

Developing a young musician's growth mindset: the role of motivation, self-theories, and resiliency

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Abstract

This chapter examines the role of motivation, self-theories, and resiliency in the development of a young musician's growth mindset. To provide some background information and contextualization for these concepts, the chapter begins with an overview of several motivation and music learning studies conducted during the early 1990s. These studies were influenced by John Sloboda's research contributions to the precursors of musical expertise and Dweck's (1986) theory of achievement motivation. Over the past two decades, Dweck and her colleagues have made significant progress in developing and testing a meaning system approach to the development of young people's beliefs about their abilities (self-theories or conceptions of ability). According to Dweck (2006), positive self-theories are necessary for developing a growth mindset as a means of achieving successful performance outcomes. There is growing evidence to suggest that a growth mindset serves as a protective factor that may promote resiliency, which sustains motivation and reduces the negative effects of adversity, failure, and stressful life events (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). The chapter concludes with some educational strategies that may help young musicians achieve their full potential, as well as suggestions for future research.

Background and context

It is a great pleasure to be part of this Festschrift honouring John Sloboda's contributions to the field of music psychology. In preparing this chapter, I was asked by the editors to make clear how my work is connected to and influenced by John Sloboda. I first met John nearly 20 years ago when he agreed to be my Ph.D. supervisor. We later became colleagues in 1995 when I joined the psychology department at Keele University and the newly established Unit for the Study of Musical Skill and Development. Over the course of my eight-year appointment at Keele, I had the opportunity to collaborate and work with John on a number of teaching and research initiatives. We established and each served several years as director of a master's degree in music psychology. In 2000, we were co-directors of the 6th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition (ICMPC). We were also co-investigators on a number of studies involving motivation and music learning (O'Neill & Sloboda, 1997), the functions of music listening in everyday life (Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001; Sloboda, O'Neill, & Ivaldi, 2001) and a large-scale study of music engagement known as the 'Young People and Music Participation Project', which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (O'Neill, Ryan, Boulton, & Sloboda, 2000; O'Neill, 2001).

In the beginning stages of my Ph.D., John and I would meet once a week and talk through my research ideas. I must have tested his patience (although he never showed it) as I explored everything from behavioural analysis to ethnography in my attempts to find a suitable method for quantifying or systematically accounting for the differences in motivation and achievement that can be found among young people who are learning to play a musical instrument. I was interested in why some children persevere at the task, while others with seemingly equal levels of ability or potential make little progress or even abandon music learning altogether. Why is it that among highly competent children there are some who deteriorate in the face of difficulty and avoid challenge, perhaps not realizing their full musical potential? Conversely, among less proficient children, why is it that they seem to thrive on challenge and attain levels of music skill that one might not have predicted from their initial musical behaviour?

Although many commonsense explanations for these apparent differences had been put forward, they tended to encompass broad perspectives ranging from genetic endowment to teacher behaviour and the educational environment. Few empirical studies on motivation and the development of musical skills had been undertaken, and theoretical conceptualizations of motivation in terms of music learning were poorly understood. As such, music educators had little concrete evidence that could be used to inform and increase the effectiveness of their practice. In addition, explanations for how motivational processes influence music learning relied heavily on (often erroneous) implicit assumptions about the role of success, praise, and self-confidence. Since motivational problems create considerable barriers and constraints on young people's music learning opportunities, particularly within formal music education contexts, my aim was to explore theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence that would increase our understanding of motivational processes in the development of young musicians.

My early research was inspired in part by an exploratory interview study that John Sloboda and Michael Howe carried out at the beginning of the 1990s into the biographical precursors of musical expertise (Sloboda & Howe, 1991). They interviewed 42 exceptionally 'gifted' young musicians at a specialist music school in England and asked them why they started learning to play an instrument. The most common reasons were: it was part of their normal school routine; their parents instigated it for its general educational benefits; they were interested in music; they wanted to emulate an older sibling. Most of the children gave non-musical reasons for beginning an instrument, for example, 'I began recorder with my dad. I think it was probably his idea, you know parents always like to introduce all sorts of things to their kids.' There were also some musical reasons, such as 'I heard the sound of the flute on the radio or something and I just really loved the sound of it.' However, only one young musician in their sample began as a result of having parents who recognized some special musical ability in their child. We now have further evidence to suggest that high achievers in music do not necessarily show more initial music aptitude than those who make far less progress (O'Neill, 1996, 2001).

An intriguing finding from the Sloboda and Howe (1991) exploratory study was that many of the young musicians believed that their musical achievements were made possible because they had a special, inherent musical talent or ability. John and his colleagues became interested in the origins of this widespread 'folk psychology' belief in innate musical talent and its impact on the development of young musicians. Their research culminated in two seminal target articles that were followed by a series of invited peer commentaries: 'Is everyone musical?' (Sloboda, Davidson, & Howe, 1994); and 'Innate talent: reality or myth?' (Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998). In these articles, Sloboda and colleagues argue that the notion of innate 'talent' has been overemphasized in Western cultures and music traditions. Research suggests that rather than some fixed prior ability, musical talent is really a form of developing musical expertise through *deliberate practice* (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, & Moore, 1996). Deliberate practice involves two main factors: (1) engagement in activities designed specifically to improve an individual's performance, and (2) amount of time spent in solitary practice during musical development (typically 10 000 hours by the age of 20). Because an expert musician's performance may appear natural and effortless, people tend to attribute it to a special or innate talent even if they are also aware of the many hours of practice that are necessary to develop high levels of expertise. Other arguments for the notion of innate musical talent focus on child prodigies and the young age when their talent emerges, and the fact that many young people try hard but often fail to develop their musical ability (see also Winner, 1996; Gagné, Blanchard, & Bégin, 2001; Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007).

Around the same time as the Sloboda and Howe research was taking place, an influential edited book was published entitled *Competence Considered* (Sternberg & Kolligian, 1990). Contributors to this book reviewed a number of motivation studies from developmental, educational, and social psychological perspectives. These studies

demonstrated strong links between the development of competence and motivational criteria in different contexts, such as school achievement (e.g. Eccles, 1983; Stipek, 1984), creativity (Amabile, 1983), and performance-related activities (e.g. Nicholls, 1984). What captured my interest was the idea that motivation is associated with multiple pathways to success, as well as complex interrelationships between social-cognitive processes, behavioural outcomes, and achievement-related contexts. While exploring the links between motivation and music learning during one of our Ph.D. supervision meetings, John Sloboda and I reviewed a paper by Carol Dweck (1986). Dweck used a series of ingenious experiments to investigate the motivational processes that influence children's learning in relation to academic performance achievement situations. Children are given a series of tasks in which success is assured, followed by tasks designed to prompt failure. It has been demonstrated, for example, that children respond with two different patterns of behaviour when failure trials begin (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). When some children begin to fail at tasks, they display adaptive behaviour and continue to employ effective strategies that maintain or improve their performance. They have a positive outlook and view the difficulty they encountered as a challenge to be mastered through effort; this is referred to as *mastery motivation*. Mastery children will remain high in their persistence and continue to employ effective strategies even in the face of failure. They display psychological and emotional resilience, often not recognizing failure as negative and something to be avoided, but instead viewing it as part of the learning process or as a challenge that can be mastered through increased effort.

Conversely, other children show maladaptive behaviour and a marked decline in their performance following failure. They begin to chat about irrelevant topics and view their difficulty as a sign of low ability; this is referred to as *helpless motivation*. When confronted with a potential failure, helpless children will begin to engage in irrelevant task behaviour, such as attempting to alter the rules of the task, devaluing the task (e.g. 'this is boring', 'this isn't fun anymore'), or boasting of their talents or prized possessions in an attempt to divert attention away from their poor performance towards their more praiseworthy attributes. In addition, helpless children report negative feelings and views of themselves when they meet obstacles, whereas mastery children maintain positive views of their competence and enjoy challenges.

What is particularly interesting is that some of the brightest, most skilled individuals exhibit the helpless pattern. In other words, a helpless motivational pattern is not related to intelligence or ability. Rather, it is a way of viewing oneself and one's capacity to be effective in a particular achievement situation. Immediately prior to failure situations, when mastery and helpless children are both experiencing success, their performances are equal (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Numerous investigations have shown that differences in children's motivational patterns following failure are not related to their demonstrated pre-failure ability as measured by prior skill on a task, grades, or standardized intelligence tests (e.g. Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Dweck & Licht, 1980; Smiley & Dweck, 1994). Based on the results of these studies, John Sloboda and I decided to explore the extent to which the study of motivation in the domain of academic learning might contribute to our understanding of motivation in the domain of music learning.

Early studies of achievement motivation and music learning

In order to investigate mastery and helpless motivational patterns in a music learning situation, we conducted a study with 51 children (aged 6–10) using a specially designed music task (O'Neill & Sloboda, 1997). We began by administering a standardized melodic direction test. Then, the children were taught to perform a similar melodic direction test where they encountered success followed by a failure condition. After both conditions they were asked to self-evaluate their performance and predict how well they thought they would do on subsequent tests. We found that, following failure, over half the children experienced deterioration in their test performance and displayed the helpless pattern, whereas the test performance of the other children either remained the same or showed improvement as they displayed the mastery pattern. We also found that the children who reported low confidence following failure experienced the most performance deterioration. We found no differences in their test performance on the standardized test that was taken at the beginning; however, helpless children scored even higher than mastery children on the success condition. Although our testing procedure may have increased the emphasis placed on evaluation and performance achievement, these are nevertheless common factors associated with many formal music learning contexts.

Our study found maladaptive motivational patterns for some children after exposure to only a very brief obstacle or learning challenge. It is therefore possible that exposure to frequent setbacks or adverse situations may well have devastating effects on those who lack resilience and those who are vulnerable to helpless patterns. However, an important question remained. If helpless children are able to perform equally as well as mastery children initially, how long does it take before we begin to see negative effects on their overall levels of motivation and performance? According to Dweck (1986), during the early school years, good students in particular may not experience very much difficulty or failure. This is similar to the way formal instrumental music instruction may structure tasks in such a way that young children in particular are ensured a great deal of initial success. Thus, helpless patterns may not influence children's long-term musical achievement until much later when obstacles and difficulties become more pronounced. It is at this point that helpless children may begin to avoid challenges or even withdraw their efforts towards formal music education altogether.

To investigate the longer-term impact of motivational patterns on children's musical performance achievement, my Ph.D. research involved a short-term longitudinal study of 51 children (aged 6–10) during their first year of learning to play a musical instrument (O'Neill, 1994a, 1996). Prior to their involvement in the study, the children had no prior formal instrumental music lessons but they were about to start lessons with an experienced music teacher. Before their first lesson and again at the end of their first year of lessons, they were interviewed individually and given a variety of measures that included a general IQ test, a musical skills test, and a problem-solving task designed to measure mastery and helpless patterns. At the end of their first year of formal instrumental lessons, the children were asked to prepare for a performance

that was videotaped. The performance included a preparatory test used by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, an 'own choice' piece that they thought they could play well, and several simple aural tests that required no special preparation by the teacher. The videotaped performances were then evaluated by four experienced Associated Board examiners, who produced ratings that indicated a good level of agreement with correlations ranging from 0.70 to 0.82.

The results showed no relationship between the amount of performance achievement the children displayed and their prior measures of intelligence or musical skills. There were, however, a number of other significant effects, which included motivational patterns. Children who showed mastery patterns on the non-musical problem-solving task prior to their first music lesson made more progress than children who displayed helpless patterns. However, when the amount of time spent practising (the children used practice diaries to record their practice) was compared between helpless and mastery children, the findings indicated that helpless children were doing roughly twice as much practice as the mastery children to reach the same level of performance achievement (O'Neill, 1997). This suggests that although some helpless children were spending large amounts of time practising, they were using their time less effectively. The interviews revealed that these children spent most of their time playing pieces that they could already play well, or making up their own pieces. They tended to avoid practising pieces that they found difficult. This was in stark contrast to the mastery children who tended to report that they liked the challenging pieces the best and were often trying to learn pieces that were far beyond their technical ability. Although helpless children were (at least initially) spending more time than mastery children playing their instruments, they did not appear to benefit as much as mastery children from the same approaches or practice strategies used in formal instrumental music education. These early studies also indicate that mastery and helpless behavioural responses are inextricably linked to an individual's self-beliefs, such as confidence in one's ability to succeed. A complete account of motivational process is therefore not possible without a concomitant understanding of an individual's internal belief systems or self-theories.

Self-theories and achievement motivation

After investigating the mastery and helpless behavioural responses of children who are confronted with difficulty or failure situations, Dweck began to focus her attention on the beliefs or *meaning systems* that individuals hold when thinking about their own and others' abilities. She referred to these meaning systems as implicit theories of ability, conceptions of ability, or *self-theories*. During the 1980s and 1990s, Dweck and colleagues demonstrated that young people tend to conceptualize and hold different self-theories about the nature of their abilities (e.g. Diener & Dweck, 1980). Self-theories manifest themselves by constructing different psychological worlds and identities that influence children to think, feel, and act differently in identical situations (Dweck, 1999). Dweck referred initially to young learners who hold a fixed view of their intelligence (or other abilities such as athletic or musical ability) as *entity theorists*. These learners are highly concerned about outcomes that show what their 'true' abilities are. According to Dweck, entity theorists are more likely to use outcome traits

evidence in support of their judgement of abilities. For learners who endorse an entity belief system, musical ability is viewed as something that you either have or you don't have. Entity theorists evaluate whether someone has the requisite amount of musical ability by seeking opportunities to display and make judgements about their own and others' musical performance.

A distinctly different self-theory of ability is endorsed by children with an incremental belief system. These learners, initially referred to by Dweck (1986) as *incremental theorists*, hold flexible beliefs about the nature of ability as something that can be improved through effort. They seek challenges and opportunities to learn new strategies that will help them solve problems and overcome obstacles and difficulties.

By the age of 8 years, children can distinguish between abilities in different domains, apply different self-theories to different domains, and use their self-theories to make judgements about the abilities of others (Bempechat, London, & Dweck, 1991). For example, in a study of 172 children (aged 6–11 years), I found that over 65% of children endorsed an incremental theory of academic and musical ability, compared with over 87% who endorsed an incremental theory of sport (O'Neill, 1994b). I also found that children's self-theories of musical ability were related to their involvement in music. Children who were learning to play an instrument were more likely to endorse an incremental theory than children who had never learned to play an instrument. One interpretation of this finding is that having the experience of learning to play an instrument, even for a short time, helps to foster an incremental belief system about the nature of musical ability as something that can be improved through effort.

Dweck does not claim that it is always beneficial for individuals to believe they are capable of mastering all tasks; indeed, one needs to have an objective diagnosis of one's strengths and weaknesses in order to pursue one's goals effectively. However, incremental theorists manage to coordinate performance and learning goals better than entity theorists. For example, an over-concern with proving oneself may lead a music learner to ignore, avoid, or even abandon potentially valuable learning opportunities. As such, young people who hold predominantly an entity self-theory of musical ability are at an increased risk of maladaptive motivation that does not promote learning.

Fixed and growth mindsets

In her most recent book, Dweck (2006) provides a synthesis of her achievement motivation research that incorporates self-theories into the concept of mindsets. A mindset is a set or system of assumptions, beliefs, and values that once established informs the goals we pursue, the decisions we make, and the way we come to view ourselves and others in our world. According to Dweck, a growth mindset encompasses an incremental self-theory or belief system. It is the hallmark of successful individuals and the development of a growth mindset is a crucial component of achieving positive motivation and successful performance outcomes. A growth mindset is characterized by a passion for learning, the active seeking of challenges, a valuing of effort, and the resiliency necessary to persist in the face of obstacles or adversity.

Contrastingly, a fixed mindset encompasses an entity self-theory or belief system that constructs the world and self-identities in ways that compel individuals to seek

Dweck quotes from McCall's (1998) book *High Flyers*: 'Unfortunately, people often like the things that work against their growth. ... People like to use their strengths. ... to achieve quick, dramatic results, even if they aren't developing the new skills they will need later on. People like to believe they are as good as everyone says. ... and not take their weaknesses as seriously as they might. People don't like to hear bad news or get criticism. ... There is tremendous risk in leaving what one does well to attempt to master something new.' According to Dweck (2006), a fixed mindset is associated with the idea that your abilities are fixed attributes that are 'carved in stone', and this 'creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over' (p. 6). In other words, a musician with a fixed mindset views his or her musical ability as evidence of talent rather than a starting point for future development.

Young 'gifted' musicians may be told from an early age that they have a special talent or ability. They begin to believe that this special ability will enable them to achieve great success. They are given constant 'proof' of their special talent in the form of winning competitions, achieving high grades on music performance examinations, auditioning successfully and gaining places among highly respected music performance ensembles and schools. However, at the same time these young musicians are achieving great success, they are developing a fixed mindset that reinforces the idea that their continued success is inevitable or even a right that they deserve because of their special talent. To ensure continued success, they may avoid taking risks or situations where they might not succeed—because failure would harm their self-image as one of the best, brightest, and most talented. When they do fail or produce a poor performance, they may deny it or apportion the blame and responsibility to anyone or anything except their shortcomings. They tend to avoid or deny accurate assessments of their abilities, and they are not very good at identifying their strengths and weaknesses. They also tend to have great difficulty dealing with setbacks and only continue to thrive when 'things are safely within their grasp' (Dweck, 2006, p. 22).

In an interview study that examined the self-identity of young musicians, we found evidence of a fixed mindset among our interviewees (O'Neill, 2002; O'Neill, Ivaldi, & Fox, 2002). For example, a 17-year-old girl described herself as follows: 'I see myself as a musician. That's all I can see myself as. Um, I think a musician isn't something you kind of develop over time ... it's something that's there at the beginning and although you can appreciate—learn to appreciate music and what have you, but you can never really become a musician.' The implication is that being a musician is a fixed attribute that relatively few people possess. Indeed, it is not uncommon for highly skilled and successful young musicians to interpret their ability through a fixed mindset, or as Dweck (2006) suggests, there is a tendency for them to 'live in a world of personal greatness and entitlement' (p. 122).

Although individuals with a fixed mindset may thrive provided they continue to encounter validations of their ability, it is unlikely they will be able to avoid indefinitely problems and obstacles that may challenge or shed doubt on their self-evaluations. Numerous educational and social conditions make it difficult for many learners to achieve their full potential. There is, however, growing evidence that a growth mindset serves as a protective factor that is capable of reducing the negative effects of adversity, failure, and stressful life events (Wang *et al.*, 1997). Resilient children who experience

failure seem to bounce back faster and display the characteristics associated with mastery motivation and incremental self-theories—in other words, they display a growth mindset.

Resiliency and music learning

The pathway to musical expertise is often turbulent and characterized by challenges and obstacles that must be overcome if individuals are to reach their full potential (MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). To what extent do we prepare young musicians for the challenges they may face during their formal music education and after they leave their disciplined educational environments? According to Subotnik, Jarvin, Moga, and Sternberg (2003), many gate-keepers such as parents and teachers take the notion of persistence for granted despite the fact that 'major professionals will have endured and overcome rejection and other setbacks by the time they have acquired management and sufficient career recognition to be considered for [prestigious] venues' (p. 6). Subotnik and colleagues found that many music performance students view persistence as a major characteristic of being a musician, since these are 'the values of their early teachers, who socialized them into believing that a true musician will be prepared to suffer for his or her art' (p. 6). Nonetheless, in order to overcome adversity and be successful, a musician must be more than persistent; he or she must also be resilient (see also Subotnik, 2000).

The concept of resiliency or resilience has grown exponentially over the past decade in psychology and education through studies involving children and adolescents who are considered vulnerable or 'at risk'. Resilience derives from the Latin verb *resilire*, meaning 'to rebound' or 'jump back'. The origins of resiliency date back to at least the 1600s when Henry More wrote in his *Divine Dialogues*: 'strong and peremptory Resiliency from this sordid Region of Misery and Sin' (as cited in Napoli, 2007). The terms resilience and resiliency are often used interchangeably, however there is a tendency for the term *resiliency* to refer to the capacity or tendency to rebound from adversity and for the term *resilience* to refer to the act of rebounding. One of the most widely used definitions of resiliency in education is 'the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences' (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994, p. 46).

Resiliency is associated with inquisitiveness, optimal optimism, active coping and problem-solving, effectiveness despite fear and anxiety, emotional self-regulation, bonding for a common mission, positive self-concept, internal control, desire to improve oneself, altruism, social support, the ability to turn traumatic helplessness into learned helpfulness, humour, and meaning (Napoli, 2007). Within the framework of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000) and positive youth musical development (O'Neill, 2006) resiliency is viewed as an active concept, similar to the notion of a growth mindset; this being in contrast to the notion of resiliency as merely the capacity to rebound or the act of rebounding from adversity.

In education, the concept of resiliency is not seen as a fixed attribute; rather, it is something that can change as young people improve their social competence,

problem-solving and decision-making skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose (Benard, 1993). Parents and teachers can do a great deal to foster resiliency by providing social skills training, and by teaching students self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-regulation strategies (Bruce, 1995). According to Good & Dweck (2006), different self-theories lead to different levels of resilience. An entity self-theory or a fixed mindset can undermine resilience, while an incremental self-theory or a growth mindset can promote resilience and increase learning opportunities. Because it is possible to influence young people's self-theories, it is also possible for educators to intervene in order to optimize the learning potential of students. For example, by fostering a growth mindset that emphasizes an incremental belief in one's musical ability, teachers can help students overcome the difficulties that they will inevitably encounter in their learning careers. This can help to improve students' resilience and increase their resistance to the influence of negative stereotypes about their abilities.

Educators can also help students through direct instruction about self-theories by encouraging them to reflect critically on their self-theories and goals. In addition, teachers can examine the messages that are inherent in their own pedagogical practices to ensure that they are conveying a growth mindset about learning to their students. For example, when referring to a musician as a 'genius', teachers may inadvertently send the message that a musician is born and not made, and that musical ability is a fixed trait. A more productive approach is to encourage students to focus on identifying the characteristics of a growth mindset for the musicians they admire in terms of their dedication, hard work, and the resiliency they displayed when overcoming problems, obstacles, or barriers to their success.

The way that teachers and parents praise their children can also send messages that foster either entity self-theories that encourage the development a fixed mindset or incremental self-theories that encourage the development of a growth mindset (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). As Good and Dweck (2006) point out, 'after children experience a success, many teachers, in an effort to boost their students' confidence and self-esteem, lavish praise upon them by telling them how smart they are. This well-meaning approach sends the unintended message that intelligence [or musical ability], per se, is the important and valued thing and that it can be measured by performance' (p. 53). It is this sort of 'trait' praise that promotes a fixed mindset. Whereas students who are given 'process' praise for their effort or strategies (and not constant praise for the things they do easily or quickly, either through luck or shortcuts), are more likely to develop a growth mindset that will promote resiliency thereby increasing their learning potential. Failures or setbacks also offer important opportunities for giving 'process' praise that does more than just offer 'a simple encouragement to try harder. Rather, teachers should use the failure as an opportunity to explore with their students new strategies and approaches that could lead to a better outcome in the future' (p. 54). To enhance their educational practices, teachers need to reflect critically on their specific assumptions, beliefs, values, and expectations in order to scrutinize consciously existing practices to promote the development of a growth mindset among their students.

The development of a growth mindset may also foster the resiliency necessary to help young people overcome negative outcomes that result from a perceived mismatch

between their developmental needs and their educational environment (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Newell & Van Ryzin, 2007). For example, studies have demonstrated that as young adolescents make the transition from elementary to secondary school, they want more autonomy and input into the decision-making that impacts on the function and structure of their education (e.g. Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles, Lord, & Roeser, 1996; Eccles, Lord, Roeser, Barber, & Hernandez Jozefowicz, 1997). Negative motivation is associated with a mismatch between an adolescent's needs and an educational context that is not able to meet those needs. The development of a growth mindset may act as a buffer against negative influences on motivation and performance achievement.

There is increasing evidence that motivational problems often result from a mismatch between the developmental needs, beliefs, and values of music learners and their educational context. For example, North, Hargreaves, and O'Neill (2000) describe the mismatch that may occur between young people's musical preferences and the music curriculum of schools. This mismatch can have negative consequences for motivation and interest in music learning at school. In a study of 1205 young people's music participation, we found that those who continued learning to play instruments following the transition from elementary to secondary school, reported feeling more self-directed and autonomous than those who gave up playing instruments (O'Neill, 2001, 2005). When asked to expand on their experiences during an interview, the young people who gave up playing instruments reported that they had fewer opportunities to take responsibility for various aspects of their music education, particularly following the transition to secondary school. There was also a mismatch between the instruments that many young people wanted to learn to play and the instruments they actually played. Those who were most likely to continue playing reported valuing the instruments that they played and identified positively with adult role models who played similar instruments (see also Ivaldi & O'Neill, 2009, 2010).

McPherson and O'Neill (in press) recently examined the competence beliefs and valuing of music compared with other school subjects according to 24 143 students (11 909 females and 10 066 males, aged 9–21 years) from eight countries (Brazil, China, Finland, Hong Kong, Israel, Korea, Mexico, and USA). The results indicate that the majority of students across all eight countries tend to rate their competence and valuing of music lower than other school subjects. This widespread belief that music is less important than other school subjects suggests that there are many misconceptions about the short- and long-term benefits of engagement in music (see further Robinson, 2009). Helping young people develop a growth mindset towards music learning, which is characterized by a passion for learning, the active seeking of challenges, a valuing of effort, and the resiliency necessary to persist in the face of obstacles or adversity, may help increase the factors that initiate and sustain what Sternberg (2005) refers to as *purposeful engagement* in music. According to Sternberg (2003), 'the main constraint in achieving expertise is not some fixed prior level of capacity but purposeful engagement involving direct instruction, active participation, role modeling, and reward' (p. 71). Future research is needed to explore the relative importance and influence of these factors on motivation and music learning.

Directions for future research

Dweck's (2006) notion of a growth mindset provides an interesting framework or lens from which to examine motivation and the development of young people's music performance skills. However, more research is needed into the personhood and musical lives of music learners if we are to increase our understanding of the single, cumulative, and interdependent strengths of developing a young musician's growth mindset. We need to increase our understanding of the benefits, processes, and development of a growth mindset, including research that focuses on the role of self-theories and resiliency. Recent studies in the area of educational resilience, for example, have focused on the characteristics that differentiate between resilient and non-resilient students in terms of their academic abilities. Similar research is needed in relation to the development of musical abilities. There is also a need for longitudinal studies that examine a range of motivational predictors. Mixed methods approaches are needed that include teacher self-reports together with student interview data, as well as survey and observational data. According to Waxman, Gray, and Padron (2003) 'such data could help us understand, from different perspectives, the complexity of issues surrounding the educational improvement of students' (pp. 14–15). Research is also needed that can inform music educators and musicians about how to develop positive motivation, adaptive self-theories, and resiliency at different ages and phases of music learning and over the course of a musician's performing life.

Increasingly, school–family–community partnerships are viewed as offering protective factors that foster educational resilience in young people (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Waxman *et al.*, 2003). These protective factors are associated with caring and supportive adult relationships and opportunities for meaningful youth engagement in schools and communities (Benard, 1995, 1997; Wang *et al.*, 1997). For example, Herbert (1999) conducted a study with 18 culturally diverse, high-achieving students in an urban high school. The results showed a positive influence of several factors on students' resiliency. Among these factors were supportive adults at home, at school, and in the community; extracurricular after-school, Saturday, and summer enrichment programmes; challenging educational experiences; a network of achieving peers; and a strong belief in and sense of self. School–family–community partnerships offer the potential for collaborative initiatives or relationships whereby all partners involved work together to coordinate and implement programmes and activities aimed at the increased success of all students. Although school–family–community partnerships are not a panacea for solving all motivational problems that students encounter, they can foster the protective factors and resiliency that mediate these problems. Future research might examine some of the benefits that young musicians derive from increased resiliency and the development of a growth mindset. For example, young musicians may be less impacted by the effects of obstacles or barriers that they come in direct contact with compared with young musicians with fixed mindsets.

It is also necessary to explore the various conditions and contexts that promote, sustain, and enhance music engagement, particularly in relation to specific obstacles or barriers that young people encounter. Both short- and long-term influences on motivation need to be identified, as well as the different pathways, factors, and strategies

that foster adaptive self-theories and resiliency among music learners. There is a tendency to view musical ability, self-identity, and character as separate or distinct aspects of a young musician. However, growing evidence suggests that there is a common underlying influence that can shape these attributes, particularly when they relate to achieving a successful outcome such as a musical performance. If we accept the premise put forward by Good and Dweck (2006) for achieving success in non-musical achievement-related domains, future research should focus on the reasoning skills that contribute to the development of musical skills, the resiliency that constructs identity in a particular way, and the responsibility that helps to define the character and long-term development of young musicians.

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Chapter 4

Negotiating music in the real world: development, motivation, process, and effect

Alexandra Lamont

Abstract

This chapter explores how people learn to negotiate their use of music in everyday settings. I draw on theory and research within the social approach to music psychology, which argues that music listening is active, social, and critical. I explore the developmental processes involved in responding to music and learning to make musical choices, and consider how this changes across the lifespan. I review a range of recent research studies addressing three key questions. First, how do people learn to negotiate their music uses in the real world, and how is this process shaped by others? Second, is the music itself important? This highlights an ongoing tension in music psychology between an emphasis on the music or the listener. Third, just how important is the element of choice? I review a complex set of findings which address these questions and illustrate the considerable challenges that research in everyday settings presents. Throughout I include the effects that musical engagement can have on many areas of life: musical, personal, cognitive, and social.

In this chapter I will consider the important issue of how people learn to negotiate music in the real world. How do we learn to engage with music listening across the lifespan? What motivates us to listen to and make use of music in different situations? How does it happen, where, when, who with, and most importantly, why? Finally, what effects does it have on us? The chapter aims to shed light on these key questions, and to propose a new contextual framework for studying music in everyday life. My focus is on engagement with music in terms of listening; other chapters consider related issues in relation to playing and performing music (cf. Chapters 3 and 11).