

Envisioning a Future Musical Self

Identities of Dropout and Continuing Adolescent Piano Students

ABSTRACT

It might be said that everyone has a musical identity. Whether you casually sing in the shower or seriously study the piano, music holds a role in everyone's daily life. But what does it mean to incorporate the term "musician" into your identity? How does being a musician hold a place for who you *are* now and in the future? What does the ability to envision a future musical self do to change the musical experiences in the present?

This publication presents results from two separate but related studies. Study 1 used quantitative methods to investigate 55 former piano students who had dropped out of lessons and found these students had a significantly more limited scope of how long they would be involved in music as well as a limited ability to envision their future musical selves. Study 2 used qualitative methods to investigate four students who were enrolled in piano lessons with intentions to continue and found these students had a deeper understanding of themselves as musicians as well as the purpose of music in their lives both now and in the future. The results suggest the dropout students could not develop a long-term vision of themselves as musicians, while continuing students had a much better sense of how music fit into their identity. Further, it suggests that developing a salient musical identity, based upon meaningful and agentic experiences, may result in students who continue with lessons. This synthesis of two studies offers an unprecedented use of photovoice methodology in music education research and is unique in its focus on the musical identities of adolescent piano students.

INTRODUCTION

A long-term musical identity is particularly important in piano lessons because of the extensive effort it takes to achieve proficiency at the instrument. The subject of musical identities has taken shape in the last 25 years, which broadly combines the study of music, education and psychology (MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell 2017, 3–24). Given the lengthy nature of piano learning, it is surprising that the topics of students' current musical

identity and future musical self are not more prominent in music education discussions. Understanding how to develop students' vision of themselves as pianists—and to whom music will be valuable in their future—may impact how long students continue to study music. Considering the frequency at which long-term concepts like the 10,000 Hour Rule is cited in popular culture (Gladwell 2008), informal academic literature (Sennett 2008) and in music education scholarship (Schnare,

McIntyre and Doucette 2011), the same long-term thinking is not always applied to students' piano lessons. Teachers often focus on short-term musical experiences such as exams or competitions without considering the identity implications of these experiences. The deeper meaning is obscured; students may forget why the many hours of practicing will be beneficial to them in the future. As such, there is "an alarmingly high proportion" of students who subsequently abandon lessons somewhere along the way (North, Hargreaves and O'Neill 2000, 270). While some would interpret dropout as a simple lack of commitment, one of the most important studies on this topic demonstrates it may have been a lack of *identity* as a musician that led to dropout (Evans and McPherson 2015, 407–422).

The long-term intention to study music and a deeper sense of musical identity has not been addressed in children's piano lessons. This article will offer results from two separate but intertwined studies (Gerelus 2016; Gerelus, 2022) and synthesize the data to offer a compelling and well-rounded picture of musical identity and lesson longevity. Study 1 investigated 55 students who dropped out of piano lessons and suggests long-term intention to study music and envisioning a future musical self may be a critical component of music lesson continuation. Study 2 investigated the other side of the question where four piano students with well-developed musical identities had a clear vision of what music would mean for their lives going forward and were generally flourishing as musicians. Whereas discussions regarding attrition encompass reasons from parental involvement (Wieser, Novak-Geiger and Müller 2024, 1–10) to lack of practice and achievement (Costa-Giomi, Flowers and Sasaki 2005, 234–247) and many further reasons, this research suggests attrition is something much deeper and more personalized. Instead, it encompasses the long-term vision students have of themselves as musicians and music as a valuable part of who they will become in the future. Evans and McPherson (2015, 421) have suggested students' long-term commitment must be fused "within their

own personal sense of identity—their own working theory of their self—and to incorporate a long-term view of their self as being somebody for whom music plays a significant role in their life." The overarching hypothesis was that students who did not have a long-term commitment to music or the ability to envision their future selves as musicians, were more prone to dropping out of piano lessons. Students who could envision a detailed picture of themselves as musicians what music would mean to their lives long-term were more apt to flourish.

BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY: LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been suggested that students who do not acknowledge a long-term commitment to playing their instrument are likely to drop out (McPherson 2000, 122–127; McPherson, Davidson and Faulkner 2012). Anecdotally, most applied teachers would agree a large portion of students leave lessons around age 12 (Chen 2011). In the academic literature, there has been some evidence that music students most often quit during the preteen or early adolescent years and well before developing a moderate mastery of their instrument (Barry 2007, 23–27; Evans 2009; Seo 2010). The work focusing on adolescent identity development is particularly important because this period is when most students determine the role of music in their lives, if they are musicians and if music will hold value for them in the future. The failure to establish a personalized musical identity may be part of the reason there is a surge in attrition during the preteen years.

Identity theorist Erik Erikson believed that what separates children from adults is the establishment of a self-selected identity. In other words, they choose who they want to associate with, what to spend their time doing and what this means for them as a person going forward. Adolescence is the time when youth bridge who they were as children to who they want to become as adults. The adolescent process is complete only when an individual has overcome their childhood identity and transformed it into a new kind of identification that tends to "force the young individual into choices and

decisions which will, with increasing immediacy, lead to commitments 'for life' (Erikson 1968, 155). The decision to commit to an activity like piano lessons during this developmental stage is typically where the lifelong benefits occur and where a long-term musical identity is taken up (Lawrence and Dachinger 1967, 23–31). Previous research has shown "if identity is a central goal to be achieved during the adolescent to young adulthood transition, then it needs to be accounted for when considering musical development during this period" (Burland 2005, 48).

Research specific to music education by Evans and McPherson (2015, 407–422) is worth discussing in detail. These authors expand on work from a previous 10-year longitudinal study that surveyed a sample of 157 Australian children between ages 7 and 9 before they began instrumental music lessons. The original study collected an enormous amount of both qualitative and quantitative data—particularly on practicing, home environment and attrition—as it followed students' musical interests over the course of a decade (McPherson, Davidson and Faulkner 2012). It has since come to be regarded as one of the most comprehensive and influential studies conducted with music students. Evans and McPherson's (2015, 407–422) analysis further developed the results regarding practice, achievement and long-term commitment to find that students who anticipated taking lessons throughout much of their lifetime scored higher on music proficiency tests than those who only had a short-term vision of lessons, even when both groups were matched in total number of practice hours. Upon reflection of the original study, the authors acknowledged "the possibility that what was initially labeled as 'commitment' actually reflects something much richer—a contextualized and well-developed sense of personal identity that the children were able to readily draw upon when asked about their future music-making" (Evans and McPherson 2015, 416). This sense of contextualized identity suggests that identity forms in relationships. Evans and McPherson found experiences such as listening to music in the home, dancing,

having music accompany cooking or observing a parent play an instrument impacted the child's sense of what music entailed and how useful or important it might be to their future self. In contrast, the students who quit music lessons had no conceptual image that music would be a worthwhile pursuit for their future selves and had a weak sense of where it might take them. In conclusion, the authors' main findings suggest children who have formed a long-term vision of themselves as musicians—and the social environment to support that vision—were more likely to continue with music lessons.

Future Selves

The idea of possible selves, first conceptualized by Markus and Nurius (1986, 954–969), has grown into an important stream of research and has recently been taken up by scholars in music education (Burland 2005, 48; Schnare, MacIntyre and Doucette 2011; Varvarigou, Creech and Hallam 2014, 84–97; Hallam 2017, 475–492; Evans and McPherson, 2017, 475–492). This concept has gained popularity in musical identity discussions because of the long journey to master an instrument and because students must have a clear vision of their future selves as someone who will find music valuable if they are to persist in the thousands of hours of practice and performance required. In the most influential publication on the topic of future selves, Markus and Nurius (1986, 954–969) propose that self-knowledge is not simply informed by one's current state but also by the ideas of what life holds in the future. The notion that identity continuously evolves between past, present and future is central to most identity scholarship. By anticipating the positive outcomes of life, we construct our *ideal self*; by anticipating the negative outcomes, we construct our *feared self*. The authors illustrate "the possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas the dreaded possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self"

(954). The authors expand further to say the *past self* also informs the current and future self, such that identity is woven both backwards and forwards in time. In turn, present identity affects people's constructions of their remembered selves or predicted selves. These past selves are representative of the individual's longstanding memories, concerns, relationships and ideologies that inform their current self and guide the future self.

Identity-based motivation (Oyserman 2007, 432–453) suggests people feel compelled to act in congruence with “who they are.” Further, people are more likely to interpret their social world using identity-congruent lenses. *Identity-based motivation theory* “invokes both current and possible future identities, the identities one has now and the ones a person can imagine becoming in the future” (Elmore and Oyserman 2012, 178). However, Oyserman qualifies that identities only matter when in context, and if a future identity seems too distant, it is unlikely to influence current behavior. For example, piano students who are asked to practice technical exercises that will build long-term skill but have no future vision of themselves as a pianist will lack the motivation to follow through. In fact, “only those identities that seem relevant to the task at hand should shape action” (Oyserman 2015, 8). Previous research has shown a clear vision of the future self impacts current action, such that students who described their future careers as academic-dependent (e.g., engineering) spent more time on homework and saw education as a path between their current and future selves (Destin and Oyserman 2010, 846–849). Overall, this work suggests that whether an identity matters for motivation is a combination of *accessibility*—the ease of imagining oneself in the future—and *relevance*—the meaningfulness of this image—based on the current context. For adolescents who are frequently struggling with what their future self will look like, this becomes a particularly important question.

Musical Possible Selves

Music students must have a clear vision of a possible self as someone who values

music if they are going to persist through the inevitable struggles of mastering an instrument, and the adolescent years often prove particularly difficult (Barry 2007, 23–27; Evans 2009; Seo 2010). Recent work suggests the solution to long-term musical engagement into adulthood depends upon musical identity formation in youth (Woody et al. 2021, 430–442). However, few significant studies have examined possible selves in adolescent music learning (Goopy 2022 570–588). One exemplary publication suggests musical possible selves are “represented in the ways in which students narrate their emergent musical selves” (Creech, Varvarigou and Hallam 2020, 62). In other words, the stories of who a student imagines themselves to be in the future has a significant impact for their present identity. To qualify as an ideal possible self, a student must have a vivid picture in their mind; it is an image based on enduring goals and aspirations. What this means is, ideal selves require an inward experience of what it would be like to live that type of life (Erikson 2007, 348–358). These visions influence adolescents’ decisions regarding what they spend time doing and whom they surround themselves with. However, adolescents are adept to shifting identities as they make daily choices about “who they are.” Their musical identities are “disrupted and reconstructed through a cyclical process of interactions and interpretations of past and present musical learning and participation, influencing orientations towards a musical future” (Creech, Varvarigou and Hallam 2020, 68). This fluid state means adolescents regularly modify their musical aspirations and reframe their possible selves. In their work with music students, Evans and McPherson (2017) draw from work with identity theorist James Marcia (1966, 226) to suggest “the ongoing dynamic processes involving *exploration* and *commitment* are part of healthy identity formations that should involve conscious reflections about the self and the future self.” Exploration means “trying on” various identities, while commitment means accepting some and discarding others, and both form pathways towards certain identities and away from others.

There is some initial evidence to suggest that attrition may be connected to adolescent students' ideal future selves, which did not include music. Daniel and Bowden (2013, 255) found more than half of the music teachers surveyed believe the intermediate stage of piano learning "involves a high drop-out rate." Evans (2009) also found a gradual increase in music student dropout over time, but the first sudden and significant surge of dropout comes at age 11 or 12, in school year 7 (see Figure 1). Campbell (2009, iii) found that "encouraging youth to see themselves as musicians in the future may impact their continued participation in musical organizations during adolescence". She also suggests students who have a strong concept of a *musical possible self* were more likely to envision a future where music held a meaningful role than students who had lower *possible self* perceptions. The implications for teachers are such that "motivation to participate in music may be enhanced by connecting present activities to a vision of the future" (Campbell 2009, 185). Research has not thoroughly investigated how adolescent piano students construct their future possible selves but would be a valuable contribution to teachers and parents who often struggle with the turbulent teenage years.

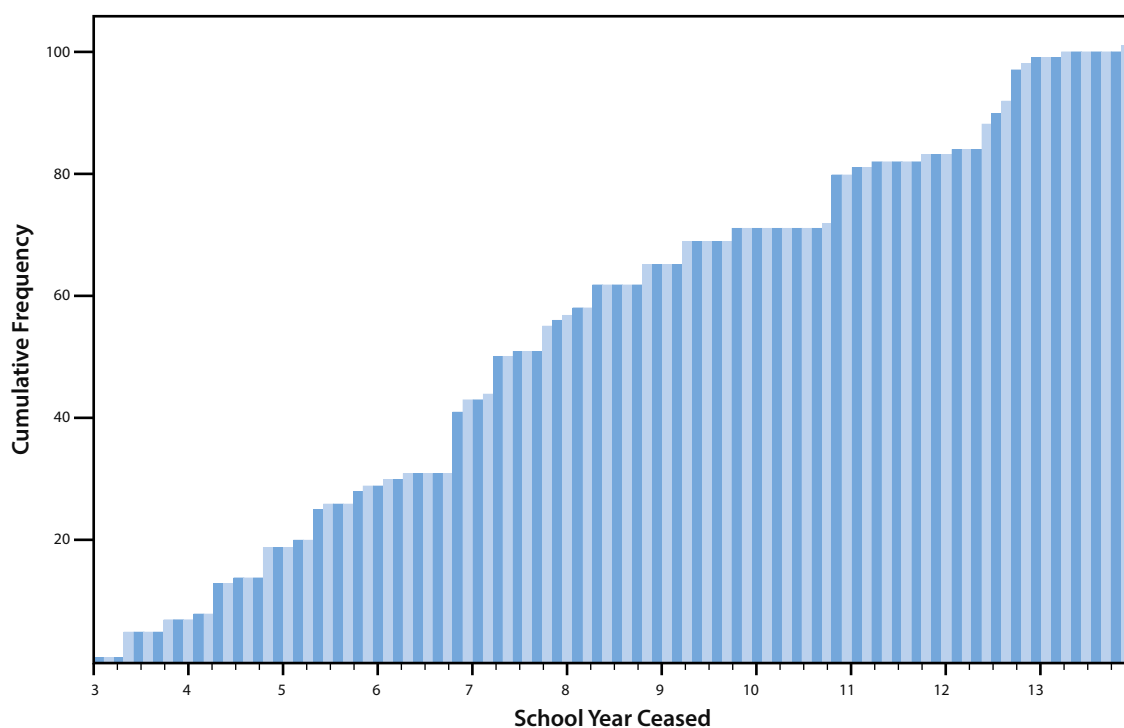


Figure 1: Histogram depiction of when children ceased music learning

Reprinted from "*Psychological Needs and Social-Cognitive Influences on Participation in Music Activities*" by P. Evans (2009, 83), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Copyright 2009 by Paul Evans.

Adolescents are regularly asked to articulate their future selves through questions such as, "What would you like to be when you grow up?" If playing the piano holds no relevancy to a student's vision of their life as they move through adolescence and into adulthood, the desire to persist long-term will be weak. A clear mental construction of a student's future musical self is compelling to develop early in lessons because "the physical, mental, and emotional effort needed to sustain long-term engagement requires a great deal of resilience and persistence" (McPherson, Davidson and Evans, 2016, 406). The results challenge the common practice that lessons are in pursuit of performances or exams, because these annual milestones only require

short-term thinking. However, students dropping out due to a weak sense of musical identity forces pedagogical thinking toward something more abstract and often harder to imagine. The concept of a future musical self points toward a more meaningful commitment to the arts as holding an important place over the course of one's lifetime. Cross and Markus (1991, 230–255) describe how *possible selves* contribute to motivating student musicians over this broad timeframe:

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

Research with instrumental music students found the children who maintained interest and enthusiasm for music lessons reported enjoying the sound of their instruments, displayed high levels of enjoyment and personal satisfaction in performing and practice but most importantly, had plans to study music long-term (Pitts, Davidson and McPherson, 2000, 51–69). A clear vision of the future self is critical for undertaking certain actions in the present which work in congruence with who we “want to be” in the future.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

Research Question

From the literature reviewed, it seems a lack of long-term commitment would be a significant cause of dropout. To expand this further, it seemed that a lack of identity as a musician would be unfavorable to successful piano study. On the contrary, a clear sense of purpose and vision of how music would be

beneficial seemed to result in more flourishing students. Without a sense of meaning to answer the question “Why am I doing this?” persisting through the challenges of being a piano student would be difficult. With a clear answer, the ability to identify as a musician would be more accessible. It seemed students who were better able to associate what they were accomplishing at the piano with who they *were* found a more meaningful place for lessons in their lives.

STUDY 1 QUESTION: Is there a connection between the ability to envision a future musical self—measured by the long-term role of music in life—and the decision to drop out of piano lessons?

STUDY 2 QUESTION: How do piano students construct their musical identities and understand themselves as musicians?

STUDY 2 QUESTION: What kinds of experiences contribute to the formation of a salient musical identity, and how does this impact the desire to continue?

The word “salient” is particularly important because it signifies that an identity is relevant to the moment and “front of mind”; it means *prominent* or *pertinent*, so a salient identity matters for constructing meaningful identities. When a person with a salient identity imagines themselves in that way, it has clear detail rather than vagueness. The phenomenological idea of experience is critical in conjunction with saliency because an accumulation of experiences lead toward more salient identities.

This article synthesizes results from two distinct studies and offers a view from both sides of the musical identity phenomenon. This is the first publication to compare dropout and continuing piano students placed within the context of adolescent musical identity.

Design and Analysis

Study 1

This quantitative study was conducted through the Piano Pedagogy Laboratory at the University of Ottawa and focused on dropout piano students by comparing them to an already established database of continuing students. This study was approved by

the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa (File Number 06-15-41). Dropout participants were recruited by contacting their former piano teachers who were members of certain professional music teachers' associations. In total, 210 teachers were contacted individually by email and 33 were able to connect the researcher with eligible participants. Teachers were asked to contact former students, distribute invitation letters and gain permission to forward the parents' contact information to the researcher. The criteria for dropout student participation included a minimum age of 7, a maximum age of 18 and at least one full academic year of experience with piano lessons. Dropout students did not reach a Level 8 playing standard set by the Canadian conservatory systems and had typically discontinued lessons within the previous year.

This study used the *Survey of Musical Interests* (2005) developed by researchers in the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory at the University of Ottawa. This survey consists of a student section and a parent section, which always took place simultaneously and was collected in a traditional pencil-and-paper questionnaire format. These meetings usually occurred at the family's home, where children and parents answered the questionnaire in separate spaces so one could not influence the other's answers. Children answered 67 questions measuring five types of motivation using Likert-scale measurement as well as 10 multiple choice and open-ended qualitative questions. Parents answered multiple-choice and open-ended questions regarding the child's musical background and learning environment on topics such as practice time and home culture. The data from each student and parent survey was manually entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) computer program where statistical analyses were performed. For making comparisons between dropout and continuing students, the independent samples t-test was used for continuous data; all p-values are two-tailed and considered significant below the 0.05 level.

Study 2

This qualitative study was conducted through the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary and sought to understand piano students' musical identities. This study was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary (Certification REB18-1837). The study involved eight trios, each consisting of a student, their parent and piano teacher. This trio combination has also been used in other music education research (Creech 2009, 163–182; Creech and Hallam 2006, 35–56). In total, 37 piano teachers who were members of various professional music teachers' associations were contacted by email. Interested teachers were asked to contact students, distribute invitation letters and obtain permission to forward the parents' contact information (phone number or email address) for further discussion and scheduling.

This phenomenological case study (Creswell 1998) used multiple methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews (Kvale 1996), photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997, 369–387), lesson observations (Burton and Bartlett 2005) and surveys (Check and Schutt 2012). The case itself could be considered an investigation into adolescent piano students' musical identities. This case was bound by the limits of eight adolescent piano students as well as their parents and teachers, taking individualized lessons with private teachers and following a conservatory-based curriculum of learning. Case study research was particularly appropriate for this interdisciplinary topic partly because of its extensive use in music, education, psychology and phenomenology but more importantly because it gathered rich and in-depth data to the complex questions of identity. Phenomenology acted as the overarching philosophical guide for this study because it sought to understand each individual's interpretation of their experiences and considered the collective experience (Van Manen 2014; 2016; 2017, 775–779). It investigates the nature of participants' lived or imagined experiences and ways of being in the world. Photovoice is a method where participants take photos as data collection. First

conceptualized by Wang and Burris (1997, 369–387), they found images allowed participants to actively participate in the research process and illustrate their experiences in a more vivid way. Participants not only became contributors but owners of the research, and the entire research process was more meaningfully co-constructed between participant and researcher. This was a compelling method because weaving arts-based research into more traditional forms of qualitative data collection includes “a process that uses the expressive qualities of [artistic] form to convey meaning” (Barone and Eisner 2012, xii).

The core data source for this study involved two interviews with each student. Interviews were recorded digitally for later transcription. The initial interview of approximately 20 questions (see Appendix 1) in a semi-structured format took 30–40 minutes. Between the first and second meetings, students submitted four photos to represent four questions concerning musical identity (see Appendix 2). Students took photos on their mobile phones and submitted the photos through text message or email. During the second interview, only follow-up questions to the first interview were prepared because the main purpose was for participants to interpret their photographs and express the meaning of their content. Because the photos were highly personal and required explanation, the second meeting was critical to understand how the photos reflected the given prompts. This second follow-up interview took 15–20 minutes and occurred within approximately one month of the first interview. Although remarkably interesting data was also collected from parents and teachers, it is beyond the scope of this article.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a method of data analysis familiar to music education research (Borthwick and Davidson 2002, 60–78; Burland and Davidson 2002, 121–140; Caldwell 2014; Cheng and Southcott 2016, 48–57; Peck and Grealey 2020, 1–12), and this study drew upon Rapley’s (2011, 273–290) approach. This entailed seven sequential steps to read, reflect and categorize the data. This

sequence was intended as an initiation since there is no single, standardized way IPA analysis must be conducted (Crawford 2019, 454–475); therefore, the research process is meant to be organic, evolutionary and flexible. Ultimately, the question, “What does this all mean?” guided the analysis. Detailed work to color-code the transcripts came from Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019, 259–270), and using different highlighted colors helped to quickly visualize which themes had arisen. *Theming* was appropriate for this study because it has frequently been used with interviews that explore participants’ beliefs, constructs, identity development, and emotional experiences” (Saldana 2016, 200).

Participants

Study 1

There were 55 former piano students, along with their parents, who comprised the dropout group. This consisted of 34 female and 21 male students, ranging between 8 and 17.5 years old, with an average of 13 years old. Dropout students began lessons at approximately 7 years old and took lessons for an average of five years until around age 12 (these figures have been rounded for ease of discussion). It is notable that an average age 12 upon quitting lessons confirms the commonly held belief of the preteen dropout stage. Their piano lessons ended an average of one year prior to taking the survey. This group was compared with 153 current piano students who had previously taken the same questionnaire and created a baseline to use for comparison purposes but were not directly part of this study. Those continuing students consisted of 100 female and 53 male students who ranged in age between 6 and 20 years old with an average age of 11 years old. Students in the continuing group began lessons, on average, at 6.5 years old and had taken lessons for an average of 4.75 years at the time they completed the survey. All students and parents were Canadian, and most were studying music in a reading-based system, such as Faber method books or the Royal Conservatory of Music publications.

Study 2

The eight students in this study were between ages 12 and 14 years old and had taken formal, traditional piano lessons for an average of seven years. Students all had studied the piano for multiple consecutive years with a professional teacher and were enrolled in piano lessons with plans to continue. They were all familiar with the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) curriculum and were following that program to varying extents. The framework of a conservatory curriculum was central to student experience, even with supplementary repertoire included. All participants were Canadian; other identifying details have been changed or omitted. Pseudonyms are used.

RESULTS

Study 1: Quantitative Analysis of a Musical Future Self

All students answered five Likert-scale questions about how playing the piano integrated with their vision of a future musical self. For example, "I am learning/learned to play the piano because I see myself as a musician" or "I am learning/learned to play the piano because this is part of who I am." The continuing students have a much stronger mental profile of themselves as people for whom music would play a significant role in their future lives and a better sense of themselves as musicians. In contrast, the dropout students could not find as much current or future meaning in playing the piano and did not capture this same sense of identity (see Table 1).

Lesson longevity asked parents and students to think back to when they first began piano lessons and estimate how long they had expected to continue. Both students and parents in the dropout group showed significantly lower mean values than the continuing students. Dropout students and parents responded they would take lessons until the end of elementary or middle school, but continuing students and parents responded that lessons would continue until the end of high school or even beyond. Longevity can also be viewed through the interest of continuing to play as an adult, and continuing parents thought their children would "probably" or "most likely" play the piano as an adult, while the dropout parents thought their children would only "maybe" or "probably" continue to play as an adult, and this difference proved statistically significant (see Table 1). It is interesting to note that in both the continuing and dropout groups, the mean averages suggest parents thought their lessons would continue longer than their children did.

		Continuing		Dropout		Statistical results	
	Scale	M	SD	M	SD	t	df
Envisioning a future musical self (child's rating)	1 to 7	4.30	1.51	3.06	1.64	5.09***	206
<i>Length of time lessons would continue</i>							
Child's rating	1 to 4	3.25	0.86	2.09	0.82	8.653***	206
Parent's rating	1 to 4	3.66	1.43	2.78	1.05	4.657***	118.95
Piano playing as an adult (parent's rating)	1 to 5	3.60	0.09	2.75	0.18	4.665***	78.23

Table 1: Lesson Longevity in Continuing and Dropout Students *p < 0.001**

Study 2: Qualitative Analysis of a Musical Future Self

Phenomenologists suggest a person's identity is developed by the content of their self-narrative (Schechtman 1996). As such, this section is presented in a more narrative style. There were a number of moving moments from student interviews that show how deeply these students were able to think about themselves as musicians, and how they described themselves as musicians gave way to moments of their own self-discovery. Even though eight students were included in the original study, only the four most compelling regarding envisioning a future musical self are offered here.

Corina

Corina was a focused 13-year-old who had recently developed a stronger interest toward her musical studies. She had a mind for language and spoke elegantly; she was sophisticated yet wearing sweatpants. Her balanced thinking made her answers to my interview questions particularly interesting. Corina's parents were from African and Caribbean backgrounds, and she lived at home with them and her sister. She had been studying piano for six years and was learning Level 5 repertoire from the RCM curriculum.

In terms of the future self, Corina had a vision of how music would matter for her life, and her forward-thinking musical goals seemed to provide an important context for her current identity. She had recently started to take her lessons more seriously and showed an increased level of dedication. Her teacher, Aaron, believed Corina had a bright future in music, with the aptitude to take it as far as she wanted and explained that she eventually wanted to learn Liszt's *La Campanella*. Corina felt piano would be part of her whole life, even if it was not part of her career. Her photo of "how music will be important to you in the future" shows the high school where she would be attending (see Photo 1), and Corina knew music would help her in school, for university entrance and for future jobs. She was considering careers in politics or finance and gave an example that if she went into

government, she could make music education a stronger force in schools. She never intended to stop playing the piano at any point, as demonstrated in this excerpt:

C: Piano is something I think will just stick with me for probably most of my life.

KG: And why do you think that is—that it will be a part of your life going forward?

C: Because during my youth it is such a huge part of what I do now.



Photo 1: Corina's future high school, 2019.

Hannah

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

Hannah had a clear vision of her ideal future self as a musician and a strong sense that music would be important throughout her entire life. She talked about perhaps combining her notability as a famous musician with the ability to travel around the world as an advocate for women's rights. She mentioned

performing as a soloist with the local orchestra. The photovoice submission for “how music will be important to you in the future” was of her canvas choir bag (see Photo 2), and she explained that becoming an accompanist for the choir would bring together her love of piano and singing. She also submitted a photo of Levels 8 and 10 music books; these are significant milestones in the RCM system. It was interesting she already had copies of these books, despite being a Level 5 student and had a clear vision of herself as an advanced pianist. Completing these exams is well-recognized by other musicians and signals a combination of determination, hard work and musical achievement. Hannah explained: “Level 8 and Level 10, when you tell someone that, they are like, ‘Whoa!’” She also knew these were the levels required to be taken seriously at a university entrance exam, and she had intentions to study post-secondary voice, piano or choral. Her musical growth was well supported by her teacher, Adele, who believed in Hannah’s musical future and explained, “I think music probably is going to be a huge part of her life. I can see that something to do with music might be part of her career.” Hannah was already advancing through the intermediate grades and with momentum to continue much further.



Photo 2: Hannah’s Cantaré choir music tote bag, 2019.

Xavier

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

The photovoice prompt regarding how music would be important to him in the future revealed an old trombone mounted to a wall above the fireplace in his living room (see Photo 3). Considering the prominence of this placement, the family was making a statement about the importance of music in their home culture. Xavier explained it “was my grandpa’s old trombone I think, or my great-grandpa, I’m not sure. I think he was in a marching band or something. And I’m in air cadets so... and I also play trombone in a concert band.” It was interesting that Xavier identified another instrument as being more important to his future than piano. Xavier believed some of his long-term musical goals included playing in a jazz band or traveling and performing with his high school band. Interestingly, he could not think of any long-term goals with piano. Although he may not have outwardly displayed it, Xavier was one of the only students that when asked to “take a photo of someone who *is* a musician,” he submitted a photo of himself. His selfie submission and acknowledgement of self-as-musician is the first and most important step to being a musician. His inner reflection and unique interpretation of the photovoice prompt points toward music as having a deeply important place in his concept of self.

Although traditional piano lessons may not have been the answer, there was music inside Xavier, and he knew it.



Photo 3: Xavier's grandfather's trombone mounted to the wall above the fireplace, 2019.

Janelle

Janelle had just barely turned 12 but was a thoughtful and articulate preteen. She was very conscientious of her responsibilities and respected her parents and teachers. Janelle's ability to manage her many competing interests was remarkable: Her mom noted that Janelle had been taking piano lessons since age 6 but was also involved in skating, swimming, ballet, art lessons, running club, badminton and soccer. Janelle played flute in the school band and essentially worshipped the Korean pop boy band BTS. She was confidently studying Level 7 RCM piano repertoire and practicing five to six days per week. Janelle's parents were Asian; she lived at home with them and had a brother who was at university in the United States.

Janelle wanted to pass her Level 8 RCM piano and theory exams, but more importantly, she believed piano lessons would help her become a certain kind of person. She submitted a diagram of how music will help

her in the future (see Photo 4) by editing a Google Images search result to fit the topic in question and adding her own keywords to the black-and-white image: *multitasking, efficiency, sense of music* and *release emotions*. This well-prepared diagram certainly speaks to her clear and straightforward personality and to understanding musical benefits in a quantitative way. Janelle referenced the word *multitasking* 12 times in two interviews and it appears as the first entry on her assessment of how music would be important to her in the future. This kind of methodical thinking demonstrates an organized and diligent person, but more than that, Janelle was considering the bigger life skills she was learning through music. All the hours practicing and going to lessons were not just about playing music proficiently but, rather, contributing to the formation of certain characteristics. In other words, piano lessons were shaping her identity.

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

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

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

KG: Like what?

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

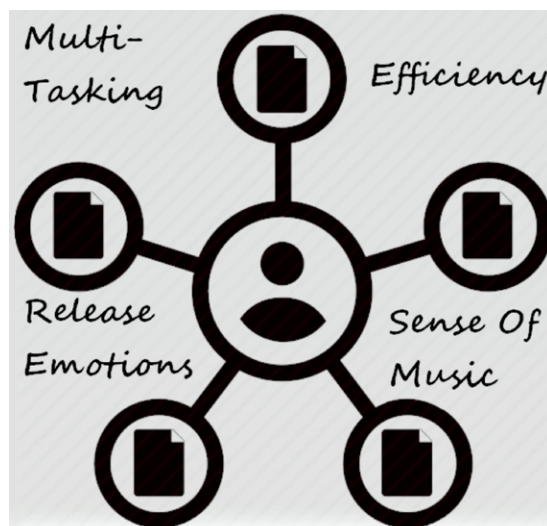


Photo 4: Edited Google image with keywords regarding the future value of music in Janelle's life, 2019.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this section is to offer a deeper examination of the data, synthesize results from the two studies and will use further direct quotes from participants interwoven with the scholarly literature to achieve understanding.

Research has shown that students who continue with piano lessons "saw music as a part of their identity and future selves" (Comeau, Huta and Liu 2015, 190). Dropout students did not view piano lessons as aligning with their future selves, which negatively impacted lesson longevity. When asked if they might play piano in the future, students would often respond that they "did not see themselves doing it" or it was "not their thing." Speaking about her daughter, one parent demonstrated her limited scope by explaining, "I thought it was reasonable for her to finish after her Grade 1 exam." Beyond a simple lack of commitment, the lack of social context to support a deeper musical *identity* is likely what led to dropout. It is important students view themselves as musicians in a variety of different real and imagined contexts to establish the idea that music is a valuable part of who they are now and who they will become in the future. It has been suggested that "social environments in which music plays an active part are conducive to children being able to form a

long-term view of themselves as musicians" (Evans and McPherson 2015, 421). The long quest to develop a musical identity requires a deep level of ongoing commitment, a supportive daily environment and a clear vision of the future self to whom piano music will be a valuable part of life. These results support other findings: Of the students who showed no long-term intention of learning their instrument, most had ceased instruction within the following 12 months (McPherson 2000, 122–127). Dropout students did not view piano lessons as congruent with their current or future vision of themselves and likely had no concept of how music might be a valuable part of life going forward. Without this deeper level of identification as someone who holds music as an integral part of their life, the desire to persist will be limited.

Instead, the students who were able to conceptualize, at some level, what it meant to be a musician, how they understood themselves to be musicians and what music might mean for their future, seemed more likely to prosper. A clear idea of their musical future led to well-being and purpose in the moment. Even if students could not articulate the finer details of their future musical selves or were interested in other careers, they had a general understanding that music would hold a meaningful place in their lives going forward over the long term. Each of these students were asked what it means to *be* a musician, with varying but equally compelling answers: Janelle and Hannah talked about expressing emotions, Corina talked about enjoyment and Xavier combined hard work with creativity. Most importantly, they all agreed that, to some extent, they were musicians. This is important because making the statement to outwardly express to others "I am a musician" is when students *become* musicians.

Musical Future Selves

The quantitative study demonstrated students had a narrow view of their musical trajectory. Most students only envisioned taking piano lessons for a few years, without a clear concept of a musical future self. One student said, "Even if I was practicing, I wasn't getting

better. I feel that I had reached the limit to what I could offer." Despite a fairly elementary playing level, this defeated tone was perhaps due to the limited understanding of the student's musical self: Without the belief in oneself as a musician, achievement will naturally be mediocre. There is no purpose to putting in effort if a musical identity has not been established. Students often cited leaving lessons in favor of sports or dance, and perhaps these activities were more in line with their hoped-for future self. In fact, dropping out had given some the opportunity to pursue what felt *identity congruent*: One participant described that he would not return to piano lessons because he "loved cello." Although leaving piano lessons in favor of specializing on another instrument was not common, it could generally be considered students who drop out of piano lessons in favor of other experiences may be signalling a different desired identity. Overall, their musical learning was incongruent with their current and future selves.

The qualitative study demonstrated the role of music for students' possible selves in more vivid ways since the four students had already considered their future musical self. For example, Hannah described her hoped-for self as being actively involved with music, both formally and informally. She explained, "I still will keep doing it, I hope, until I am old." She did not elaborate on what *old* meant, but the longitudinal nature of her comment and her reference to *hope* signalled aspirations of a future musical self. The kind of person Hannah wanted to become, and the kind of life she envisioned, involved music as a significant component. This meant her current musical self was thriving.

The photovoice submissions regarding "how you think music will be important to you in the future" resulted in some of the most compelling data. It required students to live the experiences of how their futures might look; to imagine what it would be like if their ideal self came true (Erikson 2007, 348–358). Considering it is impossible to take a photo of the future, this request required students to take a distant, abstract notion and bring it to life. Students were unexpectedly

candid with their answers. Corina described tangible benefits, such as doing well in high school music classes or having conservatory credits transferred to her transcript. Hannah had a vision of going into a university music department and studying professionally as a choral accompanist. Xavier thought that he might play in a jazz band or with the air cadets ensemble with his photo of a trombone. Janelle explained that music lessons would help build the characteristics she needed for a future career, like multitasking and efficiency. These representations of self in the future gave meaning to what they were doing in their current learning. Cross and Markus (1991, 230–255) would describe these as hoped-for or ideal selves: For example, the high-achieving high-school-band self, the unrelated-career-but-music-enthusiast self, the musical-hobbyist self or the professional-musician self. All of their possible selves were quite likely; students generally did not reference farfetched ideas, such as becoming Lang Lang's duet partner. Their realistic visions of hoped-for selves helped make sense of their present musical identity. Students with clearly defined, desired possible selves were those who had reflected on their previous experiences, developed aspirations for the future and had either integrated them into their definition of self or abandoned those beliefs and replaced them with new ones. Either way, their possible selves provided a context by which the current self was evaluated.

Adolescent Age and a Turning Point

In both studies, the average age of student participants was approximately 13, and the early teenage years are known to be a phase full of "I" and "me" questions—sometimes in contrast with "them" and "others"—as adolescents establish their own identities and gain independence. Adolescence brings together the important events and relationships with others in a desire to construct a unified story of oneself; this also provides direction for future actions. For those who dropped out of lessons, their musical identity questions likely did not have satisfactory answers and could not provide further direction. For the

four continuing students, the questions about who they were as musicians had deep and fulfilling answers, as evidenced by their thoughtful photovoice submissions and introspective interview discussions.

This period of life is held by Erikson (1950) to be one of the significant moments of *identity crisis*. The results of this study show crisis or heaviness not in a disastrous light, but rather an intense period of questioning. More recently, Ryan and Deci (2017, 384) agree adolescence is a period of “heavy lifting” in terms of identity formation. There were many moments when student participants struggled to define who they were, what they thought or the place of music in their world. Research based on Marcia’s (1966, 551–558) models of identity formation found “individuals who have gone through a period of crisis or exploration and have committed to an ideology and occupation are classified as identity achieved” (Dunkel and Anthis 2001, 765). In one instance, the peak of identity crisis was revealed in Xavier’s life as he acknowledged he had not come to any conclusions the role of music or about his identity in general. His tone of struggling through big questions was a defining moment of the interview. Marcia’s model would likely place Xavier in *moratorium* where he was in a decision-making phase and had not made any firm commitments but had mostly just followed his parents’ guidance without a great deal of independence.

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

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

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

X: Still trying to figure *life* out.

KG: Me too, man. Me too.

Xavier’s teacher, Louise, also identified he was at a crossroads between taking lessons to please his parents and taking lessons for his own interest. She explained, “He’s at a stage where he has to push his own wings, and he has, so we’ve taken a different approach. But I know he still enjoys it, and it’s important to him.” In this case, it seemed as if no one—including Xavier himself—was certain about

the role music would play in his life going forward. Uncertain does not mean doomed. Instead, this proved to be a good example of how the early teen years, and the shift away from parental guidance, can be liberating but also daunting. While Xavier had some natural ability, a supportive home environment and a teacher who nurtured his creativity, there was still something missing in his mind that made his ideal musical self unclear. Yet, his selfie submission of “someone who is a musician” suggests a spark of musical identity persisted.

Adolescence is a critical period in the development of musical taste (North and Hargreaves 2002, 397–405). Music listening may play more of a role in musical identity formation, and the impact on possible selves, than most students realize. This could have to do with the prominent role of *Musikerleben* during adolescence, a German term that roughly translates into strongly emotional musical experience (Behne 1997, 134–150). The music we experience in adolescence has a powerful and lasting impact because it plays an important role identity exploration and development (Bonneville-Roussy, Rentfrow, Xu and Potter 2013, 703–717; Lamont and Hargreaves 2019, 109–118). Research suggests “meaningful musical experiences during youth can leave a lasting impression on an individual by shaping their identity and place in the world” (Peck and Grealey 2020, 1). In both studies, participants were generally enrolled in classically based piano lessons but not all students had the supporting role of hearing similar kinds of music at home or experiencing live music in the community. Most dropout students expressed the desire to play more popular music, which is what they spent time listening to in their everyday lives. In contrast, Hannah described that her dad was always playing Vivaldi, and she had developed an enthusiasm for this type of music:

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

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

This student also had a particularly clear image of where music might lead her throughout life. Hannah described studying music at university and becoming a choir accompanist. Her vision of an ideal future musical self was providing motivation for her current actions. Hannah was known to her family and friends as a musician and, most importantly, thought of herself as a musician.

Adolescents often rely on their musical taste as a token of identity and describe who they are to others (Hargreaves, MacDonald and Miell 2017, 3–24; Lamont and Hargreaves 2019, 109–118). Music is one of many ways students experience the world and define their place within it (Ilari, 2017, 527–542). The majority of all participants' lessons were being conducted in a traditional manner, based on repertoire, technique and theory. However, Janelle's enthusiasm for Korean pop culture and Xavier's enthusiasm for electronic and techno music were unique to their musical identities but incongruent with their music lessons. Corina said, "I generally stick to pop and rock. Sometimes I like jazz and R&B, but like, the thing is, the music that most people of my generation listen to is kind of what I am just used to, so I will generally stick with that—stick with what I know." These students were generally still able to conceptualize themselves as musicians and find value in a number of different genres, but the worlds between formal and informal musical experiences were not integrated. The dropout students were significantly less amenable to learning in a traditional curriculum and perhaps their identities felt fragmented. One student said lessons would have been more fun "if the pieces were more interesting instead of only classical pieces composed in the 1700s." Another student said her teacher "didn't let me choose songs I played. We often spent months at a time working on one song. I wasn't allowed to look at my hands or play by ear." This sense of irrelevancy was likely not able to coincide with their hoped-for future selves. North, Hargreaves and O'Neill (2000,

269) described that most students' opinions regarding classical music were generally quite negative, with the only benefits to please parents or teachers. They found that "since pop music was preferred over classical music to such an extent it is easy to see why listening to or playing classical music is viewed so negatively: it presents a poor impression of oneself to others." This poses pedagogical questions for teachers about whether maintaining the exposure to classical music will be important for the student's possible future self, or whether teaching popular music is more important to encourage feelings of relevancy and relatedness in the moment. Adolescence is the time for musical identities to be tested, adopted, thrown away and solidified. The results suggest either students' informal, social worlds need to incorporate more interactions with classical music and strive to make that type of music relevant or formal lessons need to incorporate more popular music where the students already have a connection.

Choosing a Musical Identity

Choice is a key component of identity questioning, renegotiation and formation based on where we have been and where we are going. We choose which identities to accept or reject when building our self-definition, and identity choice involves giving up some things in favor of others (Josselson 2017). We are met with choices in every action we take: "Do you want to play a Two-Part Invention by Bach or the theme from *The Godfather*?" "Will you spend money on buying an acoustic piano or on a trip to Florida?" "Will your free time be used to play Minecraft or practice piano?" When people know "who they are," their identity acts to guide everyday choices toward things that further develop their identity (Oyserman, Elmore and Smith 2012, 69–104). In this way, choice is connected to our past and future selves: The choices we make today are based on our former lived experiences and guide the direction toward our possible selves. Choices take us closer toward certain endpoints and away from others. Corina brought up the topic of choice when

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

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

C: Yes, I would say so, yeah.

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

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

Similarly, Janelle brought up the concept of choice when considering her definition of what it meant to be a musician and whether she was a musician. Her beautiful, but somewhat elusive, answer references choosing to emotionally invest herself in the music.

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

Lamont (2017, 185) discusses the role of agency in identity formation and suggests “choice appears to be a central concept in sustaining a musical identity over time.” Agency could be freely choosing your own recital piece, choosing to practice in the right frame of mind or choosing to return to lessons year after year. As students accumulate musical experiences they have chosen, they are also choosing their musical identity. In other words, a salient musical identity comes from an accumulation of freely chosen experiences.

IMPLICATIONS

These implications will help more students think of themselves as musicians, develop stronger musical identities, more rewarding experiences with piano lessons and potentially less attrition. Research has only recently connected musical identity and student dropout (Woody et al. 2021), but forming a musical identity in adolescent students could be viewed as the foremost goal of all music education (Hargreaves and Lamont, 2017; Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003, 263–273).

To build a musical identity, students need to hear the term “musician” when others describe them. The ways in which parents and teachers talk about their student shapes how children view themselves. If students have never heard someone refer to them as a musician, it will be difficult to incorporate this term into their working sense of self. A musical identity can be created from the first lesson as young children; providing choices about which instrument to play or which pieces to study are actions that demonstrate a belief in their independent musical identity. Treating students as musicians from the early stages creates an identity affirmation; to say “I see you” as a musician and will respect your musicianship is a powerful action that gives agency to the student. It is not just about calling someone a “musician,” although that is an important first step but, rather, giving them the support and ownership to construct that identity for themselves. There is some evidence to suggest that “a child may begin to see themselves as ‘a musician’ around 8 years of age, when their musical ability becomes differentiated enough from other children for them to become aware of it” (Rickard and Chin 2017, 289). Beyond a simple awareness of ability, if a student's musical education also includes conversations about what it means to be a musician and proof that parents or teachers believe in the student as a musician, they are already well on their way to becoming one.

CONCLUSION

Identity can be viewed as a fluid and endlessly changing concept. For students who are considering significant questions regarding who they “are,” or who they would like to “become,” the role of a musical identity in those questions is important. Research has shown that successful music students develop a clear vision of themselves as musicians early in their learning (Evans and McPherson 2015, 407–422). The dropout students could not easily find their way to this vision, while the four continuing students had developed rich and detailed descriptions of how music would matter to their future selves. The more salient their musical identities, the more desire there seemed to be toward continuing with music. The results presented in this paper suggest students who dropped out of lessons did not have an established, long-term vision of themselves as musicians, while those students who were continuing had a much better sense of how music fit into their identity. The impact of understanding the role of envisioning a future musical self may have a considerable impact for piano students as they navigate an estimated 10,000-hour journey.

This research matters because it suggests that developing a salient musical identity may result in students who continue with lessons. Further research in this field would contribute much needed analysis to the study of piano pedagogy about whether forming a strong musician identity in students is important and, if so, how to support this shifting identity on the long journey to mastering the piano. Developing a long-term relationship with an instrument and expressing oneself through music can be one of the most satisfying parts of life and entails a musical identity from childhood. ◀◀

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STUDENTS: First Interview

Identity (Part 1)

- ▶▶ Imagine you're at a party: How do you describe yourself to new friends you have just met?
- ▶▶ I'm curious to see a piece of music you have been studying lately: Tell me about why you enjoy playing it.
- ▶▶ Could you tell me a story about a time when you felt like playing the piano was a really important part of who you are?
- ▶▶ Think back to when you first began lessons: Why did you want to play the piano then? Think about your current lessons: Why do you want to play the piano now?
- ▶▶ Compared to the other activities you are involved in, how important is piano in your life?
- ▶▶ What do you think taking piano lessons has added to—or subtracted from—your life?
- ▶▶ If you were trapped on a desert island with only a piano, which piece would you practice?
 - ▶ Could you play it for me?
 - ▶ How did you feel when you played the piano just now?

Social Environment

- ▶▶ Who are the most important influences in your life and how have they shaped your decision to study the piano?
- ▶▶ Do people around you ever call you a *musician*?
- ▶▶ How do you feel about going to piano lessons? What is your favourite part of going to lessons?
- ▶▶ How do you talk to your friends about music?
- ▶▶ Tell me about the music you listen to on YouTube or iTunes. What do you think that tells other people about who you are?

Future Self

- ▶▶ How long do you think you will continue to study the piano? Why?
- ▶▶ What are your long-term musical goals?
- ▶▶ To what extent do you think learning the piano will be useful or important you as an adult?
- ▶▶ What would you like to be when you grow up? Do you think music will help you accomplish that goal?
- ▶▶ Is the amount of time and effort it takes to learn the piano worthwhile? Why?

Motivation

- ▶▶ Could you describe a time when you felt really motivated to practice and play piano?
- ▶▶ What are your strategies to persist with piano when you feel unmotivated?
- ▶▶ What does your piano teacher or family say or do to keep you motivated?

Identity (Part 2)

- ▶▶ Someone once said, "Every child is a musician." What do you think of that?
- ▶▶ What has studying piano taught you about yourself?
- ▶▶ What do you think it means to be a musician? Are you a musician?

STUDENTS: Second Interview

- ▶▶ "During our first conversation together, [student name], you mentioned [...] Tell me more about that."
- ▶▶ "[Student name], you talked about [...] What do you think that means?"
- ▶▶ "[Student name], you said [...] What do you think that tells you about who you are?"
- ▶▶ "[Student name], I noticed you brought up [...] Can you explain that a bit more to me?"
- ▶▶ "How has your thinking about musical identity changed over the course of this study?"

APPENDIX 2: PHOTOVOICE**Student Photovoice Prompts**

Take a photo of:

- ▶▶ someone who "is" a musician
- ▶▶ a place where you make music -or- a person you make music with
- ▶▶ how you think music will be important to you in the future
- ▶▶ something that motivates you to play the piano

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

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

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

Karen Gerelus is a third-generation piano teacher, musician, author and scholar. Her research in piano pedagogy asks questions of identity and motivation with students, and how to involve piano parents in more meaningful ways.

