13) said “people make money from this. He makes money, that’s like what his family like, lives off” (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 22 October 2013). However, for those who chose to make videos, the incentive was rarely money. Tamsin, a 14-year-old aspiring comedienne explained her motivation as “I’ve always liked making other people laugh, and I thought it would be a really cool thing to do because I watch so much YouTube and I always thought it would be a cool thing to do” (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 22 October 2013). Tamsin’s YouTube channel was created by Tamsin and her friend Arabella, and featured a variety of musical and comedy sections, edited together in a fast-paced format that cut continuously from one activity to another (Video Example 7.3).
“OUR FIRST VID !!!!!!!! :):):):):):):)” is the first YouTube video by Tamsin and Arabella, published on the 1st June, 2013. After introducing themselves,30 the two girls wonder what they will do. First, they decide to dance: cut to the two girls performing parodic moves in their bedroom to the hit song Gentleman performed by Korean singer Psy (2013). The dance moves the girls include are a mixture of those performed by Psy in his music videos (for both Gentleman and Gangnam Style), interpolated with more traditionally amusing moves such as the “walk like an Egyptian”. Following a dance section, the girls decide to do “blind makeovers”, where they apply make up to each other with their eyes closed. At the end of the 2-minute video the girls conclude “that was a little bit weird”, before asking their viewers to “subscribe” to their channel; on YouTube, more subscribers generally means more views, which can lead to profit. (Fieldnotes, St Margaret’s, 23 October 2013)

Once again, this demonstrates an interesting dialogue between intimate, local, and global spaces. Filming in one of the girls’ bedrooms, a space that Baker (2004) describes as one of the most “significant, private, and immediate life space[s]” (p. 76) in the lives of young girls, Tamsin and Arabella are projecting their intimate friendship, conducted in an intimate space, onto the global stage. However, by doing so they also add to the growing corpus of local musical works that are globally accessible. Moreover, the different “scenes” in Tamsin’s video such as giving her friend a “blind make over” are examples of local traditions that have been spread through YouTube, supporting Robertson’s (1995) point that “globalization, in its most general sense as the compression of the world as a whole, involves the linking of localities” (p. 35). This “linking of localities”, facilitated by musical engagement, was seen even more clearly in the online practices of some adolescent music fans who used social media to stay up to date with their favourite artists and to interact with a global fandom.

**Being a Belieber.**

At St Margaret’s, in Sydney, I met my first true Belieber, Daisy (13). Beliebers are super fans of the Canadian artist Justin Bieber, a musician associated with the growing ability for new media to create superstars; at the age of just 13, Bieber was “discovered” by a talent manager who was browsing YouTube and happened to see a video of Bieber in a talent show. Supported by his predominantly-tweenaged fans, Bieber’s rise to fame has been somewhat meteoric and since 2009 he has had multiple top-ten hits across the world, including Australia and the UK. Bieber’s most ardent fan group the “Beliebers” are mostly girls and their youth, gender, and often semi-obsessive behaviours leave them open to significant amounts of

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30 This section is cut from the video example to maintain anonymity
criticism (Saunders, 2010). Certainly, the way that Daisy described her fandom highlighted some of the obsessive tendencies for which many Beliebers are critiqued:

I don’t know… I think there are different levels, um, I guess some people just like call themselves Beliebers but they’re not. Like there are fans of Justin and they always just want to see him with his shirt off and always just don’t care if he’s smiling, just that he’s there. And Beliebers, we care that he’s happy and like some Beliebers are like over crazy, like they can just be weirdly stalker-ish, but I don’t think that’s even the top layer. I guess the top layer are just the ones who have been there from the beginning, all the way and the bottom are the ones that just think they are but they’re not, they’re secretly just fans. Like everyone wants to be called a Believer, but like one of my friends, I’m not saying their name, they think they are a true Believer but I don’t know. They keep saying things, like fault him. They’re like “oh, he was caught smoking, or I don’t like what he’s wearing there…” True Beliebers don’t care what he is wearing, he looks good in everything. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013)

For Daisy, being a Belieber was not just a small part of her identity; it framed the way that she lived her life. As well as influencing her material life (her pencil case and related stationary is all purple, as that is Bieber’s favourite colour), being a Belieber had a profound effect on Daisy’s online social life. The online community that she found through her love of Bieber was highly important to her, and enhanced her experience of being a fan.

ATHENA: What’s it like, being a Belieber?

DAISY: It’s really good, because you get to meet all these people who are also Beliebers so it is really good like socially, and like, I’ve got a Twitter account and it is a fan page for him, and you can talk to people, like when they follow you and you follow them back. So I’ve met like heaps of people, and some of them are even going to the same concert as me in 36 days—I’m really excited—so I’m going to get to meet loads of people. It like, brings people together and you get to follow like, your idol who you love, and you get to find out where he is and what he’s doing and if he’s feeling ok. So yeah, it’s really good. (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013)

Online, Daisy had a strong presence: active on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. However, being a Belieber allowed Daisy’s online and offline lives to intersect. For example, over the course of the second half of 2013, Bieber launched “Music Mondays”, where he released one new song online (there were no physical copies produced) on 10 consecutive Mondays, which together formed the album *Journals* (2013). To celebrate and promote this, Daisy and a friend downloaded and printed out posters which they distributed throughout public places in Sydney. Although it is quite easy to see this as a brilliant, cost-effective, and exploitative form of marketing on the part of Bieber’s managing team, for Daisy this allowed her to publicly
express her devotion to her “idol”, and was in fact an empowering act. Given the value that Daisy placed on Bieber’s music, sharing her online love with her offline friends could have potentially been socially risky. Indeed, when Daisy discussed this, it was possible to see that some of her friends may have become a little exasperated with her: “I bug everyone at school, I’m like ‘OK guys, you need to go home and listen to this song, and next Monday you have to listen to another one’. And they’re like ‘Oh Daisy, gosh!’” (Group Interview, St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013).

Daisy’s experiences as a Believer demonstrates some of the ways in which the process of interpretive reproduction contributes to the production of youth cultures. Corsaro (2000) notes that “children are, by their very participation in society, constrained by the existing social structure and by social reproduction” (p. 92). In Daisy’s case, her experience of being a Believer was restricted to a certain extent by the ways in which Bieber’s management behaves, which photographs they publish, when they decide to tour Australia, when a new CD is released. Although Daisy may have felt as though she was behaving autonomously, her actions were often constrained by the adults around her: for example, the day that she distributed posters was chaperoned by her mother, and she was unable to meet many of her online friends as they lived in other parts of the country. However, what Daisy was able to do was act within these constraints to creatively produce her fandom. Using online sources allowed her to make a meaningful contribution to the online peer community by learning and repeating their cultural routines (for example, buying purple commodities). Moreover, the peer community collectively interpreted the images of Bieber distributed by the media by actively selecting those that contributed to a positive concept of Bieber, and explaining away those that did not. Although it is possible to see Daisy’s love of Bieber as completely uncritical, this lack of criticism is in fact a framework of collective interpretation and fundamental to her self-concept as a Believer. Collectively, the cultural routines of Bieber fandom stipulate that the “highest” form of fandom is one that is caring, non-judgemental, and loving in an almost platonic way. Thus, by reproducing these behaviours, Daisy was able to contribute to a global peer culture which revolved around the fandom of one celebrity, mediated through online actions.

Multimodal Engagement

Jensenius (2007) suggests that music is a “multimodal phenomenon”, (p. 14), and Webb (2007) argues that the majority of human interaction with music is itself also multimodal. The
term “multimodal” in this context refers to the integration of multiple modes of communication, including auditory, visual, spatial, and kinaesthetic (Breeze, 2011). Throughout the texts in the meta-synthesis, multimodal engagement with music was clearly demonstrated across all ages of participants. Bishop (2014) highlights the importance of touch and gaze to the performance of clapping games (p. 53), and stresses that many children’s musics rely on multimodal transmission. Whilst a multimodal experience of music is not unique to the 21st century (Webb, 2007), the increasingly expansive use of handheld, digital technologies that support multimodal media has facilitated a culture of immediate access to music integrated with visual forms. Miller and McVee (2012) argue that “it is clear that in 21st century social and cultural contexts, meanings are more and more represented multimodally—with images, sounds, space, and movement representing and communicating meaning” (p. 2). The way that the young participants spoke about their music listening practices often revealed a multimodal aspect to their engagement. In one example, 14-year-old Ellie described the evolution of her musical taste:

In Year 7 I was like JLS, JLS! [A pop boy-band featured on the UK X Factor television programme]. But then I met other people, like Amy, and they told me about You Me at Six [a British rock band] and I started listening to their music, ‘cause when you listen to something, then other suggestions come down the side, and so then I’d click on them, and then I’d tell these guys [the other girls in the interview, part of her friendship group]… I remember, I got you into You Me at Six… I played you a song, and then you went home and listened to them. (Group interview, Bellamy Secondary, 14 June 2013)

The first band mentioned by Ellie, JLS, rose to fame in 2008 on the UK television programme The X Factor, a music competition in which the boy band placed second. As Ellie’s music teacher at that time (two years prior to the above interview) I can remember her profound love of the band, particularly as she covered her music book in pictures of the band members cut out from magazines. However, it is her discussion of the second band which demonstrates the extent to which a multimodal engagement with music pervades her musical experiences. Her descriptions of “other suggestions [coming] down the side” is a reference to YouTube and that website’s practice of displaying related videos. This suggests that Ellie commonly used YouTube to “listen” to music, demonstrating a conflation between listening and watching that is not always immediately discernible. Across all four schools young people described YouTube as one of the most commonly used ways of accessing popular music, meaning that for many of the participants listening to music is often, equally, a visual experience.
Multimodal Learning: Audio-Visual Media

Throughout the empirical phase of this study, it was clear that young people consistently integrated aural and visual sources to support both the learning of musical works for performance and their own production of musical compositions. In all four schools the importance of new media (particularly websites such as YouTube) was made clear. Webb (2007, 2010) argues that the music videos shared on YouTube have great potential for learning, and categorises them by content into four distinct types: performance (where the visual content references the performance of the aural content), notational (including staff, graphic, and graphic-impressionistic), narrative, and conceptual (p. 316). Many young people highlighted the importance of music videos and video platforms such as YouTube to their learning. For example, when I asked 13-year-old Anja about her guitar learning practices she said “I don’t have lessons. I’m quite chilled out. YouTube teaches me” (Fieldnotes, St Margaret’s, 5 March 2013). When I questioned her in more detail, Anja went on to describe her preference for learning from videos online. Although she used to have flute lessons, she gave them up as she found the format too restrictive, and instead she chose to learn the guitar by watching a combination of video tutorials and the videos for specific songs that she wants to learn.

Although the sort of practice described by Anja is typically situated in the home (a negotiated, or even youth-mediated space), when given the opportunity many young people in adult-mediated spaces such as the classroom also chose to learn from YouTube. For example, the Year 8 students involved in a Musical Futures project at St Margaret’s frequently used YouTube videos as learning aids, certainly to learn lyrics but also to identify and practise instrumental parts. Of all of Webb’s categories, it was performance videos that were most commonly used to identify the instruments in the aural track. For example, the narrative performance track for *Keep Your Head Up* by Andy Grammer (2011) was used by one group of girls to determine the piano part; after watching the lead singer perform on a keyboard (Figure 7.3) the girls realised that the piano played accompanying chords, rather than the melody.
Figure 7.3. Video imitation. Left: Andy Grammer plays the keyboard in his song *Keep Your Head Up*; Right: One girl imitates his movements while watching the video, before telling the rest of her group “it’s chords” (Observation, St Margaret’s school, 12 March 2013).

Whilst performance videos were most frequently used as instrumental models, notational videos were used to learn specific instrumental lines. Although some of the girls at St Margaret’s used traditional Western notation found online or featured as part of a music video, many more used notational videos more closely aligned with video games such as Guitar Hero (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4. Video notation. One girl uses two forms of video notation for the same song; Left: a midi-notation video similar to video game Guitar Hero (Observation, St Margaret’s, 18 March 2013); Right: self-scrolling Western notation viewed on an iPhone (Observation, St Margaret’s, 5 April 2013).

As well as using video clips as learning tools, the visual content of certain videos was itself intrinsically important and often highly motivational (Benson, 2012). Enjoyment of the audio-visual experience prompted some children to make their own aural or multimodal interpretation of favourite songs (see later in this chapter, “Producing multimodal texts.”). At St Margaret’s school for example, one group of girls had chosen to perform the song
*Breezeblocks* by Alt-J initially because of the somewhat macabre nature of its accompanying narrative video.

The final group of videos that was commonly used at St Margaret’s comprised video tutorials. This form of video does not fit comfortably into Webb’s (2010) schematic as its purpose is not to accompany an auditory track but to teach people how to play certain instruments, or specific instrumental lines. These video tutorials are what Miller (2012) calls “amateur-to-amateur” videos, with content uploaded by interested amateur instrumentalists that is designed to aid other interested amateurs. At St Margaret’s, one group extensively used such videos to learn the various instrumental parts for *Domino*, by British artist Jessie-J.

Reviewing these videos was treated as a group effort by the girls, who helped each other decode any unfamiliar terminology used and translate it into directions that they were able to follow (Video Example 7.4). Interestingly, watching as a group allowed the girls to overcome some of the main limitations of online video tutorials as discussed by Miller (2012):

> we still have to learn from other people’s bodies, finding a way to comprehend their kinaesthetic knowledge and make it our own… our current online media formats seem ill suited to this purpose: two-dimensional, with a radically impoverished sensorium (just sight and sound), and often lacking real-time interaction. (p. 183)

By watching video tutorials together, the girls were able to supplement their understanding with real-time social interaction, group-sourcing the visual/verbal to kinaesthetic translation: as one of the girls observes, “they have a pinkie there”, before pointing closely at the place on the guitar being held by her friend (Observation, St Margaret’s school, 5 April 2013). In this way, the group incorporates social and kinaesthetic interaction into something that could otherwise be purely audio-visual. Interestingly, however, at the end of the Video Example the girls actually turn their kinaesthetic experience back into a visual one, taking a photograph of the guitar player’s hands to record a visual model for future reference.

Many of the groups at both St Margaret’s and Bellamy Secondary created visual recordings of their performances to support their learning. Making such recordings was often a highly enjoyable experience and in most cases, the adolescents used their phones (which were prohibited at both schools), sometimes sending the recordings that they had made to their friends. Although the recordings appeared to be made predominantly to document their achievements, many of the videos were subsequently used to critique their musical development, and to allow the groups to identify areas for future improvement (Video
Example 7.5). It could perhaps be that observing themselves on video allowed the participants to more easily compare their performances with the performances they were trying to replicate. Whilst this may be because it provided them with a certain degree of critical distance, it could also be due in part to the adolescents being able to observe their own creations as an audio/visual product, bringing it into line with the models that the groups were using. Certainly, the group in Video Example 7.5 were most keen to hear the part of their rehearsal where they performed on their own, rather than along with the recording. This contrasted strongly with their real-time preferences, where most of the group wanted to spend most of their time playing alongside the original performance amplified through the computer. Throughout the period in which the girls listened to their performance, they made a variety of positive and negative comments that ultimately supported their development as individual and group musicians. Interestingly, these comments were not just limited to the musical performance, but included rehearsal technique: such as the drummer who, hearing herself play continually through a time in which the rest of the band were having a discussion, said “I really need to shut up”. Of course, producing multimodal texts such as these videos was not always for educative purposes. There were many other examples of children and adolescents creating videos for more aesthetic reasons.

**Producing multimodal texts.**

Webb (2007) suggests that young people are immersed in a media environment that encourages an understanding of music as a visual, as well as aural experience. Therefore it is not surprising to find young people producing their own multimodal aural/visual texts, such as the YouTube video featured in Video Example 7.3. Although the YouTube video created by the teenagers at St Margaret’s was primarily focussed on comedy, other videos were produced that were more directly focused on music. One example of this occurred at Oakwood where I observed the creation of a music video. Using the iPhone app *Video Star*, a group of four 11-year-old girls decided to spend their free time creating a video to accompany the Taylor Swift song *We are never ever getting back together* (2012) (Video Example 7.6).

*Video Star* was a highly popular app, which in 2013 was available exclusively for Apple products (such as iPads and iPhones). It worked by allowing users to select any song from their music library and then modify both pitch and tempo independently, before filming themselves lip-synching along to the song in its new form. Typically users filmed separate, short video clips of a line or more through a variety of filters before splicing them together to
create a video for the whole song. The video was then stored in the app and could be digitally shared with friends or strangers in a variety of ways, including a facility for directly uploading to YouTube. For the girls at Oakwood, much of the appeal of the app appeared to lie in the endless customisability of the video, and a great deal of time was spent choosing appropriate filters and framing each shot accurately (Figure 7.5).

![Figure 7.5. Some of the filter options used by the girls in their Video Star version of We are never ever getting back together.](image-url)

The girls spent around 25 minutes shooting the two and a half minute video. The video that the girls created could be described as both a performance and conceptual video, with some narrative elements, such as the “phone” shot seen in the bottom right image of Figure 7.5. Moreover, some of the shots that the girls included were reminiscent of the narrative music video that accompanied the release of Swift’s song, including the range of “solo” and “group” scenes. Throughout the duration of the film-making process, the girls were constantly attuned to making their performance appear as professional as possible; scenes were shot and edited multiple times, and each girl rehearsed her solo part before her section was shot to ensure that her lip-synching was accurate. Of the four girls, Carla (11) was far less familiar with the song than the other three. To make sure that Carla was equally included in the activity, Braith (11) coached her through each scene (Video Example 7.7): going through the words and actions with her before she shot her solo, and standing off camera to mouth the lyrics for her as Carla performed. As with the girls learning the guitar at St Margaret’s, this multimodal engagement supported Carla’s learning of a new song. However, it also emphasised the importance of
inclusivity; the girls clearly relished the opportunity to make music together, as a group. Braith, the girl who owned the app stated “when you do it in the group it’s just a bit of fun. But if you try to do it seriously [on your own] then you look like a bit of a banana” (Research Conversation, Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013). The self-consciousness associated with making a video on her own was further evidenced by Braith’s reticence to show me a video that she had created on her own, at home. Stored on her phone, Braith had many different videos that she had made either with her sisters or with her friends, suggesting that passing the time together making music videos was a common activity. All four girls clearly enjoyed both the social and aesthetic challenges involved in the creation of an audio-visual text. Moreover, the act of making such a video at school seemed to add to the enjoyment of the experience. Generally, phones were not allowed in school, and the girls had been given special permission to bring theirs to school (or at least, take them out of hiding) for the purposes of an interview with me. The decision to create a video was a spontaneous one, and the girls all seemed to particularly enjoy incorporating items associated with school into the video: for example, the papier-mâché head that had been made by two of the girls (see Video Example 7.6). The incorporation of multiple modes of engagement alongside the different spaces that occurred when this group produced their video was further enhanced by the way that the video brought together multiple spaces. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the legitimising aspects of linking intimately valuable music with typically adult-mediated spaces were often very important to young people. In this creative activity multiple spaces were drawn together via a multimodal production that helped to make both the video and the process of its creation more meaningful.

The legitimacy derived from combining youth-mediated music with adult-mediated spaces is also reflected in the very act of creating a multimodal text. Music videos are globally recognised texts that are typically associated with high-end production and successful recording artists. This suggests that the girls’ production of a music video could be seen to be another example of interpretive reproduction. Corsaro (2015) suggests that children “strive to interpret or make sense of their culture and to participate in it. In attempting to make sense of the adult world, children come to collectively produce their own peer worlds and cultures” (p. 23). By making a music video, this group of girls was interacting with the artefacts of adult culture but transforming them to suit their own purposes. Rather than simply reproduce the music video that they had seen many times, the girls created their own interpretation, revealing in the process those cultural artefacts which were most meaningful to them.
**Soundscapes**

One of the unanticipated findings from the meta-synthesis was the extent to which each learning context was saturated with sound. Almost every ethnographic account of informal learning included some notes on the sheer volume of sound in which young people were happily musicking. Campbell (2010), for example, wrote about the “tremendous variety of sounds, movements, styles, and interactions” (p. 22) that she observed in one school playground, and the “undiscernible din of sounds” (p. 37) that she experienced in a school cafeteria. In these youth-dominated, and generally loosely regulated cases, a vibrant soundscape was not unexpected; however, even in more controlled environments there were accounts of vastly rich tapestries of music and other sounds. Lum (2007) described the “countless examples of pupils engaging in… all kinds of body percussion” (p. 110) that he found in a kindergarten classroom, and Davis (2008) the “cacophonous patchwork sound” (p. 198) that filled her classroom. The extent to which young people were comfortable working in spaces dominated by competing sounds was certainly reflected in the empirical phase of this study, and vibrant soundscapes were observed across playgrounds, classrooms, practice rooms, and other spaces. Many of the music lessons at both Bellamy Secondary and St Margaret’s involved a raucous soundscape generated by the young people themselves and the technology that they used to support their learning. In one case, a group at St Margaret’s were working on their rock song performance:

The Pink group is working on *Just Give Me a Reason*. They have the largest practice area, a double height performance space with wooden floors, filled with instruments including a beautiful grand piano. The space is dominated by drum and guitar riffs that bear no relation to the song they are rehearsing; the singers who are practising their part are drowned out by the rest of the group. Noise echoes around the space, and each instrument sounds like it is competing with the next. Despite the vast range of loud noises around them, the girls seem happy and all work on their own parts within the sonic chaos. (Fieldnotes, St Margaret’s, 2 May 2013)

This is a typical example of the soundscapes that I encountered across the music lessons of the two secondary schools, particularly when larger groups of teenagers (three or more) were working together. In Green’s (2008) study of informal learning in the classroom of British secondary schools, similar experiences were documented.

Traditionally, classrooms are places where teachers are in control, which generally means that sound levels are controlled too. Loud noises are often met with teacher reprimands (Campbell, 2010; Lum, 2007), and young people are encouraged to work in a quiet...
environment to support concentration. The findings from both the meta-synthesis and the empirical data strongly suggest that when left to themselves, young people generally prefer working in a raucous soundscape. Although this could be reflective of young people’s higher tolerance for noise it could also be seen as an act of subversion, a way of upsetting the dominant school hegemony by creating a sonic environment that is not seen to be appropriate. By working in a seemingly chaotic soundscape, these young people claim ownership of both their work and their space and create a relatively democratic context in which all voice their views and opinions at the same time. This links closely to divergent progression (see Chapter 5), as rather than progressing from one part of a learning experience to another in a calm and orderly way, these young people explore everything at once in a manner that appears to have little internal logic. Aside from being a subversive act, these vibrant soundscapes can also be seen as another example of conflating contexts. As discussed above, some school spaces, such as the playground, are expected to be loud (Marsh, 2008). By recreating that sonic environment within the cultural space of the classroom, a place rarely associated with excessive noise, young people are once again able to use music and sound to imaginatively join together multiple contexts, defining a space around themselves that asserts their cultural autonomy.

Despite what was at times a very chaotic soundscape, young people demonstrated a remarkable ability to focus predominantly on the sounds that they were individually making. This aural “blinkering” had quite surprising effects: in many cases, it appeared that young people were unable to tell if they were playing in tune with each other or not. Throughout my time in the field, I documented many different instances of young people playing for extended periods of time without noticing that they were in different keys: providing they stayed in time together, they would judge their performance to be “good”. This was certainly unexpected, given the focused listening that many of the groups displayed when paying close attention to recorded performances in order to work out which instruments were playing, or to learn a particular strumming pattern, for example. The lack of concern for key, and sometimes, pitch, was demonstrated many times across all four schools.

Instead, young people seemed much more interested in the timbre of individual instruments: teenagers at both secondary schools spent a great deal of time choosing the “right” sounds for keyboards and electric drum kits, or selecting the “right” handheld percussion. In some cases, timbre was the inspiration for composition, as in St Margaret’s
when a group of girls found that the electric drum kit settings had been changed, and it sounded “really retarded. We thought they were going to be normal and then they were all, like, ew” (Candice, 13, Research Conversation, St Margaret’s school, 2 May 2013). This inspired them to create a composition that they called “Depression Party” (Video Example 7.8), which drew together a “sad” sounding piano part that Tamsin had written at home with the newly-discovered drum sounds. Interestingly, this presents another example of a composition that drew together multiple referents and combined them into an intertextual artwork that transformed the room in which the girls were working into a negotiated space through sonic means. The melancholy opening of the composition had been written by Tamsin at home when she was “messing about” on her family’s piano. The group told me that when she played it to them in a practice room (when they were ostensibly working on their rock band project) it had reminded them of a film they had watched in assembly about teenage depression and cyber-bullying. They then contrasted this with the sounds of the electronic drum kit which reminded them of dance music, particularly the young Australian artist Flume that the girls particularly enjoyed listening and dancing to. Thus the two sonic signifiers were combined to create a new composition that was somewhat subversive, both through its irreverent reference to teenaged depression and because the girls were meant to be working on something entirely different. By surrounding themselves in a soundscape of their own making and their own choosing, the girls presented a challenge to the teachers who were meant to be responsible for their learning. However, they also created an affirming context in which they were culturally dominant, and their friendship was consolidated through the selection of particularly meaningful sounds.

Praxial Transmission

Praxial transmission, or “teaching and learning by doing” characterised the majority of transmission processes recorded in the texts of the meta-synthesis. Young people were shown to consistently gravitate towards learning music through direct contact with the music itself, playing it, singing it, or listening to it. This emphasis on “doing” was highlighted by Harwood (1999b), who describes the main features of music learning that she observed in an after-school group for girls:

These include among others: freedom of movement for learners and proximity to the models they are studying, expectation that onlookers will comment as musical performances are taking place, opportunity to learn from repeated performances of the same repertoire over a prolonged period of time, a shared understanding that physical
movement is an integral part of all musical experiences, a shared understanding that less skilled players are responsible for increasing their level of participation through practice with near-skill peers, and a shared understanding that play rather than practice provides the necessary repetition to achieve mastery. (p. 55, emphasis added)

This form of active and embodied learning is found in many contemporary studies of playground musical practice (Bishop, 2014; Marsh, 2008), and indeed, I found many examples of it across all four playgrounds.

The term praxial transmission has clear links to Elliot’s (1995, 2005) “praxial music education”, a philosophy that aims to teach music through “performing-and-listening, improvising-and-listening, composing-and-listening, arranging-and-listening, conducting-and-listening, and listening to recordings and live performances. I emphasize that music making of all kinds…should be at the centre of the music curriculum” (2005, p. 7). The praxial philosophy stresses the strong links between doing and knowing, integrating practical and mental skills in a feedback loop that promotes “reflection-in-action” (Gruhn, 2009, p. 106). At its core is a rejection of the Cartesian division between body and mind, which has long dominated Western discourse about music (Westerlund & Juntunen, 2009). Instead, the body is treated as an active agent of learning that provides an experiential, “first-person perspective” of music education. Fundamentally, by learning music through music-making participants learn music musically, akin to learning “a language by speaking and communicating (instead of being mute and memorizing a vocabulary)” (Gruhn, 2009, p. 110). Much of the discourse surrounding Elliot’s praxial philosophy resonates with Small’s (1998) call to understand music as an activity or process, rather than a reified “thing”. This belief that music is situated action draws together the highly social nature of most musical experiences with personal agency, empowering listeners and dancers as much as performers and composers.

Praxial transmission is therefore built on a belief that music itself is fundamentally a practice that is situated in the real world and is (quite literally) embodied. By conceptualising music in this way it then follows that learning music should also be practical, situated, and embodied. In this section I shall be discussing several instances of praxial transmission as it occurred in the empirical phase of this project, in particular examining the roles of active modelling and performance and including an exploration of legitimate peripheral participation as well as the importance of audience to informal learnings in music.
Active Modelling

Many of the texts in the meta-synthesis demonstrated the importance of active modelling to informal learning. Modelling, or learning through observation and imitation, is a common pedagogical technique in both formal and informal learning contexts. However, as Lave and Wenger (1991) point out, it is often given insufficient attention:

Verbal instruction has been assumed to have special, and especially effective properties with respect to the generality and scope of the understanding that learners come away with, while instruction by demonstration—learning by “observation and imitation”—is supposed to produce the opposite, a literal and narrow effect. (p. 105)

Throughout the informal learnings that I documented in my time in the case study schools, verbal instruction was used only very rarely. By far the most commonly and successfully used transmission practice was modelling, which took place often without any verbal communication at all. However, amongst these examples I also found many instances of modelling that went beyond simple observation and imitation, where the intimate relationship between the “teacher” and the “learner” was equally important as the demonstrated content. Thus the term “active modelling” helps to emphasise the two-way relationship of modelling where the observer can influence the model as much as the model influences the observer.

As the name suggests, active modelling involved a great deal of activity on the part of both the “teacher” and the “learner”. Often, modelling involved the physical manipulation of one or both participants, as bodies were used to demonstrate and non-verbally explain the desired outcomes. Physical demonstration ranged from subtle lip-synching, to overt (and often rough) manhandling. As well as being almost completely reliant on the body, active modelling was also a highly interactive process in which the actions of both the model and the observer engaged in a process of transactive communication; that is, a process of almost immediate communication and feedback. Therefore active modelling was an immediate form of transmission whereby all participants were equally engaged in communicating, transforming, and reproducing content. Songs, dances, musical games, and difficult instrumental parts were all transmitted from one young person to another through active modelling, often with very little in the way of verbal support. In many cases active modelling was used as a non-threatening way of including less-confident participants in musical activities, perhaps because the young people who frequently relied on active modelling as a technique of musical transmission recognised the option to be more or less committed to the process without negative recourse. This was demonstrated neatly by the group of dancers at Blue Hills. In the
months that I was at the school, Taylor Swift’s song *We are never ever getting back together* was highly popular and often selected by the girls. At times they were joined by both younger girls and some boys, who danced with or near them for short periods of time. Laura (aged 11) was the least confident dancer in this core group and often had to be encouraged by the other girls before she felt comfortable enough to join in. This encouragement often took the form of active modelling, which provided specific support for Laura, as described in the following vignette:

A group of seven girls, ranging in age from 5 to 12, are dancing together on the veranda. Jess, the oldest, is in charge of choosing the music for this dancing session, and has decided to put on *We are never ever getting back together*, which is loudly appreciated by the rest of the group. While Sunita and Lexi rush to the front to perform a routine they are developing, Jess stays towards the back with Laura. As Taylor Swift starts to sing, Jess leans her arm on Laura’s shoulder, and starts singing along, acting out the words with exaggerated facial expressions. Laura reciprocates, copying Jess’s acting style, taking physical cues from her friend, and aural clues from the words of the song. Over the duration of the song, Laura becomes more and more physically committed to the performance, eventually joining with Jess to include Hailey, a kindergarten girl, in their stylised, dramatic performance. By the end of the song, the three girls are dancing together in a circle, clearly enjoying themselves. (Observation, Blue Hills School, 4 February 2013)

This example demonstrates the transformative power of active modelling: a far more effective strategy in this situation than simply asking, or telling Laura to join in. By modelling her dancing expectations for Laura, Jess provided a physical support that allowed Laura to participate in the group dance, and eventually gain the confidence to actively model dance moves for another girl. For Jess, this was also an example of the ways in which active modelling can change the behaviour of the “teacher”, as much as the “learner”. Jess was most commonly found dancing very seriously, in line with her professed ambition to be a dancer in the future. She fastidiously practised complex moves to perfect them, and often choreographed dances that she taught the other girls. Thus, to use very simple moves demonstrates the extent to which she wanted to include Laura in a social activity, modifying her typical preferences in order to be overtly inclusive. Furthermore, the hints of parody present in the exaggerated movements (also seen in the same girls’ *Wings* dance in Chapter 6) supported Laura’s inclusion by removing a fear of failure. Perhaps the most important feature of this example, however, was the lack of any verbal instruction. Although the girls sang along to the song, at no point did Jess verbally explain how to dance: the transmission process
was entirely physical, interactive, and social, and typical of the many instances of active modelling that I recorded across all four schools.

This instinctive reliance on active modelling on the part of most of the young people in this study has interesting implications for informal learning in music. Bickford (2011) discusses a similar phenomenon amongst the children of a Vermont elementary school, where talk about music was “almost always indexical or mimetic (iconic), very rarely symbolic or decontextualized” (p. 245). Bickford’s attempt to engage the children in abstracted discourse about music was met with disdain on the part of his participants, many of whom appeared to be acutely uncomfortable when asked to talk about music, even when it was presented as a teaching problem (How would you describe Evanescence [a popular rock band] to your friend?). Bickford suggests that this apparent inarticulateness is a product of the ways in which young people interact with and understand music on a fundamental level. He suggests that music is “a material presence in actually occurring social situations, not an abstract object of discourse” (p. 246). Decontextualized, abstract questions about music are simply not part of children’s musical cultures, however common they are in classroom situations. For the dancers at Blue Hills, learning their dances through active modelling was (perhaps most fundamentally) fun, and they had even devised a sort of game based around their prowess at spotting visual cues. The core group of girls appeared to gain a great deal of pleasure through creating improvised choreography, making it a highly social, as well as educational, experience. This was demonstrated very succinctly by a breathless exchange after the performance of a particularly exhilarating (improvised) dance routine (Video Example 7.9):

SUNITA: We just... see how I was looking at her when [we danced]... I was just picking up the moves from her.

ATHENA: Oh, so you haven’t practised that one before?

SUNITA: No, we just did it…

ATHENA: Oh, you just did it, just like that? And so you were looking at her to copy the moves, and she was looking at you to copy the moves…

SUNITA: Yeah. And that’s how we make it, that’s how we make stuff. (Research Conversation, Blue Hills School, 6 February 2013)
Legitimate peripheral participation.

Active modelling also took place on a macro scale through processes of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) facilitated learning through inviting the participation of new members. As a framework, legitimate peripheral participation has been used to analyse and understand the learning that takes place in many different communities of (musical) practice (Harwood, 1998b; Karlsen, 2009; Koopman, 2007; Partti & Westerlund, 2013; Westerlund, 2006), particularly those that are based around informal ways of learning music (such as music festivals), or where an emphasis on praxis is inherent to the community (such as garage band participation). Of particular interest to this study is Harwood’s (1998b) work, where legitimate peripheral participation is applied to the analysis of musical games on a school playground. She argues that the social structure of the playground constitutes a community of practice, as it is constituted of “identifiable newcomers, old-timers and adepts, and a host of participants placed somewhere along the continuum of participation from onlooker to what Lave and Wenger (1991) call ‘full participants’” (p. 54). Furthermore, the “blurred line between the roles of performer, listener, and critic” (p. 56) is indicative of legitimate peripheral participation, where “the apprentice engages by simultaneously performing in several roles” (Hanks, 1991, p. 23). In both NSW and England the vast majority of children’s engagement with music took place in social settings, often in friendship groups. In some cases these groups clearly constituted a community of practice, and legitimate peripheral participation with and through music enabled meaningful social and musical learning to take place. In the collection of dancers at Blue Hills, for example, the core group of older girls could be considered the “old-timers”, with the younger girls and boys constituting a group of “newcomers”. In the cases of larger group dances, it is possible to see how the group behaved as a community of musical practice, in which legitimate peripheral participation fostered the praxial transmission of musical understanding.

One of the key learning experiences for newcomers to a community of practice is learning how to “be” in that particular context. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that “learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants” (p. 105). This was clearly the case for the youngest member of Blue Hills, Hailey (5), who had joined the school’s kindergarten only a few weeks before. While dancing to *We are never ever getting back together* Hailey moved from literally standing on the periphery of the dance and observing the older girls, to dancing in the middle...
of the group (Video Example 7.10). Through observation and imitation, Hailey instigated a “jumping” dance move that she repeated multiple times both on her own and then with more confidence after seeing some of the older girls jump too. Her participation was facilitated in part by the accessibility of the dance move and the fact that the group were dancing freestyle, rather than in a choreographed routine. However, Hailey’s participation was also supported by the social structure of legitimate peripheral participation, in which “close peers” play an important part in the dissemination of understanding. Hailey’s closest peers were Grace (7) and Nisha (8), who spent an increasing amount of their time dancing with or near the older girls. Members of a community of practice tend to fall along a gradual continuum of experience, making newcomers only one end of a learning-gradient (Harwood, 1998b). Indeed, although Grace and Nisha used similar dance moves to Hailey (lots of jumping up and down and running around, with some circle dancing), they also operated as more confident members of the group by physically engaging some of the older girls and attempting some of the moves that the older girls routinely used. Furthermore, on a separate occasion Grace and Nisha choreographed their own dance to We are never ever getting back together, which they subsequently performed to the older girls and myself. This highlights the importance of young players’ access to older models, a point discussed at length by Countryman (2014). She suggests that the apprentice model of legitimate peripheral participation is significantly undermined by some schools’ increasing preference for segregated play, where younger and older children are divided either into separate playgrounds, or by separate play times. The resulting lack of interaction makes it far more difficult for younger players to “catch” games and songs from older models, which could lead to a diminishing repertoire of musical play in schools. Harwood (1998b) points out that the musical communities of school children are (by default) short lived, and that the continual replacement of old-timers is necessary in order to keep the community of practice alive.

Legitimate peripheral presentation was not only observed on the playground. There were also multiple examples of adolescents demonstrating the same behaviours in different contexts, for example, Keith’s description of his first few rehearsals with his band Back to Nothing:

My story of Back to Nothing is that first I was in another band… I liked being in that band, but I didn’t like Arjun being in it. He tried to make it that even though he had been playing for less than a year, that he knew everything. So I stopped playing with him. So after a while I started sitting in with them [Back to Nothing], and then we were
in L6 [a school classroom], and I was sitting at the drums, and they were playing something, so I started drumming with my hands. So for a few weeks, for a few practices, I did the percussion, but then I just started to get the guitar out. (Group Interview, Bellamy Secondary, 16 June 2013)

Keith’s story describes the importance of learning to “be” in a new community of practice. Although initially small, Keith’s musical input constituted a contribution to the community. Moreover, his prior understanding of how to behave in a band meant that he was able to immediately engage in the reproduction of community values. The care that Keith took not to appear overly dominant suggests that he was “engaged in the generative process of producing [his] own future” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 57), as he was keen to become a part of the group and was aware that behaviour that was perceived as arrogant or overly-confident would not be accepted. Thus through musicking, Keith was able to move from the periphery to the centre of the group, subtly mediating himself through his choice of instrument.

**Performance: Presentational and Participatory**

Praxial transmission both in and away from the classroom was conducted through the playing or singing of music, or performance as opposed to isolated composing of or listening to music. Although the performance of music certainly encompasses the composition of original pieces as well as spontaneous improvisation, the vast majority of performances that I documented in the field were of pre-composed musical games and songs, many of which were disseminated through popular media. It can be tempting to think of “a performance” as a reified product, rather than a learning experience; something that is “worked towards” over time rather than the “working” itself. However, some of the texts in the meta-synthesis used a performance framework developed by Turino (2008), which presents two forms of performance, presentational and participatory (within a larger schema that includes two forms of recording: high fidelity and studio-audio art).

The majority of performances that were documented in the meta-synthesis literature would be most accurately described as participatory, where musicians “actively contribut[e]… to the sound and motion of a musical event through dancing, singing, clapping, and playing musical instruments when each of these activities is considered integral to the performance” (p. 28). Indeed, Harwood and Marsh (2012) suggest that the musical play of children could be considered a special and discrete type of participatory performance, one that is integral to the musical culture of children and young people. The priority placed on participation, sometimes to the detriment of typical Western musical conventions such as integrity of pitch (Harwood
& Marsh, 2012), makes participatory performances particularly suited to musical and social exploration, which in turn makes it a key context for musical learning. Using this framework it is possible to describe the dancing in Blue Hills as a participatory performance, one that provided a context in which legitimate peripheral participation facilitated the learning of younger participants such as Hailey, Nisha, and Grace. Examples of participatory performance were not exclusive to the dancing at Blue Hills, and across all four schools many different instances of participatory performance were recorded. However, many of the examples that I observed in the field appeared to occupy an interesting space between participatory and presentational performances, where presentational aesthetics were applied to participatory contexts. One such example occurred at Oakwood, where a group of children engaged in an impromptu karaoke session (Video Example 7.11).

In Oakwood, a group of six girls and one boy were spending the start of their lunchtime finishing off artistic Christmas cards. The classroom was a mess of glitter, glue sticks and paper, and the girls were using a laptop to access YouTube and listen to a variety of songs to rehearse for a student-initiated talent show the following day. After listening to a few different pop songs, the children selected Swift’s *We are never ever getting back together*, which prompted four of the girls to stop their activity and move over to the computer to more closely interact with the song and music video. With varying levels of interaction the girls listened and sang along to the Swift version of the song three times in a row, drawing around them a growing group of girls who all sang together, some more in tune than others. Their interactions with each other and the song were clear: they danced together, added in gestures to reflect the character depicted in the story and generally worked together to produce a strong performance of their favourite song. Following the multiple repetitions of the song, they decided to find a karaoke version on YouTube that had removed Swift’s vocals. The girls delighted in the added challenge, and only stopped their singing when it was time to pack up for afternoon lessons. In the event, none of the girls did perform the Swift song for the talent competition. (Fieldnotes, Oakwood Primary, 19 December 2012)

Socially and contextually this was a participatory performance. The emphasis was placed on the other performers rather than on the quality of sound itself (at least, quality as measured by traditional Western classical music practices). Evidence that the success of the performance was measured in participation could also be seen by the way in which the girls invited others to join them: from an original group of four, by the end of the karaoke session at least six more children (both boys and girls) had participated by singing, dancing or both. However, despite demonstrating many of the characteristics of a participatory performance, the girls were actually ostensibly working towards a presentational performance and had selected a song that would clearly work well in this context. Moreover, although not a great deal of attention was paid to the musical values of Western classical music (such as staying in
time with the song or each other or singing in tune), attention was given to aspects of performance that were clearly valuable to the girls such as including the pop inflections used by Swift, singing in an American accent, adding in gestures to help tell the story of the song, and narrating the spoken sections with gusto. Therefore it is possible that this particular performance falls somewhere between a participatory and presentational performance as it displays aspects of both. Interestingly, Turino (2008) does suggest that such a continuum may exist; however, he maintains a distinction between the two forms of performance. Similarly, Power (2008) demonstrates that both presentational and participatory performance can occur within the context of a community choir, but she suggests that there is a “shift” from one orientation to the other in the course of rehearsing for a concert. In the case of the singers at Oakwood, the relationship between the participatory and presentational appears more complex. Although the girls were performing with and for each other, it seems that they were also performing for an audience, albeit an imaginary one. Several gestural clues suggested the presence of an imaginary audience, including the use of an air-microphone and heightened, emotive facial expressions prompted by the performance of the song, rather than by any particular musical exertion (Figure 7.6). Interestingly, the passionate performance delivered to the imaginary audience was one that was not ever repeated to a real audience (as in the aforementioned talent show), suggesting that imaginary audiences could be a powerful tool in the exploration and enactment of a “performing” identity.

Figure 7.6. The use of an air-mic, indicating the presence of an imaginary audience.
This example, then, could be described as an imaginary-presentational performance within a participatory framework, whereby the participants both performed with each other as a group, but also individually to an imaginary audience. This layering of fantasy and reality is common to children’s musical play on and off the playground (Bishop, 2014; Grugeon, 2001; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011) and is perhaps a product of the fluid interactions between the musical cultures of children, adults, and the media. Certainly, in this case, the girls’ awareness of Taylor Swift as both a celebrity and singer clearly influenced their performance; as well as musically imitating Swift they also used gestures drawn from both her specific performance of the song in the music video, and incorporated musical and physical gestures drawn more generally from pop culture. In this way, the girls embodied Swift, modelling their performances on hers and subsequently learning how to perform in a particular way. Therefore, the presentational division between performers and audience can still be pertinent to participatory performances, and may even facilitate the praxial transmission of music.

The imaginary audience and the camera’s gaze.

It would be remiss to not mention that, as demonstrated in the previous Video Example, there was a very real audience for the performances discussed here: myself and my camera. Some of the performances that I documented were very clearly intended to be presentational performances for the benefit of the recordings I was making. However, even with this in mind, throughout my research I was consistently surprised at how little the camera appeared to affect the music-making of the children and adolescents in this study. For example, I saw many instances of the girls at Blue Hills dancing in much the same way when I was over on the other side of the playground, or without a video camera, and the support staff with whom I discussed this assured me that the girls had been dancing in an identical way in the periods when I was not at the school. This comfort with the camera could be a product of the increasing role of hand-held technologies in the lives of the children in this study; almost all children over the age of 8 either had their own mobile phone or frequent access to one. Mobile technologies were often used to record photographs or videos, both by the children themselves and, undoubtedly, their parents. Moreover, photographs and videos were frequently taken by teachers and support staff from both schools, which helped to document the various achievements of individual children.

The extent to which children at both Oakwood and Blue Hills were used to visual documentation was certainly useful for me as a researcher; however, it raises some important
questions about the increasing pre-eminence of the image amongst young people and the 
potential for consequent voyeuristic tendencies. Tilley (2006) argues that “the personification 
or anthropomorphic representation of people through things is one powerful and typical form 
objectification processes take” (p. 63). Certainly many of the children referred to images and 
videos disseminated by the media to illustrate their views of celebrities such as Taylor Swift. 
For example, many children propagated the tabloid-favourite concern with Swift’s 
relationships, “I think what she does is this: she goes out with someone, and then dumps 
them, and then writes a song about it” (Genna, 11, Group Interview, Oakwood Primary, 20 
June 2013). In many ways the girls’ consumption of Swift’s music was fundamentally linked 
to Swift’s image, meaning that their understanding of Swift was subsequently indelibly tied to 
their understanding of audience. This perhaps accounts for the importance of the imaginary 
audience in the girls’ play with Swift’s music as the audience becomes an assumed 
prerequisite of children’s understanding of popular music.

The importance of the audience’s gaze in children’s (popular) musical play was also seen in 
the Video Star production by some of the same girls. Having spent a significant amount of 
time crafting each scene with a strong awareness of audience expectation (as demonstrated by 
their use of stylised gestures drawn from pop culture) the video then joined the library of 
videos on Braith’s phone that were only ever shared with the friends who were featured in 
them. Therefore, from being initially framed as a highly presentational performance, it 
became an artefact that was used in a participatory way. The imaginary audience was 
forgotten, replaced by a participatory aesthetic that sees no divide between performer and 
observer. The globally-influenced text returned to an intimate context, its social 
meaningfulness perhaps enhanced by such privacy.

For some of the adolescents at Bellamy Secondary, an imaginary audience was crucial to 
their music making. Paul (13, lead singer), Justin (14, piano), Edith (14, guitar) and Keith (14, 
guitar/drums) were the members of the band Back to Nothing, who met most lunchtimes and 
after school to rehearse a large variety of musical genres including classic rock, soul, jazz and 
pop. The band members had created a YouTube channel to promote themselves, though at the 
time I was in the school they had yet to upload any videos. Despite this, they spent a great 
deal of time rehearsing specifically for the future videos that they intended to make, and had 
even enlisted their friend Arjun (14) to direct a music video for their signature song Back to 
Black. Just like the karaoke singers at Oakwood, the members of Back to Nothing used a
variety of moves and gestures drawn from globally disseminated pop and rock acts. For example Paul, the lead singer, modelled many of his gestures on large stadium rock bands such as Biffy Clyro whose songs the band often covered.

Because of their clear aspiration to be a successful rock band, members of Back to Nothing were more self-aware of their performing image than the primary school karaoke singers. The pressure to look and behave a certain way was made clear by Keith, who said:

I’m scared of the future. Because in music, unless I team up with a band of really good looking guys, I’m not going to get anywhere. I’ll be sitting there on my album cover, like… [pulls a face] it just kind of sucks. Like some of the bands I listen to are good, they are ugly, like not very good looking, but the music is good. But pop lovers are like “oh you’re hot, I like you”; they’re not about the music. (Group Interview, 26 February 2013)

The adolescents therefore carefully crafted their performances to match what they believed was an accepted style, making every rehearsal a self-aware, imaginary-presentational performance as shown in Video Example 7.12 and described below.

Paul and Keith are rehearsing Many of Horror, which they plan to introduce to the rest of the band the following day. Paul is reading the words from the screen of his phone, while Keith plays the guitar and sings an octave lower. As they reach the chorus Paul stands and starts to move more forcefully to the music, raising his hand and pointing at the ceiling, as well as nodding and shaking his head alternately. Throughout this, Paul’s eyes shift focus between his phone, Keith, and the camera, suggesting that he is highly conscious of both his vocal performance and movement. The boys continue to play, before Paul instigates a discussion about the range in which he is singing; suggesting to Keith that the climax of the song would be more effective if he dropped an octave into his chest voice. (Observation, Bellamy Secondary, 25 June 2013)

For Back to Nothing, music making was a social activity where a participatory aesthetic was important. However, adhering to global standards of pop and rock performance was paramount to the group’s feelings of authenticity and success, and so their imaginary audience became a crucial, legitimising construct. What made the imaginary audience so important in this example was the way in which it framed the experience with fantasy. Although this was still a serious performance, rather than the playful or parodic examples in Chapter 6, by layering the experience with fantasy play the band members were able to safely experiment with performance styles without the concern that they might be overly committing themselves and running the risk of embarrassment. Thus, the imaginary audience meant that young people such as Paul could embody the characteristics of global superstars in a serious way,
actively learning how to perform in this way through experimenting as he performed: learning by musicking.

**Summary**

At the heart of the informal learnings documented throughout the empirical phase of this study is the idea that music brought together multiple, often disparate contexts. This appeared to have the effect of making music more meaningful for the young participants, as music that was important in intimate contexts such as the home was recontextualised and shared in larger, local contexts. Moreover, the interpretive reproduction of globally disseminated musics was shown to make such music relevant through recontextualisation into local spaces, which had profound effects upon both localised peer cultures, and personal, intimate understandings of music. Therefore musical pathways were created through both the recontextualisation of music, but also through the ways in which music was able to draw different spaces together. By recontextualising music in new spaces, those spaces were themselves inexorably altered. Moreover, engaging with intimately valuable music in adult-mediated areas such as the classroom had the effect of changing classrooms into negotiated spaces, increasing young people’s agency, and conferring more meaning onto the music in question. The role of digital media cannot be overlooked in this case, as handheld technologies such as mobile phones and digital tablets make globally produced music accessible at any time, and in any place. Although musicking has always been a multimodal experience to a certain extent, the growing role of digital technologies in the 21st century appears to have made understandings of music increasingly multimodal. Bringing together a variety of sensory inputs, multimodal documents emphasise the strong links between the aural and the visual, whilst encompassing the kinaesthetic and the spatial (Bishop, 2014). The fact that few popular music tracks are released without an accompanying music video has clearly had an effect on the ways in which young people play with music, leading to the participants of this study creating intricate multimodal texts that were sometimes uploaded to video sharing websites where they could potentially reach a global audience (Burgess & Green, 2009).

Finally, the praxial transmission of music helped to bridge the gaps between intimate, local, and global contexts. As a process, active modelling demonstrates the immediacy of learning music through intimate and personal imitation and practice. The body becomes the primary means through which music is experienced and learnt. This demonstrates another
multimodal translation from the visual and tactile to the embodied, from a local to a wholly intimate context. The physical and social intimacy that is often associated with children’s musical cultures (Bickford, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011) enabled this local transmission of meaningful music; however, this intimacy was surprisingly integrated with a tacit understanding of a global audience, particularly in the transmission and performance of popular music. Performances that crossed boundaries between presentational and participatory aesthetics made music more meaningful by legitimising musical activities through a range of local and global contexts. The transformation of participatory and presentational performances was facilitated in some cases by an imagined audience, itself linked to the all-encompassing, multimodal experience of music in the 21st century. Embodying the characteristics of global performers further enabled the praxial transmission of music by allowing young people to meaningfully experiment with performance in a space made safe by fantasy.
Chapter 8

The Characteristics of Informal Learning: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The purpose of this thesis was to examine young people’s informal learning of music across a variety of school spaces. An analytical lens derived from the meta-synthesis of pertinent literature revealed nine key themes that were found throughout the cases of informal learning documented in the literature. This lens was subsequently used to guide the analysis of the ethnographic data collected in the empirical phase of the study. Four schools, two in NSW, Australia and two in England provided the case studies, which included two primary and two secondary schools. As well as establishing an analytical lens the study aimed to investigate informal learnings as they exist in multiple school contexts, and to particularly examine informal learnings from the perspective of young people through the theoretical framework of childhood studies.

The Characteristics of Informal Learning

The data from the empirical phase of this study actively informed an understanding of both the nine key themes and the three dimensions, resulting in the identification of three fundamental characteristics of informal learning: decentralised structures, extended learner autonomy, and meaningfulness. These three characteristics can be seen replicated across the cultural worlds of children and young people, reflected in their cultural routines and values, and the ways that they interact with each other and with the adult world. This suggests that informal learning is in fact ontologically congruent with the ways in which young people understand the world. Put simply, the reason pedagogies that facilitate informal learning are so successful may be because the ways in which young people are encouraged to learn resonates with them on a very intimate level. To conclude this thesis, I offer a discussion of those three characteristics as they were manifest across the three dimensions of informal learning.

Decentralised Structures

The Structural Dimension, comprised of fluid roles, divergent progression, and immersive behaviours, revealed that the structures of informal learning are inherently decentralised. Rather than being organised in a linear or hierarchical way, informal learnings utilise structures that are flexible and dynamic. The majority of school-based informal learnings are
conducted in groups, making learning a highly social activity (Harwood & Marsh, 2012). The consequence of this is that social organisations impact significantly upon the learning experience. Generally, young people worked within fluid hierarchies, where power was subject to change and leadership frequently subverted. Very few children or adolescents were comfortable characterising themselves as “followers” and as a result leadership was tenuous at best. Overly “teacherly” behaviours were typically received poorly, with young people resenting bossiness and rejecting their peers who attempted to appropriate power through practices associated with adult teachers. In contrast, those young people who taught through different means, for example, leading their peers through musical demonstration and communication, were able to sustain a leadership role for much longer. Interestingly, it was very clear that the fluid roles adopted by young people in their informal learnings altered significantly depending on the context. In the playground conceding leadership to one person or a small group of people was accepted as normal practice. In some cases, these leaders acted in a quasi-dictatorial fashion and yet were not only accepted but even encouraged by their peers. In the classroom, leadership was far more hotly contested and when participants did establish themselves as leaders, this leadership was often undermined and ultimately overturned by their peers. Several teenagers suggested that it was difficult to work with their friends for this reason, and that they craved the disciplinary support of an authority figure such as a teacher. This suggests that the politics of the classroom do significantly recontextualise informal learning practices.

Decentralised structures were also demonstrated by young people’s preference for divergent rather than linear progression. In both England and NSW, music curricula have been organised according to a concept of progression that assumes development from simple to more difficult skills (Marsh, 2008; Young, 2012). As multiple studies have shown, away from the classroom both children and adolescents tend to follow a content-based curriculum wherein skills are developed as and when they become necessary (Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Harwood, 1998b; Lum, 2007; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011). A curriculum led by content rather than skills means that skills are often developed in a haphazard way, and at times more difficult skills are acquired before those which adults may consider to be simpler. Consequently many young people demonstrated that their measures of difficulty were different from those of adults, suggesting that schools which wish to provide opportunities for informal learning need to reimagine musical progression. The differences between decentralised progression and typical classroom practices perhaps represent the largest
paradigm shift between formal and informal learning. However, it is possible to reconcile the two opposing systems through adopting long-term rather than short-term perspectives and working with young people to facilitate their personal goals rather than imposing external measures of progress. Key to reimagining progression is providing enough opportunities for improvisation and exploration. This study showed that improvisation was one of the most important means through which young people developed their musicality. Improvisation allowed both children and adolescents to practise the skills that they felt were important and to develop skills which they needed to achieve future goals, without becoming bored by overly repetitive rehearsal techniques. Although many teachers include opportunities for improvisation in their music lessons, in many cases it is taught as a distinct skill rather than being integrated throughout all musical experiences (Burnard, 1999; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). Demonstrating the validity of improvisation to all genres of music (rather than confining it to units of work on jazz) would support, on a microcosmic level, a concept of progression that is decentralised, non-hierarchical, and ultimately personal.

Improvisation may also help young people to enter a state of flow. In flow, young people self-structure their learning and enter a psychological state in which concepts of time are significantly altered (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Although some people are more able to enter a state of flow than others, once engaged in a flow experience learning becomes intrinsically motivated, and positive emotional feedback makes the learning highly rewarding. However, this study showed that “ebb” periods, where young people temporarily disengage from the flow state, are actually integrally important to maintaining flow over an extended period of time. Ebb periods were often characterised by repetition, where seemingly simple tasks or actions were repeated many times. A common example of this (particularly amongst adolescents) was the repetition of musical “doodles”, fragments of either pre-composed or improvised music that peppered the learning of other, unrelated pieces. Such repetitions appeared to provide respite from the concentration required to sustain a flow state, and thus allowed young people to remain in flow for more extended periods of time. Once again, recognising the paramount importance of ebb periods inherently supports a reconceptualisation of progression in which seemingly “off task” behaviours, or even lack of engagement, is considered a natural and important part of learning.

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between informal learning in the classroom and informal learning in other contexts such as the playground or online is the lack of opportunity
to “walk away” from the learning. The expectation is that young people will learn music at a
time that is stipulated by the adult in the room. Even in examples where young people are able
to self-structure their learning, such as the first stage of Musical Futures, there is still the
unspoken agreement that young people will remain on task, learning music for the set period
of time marked by the beginning and end of a scheduled lesson. Thus, perhaps the best way to
incorporate decentralised structures within music lessons would be to provide opportunities
for young people to legitimately disengage from the set task. This could be achieved by
providing a variety of tasks to be accomplished over a longer period of time and according
young people the responsibility of completing all aspects of a project by a given end date.
This would also allow young people to prioritise those aspects which they feel are the most
important, as well as giving them a way to “walk away” without compromising themselves
musically or disciplinarily. Superficially, it would appear that the decentralised structures of
informal learning are incompatible with the forms of organisation employed in school
classrooms. This is particularly pertinent at a time in which teachers and schools are
increasingly monitored and young people increasingly nationally assessed. Further research,
particularly action research based in real classrooms, could illuminate new ways of
reconciling decentralised structures with school classrooms and could be highly beneficial to
the community of music educators.

**Learner Autonomy**

The Playful Dimension, including the key themes of play, ownership, and physicality,
demonstrated the extent to which meaningful learner autonomy characterised informal
learnings. In both youth-mediated and negotiated spaces the increased agency of young
people was apparent, and in adult-mediated spaces there was a discernible undercurrent of
subversion designed to extend the cultural power of both children and adolescents. The play
of young people demonstrated a delicate balance between transformation and authenticity,
where children and adolescents created, replicated, and developed playful cultural routines.
Examination of the cup game as a case study demonstrated that play is an important part of
teenagers’ musical lives, and that teenagers play in surprisingly similar ways to younger
children. In the case of the cup game, traditional methods of transmission were profoundly
altered by the game’s association with media sources. Online tutorials as well as the game’s
inclusion in a popular film meant that there were known texts that affected the way that the
game was presented and taught. Young people routinely imitated the performance given by
the main protagonist of the film *Pitch Perfect*, and few deviations from this performance were
observed. Many scholars have demonstrated the potential of including the structures and practices of children’s musical play within the classroom (Dzansi-McPalm, 2004; Harwood, 1998b; Marsh, 2008). Allowing children to be competitive, to create their own rules, or to adapt existing games can be easily accommodated into the classroom (see also Harwood & Marsh, 2012). Understanding 21st century transmission practices of playground games can also provide avenues for exploration in the classroom. Creating online learning resources for games and chants could empower young people’s musical agency by supporting their ownership and curatorship of a musical tradition that is seen as uniquely belonging to childhood.

The theme of ownership demonstrated the importance of subversion and parody to the learning of young people. A commitment to humorous parody was seen throughout all three types of space. Throughout all four schools, parody had transformative potential. Spaces in which young people’s agency was limited were reimagined through subversive behaviours which allowed children and adolescents to feel culturally powerful. Therefore, the use of typically “childish” (Bickford, 2011) behaviours became a social tool to extend learner agency, with the result that learning experiences became more meaningful. In some cases, parody was designed to subvert the disproportional power relationship between young people and adults, or between young people and their peers. This was particularly clear in the secondary adjustments (Corsaro, 2015) that many groups of young people made to normal classroom rules and practices. However, in other cases parody was used to consolidate peer cultures by cultivating “in jokes” between friends that helped to define group membership. It also provided a safety net for young people who were not confident, allowing them to fully participate in musical activities from which they may otherwise have felt excluded. This has important consequences for music learning in the classroom, where teachers often expect serious performances. Encouraging children and adolescents to explore subversive tendencies through music could lead to interesting and creative musical products, contextualised within a cultural language meaningful to young people.

Finally, the Playful Dimension supported prior studies that place physicality at the heart of music learning (Davis, 2006; Harwood & Marsh, 2012; Westerlund & Juntunen, 2005). Music and movement go hand in hand, and restricting young people behind desks for long periods of time can likewise limit their musical experiences. Away from the classroom, young people move all the time and it was clear that even the oldest and most self-conscious of the
participants took a great joy in moving to music. Indeed, for many young people the body was an important site for the exploration of musicality and the use of parodic movement to articulate and experiment with musical identity was documented across multiple sites. On the simplest levels, incorporating musical movement into the classroom could include not chastising young people for moving to music, even if such movement could otherwise be considered to be disruptive (something that was seen to occur in one of the secondary schools). Furthermore, suggesting tasks such as creating music videos to accompany the piece that they have created can encourage young people to think meaningfully and critically about the ways in which music and movement are linked. On perhaps an even more fundamental level, young people across all four schools were seen to accept and acknowledge the importance of embodied understanding. In adult-mediated spaces, young people were consistently expected to articulate themselves verbally, often through vocabulary which few children or adolescents found meaningful (Andrews, 2012; Bickford, 2011). Again, this demonstrates the extent to which schools are organised according to developmentalist principles, wherein both children and adolescents are expected to produce documents that are easily assessed and graded. Away from the classroom, this form of decontextualized and sometimes arbitrary measures of development were ignored. Accepting that embodied understanding is a valid form of musical knowledge does raise difficult questions for the forms of assessment that are typically used in schools. However, helping young people to meaningfully self-assess may begin to address some of the problems inherent in the validation of embodied understanding, as well as providing more opportunities for young people to demonstrate their musical awareness. This supports a system of assessment that is ongoing, holistic, and formative, rather than summative, paper-based grading that arguably has little to do with the practice of music.

**Meaningfulness**

The Musical Dimension demonstrated how important it is to connect music learning at school to young people’s musical experiences away from the classroom. Encouraging the construction of musical pathways is vital to making music in the classroom meaningful for young people (Green, 2008). This study found that the value of music increased as it became meaningful in multiple spaces and contexts. Critical to the construction of musical meaning was the process of glocalization, where young people ascribed local meanings to global texts (Robertson, 1995). This included personalised interpretations of globally disseminated songs, as well as the mixing of media referents to create complex intertextual pieces of music that
drew together many different, culturally valuable fragments. Moreover, some children used global frameworks of understanding to frame the way that they interacted with music, using certain genres of music and the cultural values ascribed to them to help validate their local musical and social practices. Recontextualising music into new spaces can increase its value through a process of validation. Introducing music valued by young people into adult-mediated contexts (as in the performance of the cup game in Blue Hills’ concert) demonstrates that adults can and do take young people’s opinions and ambitions seriously. This is one of the reasons that Musical Futures works so well in schools, as it acknowledges the importance of certain pieces of music to the lives of young people, and subsequently personally and contextually validates them. The musical pathway that is then built between an adolescent’s intimate value system and a typically adult-mediated space helps to add value to both the music and the learning experience. It is therefore vital that teachers include opportunities for young people to direct the content of learning, by choosing to learn songs or pieces of music that they find personally meaningful. However, many teachers are uncomfortable with this idea (Green, 2008; Sexton, 2012), as they feel they have a responsibility to introduce young people to a large variety of different kinds of music. Allowing young people to choose the content of their learning can result in a culturally homogeneous syllabus (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010). However, taking care to build musical pathways can help to make unfamiliar music meaningful to young people. Providing opportunities for children and adolescents to play with unfamiliar music, performing it, composing with it, subverting it, or using it to inspire multimodal artworks, can help to make unfamiliar music relevant to the day-to-day experiences of young people. The opportunities afforded by 21st century media and technologies could be used to dramatic effect when it comes to raising interest and investment in unfamiliar music.

The empirical data demonstrated that multimodal engagement with music is the norm. Young people rarely listened to music without some degree of simultaneous visual and/or kinaesthetic engagement. Many of the more recent meta-synthesis texts (Benson, 2012; Bickford, 2011; Bishop, 2014; Campbell, 2010; Marsh, 2008; Willett, 2011) demonstrated the importance of visual media to the musical engagement and learning processes of young people. In the four case study schools, multimodality was seen as inclusive, and the creation of multimodal, musical texts often had the result of bringing groups of friends closer together. In classrooms, the use of technology could also prove to be indispensable when addressing multimodality in informal learning. Integrating aural, visual, and kinaesthetic modes of
experiencing music can be achieved in ever more exciting and creative ways thanks to the development and growing affordability of new technologies. Rather than conceiving of music as a purely aural experience, it is important to attend to the fact that many people now watch music as readily as they listen to it. In the classroom this could be addressed by the inclusion of handheld connective technologies such as mobile phones or tablets. Discussing the relationship between the aural, visual, and kinaesthetic could include looking at the ways in which young performers are presented in the media, beginning a dialogue about musical semantics that could allow children and adolescents to become more media-aware. Creating performances and compositions that encompass a visual or kinaesthetic dimension should also be encouraged, from small details such as the addition of dramatic lighting (be it turning the classroom lights on and off or something more sophisticated), to larger scale projects such as creating dances with costumes.

A subsidiary finding of the key theme of multimodality was the preference of many young people to work in very loud soundscapes. Although in some cases this appeared to be a subversive technique to increase the agency of children and adolescents, in most examples it appeared to simply be considered normal to work within a very noisy space. The noise levels of classrooms and other school spaces are often rigorously controlled by adults (Campbell, 2010; Lum 2007), and so experimenting with allowing young people to be loud when working in music lessons could have interesting and unexpected outcomes. Moreover, many young people (particularly adolescents and older children) reported enjoying listening to music when completing written work, and suggested that they were able to concentrate more easily when listening to songs that they enjoyed. Providing the means for children and teenagers to listen to music when working in other subjects (or indeed, completing written or theoretical work in music lessons) could help to enhance concentration and enjoyment. Finally the key theme of praxial transmission demonstrated that it is practical music making that best facilitates the learning of music. Many of the participants remarked on how much more they believe they achieved when involved in practical music lessons where the emphasis was on performance, improvisation, composition, and consequently detailed listening rather than lessons that centred on theory, history, or vocabulary. Throughout the various spaces of the four schools, young people taught and learnt through a process of active modelling where the learner and the model were equally invested in the musical experience. In many cases, such transmission occurred within the context of play or performance, rather than decontextualized moments of rehearsal. Often, active modelling occurred as part of legitimate
peripheral participation. Several texts of the meta-synthesis (Harwood, 1998b; Marsh, 2008) suggest that legitimate peripheral participation is the most common framework for transmission in spaces such as the playground. In the empirical phase of this study, it was found throughout all three types of space, with many young people engaging in a peer culture that closely resembled a community of practice. Learning from close peers was a frequent occurrence, and many times young people learnt from peers who were only slightly more technically advanced than themselves. Although at times this could lead to arguments, often learning from peers was an enjoyable experience. Indeed, it seems that often it was not characterised by the participants as learning at all, so much as simply doing. Therefore, facilitating access to peer learning is vital in music classrooms that wish to incorporate informal learnings. Group work is subsequently validated as an important pedagogical tool, as is Green’s (2008) suggestion that older students are brought into the music classroom to offer guidance and lead workshops. Mixed age teaching could offer exciting opportunities for young people to pass on their knowledge, and learn from their friends.

However, in some cases this is not logistically possible. Therefore utilising online resources such as YouTube tutorials created by young people could provide similar benefits. Moreover, creating such videos could help to establish a local database for the peer teaching of music from which others in the community may learn. Interestingly, such videos also demonstrate the final finding of the Musical Dimension: the existence of a presentational/participatory continuum. Many texts which use Turino’s (2008) framework for performance tend to classify performances as either presentational or participatory. However, the empirical data from this project demonstrated that many performances by young people fall somewhere between the two points. The role of an imaginary audience was found to be highly important, where some children and adolescents frequently engaged in imaginary-presentational performances within a paradigm of participatory performance. Subsequently, acknowledging the importance of an imaginary audience (and the anxiety related to performing in front of a real audience) could be very important to the music classroom. Most music classrooms expect live performances, an aesthetic traditionally aligned with Western classical music. In contrast, popular music performances tend to be more frequently aligned with recordings and videos. Affording young people the opportunity to perform for a recording rather than live, or to perform on their own terms (by creating a music video or remix) could not only help to increase performing confidence, but also validate the performing aesthetics that young people value.
Whilst the meta-synthesis established nine key themes arranged across three dimensions, the empirical phase of the study helped to illuminate the core characteristics of informal learning. The Structural Dimension was revealed to be comprised of decentralised structures, the Playful Dimension was largely concerned with extending the agency of young people, and the Musical Dimension showed that meaningful content that draws together intimate, local, and global contexts is paramount to validating the learning of music. For teachers of music, and indeed of other subjects, including these three characteristics in the classroom could help to create a context in which informal learning thrives.

**Into the Classroom, and Beyond**

As I left Oakwood Primary school for the last time as a researcher, one of the teachers and I got into a conversation in the car. As a lifelong teacher, she was keen to know how my research could benefit her practice; to find out exactly what I had learnt, and how she could apply it to make herself a better teacher of music. She was particularly concerned with improving the whole school singing that took place each week in assembly, as she felt that some of her students became easily bored when learning a song line by line. As a secondary school music teacher this was a music learning experience that I rarely addressed in my own practice, and I was quickly absorbed with thinking about ways in which informal learnings could be facilitated in such a widespread phenomenon.

This led to the creation of a ten week project in conjunction with Oakwood which saw a new way of conducting “singing assemblies”. Together we compiled a list of five songs, including two songs that had recurred multiple times in research conversations with the children at the school: *Price Tag* by Jessie J, and *Mamma Mia* by Abba. I suggested that the first assembly should start with *Price Tag*, as it was so popular in the children’s homes and on the playground. When I talked to the teacher on Skype later that week, she was glowing with enthusiasm: the children had loved it. They had sung it through the first time with palpable joy, even those children in the youngest classes were joining in with the chorus by the end of the first run through. As my mum said “they really sang. They stood up, they danced, and they really just sang!” Rather than spending the majority of the assembly reading out lines that were repeated back, the teachers had just projected the words onto the whiteboard at the

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31 Although these choices were based on my observations and discussions with the children at Oakwood, the songs were ultimately chosen by adults. In the future, I would make these choices more democratically, with more youth involvement.
front of the assembly, and played the song via YouTube. The children loved it so much that they sang the song three times in a row. Here, the joy of music was clear, and the learning electric. The teachers learnt, sang, and danced alongside their students, creating a decentralised structure more closely aligned with playground and home learning than that of the school. The children’s musical values were addressed, and their agency empowered as they realised that their preferences were being listened to. Finally, the large classroom lost its identity as an adult-mediated space as children and adults sang and danced together, building musical pathways between home, the playground, and school via the Internet. Most importantly, rather than learning the words to a song, the children were learning how to be better singers, how to communicate via song, and how to playfully address their musicality.

The fact that this was an unusual experience suggests that there is still a significant amount of work to be done in order to locate the informal learning of music in the classroom. In terms of pedagogical implications, the findings of this study primarily suggest that there needs to be a change in teacher expectations, particularly when it comes to ingrained concepts of progression and development, student autonomy, and the importance of content. This is an inherently political problem and changing such long-standing ideas will take time and will reach right into the heart of what we believe the role of the school could or should be, as music education moves into the future. The three characteristics of informal learning identified by this study, decentralised structures, learner autonomy, and meaningfulness suggest that informal learning is ontologically congruent with young people’s experience of the world around them. This means that we still have much to learn about learning by examining the cultures of children and adolescents. By understanding these cultural worlds, and applying their paradigms to our shared classrooms, it is possible to create a context for learning that inherently supports young people as they leave compulsory music education, and begin their personal, lifelong project of music learning.
Reference List


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mariealexandraaa. (2013, January 20). The Cup Game Tutorial [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00IKfQC6V_A


Appendix A: Ethical Approval and Consent Forms

RESEARCH INTEGRITY
Human Research Ethics Committee
Web: http://sydney.edu.au/ethics/
Email: hr.ethics@sydney.edu.au

Address for all correspondence:
Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building - G02
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

FG/PE
21 September 2012

Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh
Sydney Conservatorium of Music – C41
The University of Sydney
kathryn.marsh@sydney.edu.au

Dear Associate Professor Marsh

Thank you for your correspondence dated 4 September 2012 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

On 20 September 2012 the Chair of the HREC considered this information and approved your protocol entitled “A study of informal learning practices in music within and beyond the classroom, in Australian and British schools”.

Details of the approval are as follows:
Protocol No.: 15171
Approval Date: 20 September 2012
First Annual Report Due: 30 September 2013

Authorised Personnel: Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh
Miss Athena Lili

Documents Approved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Information Statement (Parental or Caregiver)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/9/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Consent Form (Parent/Caregiver)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27/7/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Information Statement (Children Under 15 years)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27/7/2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27/7/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/8/2012</td>
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HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Special Condition of Approval

Please forward the letters of approval from the School Principals, the NSW Department of Education and Training, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the British Department of Education prior to this part of the research commencing.

Manager Human Ethics
Dr Margaret Faedo
T: +61 2 8627 8176
E: margaret.faedo@sydney.edu.au

Human Ethics Secretariat:
Ms Karen Greer
T: +61 2 8627 8171
E: karen.greer@sydney.edu.au
Ms Patricia Engelmann
T: +61 2 8627 8173
E: patricia.engelmann@sydney.edu.au
Ms Kala Rether
T: +61 2 8627 8173
E: kala.rether@sydney.edu.au

ABN 15 211 312 494
CRICOS 00067A
Conditions of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
- All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- Any changes to the protocol including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC by submitting a Modification Form before the research project can proceed.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.
2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Dr Fiona Gili
Deputy Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

cc All9122@uni.sydney.edu.au

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
A study of informal learning practices in music within and beyond the classroom, in Australian and British schools.

PARTICIPANT PARENT/CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM

I, ..........................................................................................

[PRINT NAME], give consent for my child to participate in the research project

TITLE: A study of informal learning practices in music.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Parents/caregivers Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about my child will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
6. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the interview at any time if I do not wish my child’s interview to be used, the audio and video recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:
   - Audio-recording YES ☐  NO ☐
   - Video-recording YES ☐  NO ☐
   - Receiving Feedback YES ☐  NO ☐

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: _______________________________________________________
          _______________________________________________________

Email: _______________________________________________________

.......................................................... ..........................................................
Signature

.......................................................... ..........................................................
Please PRINT name

.......................................................... ..........................................................
Date
A study of informal learning practices in music within and beyond the classroom, in Australian and British schools.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ..............................................................................................................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: A study of informal learning practices in music.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio and video recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

I understand that I can stop my participation in the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue; however as it is a group discussion it will not be possible to exclude individual data to that point.

7. I consent to:
   - Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐
   - Video-recording YES ☐ NO ☐
   - Receiving Feedback YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

**Feedback Option**

**Address:**

..................................................................................................................
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**Email:**

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Signature

.............................................................. ..................................................  
Please PRINT name

.............................................................. ..................................................  
Date
INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR PARENTS
Research Project

TITLE: A study of informal learning practices in music within and beyond the classroom, in Australian and British schools.

(1) What is the study about?

I am interested in how your children learn music, in school and out of school. I am especially interested in the way that they teach themselves and the way they teach their friends to play instruments, and the way that they share the music they enjoy with each other. I am interested in the differences between their music lessons at school, and the way they choose to learn music on their own.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

My name is Athena Lill. I am studying at the university and I will be coming to see the students at your school to talk to them about the music they like to learn and listen to.

(3) What does the study involve?

I will be coming to your school to see how your children learn music. I will be watching them in school music lessons and talking to them about music at school and at home and other places. If you give your permission we will record them on video and on an audio recorder. If you do not want them to be recorded they can still take part in the study, I will just make notes instead.

(4) How much time will the study take?

I will record the students when they are playing music, or singing, or listening to music. I will talk to them for a short time after the musical activity, between 5 and 30 minutes, if they want to talk. I will also record the students when they are in their school music lessons, and talk to them afterwards at break time or lunch time, if they want to talk.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw your child from the study at any time, and you can also ask them to withdraw from the study at any time.
Your child can stop being in the study at any time if they don't want to, or if you
don't want them to.
Your child may stop the videoing or talking at any time if you do not want to
continue. I will not use a video recorder if you do not want me to.

(6) **Will anyone else know the results?**

I will write a report about what we find but we will not use the real names of people
unless you want me to.

(7) **Will the study benefit me?**

I hope that the things I find out might make school music lessons more enjoyable
and interesting for your children. I hope that it might encourage them to take part
in musical activities if they want to. I would also like to show people how musical
young people are, and how well they can teach themselves and other people
music.

(8) **Can I tell other people about the study?**

You or your children can talk about this to anyone.

(9) **What if I require further information?**

You can talk to me (Athena Lill), and I will answer any questions you may have.
You can email or call me, at alil9122@uni.sydney.edu.au. You can also contact my
supervisor, Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh, on (02) 9351 1333.

(10) **What if I have a complaint or concerns?**

| Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 8627 8176 (Telephone); (02) 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or | human.ethics@usyd.edu.au (Email). |

This information sheet is for you to keep
Appendix B: Example of Data Index

INDEX OF FIELD RECORDINGS: Blue Hills PS 06-02-13

VIDEOS: M2U00178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188

Recorded: 06-02-13 by Athena Lill

A: On the Playground before school

M2U00178

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Title/Participants</th>
<th>Annotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00</td>
<td><em>Nisha and Grace</em>&lt;br&gt;DSi games&lt;br&gt;<em>One Direction</em></td>
<td>Nisha is talking about a game she has at home, on her DSi. She says you get messages that you have to read, and you play with a kitten that you pat. I ask when her birthday is, and she says March the 5th. She says that she is getting an iPod, and she is going to put on One Direction, and Harry Styles singing on his own. I ask why Harry is her favourite, and she says it’s because he has curly hair and is hot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:11</td>
<td><em>Justin Beiber</em></td>
<td>I ask what else she will put on the iPod, and she says Justin Beiber and Taylor Swift. Grace says that she likes Taylor Swift too. I ask what her favourite song is, and she says she can’t remember, she likes them all. In the background, the older girls are dancing on the veranda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02:21</td>
<td><em>Taylor Swift</em></td>
<td>I ask Grace what her favourites are and she says she doesn’t know. Nisha says that there are a lot of girls in Justin Beiber’s new song, and it’s with Nicki Minaj. She says that she likes the new song. Nisha says “I like that Taylor Swift we are never EVER getting back together”. I ask why, and she says it’s a good song, and that her and Grace made up a dance to it which she really likes to do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M2U00179

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Title/Participants</th>
<th>Annotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00</td>
<td><em>Grace</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Black Eyed Peas</em></td>
<td>I ask Grace what her favourite songs are, and she says that she likes Justin Beiber and the Black Eyed Peas. I ask what her favourite song is, and she says “when they do the new one that says Don’t Stop the Party”. I ask her why that is her favourite, and she says it’s because it has a party in it. I ask if that is in the video or the song, and she says it’s in the song.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: DVD of Video Examples

Please see the included DVD. All videos are in MP4 format.

*Video Example 5.1.* Aunty Anna Triad (Oakwood Primary, 20 June 2013)

*Video Example 5.2.* Aunty Anna Tactics (Oakwood Primary, 20 June 2013)

*Video Example 5.3.* Rock Composition (Bellamy Secondary, 10 June 2013)

*Video Example 5.4.* Emmy’s Cat Song (Oakwood Primary, 18 December 2013)

*Video Example 5.5.* Behavioural Characteristics of Flow (Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

*Video Example 5.6.* James Composing (Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

*Video Example 5.7.* Emmy’s Composition (Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

*Video Example 6.1.* The Cup Game (Bellamy Secondary, 14 June 2013)

*Video Example 6.2.* The Cup Game in a Circle (St Margaret’s, 14 May 2013)

*Video Example 6.3.* *Call Your Girlfriend* Variant (St Margaret’s, 24 October 2013)

*Video Example 6.4.* The Boys’ Cup Game (Bellamy Secondary, 25 June 2013)

*Video Example 6.5.* *Wings* Dance (Blue Hills, 5 February 2013)

*Video Example 6.6.* Peter’s Beaters (Oakwood Primary, 13 December – 21 December 2012)

*Video Example 7.1.* The First Camp Rap (St Margaret’s, 13 May 2013)

*Video Example 7.2.* The Second Camp Rap (St Margaret’s, 13 May 2013)

*Video Example 7.3.* Our First Vid (St Margaret’s, 22 October 2013)

*Video Example 7.4.* Online Tutorial (St Margaret’s, 5 April 2013)

*Video Example 7.5.* Video Critique (St Margaret’s, 28 March 2013)

*Video Example 7.6.* Video Star (Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

*Video Example 7.7.* Framing and Coaching the Video Star Recording (Oakwood Primary, 21 June 2013)

*Video Example 7.8.* Depression Party (St Margaret’s, 2 May 2013)

*Video Example 7.9.* Improvised Dance Routine (Blue Hills, 6 Feb 2013)

*Video Example 7.10.* Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Blue Hills, 6 Feb 2013)

*Video Example 7.11.* Taylor Swift Karaoke (Oakwood Primary, 19 December 2012)

*Video Example 7.12.* Performance Practice (Bellamy Secondary, 25 June 2013)
Appendix D: Emmy and James Flow Indicators

Please see overleaf.
Throughout the hour that Emmy and James explored their own musical world, there were many clear instances of the ways in which they challenged themselves. For James, the instrument that held the most fascination was a large xylophone, big enough for him to comfortably play whilst standing up and too large for him to move on his own. Having played the instrument without pause for around fifteen minutes, James decided that he wanted to record his improvisations as a composition. Finding a piece of paper and a pen, James went on to use the letters printed on the xylophone bars (including the letters “H” and “Es” as the instrument was German) to record his composition, moving purposefully from the instrument to his sheet of paper. It is likely that James’s understanding that music could be written down was taken from both his experiences in classroom music lessons, and his older sister’s violin music which she regularly practised at home and that used a combination of staff notation and letters. James challenged himself to create and notate a piece of music, without knowing how to write Western notation, in order to extend his musical experience. He obviously found it difficult, as it took a long time for him to record the sounds he wanted, but he was motivated to continue by the self-imposed challenge.

It was clear that, as the twins improvised, their physical movements became unconscious. At one point, Emmy began to improvise on a glockenspiel using two beaters. As she played, she alternated between looking down at the instrument, looking at her brother, and staring off into space. Her hands moved freely, and almost explored the instrument on their own: when she played a glissando, she looked at me almost in surprise before proceeding to tell me about how she would perform glissandi on her old, toy glockenspiel at home.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear goals</th>
<th>Young person has a clearly articulated goal, either self-imposed or externally-imposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

As this music session was entirely spontaneous, there were no externally applied goals. However, both Emmy and James were demonstrably setting themselves multiple tasks that they wished to achieve. These ranged from inventing notations for composition to selecting and laying out a range of instruments to aid performance (at several points both children tried to play multiple instruments at once to create a multi-layered texture). Perhaps the clearest indicator of these unarticulated goals occurred when Emmy announced that she wished to perform her “song” for me and for James. Emmy had also decided to record her composition, but unlike James, she had chosen to record it as a decorative poem. She began her performance and then, only a seconds in, referred to her score, shook her head and announced “got it wrong” (Observation, 21 June 2013). After consulting the score further, Emmy began her piece again. In the second performance the contours of the pitch remained the same, although the notes changed somewhat. Emmy’s “mistake” demonstrated the existence of a goal in her mind; an idealised performance model that represented the optimum realisation of the score that she had produced. Although the two performances were markedly different, Emmy was happier with her second attempt, suggesting that she had reached a goal that she had set herself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate feedback</th>
<th>Young person responds and adjusts according to feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The performance of music provides feedback in numerous ways. Most immediately, the performer is met with the aural feedback of the music itself as well as kinaesthetic feedback from the body. Performers may also receive feedback from an audience or other performers. When in a state of flow, feedback is important as it can aid the achievement of goals, and help to provide new challenges that can prolong the experience. For James, the aural and kinaesthetic feedback that he received from his performance was highly positive. He delighted in experimenting with different beaters to produce different sounds, and moved constantly with the music that he made. The sheer size of the instrument contributed to James’s positive kinaesthetic experience as it was precisely the right height for him to comfortably play whilst standing, allowing for full-body movement. When I asked him what he enjoyed the most about playing this...
instrument, James immediately started to mime hitting it with a beater, and said “I like the sound, and I like… this” (Research Conversation, 21 June 2013). However, despite enjoying the physical sensation of hitting the xylophone very hard, he stopped doing this when he caused the bars to jump up, as it resulted in the loss of the aural quality that he most valued.

Concentration

Young person is concentrating on the task and is not distracted by other things

It was clear that both of the twins had entered a state of extreme concentration. Although they interacted both socially and musically throughout the improvisation session, they also respected times where one of them was engaged in solitary work. At one point, both children were working on their second compositions, both of which took the form of decorated poems. Throughout this composition session, which lasted for just over five minutes, the children worked in silence. At one point, Emmy crept over to James and whispered “James… I need the blue pen. James. James. I. Need. The. Blue. Pen. Please?” (Observation, 21 June 2013). Her behaviour at this point (the exaggerated creeping and stage whisper) suggests that Emmy was well aware of how closely James was concentrating on his work. Moreover, I asked the children questions on several occasions (still hoping for an interview) that they obviously did not want to answer because they were so focussed on the music that they were making.

Control

Young person is calm and in control of the situation

The aspect of control was best demonstrated by times where the children lost control, and were momentarily jolted out of their flow-state. Examples of this can be seen in the mistake that interrupted Emmy’s performance, as well as in James’s surprise when he hit the xylophone hard enough to dislodge the bars of the instrument. These were isolated incidents, and most of the time the twins appeared to be calmly in control of the instruments they were using and the music that they were making. Moreover the children held a structural control over the whole experience: they had instigated the improvisations, and they decided when they wanted to stop and return to their normal lessons. This autonomy allowed the twins to feel a degree of control that they may not
have regular access in a classroom environment. Their autonomy as authors was also reflected in their desire to record their improvisations in notations that they had devised themselves.

**Loss of self-consciousness**

Young person moves in a way s/he would normally self-censor, perhaps dancing

It was apparent that both children had lost self-consciousness at several points in the session and were completely absorbed in the music that they were making. Interestingly, the loss of self-consciousness was best demonstrated by times where the twins became self-aware, before relaxing into a seemingly less aware state. A prime example of this was James’s performance stance: he typically spent a large amount of time with his hands in his pockets (I had even observed him playing football like this), yet as he became more absorbed in his performance his “free” hand occasionally emerged from his pocket and joined in with the movement of the rest of his body. Upon the realisation that his hand was dancing James resolutely moved it back, only for it to escape again. This happened many times over the course of one particularly strenuous improvisation.

**Transformation of time**

Young person loses sense of time, perhaps missing routine activities

After more than half an hour of improvising and composing, mid-morning play time started. The twins were only alerted to this when a nearby class left noisily for the break. Both looked up, slightly surprised. Emmy turned to me and asked “can we stay in until play time is over?” (Observation, 21 June 2013). Both twins generally enjoyed their play time and the day was bright and warm, suggesting that the only reason they had for staying in was to continue to play music. As I felt it was important that the children have time to run around and eat a snack, they left for play time on the condition that they could return afterwards and carry on improvising.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intrinsically rewarding experience</th>
<th>Young person appears happy and self-satisfied, does not want to stop performing the task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It seems likely that the children found the experience to be intrinsically rewarding. They had been told that they could leave at any point, and after just over an hour James decided that he wanted to go back to class. It is unlikely that the children chose to remain because it was preferable to their classroom lessons, as both of the twins enjoyed classroom work and being in a large group. Moreover, at one point Emmy said “we could have done this yesterday, and then we could have made more music today” (Observation, 21 June 2013), suggesting that she enjoyed the experience enough to wish that it could be extended.
Appendix E: Keith and Lana Lesson Transcription

Student performances transcribed by Athena Lill, from a video recorded Observation, Bellamy Secondary, 12 June 2013.

Many of Horror Guitar part (as played by Keith)

\[\text{Music notation image}\]

Many of Horror melody and lyrics (played on piano and sung by both Keith and Lana, sometimes starting on different notes)

\[\text{Music notation image}\]
Fragment A (played by Keith)

Fragment B (played by Keith)

Fragment C (The Mortician’s Daughter, played by Keith)

Fragment D (There She Goes, played by Keith)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Lana: Activity</th>
<th>Keith: Activity</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00</td>
<td>Plays keyboard with headphones on</td>
<td>Plays a variety of chords on his guitar, listens to Gemma on keyboard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stands up to let another student past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:40</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plays the opening six bars of Many of Horror [MoH]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:53</td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: So, do you want to practise?</td>
<td>Lana: I don’t know the notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:02</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leans over to the keyboard to help work out the notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:14</td>
<td>Plays MoH chords on the keyboard in a different key to the guitar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stops playing guitar chords</td>
<td>Keith: I think you need to go up a bit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01:55</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plays the MoH opening bar again, repeating the third chord six times before</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>continuing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02:22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stands up and puts down the guitar before standing over the keyboard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Response</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:11</td>
<td>Listens to Keith play Sits back down and plays the MoH opening again, this time up until the chorus (first eight bars)</td>
<td>Lana: It sounds so good, but I just can’t get it Keith: I’ll work it out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03:58</td>
<td>Plays some notes on the keyboard</td>
<td>Keith: Just try that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04:12</td>
<td>Sits back down and plays the MoH opening bar slowly.</td>
<td>Lana: We need to start again</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04:24</td>
<td>Plays the MoH opening bar again</td>
<td>Lana: What note do you start with?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04:34</td>
<td>Plays the MoH opening bar again</td>
<td>Lana: Ok</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04:40</td>
<td>Plays first chord three times</td>
<td>Keith: Oh, that sounded alright  Lana: Yeah it was</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04:47</td>
<td>Plays MoH opening bar</td>
<td>Keith: Ok, what note did you just end with?  Lana: C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05:09</td>
<td>Plays the first four bars of MoH.</td>
<td>Keith: What about I start like this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05:11</td>
<td>Plays the first four bars of MoH.</td>
<td>Lana: It doesn’t sound right with the piano though</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: How about, you know how it is three notes? And this keyboard just sounds like shit because it’s cheap. So it goes like “A”. Ready, three, two, one. I think the last one, if you go like this… So don’t start with anything; just wait until the third one, until I press down the third one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Lana</td>
<td>Keith</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>06:30</td>
<td>Plays MoH opening bar, emphasising the third chord</td>
<td>So like that?</td>
<td>Yeah, something like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06:50</td>
<td>Plays the fourth bar, again emphasising the third chord, plays standing up and looking over the keyboard.</td>
<td></td>
<td>So then go to the G below that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:06</td>
<td>Stops playing</td>
<td>I’m never going to work this out. Can’t I just do the melody there?</td>
<td>If you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:20</td>
<td>Sings the melody over the guitar part</td>
<td></td>
<td>Because the guitar just sounds so good in the background there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:20</td>
<td>Plays the MoH first two bars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:29</td>
<td>Plays some notes on the keyboard (indeterminate, as through headphones)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:42</td>
<td>Plays some higher notes</td>
<td>Too high!</td>
<td>Somewhere in between there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:43</td>
<td>Continues experimenting with different starting notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>There?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:13</td>
<td>Stops playing and stands over the keyboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>08:30</td>
<td>Plays the MoH first two bars, before going back to the keyboard</td>
<td>Lana: We should find it. I have a keyboard at home; I can practise it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:44</td>
<td>Plays melody starting on a D, with the wrong intervals</td>
<td>Lana: Hey, that sounds really good.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:04</td>
<td>Continues to play the keyboard, at times singing additional parts quietly, and moving in time with the imagined chords</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20</td>
<td>Lana: Shall I try that?</td>
<td>Keith: Yeah, so I’ll teach you that, alright? So do you have a pen? I think we’re getting somewhere here!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:59</td>
<td>Writes down the melody line using letter names</td>
<td>Keith: Ok, E E D D C C, D D right so we’ve got… D D C D C B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches Lana the melody by singing it, playing it, and telling her the letter names</td>
<td>Lana: C B?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: Yeah, so it goes like this… what have you got down?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lana: [Repeats back the melody]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: Yeah, so that’s the two first verses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:21</td>
<td>Continues writing down the melody</td>
<td>Keith: E D G E D C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Returns to playing and singing the melody on the keyboard</td>
<td>Lana: E D G E?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: D C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:19</td>
<td>Continues writing down the melody</td>
<td>Keith: It’s ok; you’ll learn it. You should start a new line; it’s the chorus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Other Student Comments</td>
<td>Teacher Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>17:00</td>
<td>Plays the melody part on the keyboard in a different key</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher: Hey, sounding good mate! Other student: Skills!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plays the MoH opening four bars on the guitar. Sings with the keyboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:31</td>
<td>Plays the opening two bars of melody</td>
<td>LANA: I’ve got the first bit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Starts to play the chords for a different piece of music (frag. A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:50</td>
<td>Plays the chorus melody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plays the MoH opening chords</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19:30</td>
<td>Starts to play the chords for the MoH chorus</td>
<td>LANA: Are they Cs? Yeah, they’re Cs and As. KEITH: Yeah, I made a mistake, I said a C but it’s A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:57</td>
<td>Plays the melody independently</td>
<td>KEITH: That hurts my fingers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvises with the chords of frag. A before returning to the opening chords for MoH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20:20</td>
<td>Plays melody from “it’s you and me…”</td>
<td>LANA: It doesn’t sound right [plays]. Oh, it does, actually. KEITH: Yeah, that’s [sings, and mimes playing the keyboard] “it’s you and me to the end of time”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvises on a blues scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:46</td>
<td>Practises the melody line on the keyboard</td>
<td>LANA: Is that still recording? KEITH: Yeah. She just has it on all the time then at lunchtime she just watches it all through and then takes bits out of it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continues to improvise on frag. A</td>
<td>KEITH: Are you alright?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>LANA: Yeah, it sounds good in the first bit, but… KEITH: Learn it in stages. Like, learn it off by heart but in stages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Action Description</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>21:50</td>
<td>Practises the second melody line</td>
<td>Lana: Ok, start from the beginning, I want to see if I can do it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:17</td>
<td>Plays the melody line. Still in two different keys</td>
<td>Plays the MoH opening chords, starts to sing the melody</td>
<td>Lana: I’ll try and do the chorus.Keith: Alright, three, two, I’ll do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the run up ok? Right, so…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:31</td>
<td>Starts to play then stops</td>
<td>Plays the pre-chorus chords</td>
<td>Lana: I don’t know! It’s F, E, E, D, D, C, C, D?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:08</td>
<td>Starts to play the chorus melody</td>
<td>Improvises on a scale, then starts to play what sounds like the opening</td>
<td>Other student: What’s that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to a different song but could be an improvisation on the MoH</td>
<td>Keith: It’s Miss Lill’s camera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>opening chords (frag. B), then back to improvising on the chord</td>
<td>Student: Hellooo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>progression of frag. A</td>
<td>Keith: Miss Lill’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student: You’re really good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: I know, I’m the best, I’m like a Hendrix-rock God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25:25</td>
<td>Plays the melody from the beginning</td>
<td>Starts to play the chords from The Mortician’s Daughter (frag. C),</td>
<td>Other student:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>before going back to the earlier chords (frag. A)</td>
<td>What’s that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: It’s Miss Lill’s camera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student: Hellooo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: Miss Lill’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student: You’re really good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keith: I know, I’m the best, I’m like a Hendrix-rock God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25:55</td>
<td>Continues to play from the opening melody</td>
<td>Improvises on a blues scale</td>
<td>Student: Do you want to hear my tune? [strums all strings].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Action Description</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26:50</td>
<td>Returns to playing the original chord progression of frag. A</td>
<td>Keith: It takes hard work and dedication! Lana: Actually, I’ve got the first bit. Keith: Good Lana: Nailed it!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:03</td>
<td>Starts to play the opening part but not in time with the guitar</td>
<td>Plays the opening chords for MoH Lana: Ok, I’ve got it; start again?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:29</td>
<td>Plays the melody in time with guitar, still in a different key. Goes wrong on the third line, but carries on</td>
<td>Other student: Can I play you something? Quickly? You’ll like it! Keith: After this. Lana: After this, we just need to do this. Student: Sorry then, sorry Lana.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>27:33</td>
<td>Plays the first eight bars of MoH twice</td>
<td>Plays the first eight bars of MoH twice Lana: Sorry, I got that… Keith: Just carry on. [Transitions into the second verse]. And again. Lana: What? I need to write that down.</td>
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<td>28:03</td>
<td>Gives the guitar to his friend</td>
<td>Gives the guitar to his friend Lana: You said to do that twice? Keith: Yeah, you just… Lana: But you don’t just repeat that again the same? Keith: Yeah, because it goes [sings] “but when my back is turned…” the pre-chorus, then chorus Lana: Oh yeah.</td>
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<td>28:39</td>
<td>Practises the melody from the beginning</td>
<td>Returns to his guitar, starts to improvise on a blues scale. Passes the guitar to his friend, who shows him a short riff.</td>
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290
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<thead>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>29:21</td>
<td>Joins in at the chorus.</td>
<td>Plays MoH chords from the start</td>
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<td>Lana: I got it!</td>
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<td>Keith: Yeah, his is in a different pitch though, we’re doing it in a different pitch.</td>
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<td>Lana: Yeah, it sounds different.</td>
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<td>Keith: yeah we’re a bit higher. Because his voice is all like “oh I’m a manly man”,</td>
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<td>and I’m like “heeheeh!” It’s a bit awkward.</td>
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<td>30:00</td>
<td>Plays the Biffy Clyro version of MoH (the original recording) on her phone, and sings along. Plays the chorus melody in a third key</td>
<td>Plays along with the recording, singing along, despite being a tone apart.</td>
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<td>Starts singing in the same key as his guitar, but stops playing the guitar in the middle 8 and sings in the same pitch as the recording on the phone</td>
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<td>31:30</td>
<td>Continues listening to the recording on the phone</td>
<td>Starts to play frag. C, while listening to the MoH recording</td>
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<td>32:07</td>
<td>Joins in with the recording at the chorus</td>
<td>Joins in with the chorus, singing at the same pitch as the recording. Starts to play guitar, but gives up</td>
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<td>Lana: [referring to a vocal melisma] That bit is going to be hard.</td>
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<td>Keith: he goes “har-d” when he does it live.</td>
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<td>32:37</td>
<td>Plays the opening chords of frag. A, before playing the chords of frag. B, then improvising on a blues scale</td>
<td>Plays the opening chords of frag. A, before playing the chords of frag. B, then improvising on a blues scale</td>
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<td>Lana: He has such a cool accent</td>
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<td>Keith: when he says, he can’t say the band’s name without going “biffy fucking clyro” like, “we’re biffy fucking clyro, we’re biffy fucking clyro”, like calm the fuck!</td>
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| 33:22 | Starts to play the opening of frag. C, then a chord improvisation | Lana: What song is that?  
Keith: I don’t know, I just did it.  
Lana: I actually recognise that.  
Keith: I’m the next Ed Sheeran, like, Jesus Christ!  
Lana: You are really good though.  
Keith: Well, thank you.  
Lana: can I have a go? I used to play it… |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 34:00 | Lana plays the opening of Twinkle Twinkle, before finger picking some chords | Lana: It’s so big! I used to know Frere Jacque, and Twinkle Twinkle.  
Keith: Yeah, it’s really bulky. My acoustic’s a lot smaller.  
Lana: I can’t remember any chords!  
Keith: the first song I learnt was like a rock song, like Smoke on the Water or something.  
Lana: Yeah, I used to know that, but I forgot it now.  
Keith: then I just, I dunno, learnt all the songs on Guitar Hero and stuff.  
Lana: I don’t know many chords. That’s the only chord I know, like D. It’s so easy! |
| 35:31 | Takes the guitar back, and demonstrates different chords in various strumming patterns | Lana: I can’t strum like that  
Keith: I can’t strum like that and sing. Apart from Biffy Clyro, the more I practise that, the better it gets. |
| 35:45 | Joins in with the vocal line at “I don’t know why” | Plays and MoH, up until the end of the first chorus |
| 37:13 | Improvises a rhythmic part based on the third verse | Lana: I can’t sing. I could do a little back up thing, like be your back up singer, you know like people have back up dancers?  
Keith: I can’t sing either  
Lana: But we’ll sound alright together. |
| 37:21 | Starts to play and improvised on frag. A | Keith: I have to sing tomorrow.  
Lana: What do you have to sing? Is it for the concert? |
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| 37:34 | Plays and sings the opening of frag. C                              | Keith: Yeah it’s like…
Lana: That sounds really good. I think I recognise that song?
Keith: I think everyone likes that song. I don’t know anyone who doesn’t like that song.
Lana: I’m not a big fan of them though.
Keith: Me neither. I went to see them live, for no reason. |
| 37:58 | Starts to play an improvised chord pattern                          | Another student: Bet you can’t guess what we’re doing!
Lana: I bet it’s Two Door Cinema Club. Or Swim Deep or something.
Keith: The 1975 opened for Two Door Cinema Club this year. It was like, perfect. |
| 38:30 | Starts to play an improvised chord progression, then stops to talk  | Keith: How can The 1975 be my sort of band?!  
Lana: I know, I thought you were just into hard rock.
Keith: Yeah, that’s cos all my T-shirts are like… I like acoustic things like sad songs. I like both kinds, like anything rock I can deal with.
Lana: The same, I have phases, like hard stuff then soft stuff. Do you like metal?
Keith: Like depend, like what… do you mean Metallica? I like that kind of stuff. I don’t know… do you mean old metal or like modern metal?
Lana: Old metal is bad. Like, Classic Rock is the best.
Keith: I just like a vast majority of rock.
Lana: It’s good though, to like loads of stuff. I like some of the indie stuff… Keith: I love the indie stuff, though my sister hates me for it. |
| 39:51 | Starts to play the opening of There She Goes (frag. D), and sings along with it. Starts to improvise on the chord progression | Lana: [To other student] He told me what you are doing!  
Student: What are we doing then Lana?  
Keith: Do you actually know what they are doing?  
Lana: No, but Keri will tell me later. |
| 40:40 |                                                                      | Lana: Do you have lessons?  
Keith: No, but when I go up to my dad in Scotland he teaches me all the theory and shit, because he thinks that if I learn that I’ll be able to play professionally. |
Lana: like in a band?
Keith: I don’t know. I’ll try and get a band, like in University. And if that doesn’t work then I’ll just play acoustic. I’ll try and get big and it probably won’t get anywhere.
Lana: that’s good. Like lots of bands they start around university.
Keith: Yeah, it’ll be good because I’ll be studying music management, like when you learn how to manage bands and stuff.
Lana: That’s a good idea.
Keith: And yeah, then I’ll try and get a band. But if not, I’ll try and do acoustic, on my own. And hopefully, somebody… Maybe I’ll get my Aunty to manage me.
Lana: That’s good. My uncle is in a band, I think he’s like touring at the moment. He’s touring in Germany I think.
Keith: My stepdad, you know like, touring with lorries and that? He’s like signed up to help for touring and that. And his friend does like the lighting.
Lana: That’s really cool, I’d like to do that.
Keith: Yeah, I know, if playing, if it’s a dead end, I’ll just go and be a roady.

41:06  Starts to play opening bars of MoH
Lana: I know what I’d like to do. You know the people that come on stage and change things around, and everyone cheers them?
Keith: I’d be shitting a brick! I know you’re only changing stuff, but there’s thousands of people watching you…
Lana: When you go on stage they think that you’re the band and they’re like “Woooooo!” but then they realise it’s just you!

41:37  Stops playing the guitar momentarily, then starts to improvise chords again
Keith: so do you actually only wear shorts to the gigs?
Lana: Yeah
Keith: perverts! Don’t you get perved on?
Lana: no it’s better… you can’t wear leggings because it’s too hot.
Keith: because when I saw that photo on twitter I was like “Lana! You were allowed to go out in that?!?” Not that I’m saying you looked like a whore or anything.
Lana: yeah, luckily I didn’t crowd-surf in that one…
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<td>43:09</td>
<td>Starts to play the opening melody</td>
<td>Lana: It just gets too hot. Oh well. And I go to much heavier gigs now.</td>
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<td>Plays the opening chords for MoH, before improvising on a blues scale.</td>
<td>Keith: Don’t you get scared?</td>
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<td>Lana: Not really, some people do but it’s like ok cos everyone is really into it. You can’t squash kids that much. It’s still good.</td>
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<td>Keith: I wish I went to Enter Shikari</td>
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<td>Lana: Yeah it was really good.</td>
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<td>46:35</td>
<td>Plays the melodic line</td>
<td>Keith: So have you practised it now? Reckon you know it?</td>
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<td>Plays the MoH opening chords, stops and starts again</td>
<td>Lana: yeah, I know it I think.</td>
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<td>Keith: Shall we start again? I’ll start from the start.</td>
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<td>47:12</td>
<td>Stops playing, joins back in</td>
<td>Lana: Oh my god, it’s so confusing!</td>
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<td>48:00</td>
<td>Plays until the lesson is called to an end</td>
<td>Teacher: Ok, ok, please can you congratulate the girls who were organised enough to bring their lyrics…</td>
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<td>Plays until the lesson is called to an end</td>
<td>Lana: I think we’re ok though.</td>
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<td>Keith: Yeah, next time I’ll bring my phone with Internet and that.</td>
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<td>Lana: Yeah, do.</td>
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Appendix F: Notation Conventions for Clapping Games

Adapted from Marsh (2008), pp. 342-349

C/O  clap own hands together

R/R  clap partner’s right hand with own right hand

L/L  clap partner’s left hand with own left hand

Jump into the splits incrementally

Tap a surface (e.g., table top) with hands

Grab right side of cup with right hand

Grab left side of cup with right hand

Pass cup from right hand to left hand

Tap a surface with an upside down cup (open mouth of cup to the table)

Tap a surface with the bottom of a cup

Tap open mouth of cup to left hand

Cup moved across the body to the right over the course of other movements

Cup turned upright over the course of other movements

Cup turned upside down over the course of other movements
Appendix G: The Cup Song and CYG Variant

The Cup Song

I've got my ticket for the long way round
Two bottles of whiskey for the way, and I sure would like some company and I'm leavin' to morrow what d'ya say? When I'm gone, When I'm gone, You're gonna miss me when I'm gone, You're gonna
miss me by my hair you're gonna miss me everywhere oh I know you're gonna miss me when I'm gone.
Call your girlfriend, it's time you had the talk

Give her your reasons, say it's not her fault. But

you, just met somebody new, Tell her not to get

upset second guessing everything you've said and done,

and then when she gets upset tell her that you never meant to hurt nobody.
You just tell her that the only way her heart will mend is when she learns to love again and it won't make sense right now, but you're still her friend, and then you let her down easy.
Appendix H: The Camp Raps

The First Camp Rap


Esh-ay_Tam-my, Esh-ay_Mil-lie, Esh-ay_Viv! Yeah what? Esh ays. they like glamp-ing,

Esh-ays they like camp-ing, Esh-ays they like stamp-ing, Huh!
The Second Camp Rap

Pent-house tens buh dum buh dum ksh, Pent-house tens buh dum buh dum ksh,

Pent-house tens buh dum buh dum ksh, Pent-house tens!

Du nun nun nun nun nun nun We're so Funky fresh we're so

du nun nun nun nun nun nun We're so Funky fresh we're so

du nun nun nun nun nun nun Fresh fresh fresh fresh fresh fresh fresh fresh

Put it in your cup put it in your cup, woo! Put it in your cup put it in you cup woo!

Put it in your cup put it in your cup woo! Put it in your cup cup

(nonsense sounds) Every-thing's in a

cup! Cup cup cup cup cup cup cup! Read be-tween the lines!