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Connecting through music: The contribution of a music programme to fostering positive youth development

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Abstract

This article reports an investigation of the musical and extra-musical outcomes of participation in a music programme for students in four socio-economically disadvantaged school settings. Drawing on the theory of Positive Youth Development, which provides a focus on the positive assets young people bring to their engagement rather than perceived deficits and risks, the findings indicate that PYD outcomes do arise from music participation in these settings. Specifically, students evidence developing competencies in the PYD domains of Competency (musical, academic, social), Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring. The findings also indicate those learning and teaching strategies and environmental supports that foster the development of PYD domains in these settings.

Keywords

music engagement, music learning, music learning and teaching practices, Positive Youth Development, socio-economic disadvantage

Introduction

Young people in contemporary society face a range of challenges. Changes in family support structures, combined with the breakdown of social norms, have led to some feeling marginalised and concerned about their future. Young people unable to cope with the pressures they face often suffer from low motivation, a lack of confidence, and poor self-esteem (Sklar, Anderson, & Autry, 2007). Such feelings of alienation are often reflected in at-risk behaviours, such as poor school performance, sexual promiscuity, truancy, and drug and alcohol misuse (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Conversely, research has shown that young people engaged in challenging,

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complex and intrinsically rewarding behaviours, for example, learning to play a musical instrument, are more likely to view these activities as providing a sense of achievement, freedom, and self-determination (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004). Furthermore, young people are also more likely to persevere with such behaviours. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), individuals engaged in activities they believe provide a sense of autonomy, competence and social engagement have an increased tendency for self-determined behaviour and are less likely to engage in at-risk behaviours.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an emerging area of practice and research that applies a strengths-based perspective to the promotion of positive outcomes for young people (Bowers et al., 2010; Damon, 2004; Sklar et al., 2007; Tebes et al., 2007). This perspective rejects the view of young people as problematic and in need of remediation, instead, promoting their resilience and value to others and to their community (Tebes et al., 2007). This study examines the ways in which a music programme promotes PYD outcomes in four socio-economically disadvantaged school settings in New South Wales, Australia. Specifically, the research investigates young people's learning arising from participation, the teaching and learning practices that promote learning, and the environmental factors that support music engagement and learning.

Theoretical framework

The Positive Youth Development approach

Adolescence is a time of experimentation and increased involvement in risk behaviours (Damon, 2004; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Such behaviours can include school truancy and failure, youth violence, substance abuse, and high-risk sexual behaviour (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Damon, 2004; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Research addressing the influences and motivations behind a young person's engagement in at-risk behaviours has examined the individual characteristics of young people, the environments in which they live, the situations they encounter, and the interactions of these factors over time (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). This research has emphasised the role of discrete risk factors that increase the likelihood that a young person will engage in at-risk behaviours.

Over the past several decades, numerous programmes, services and policies have been implemented internationally in attempts to stem the problems associated with engagement in risk behaviours. These programmes have tended to focus on the prevention of single problem behaviours (Damon, 2004) rather than considering the co-occurrence of at-risk behaviours in a single individual (Catalano et al., 2002). A growing body of literature suggests that risk prevention programmes, especially those targeting individual problem behaviours, do not necessarily promote successful outcomes or adaptive behaviours in young people (Allison, Edmonds, Wilson, Pope, & Farrell, 2011). Importantly, the focus on deficit views of young people inherent in risk prevention programmes has masked the potential of young people to contribute positively to their social worlds. PYD theory has arisen in part through a desire to identify and draw on the *assets* (Benson, 1997; Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006) that young people bring to their development and learning, and to counter stereotypical negative views of young people (Damon, 2004). Originally developed in response to concerns relating to adolescence, PYD programmes have been implemented with children aged between 6 and 20 years (Catalano et al., 2002).

In an historical overview of PYD approaches Damon (2004) emphasises the emerging view of young people as "resources rather than as problems for society" (p. 15) for whom the

aim is one of "understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than ... correcting, curing, or treating them for maladaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities" (p. 15). Damon traces the evolution of the PYD field from early work in resiliency, which presented a view that young people develop resilience through encounters with adverse conditions, dangers and stressors, to later work on the *developmental assets* (Benson, 1997) of young people. Benson (1997) identified 40 developmental assets categorised into two groups: external assets such as family and community support (assets 1–6), empowerment (assets 7–10), boundaries and expectations (assets 11–16), and constructive use of time (assets 17–20); and internal assets such as commitment to learning (assets 21–25), positive values (assets 26–31), social competencies (assets 32–36), and positive identity (assets 37–40). These assets are seen to play a crucial role in helping young people avoid risky behaviours, to thrive, and build resilience (Benson, 1997).

Lerner and colleagues (2000, 2002, 2006) have drawn on Benson's work to develop a PYD framework that emphasises the interaction between personal and social dimensions of youth development and engagement. This framework, known as the Five Cs model is now one of the most prominent youth development frameworks utilised by programme developers and researchers in the US (Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2012), and is reported to be the most empirically supported of the PYD frameworks to date (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009).

The Five Cs approach to Positive Youth Development

The Five Cs PYD model outlines five domains as fundamental to positive youth development: Competence (social, academic, cognitive, and vocational); Confidence (sense of self-efficacy and positive self-worth); Connection (positive bonds with people and places); Character (integrity and moral centredness and respect for societal and cultural rules); and, Caring (humane values, sympathy and empathy, and social justice) (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005). Development in these domains leads to a sixth C, Contribution. Contribution refers to both the self, and the environment in which the young person resides, including family, community, and society (Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2012). Whilst there is an emerging body of research investigating the application of this PYD model to a range of engagement and learning programmes with young people, including participation in youth clubs (Lerner et al., 2005) and sporting programmes (Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005), less is known about the ways in which engagement and participation in music programmes might contribute to PYD outcomes.

Music as a vehicle for Positive Youth Development and social change

Studies investigating the musical and extra-musical benefits of music engagement for young people provide evidence of positive cognitive, emotional and social benefits from music participation (see Hallam, 2010 for a critical review). Findings suggest that music engagement contributes to the development and/or enhancement of executive functions (working memory, self-inhibition, and mental flexibility), and cognitive processing skills (Bigand & Poulin-Carronnat, 2006; Gaab et al., 2005; Ho, Cheung, & Chan, 2003; Jones & Estell, 2007; Patel & Iverson, 2007; Schellenberg, 2003, 2006; Tallal & Gaab, 2006; Thompson, Schellenberg, & Husain, 2004) with strong results evidenced in children from 'at-risk' populations (Portowitz, Lichtenstein, Egorova, & Brand, 2009) or with language difficulties (Humpal & Wolf, 2003; Portowitz & Klein, 2007). Beyond the cognitive domain evidence suggests that music engagement has psychosocial benefits for young people (Barrett & Smigiel, 2007; Hallam, 2010; O'Neill, 2005, 2006; Saarikallio & Erkkila, 2007; Saunders, 2010).

Recent research suggests that school-based music activities provide a number of positive benefits for marginalised young people and foster social inclusion amongst migrant groups and their new communities. Odena (2010) suggested that music education projects are an effective means of addressing prejudice amongst young people living in divided communities. Marsh (2012) demonstrated that school-based musical experiences provide opportunities for cultural maintenance, cross-cultural transmission, and verbal and non-verbal communication. Furthermore, Marsh argues that school-based music programmes may also facilitate interpersonal connections, social cohesion, and student empowerment. From their experiences working with refugee and migrant communities, Hesser and Heinemann (2010) note that music can be "an effective resource in the healing process of individuals and groups who have been emotionally and physically afflicted" (p. xi).

Music programmes and disengaged youth

A number of recent studies support the view that engaging in music learning experiences can have positive effects for young people who have disengaged from mainstream schooling or who are participants in the Juvenile Justice system. This research suggests that young peoples' engagement in music programmes contributes to: improvements in self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-concept (Anderson & Overy, 2010); improvements in mood, socio-emotional states, behavior, and increased positive participation (Anderson & Overy, 2010; Devroop, 2012; Woodward, Sloth-Neilson & Mathiti, 2008); the development of positive identities rather than "offending" identities (Baker & Homan, 2007; Woodward et al., 2008); increased knowledge of different music styles and genres (Baker & Homan, 2007; Henley, Caulfield, Wilson, & Wilkinson, 2012; Woodward et al., 2008); increased positive social behaviours, confidence and self-esteem, and capacity to engage in and persist with learning tasks (Barrett & Baker, 2012; Henley et al., 2012). These authors conclude that music engagement leads to beneficial social change and positive shifts in identity. Developing positive beliefs about self has been shown to be an important contributor to positive growth in young people (Bowers et al., 2010). Thus, there is reason to suggest that musical engagement may contribute to PYD through music's influence on the personal and social dimensions of young people's lives.

Research context

The Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF) was established in 2002 with a mission to ensure that all Australian children, regardless of their socio-economic or geographic circumstances, have the opportunity to enjoy the many benefits of a music education (www.acmf.com.au). Since its inception the ACMF has implemented music programmes in over 40 disadvantaged schools and 21 juvenile justice centres across Australia. This project focused on those ACMF music programmes delivered in a rural school in a remote socio-economically disadvantaged community, two urban schools located in areas of extreme socio-economic disadvantage, and one school dedicated to the re-integration of students with severe behavioural and learning difficulties who had been expelled from mainstream schooling.

Methodology

This collective case-study (Stake, 1995) sought to identify the life and learning outcomes (musical and extra-musical) of participation in the ACMF programme in four school sites in NSW. Specifically, the research aimed to identify:

- The learning outcomes (musical and extra-musical) of participation in the ACMF music programme for participants;
- The learning and teaching strategies that support these outcomes; and,
- The contextual factors that promote positive music engagement and music learning outcomes for students in this setting.

Data generation methods were implemented in three phases over a 9-month period and included: observation of the ACMF programme at each school; interviews with ACMF teaching staff, school principals and teaching staff, participating students, and parents of participating students. Analysis of materials developed for the project, including teaching materials, newspaper articles, school newsletters, and websites, was also undertaken as a means of data triangulation.

Research sites

Research sites were selected by the ACMF to provide a mix of urban and rural/remote locations in socio-economic disadvantaged areas in a single state (NSW), and the work of two teachers (ACMF teachers A and B).

School A, Teacher A: Located in an ethnically diverse, and socio-economic disadvantaged community in urban NSW, the school serves 208 students from Kindergarten to Year Six. Music education is a significant part of the school's culture and is supported by students, staff, parents, and the wider community. The ACMF teacher's approach draws in part on the theory and practices of Hungarian composer and music educator, Zoltan Kodály, and her programme addresses the learning content and outcomes of the NSW Board of Studies Creative Arts K–6 syllabus. The students' involvement in the ACMF programme incorporates: singing in classroom music and choir; drumming workshops; performing instrumental (drums, chime bars, xylophone, bells, claves) accompaniments to vocal works, musical literacy and auditory perception games, and movement experiences.

School B, Teacher A: Located in regional NSW this rural school serves children from Kindergarten to Year 12. However, only children from Kindergarten to Year 6 take part in the ACMF music programme. Unlike School A where the ACMF teacher attends on a weekly basis, at School B the ACMF teacher spends approximately two weeks at the school each school term—in the first and last weeks of the term. These are periods of intense musical activity for the students. In between these visits classroom teachers implement the music programme employing lesson plans and resources (CDs and pre-recorded music exercises) developed by the ACMF teacher. Music lessons include rhythm and musical memory games, reading simple musical notation, and instrument practice with tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments (chime bars, clap sticks, bells, and triangle). Classroom singing and choir involve singing along to CD recordings. Drumming is a major aspect of the ACMF classes in this school with students working on home-made Djembe drums constructed from "Round-up drums" (large plastic containers formerly used to store weed-killer).

School C, Teacher B: Located in urban NSW this school provides a reintegration programme and academic and behavioural support for students with Emotional Disturbances and Behavioural Difficulties who previously attended mainstream primary and secondary schools. Intervention and re-integration programmes are provided to students from Years 5 to 10 to facilitate re-engagement with mainstream education including vocational training. The student enrolment at the time of this study included 37 students with moderate to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. Music classes are implemented through an informal

Table 1. Interview participants in the research project at each school, June 2011–March 2012.

	Student participants	Adult participants (principal, teaching staff, ACMF teacher)	Student participant parents
School A	10	2	2
School B	10	3	2
School C	4	3	0
School D	4	3	0
Total	28	9 (ACMF teachers counted once)	4

teaching approach (Green, 2002, 2008) and are generally attended by three to six students. Although participation is encouraged, students are not forced to take part if they choose not to. Students are provided with participation certificates at the end of each class.

School D, Teacher B: Located in urban NSW this comprehensive co-educational high school had a student enrolment of 465 students at the time of the study with 40% of students identified as LBOTE (Language Background Other Than English). The school provides three classes for students identified as living with mild intellectual disability and one for those living with moderate intellectual disability. The school has a strong arts and music programme, with a full-time music teacher in addition to the ACMF music teacher. For the majority of the duration of this research (June 2011–Feb 2012), the ACMF involvement in this school consisted of a lunchtime song-writing class. This class was on a voluntary basis attracting five to ten students weekly and is the focus of this research.

Participants

Across the four research sites, in addition to the two ACMF teachers, 28 student participants (aged between 10 and 16 years) and 11 adult participants (school staff and parents) participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews at each of the three data collection phases (see Table 1). Some 178 student participants were observed in classes across the sites. In schools A and B student interviews were undertaken in groups of five. Due to behavioural and monitoring issues, student interviews in Schools C and D were undertaken individually.

Project implementation and methods and techniques

Prior to conducting the research, ethical consent was obtained from the University undertaking the research, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, and the participating schools. Ethical consent was subsequently obtained from parents and children, teachers and school staff, and each ACMF music teacher.

The research design included three visits to each school at three-month intervals.

- Visit 1: Interviews were conducted with ACMF music teachers, school principals and teachers, and ACMF music students. Interviews were also conducted with parents of participating students and naturalistic non-participant observations of the ACMF programme in action were undertaken.
- Visit 2: Interim interviews were undertaken with ACMF music teachers, school principals and teachers, ACMF music students, and parents. Further naturalistic non-participant observations of the ACMF programme in action were undertaken.

- Visit 3: Final interviews were undertaken with ACMF music teachers, school principals and teachers, ACMF music students, and parents.

Due to the differences in programme implementation across the schools and fluctuations in the School populations (Schools C and D specifically) the number of research participants at each school varied. However, the in-depth nature of the interview approach for both teachers and participating students, the triangulation of data sources (children, parents, school staff, and ACMF teachers) and data types (observation, interview, artefact analysis), and the iterative research schedule, contribute to the trustworthiness of the research findings.

The interview schedule developed for this research consisted of open-ended questions exploring perceptions of student engagement with the music programme (including teaching style and content) musical and extra-musical learning outcomes and overall perceptions of the programme. In addition, students were asked to comment on whether they enjoyed the music classes, why they enjoyed (or did not enjoy) them, what they like best about the ways that they were taught music, and how they believed they benefitted from the music classes. Interviews ranged between 15 and 40 minutes in duration. Given the focus on individual participant perceptions the interview data were the primary focus of analysis. Observation data were used to confirm participant descriptions of activity and participation.

Interview data were analysed inductively and deductively (Patton, 2002). Initially interview data were analysed inductively to identify emerging themes in relation to the research aims of uncovering perceptions of learning outcomes (musical and extra-musical), accounts of learning and teaching strategies, and contextual factors that supported the development of outcomes. Interview themes from all participants (students, parents, school staff, and ACMF teachers) were reviewed against observation field-notes and artefact analysis for corroborating evidence. Subsequent to this approach the framework of the Five Cs PYD approach was employed as a further analytic lens (deductive analysis). Given the differing nature of the sites an in-case focus was taken to identify those characteristics specific to each site rather than engaging in a cross-case analysis. Nevertheless, as only two ACMF teachers were involved in the project (teacher A taught in sites A and B whilst teacher B taught in sites C and D) there was some opportunity to look for common factors in each teacher's approach.

Presentation and discussion of findings

From the analysis of the interview transcripts it was evident that while all five elements of the Five C model were present, the music programme contributed significantly to the development of Competence, Confidence and Connection, with less evidence of the elements of Character and Caring. While the first three Cs were discussed by both adult and student participants, Character and Caring were more likely to have been observed and discussed only by adult participants. In the following sections the music and extra-music (PYD) engagement and learning outcomes reported by all participant groupings are presented and the teaching and learning practices and environmental supports that underpin these outcomes are outlined.

Learning: Positive Youth Development outcomes

Competence. Competence is defined as possessing a "positive view of one's action in domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721). In the following section music competence, social competence, and academic competence are highlighted. Whilst these are dealt with separately, there is overlap in the ways in

which these elements are understood, as evidenced in the following response.

Music competence. Of the competency outcomes discussed by interviewees, increases in music competency were the most frequently described by students and teachers alike. Indeed, all student interviewees felt that their musical abilities had improved since the beginning of the programme, particularly when it came to performing.

> The students will tell you that they've learnt to read basic music and they've learnt a lot of songs … a little about particular musical instruments … What they have actually learning [sic] is they have developed their fine motor skills … they have learnt to stand up and perform. (ACMF Teacher A)

Student comments focus on the practical skills they are developing and their perceptions of improvement in music performance:

> I get really excited when performing. Just really happy that you've done something to show people something different. (A002)[1]

> I love performing in front of others. It feels really good because you know that you've done something that you wouldn't think you would do. (B002)

In Schools C and D, ACMF teacher B aims to develop song-writing as a life-long skill and long-term musical competence:

> If I show them the basics of writing songs then they can keep writing songs for the rest of their life and develop their techniques. Same with learning to play guitar. I know they're capable of learning. (ACMF Teacher B, interview 1)

Students perceive that they are learning and enjoy the challenge of learning new things and performing for others:

> [W]e learn new notes … it's interesting all the time. (C001)

Social competence. Social competence "pertains to inter-personal skills (e.g. conflict resolution)" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721) and the capacity to draw on these to self-regulate in a range of settings. Both teachers and students highlighted a range of social competencies that they believed they had developed through their music activities. For both the ACMF teachers and school staff, social learning was an important element of the programme.

Adult participants commented on the ways in which participation in the music programme built skills in self-regulation:

> [T]hey often leave music and their behaviour is better, that means they can learn more in the classroom so children are often calmer when they come back from music. (ACMF Teacher A)

The Assistant Principal at School B commented on children's developing social competence remarking that "they're a lot more ready to negotiate … they also appreciate other people's performances" (School B, AP interview). The view of music participation as a vehicle for developing social competence was taken up by the Principal of School C who commented on music's capacity to socialise children for school:

> They have to learn to turn take and share and act as part of a team. In a band situation they have to cooperate with each other. It's an *elementary cooperation*, but cooperation nevertheless and it's good for them. It takes a lot of courage to do that, particularly with my adolescent group. The thing that they're most terrified of is looking vulnerable in front of their peer group. (Principal, School C)

Academic competence. Academic competence is described as positive performance in relation to "school grades, attendance, test scores" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721). Students commented on aspects of their own learning suggesting the development of a positive learning disposition (Barrett & Baker, 2012) and an understanding of what facets of the programme helped them in learning tasks. In short, experiences in the programme provide opportunity to learn *how* to learn. Principal C noted that part of students' learning is developing an understanding that they are going to try things and will make mistakes. He believed that music provides an opportunity for children to learn about learning because it is very skills based. Consequently students come to know how skills are acquired and become more refined with practice. Participants also spoke of the ways in which experiences in the programme build a sense of value, and the capacity to persist:

> Music gives them a sense that they can tackle something that they see as being valuable and with persistence, get some skills and feel good about what they do … You've got to do some of the stuff that makes you sweat, but at the other side of that there's this great feeling that you've achieved something. Music's a great—it's the wheels that we can push them along on. (Principal, School C)

Students in the ACMF composition class (School D) also spoke of the opportunities the programme provided to persist:

> We learn how to keep our songs in a song journal. We have to bring something so we have something for [ACMF Teacher B] to read and if we don't have it right, he tells us how to work on it and how to do the words … If no one writes a song, you have nothing to do. (D001)

Confidence. Confidence is described as "overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721). School principals and teachers commented on increased levels of confidence:

> I think it's [the ACMF programme] a huge self-esteem builder. I had a kid walk off the stage at this particular performance and she noticed that parents in the audience were crying. She said to me, "They really liked what I did; nobody likes what I do." It's that immediacy of, "I am achieving this and I'm a part of this," and also, "I'm a part of the team that is achieving this." (ACMF Teacher A)

This view of music performance participation as providing an opportunity to "build up self-belief" was evident in others' views:

> We learn not to be embarrassed about how much we do wrong … not to worry about what other people are going to think; so I'll play the drums, and learn not be afraid to do that as well. (A004)

One parent (School B) commented how engagement in the music classes had improved her child's levels of confidence in both music abilities, and general demeanour:

> It was a good opportunity for kids that aren't interested in normal school work. Whenever he's had music he's quite happy to talk about it and tell you what he did in class and he'll want to show you the tunes and stuff that he's played and what new song he might have learnt. (Parent B001)

In Schools C and D teacher goals are predicated on developing confidence, particularly in relation to students' self-worth:

> [T]he important thing for me is that they enjoy it and it lifts their self-esteem and they can achieve stuff. … In a lot of cases it's the first thing they've actually done that they're really proud of. (ACMF Teacher B)

Connection. Connection is described as the capacity to build "positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721). Connection might be seen in the capacity to lead others and to accept others in leadership roles:

> We learn new things and we can teach other kids some things … like, we're passing it on. [ACMF Teacher A] was the start of all that. (A003)

Connection is also evidenced in the capacity to work as a team member as evidenced in the following:

> It's self-discipline. That's really important. They learn to be part of a team. I mean they're playing in a band, they're not playing by themselves. … they show their friends that they can play it and their friends want to learn. (ACMF Teacher B)

In further discussions the Principal at School C described students as arriving at the school with a "long history of failure", "attention deficit disorders", "extreme acting out behaviours", "learning gaps", "complex diagnosis", and "learning difficulties". For this Principal the ACMF programme provided a powerful means by which to begin to re-dress some of these issues:

> They're actually starting to have fun doing pro-social things like cooperating, working as a group, acknowledging the fact that somebody else in the group might need them to slow down for a while, while they learn their bit … we have got to create this memory of a positive experience. (Principal School, C)

Character. Character is described as "respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviours, a sense of right and wrong (morality) and integrity" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721). Although not as evident as the previous PYD elements discussed, there were some instances where adult staff believed character development was evident. The students themselves did not speak to their own thoughts on character development. However, all school principals and teachers commented on the ACMF teachers' approaches to behaviour management that allowed students to understand clear limits and norms of behaviour. Higher school attendance was reported on music days as was improved behaviour leading up to music classes; this was particularly evident at School C and School B.

> These kids, don't so much say a lot. When music is on, they scurry towards the door of the classroom where it's being held. It's really obvious to any observer that they love doing it. They just get involved and it's not hard to get them to engage. (Principal, School C)

> I think that that [ACMF programme] encourages their engagement in school. They like coming to school, because they like doing this particular part of it. I think their behaviour reflects that sometimes. (Head Teacher, School B)

Caring. Caring is described as "a sense of sympathy and empathy for others" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721). A number of participants commented on the opportunities provided to develop

a capacity for giving and receiving praise. Evidence of Caring was not as apparent in the students' behaviours as Confidence, Competence, or Connection, yet there were several examples of students displaying a willingness to help and support others having difficulty with an instrument, and on numerous occasions, the students themselves spoke of the enjoyment they received when helping others learn a difficult drumming pattern or musical work. This willingness to help or encourage others was observed by the adult teaching staff:

> The kids get used to seeing achievement in others and being able to say something praiseworthy and also accept it. That's an important thing. (Principal, School A)

Student perceptions of the processes that facilitate their capacity to work with others is evidenced in the following interview extract:

Student:	[ACMF Teacher B] teaches us in music so we learn stuff and then we can teach the new kids that come, we teach them new stuff …
Interviewer:	Do you like helping others?
Student:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Why is that?
Student:	Because I can show them what I know, I can teach them different notes. (C002)

Whilst caring has been identified as a capacity to serve others, caring may also be viewed as the capacity to serve the self through learning the skills of self-management and care. In the following a student interviewee demonstrated an awareness of the ways in which music could be used as a means of self-management:

> [I]t's good for me sometimes … because when you're angry it calms you down. (C004)

Another student in the same school commented:

> [I]t gives me a bit of time to think over things if you know what I mean. I practise and not be so worried about a test coming up. A bit of relief if you know what I mean … lets you think about other things. (C002)

Climate and community engagement. Analysis of data revealed two further aspects contributing to PYD in these settings, those of school *climate* and *community engagement*. School climate pertains to building a school community in which music participation is valued, supported, celebrated, and sustained. Community engagement may be viewed as an emergent outcome of positive school climate. This is evidenced when celebration of students' music-making is a shared endeavour across the school and the wider community. ACMF Teacher A's comments evidence the ways in which both these aspects are identified in School B:

> It is changing the ethos of the school little by little just because people like to be told that what they're doing is important and they like to be helped … The local community are taking notice which means an awful lot to these children. (ACMF Teacher A)

The contribution of a music programme to a positive school climate and community engagement is evident in other settings and in the views of other stakeholders:

> It builds a sense of community within the school amongst the students when they see other kids performing … they think, "He can do it; I can do … it this time." So it's that role modelling and leadership that we get from the kids. (Principal, School A)

This principal identifies the ACMF music programme as a *binding agent* "that adds a lot of cohesion and enjoyment to the classes that involve it" (Principal, School A).

Teaching and learning practices that promote learning

The ACMF teachers in this study have diverse music experience and learning and teaching approaches. ACMF Teacher A's teaching reflects her training as a classical musician. Her teaching draws on aspects of the music literacy techniques employed in the Kodály approach to music education. Recent experiences in drumming circles and with world music have also been included in an eclectic teaching approach that combines singing and percussion performance, movement, and music literacy skills. ACMF Teacher B's pedagogical approach reflects his learning experiences and continuing practices as a self-taught singer-songwriter and performing musician. Whilst he does not adhere to any particular methodology his approach echoes the informal learning and teaching approaches advocated by Lucy Green (2002, 2008).

Whilst these teachers' pedagogical practices (and environments) are divergent, they share a number of common values and practices:

1. A commitment to re-investment in the music learning experiences that nurtured them

> I think that as a musician, I had a really privileged background. I had teachers who were good music teachers and I always believed that as a musician you should give back to other people; that is our job as a musician. (ACMF Teacher A)

> I learned a lot about song-writing from people who took five minutes to show me something that had taken them 20 years to learn, like by trial and error. I can now teach people in five minutes something that took me … 20 years to learn. (ACMF Teacher B)

For ACMF Teacher A, music literacy, cross-age grouping and peer mentoring, positive reinforcement of music and extra-music behaviours, a view of mistakes as "learning opportunities", and a clearly structured learning sequence are key characteristics:

2. A focus on developing music literacy skills (aural and written)

> Every child I teach can read basic stick notations. Every child that I teach will sing by themselves and also sing in groups, and they can sing up to three parts. (ACMF Teacher A)

3. A focus on cross-age grouping and peer mentoring

> [I]n a lot of classes I will often deliberately have double classes of a year group and then a year group that are a little bit lower. I will get the older children to help the younger children. (ACMF Teacher A)

4. A focus on positive reinforcement

> I try and praise children, not for being clever … I will say to kids, well done, you've performed really well so it takes out the whole "did you play the right notes or did you sing all the right words," or something. As far as I'm concerned they've pushed themselves further than they've ever done before so, they deserve praise. (ACMF Teacher A)

5. *A focus on the development of extra-musical skills through music*

[T]he more I do this the more I think I am not here as a music teacher … I am here as somebody to teach you skills that you will use later in life … I do a lot of self-esteem building. (ACMF Teacher A)

6. *A positive view of mistakes as an opportunity to learn*

I say constantly in music lessons … "I don't care if you make a mistake; I care if you stop; jump back in." For me that's the courageous part about being a human, is not actually when you stuff up; it's when you pick yourself up and keep going. (ACMF Teacher A)

7. *A clear structure to each learning experience*

[R]ight from a straight teaching point of view, the lesson structure is very organised, it's tight. There's a clear beginning, there's learning steps, there is a constant feedback during the lesson to say, what's well, what's not well, here we can do changes to that. (Principal, School A)

For ACMF Teacher B, an informal approach to teaching song-writing that provides opportunity to participate in a community of practice is of key importance:

1. *Collaborative learning and teaching process that draws on the tenets of informal and non-formal learning and teaching processes* (Green 2002, 2008).

[A]s far as I'm concerned the only way to teach song-writing is to get them writing songs. You learn it by doing it. It's all about ideas and they come up with the ideas. (ACMF Teacher B)

2. *A teaching approach that allows legitimate peripheral participation* (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

[T]he mode of delivery is tailored to suit their needs. So [ACMF Teacher B] got onto that pretty quickly and realised that some kids they venture into a bit of song-writing and some kids would only kind of sit back to just listen. Be part of it but not actively for quite a while and they would kind of come closer into the group when their courage increased. We decided a long time ago that we were not going to make any element of it compulsory … the kids are thinking, "Well I don't have to, so I might." (Principal, School C)

It is evident that the experience of teaching in these schools is rewarding for the ACMF teachers in a range of ways:

I think it has made me far more joyous as a musician by watching these kids experience stuff for the first time, and I think it's made me realise how special a safe life is as well. (ACMF Teacher A)

Concluding remarks

This study investigated the learning arising from participation in the ACMF music programmes in four socially and economically disadvantaged Schools in New South Wales, the teaching and learning practices that promote that learning, and the environmental factors that support music engagement and learning. Analysis of the data arising from interviews with a range of stake-holders and observations of the programme over a 9-month period suggest that in addition to the development of musical competence, participating students build strengths in the PYD domains of Competence (social and academic), Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring. Findings suggest students develop team-working skills including the capacity to take leadership roles and accept others in those roles, and the social and communication skills

necessary to developing positive team processes. Importantly, students evidence the habits of persistence and risk-taking in learning situations that move them beyond avoidance for fear of failure to participation as a means to developing skills and understanding.

From an analysis of the student participant interviews, it was apparent that young people were proud of their increasing levels of musical competence and general levels of confidence in particular. A number of students suggested that this confidence also extended to other areas of their school life, such as self-confidence, and social confidence. Several studies have shown that mastering a challenging task that can be transformed into a positive accomplishment, can, in turn, influence young peoples' attitudes towards difficulties they may face in the future (Sklar et al., 2007). Learning a musical instrument, may be described as a "proximal process" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), that is, an activity that occurs "regularly over a long period of time and becomes progressively more complex" (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman 2004, p. 12). Such learning, when carefully managed, has the potential to instil in young people the belief that even in the face of challenges, difficulties can be overcome, and goals can be achieved.

The programme provided students with positive role models of musician-teachers who not only modelled the musical skills and understandings that students were asked to develop but also modelled pro-social behaviours of Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring in their interactions with students and other professionals in the school environment. It should be noted that no single teaching approach ensured successful learning outcomes for students across these settings. Rather, the matching of the particular skills sets and dispositions of the teachers to the environments in which they worked appeared to be an important factor for the success of the programme in each setting.

It is evident that the ACMF programmes are highly valued by a range of stakeholders (children, classroom teachers, ACMF teachers, principals and senior staff, and parents and community) in each setting. Such support is evidenced in the time and resources being made available to the music programme and a range of extra-curricula activities that ensure that the performance arising from the programme is viewed as a school and community resource.

Due to the diversity of schools, the differing teaching approaches and the diversity of age groups of child participants (10–16 years), it is difficult to draw cross-case comparisons concerning the extra-musical outcomes of participation in the ACMF programme. Further difficulties are presented as a number of additional learning programmes were implemented in each of these settings and it is not possible to link specific extra-musical benefits to the ACMF programme alone. With these reservations in mind there is still compelling evidence as outlined above that the programme has produced positive learning and life outcomes for those involved: children, teachers, and the school communities in which they live.

There is clearly potential for further investigation into the capacity for music programmes to contribute to Positive Youth Development. This study has provided some preliminary insights into the nature of PYD learning outcomes that might arise from positive pro-social music participation. Given the diversity of teaching practices and School environments evidenced in this study it is difficult to transfer the findings to other settings. We recommend further research that investigates the contribution of music programmes to the development of PYD learning outcomes including the design and nature of such programmes, the teaching and learning models that are adopted in these programmes, and the environmental supports that allow such programmes, and their participants, to flourish and develop.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) focuses on developing young people's skills, strengths and interests rather than focusing on negative attributes and anti-social behaviours (Lerner et al., 2005). Larson (2000) argued that programmes designed for young people should strive

to empower them and engage them in challenging, self-motivated, and goal-orientated activities. As the findings of this study have suggested, when participating in a challenging activity such as learning to play a musical instrument, within a climate that is supported by non-familial adults such as teaching and programme staff, social bonds develop and a sense of community is created (Sklar et al., 2007). In addition, The PYD experiences of young people can be further enhanced if parents or caregivers are also included in the activities. For example, inviting parents and carers to attend music performances, can involve parents in programme goals and activities and help to further foster the young person–staff–parent relationship. In addition, including parents can also help develop the support that the young people require to be successful in their musical endeavours.

Through the medium of music, this study has shown the potential of the ACMF programme to build self-regulation, teamwork and confidence amongst young people, through the provision of complex, goal-orientated, and challenging activities. Participating in the music programme has provided the climate in which young people can develop Competence, Confidence and Connection, and to a lesser extent Character and Caring. Viewed in this light, structured music programmes of varying kinds have the potential to be a catalyst for Positive Youth Development.

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Note

1. Participant coding system indicates School (A) and student member (02).

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