

# Secondary student motivation to participate in a Year 9 Australian elective classroom music curriculum

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*Despite strong philosophical arguments supporting the inclusion of music in all students' education, declining student participation rates in school music activities during the middle years of schooling remain an ongoing issue for music education researchers. This paper presents the findings of a case study examining the motivational factors influencing student enrolment behaviour in the elective classroom music curriculum within the social context of an independent secondary school in regional Australia. The analysis discussed in this paper focuses on the socio-cultural contexts of school culture, peer group, family values and student perceptions of teachers as factors shaping student academic motivational orientations.*

## Introduction

The importance of music education in Australian schooling has been recognised by Australian State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education who endorsed the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). The national goals for schooling require state and national curricular frameworks to include music as a component of all students' education through the identification of music as an essential strand in one of the eight national key learning areas, 'The Arts' (MCEETYA, 2008). Statements of syllabus rationale from each of the states and territories of Australia emphasise the role of musical engagement in all students' education, for example, 'music is a unique means of expression, of knowing and communicating experience, it makes a profound contribution to personal, social and cultural identities' (Queensland Studies Authority, 2004, p. 1). Such educational aims that recognise the value of music in a student's education for the achievement of broader educational goals are consistent with numerous music advocacy statements (for example, International Society for Music Education: [http://www.isme.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=116&Itemid=30](http://www.isme.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=116&Itemid=30), accessed 10 January 2012).

Concurrent with the strong philosophical arguments supporting the inclusion of music in all children's education (Swanwick, 1999; Pitts, 2000; Paynter, 2002; Reimer, 2002) music is described as the primary leisure activity of adolescents (North *et al.*, 2000; Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001; Youth Music, 2006). The prominent role of music in the lives of adolescents has been explained from a social psychological perspective, where its primary function is viewed as a means of development and expression of an individual's

sense of identity (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2002; Tarrant *et al.*, 2002). Despite the function and prominence of popular music in the lives of adolescents and the value of music in a child's education being firmly grounded in educational theory and research, a decline in student participation in school music activities during transition periods in school, such as that from primary to secondary education, continues to be observed (O'Neill *et al.*, 2002; Colley & Comber, 2003; Marshall & Hargreaves, 2007).

The disparity between student attitudes and levels of engagement with music playing and studying encountered in school contexts and the popularity of music listening as a leisure activity outside of school has been identified as an issue in Australia (Rosevear, 2003) and internationally (Lamont *et al.*, 2003; Youth Music, 2006; Lamont & Maton, 2008). Within the Australian context, there exists 'a general perception that Australian school music education is approaching a state of crisis' (DEST, 2005, p. 2). The difference between young people's engagement with music in school and non-school contexts, together with a body of research revealing a concerning decline in the status and quality of music education in Australia (for example, Stevens, 2003; DEST, 2005; Temmerman, 2005) has contributed to renewed advocacy and action. The level of concern about music education was reflected in the debate regarding the importance of music in the education of all young Australians, held in Australia's federal parliament on 10 February 2003. This debate served as a catalyst that launched a National Review of School Music Education. The final report of this national review described the current state of Australian music education to be at 'a critical turning point' and 'at time when action must be taken' (DEST, 2005, p. xxvii). One explanation for the continued decline in student engagement levels with school music is the failure of curriculum reform efforts to consider the motivational needs of students.

The success of recent curriculum reforms in various countries in our [Asia-Pacific] region of the world rests on the degree to which music teachers are able to recognise the importance of basing their work on those motivational processes which have been shown in a wide range of education research to enhance learning and teaching. ... teachers and educational planners need to become more cognisant of the personal and environmental catalysts which shape children's decisions to choose to participate or not to participate in each arts subject. (McPherson, 2003, p. 15)

While much of the earlier work of motivational theorists focused on the individual's self-perceptions of ability, prior knowledge, expectancies for success, locus of control and interests, motivational research over the past decade has recognised the role of context in which student learning takes place (Wigfield *et al.*, 1998; Hickey & Zuiker, 2005; Schunk *et al.*, 2007). In their expectancy-value model of achievement motivation, Wigfield and Eccles (2000) argue individuals' perceptions of past experience together with a variety of environmental and socialisation factors, influence task-specific beliefs including perceptions of ability, task difficulty and goals, in turn, influencing individuals' choice, persistence and achievement. The social organisation of schools and classrooms, and students' interactions with peers, family members and teachers are recognised as important environmental influences in the development of a student's motivational orientation (Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Davidson, 1997; Wigfield *et al.*, 1998). Despite a growing body of music education research literature that has explored the role of social context on student motivation, much of this research has been focused on learning and playing musical

instruments (Lamont & Maton, 2008) and has been organised according to clusters rather than integrated across the different motivational and contextual factors (Bergin, 1999; Hidi, 2000; Murphy & Alexander, 2000; Moore *et al.*, 2003). Much less research has investigated the factors influencing student enrolment behaviour of early adolescence in Australian classroom music contexts. The current study provides an extension to the existing body of music educational research by employing an integrative framework that explores the environmental influences of school culture, peer group, family values and student perceptions of teachers as they relate to student motivation to participate in elective classroom music. This study has focused on the transition from mandatory classroom music for all students to elective classroom music as this represents the first time students are given the choice to include music as part of their school timetabled classes.

### **Aim and setting of the study**

The aim of the study was to identify and provide insight into the nature of the motivational and contextual factors that influenced student classroom music enrolment behaviour. This study specifically examined student and parent perceptions of the influences and motivations of Year 8 students, average age 13 years, when considering participation in the elective Year 9 classroom music curriculum in the specific setting of a high fee-paying independent coeducational Kindergarten to Year 12 day and boarding school in a regional city of Australia. Music occupied an important place within the broader school community. The classroom music curriculum was well resourced with specialised music facilities and staffing. A co-curricular music programme operated independently of the classroom music curriculum with student participation occurring outside of the normal school academic timetable. The co-curricular music programme was comprised of five choirs, three concert bands, an orchestra, stage band, brass ensemble, string quartet and woodwind quintet. While student participation in the elective classroom music curriculum was low at 6% of the student cohort, 47% of students in the Year 8 cohort were participating in individual instrumental and vocal music tuition at the time of this study.

While this study was conceived from a personal interest in the factors influencing student motivation to participate in the Year 9 elective classroom music curriculum within this specific social setting, the identification of cognitive and social factors that influence student music curriculum choice is a phenomenon that has a broad interest beyond that of the case alone (for example, Marshall & Hargreaves, 2007; Lamont & Maton, 2008).

### **Method**

An interpretive case study design (Stake, 1995) was employed in this investigation to facilitate a detailed study of individual student and parent perceptions within the broader social unit of the specific school setting. Data were examined for themes or patterns consistent with 'open coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) or 'cutting and sorting' (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). While key themes were sorted and classified to clarify points of convergence and divergence, the analysis strategy was primarily focused on exploring emerging key themes according to meaning within the larger body of data. The constant

movement between key themes and the broader context enabled an interpretive focus (Stake, 1995) where meaning was constructed within the complexities of the case.

A multi-method approach was employed to allow the phenomenon to be viewed from a range of perspectives while enabling findings to be assessed for consistence across different data sources (Yin, 1994). Methodological triangulation involved the use of a student survey (Appendix A), semi-structured individual student interviews (Appendix B) and semi-structured pair interviews with parents (Appendix C).

The written survey was administered to the full Year 8 cohort ( $n = 92$ ) with responses to each question tallied for frequency to provide a preliminary view of the factors influencing student elective curriculum choice. Open-ended questioning was employed in the survey to explore each motivational category while also promoting a freedom in response that did not preclude unanticipated data. While the survey data provided a 'snapshot' of the factors influencing student music curriculum choice, in-depth interviews served as the primary means of data generation. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 Year 8 students to ground survey findings in personal accounts of student motivation and provide a richness of data not available through the survey instrument. The interviews comprised five students from each of three purposive samples. The purposive samples encompassed all student backgrounds as they relate to previous instrumental music experiences. To minimise response bias associated with my dual role as researcher and teacher within the research setting, a person unknown to the students conducted all student interviews.

Five students were invited to participate from each of the following three purposive samples:

- 1 Students who had elected to participate in the classroom music curriculum of Year 9 – EMS.
- 2 Students participating in instrumental or vocal music tuition who had not elected to participate in the classroom music curriculum of Year 9 – INMS.
- 3 Students with limited or no previous instrumental or vocal music tuition who had elected not to participate in the elective classroom music curriculum of Year 9 – NMS.

Independent pair interviews were conducted with both parents of each interviewed student. The parent interviews enabled data to be gathered that could not be accessed directly, for example, social influences that may exist beyond the school context. The parent interview data provided important multiple perspectives that served to clarify meaning and account for possible variations within the student interview data whilst also adding breadth, richness and depth to the inquiry.

All methods of data generation were designed around the four motivational categories identified by Eccles and Wigfield (2002), in their review of motivational beliefs, values and goals. The four motivational categories were based around theories focused on expectancies of success (self-efficacy, self-concept); task values (intrinsic and utility values, goal theory); the integration of expectancies and values (attribution theory, expectancy-value models); and the integration of motivation and cognition (social-cognitive theories related to contextual factors). The coherence between the designs of the data generation methods enabled survey and interview data to be compared for consistency and clarification. The analysis of interview data focused on the interpretation

and co-construction of meaning with emerging themes considered in relation to the survey findings. As part of the ethical protocol, pseudonyms are used in the reporting process to render data untraceable to the individual or school.

## Findings

For the purposes of this paper, data analysis focuses on motivational influences related to the environmental factors of school culture, student peer groups, family values and student perceptions of teachers. Emerging data are grouped according to each of the environmental factors with raw data used to illustrate the nature of these factors as perceived by the respondents. While each context is discussed separately, it is important to acknowledge that the 'multiple contexts interact with each other to impact school music in myriad ways' (Bresler, 1998, p. 2).

### *School culture*

The broader school culture is a significant environmental influence on the development and expression of student motivation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), framing the complex multiple social interactions of the classroom climate, teacher practices, family values and peer group influences. In this specific setting, the school culture included a compulsory co-curricular sport programme for all students and a compulsory cadet unit for all male and female students in Years 8 to 10. The range of available winter sporting activities was limited to netball and hockey for girls and rugby and cross-country running for boys. Students in Years 11 and 12 were able to participate in the additional sporting activities of aerobics for girls and soccer for boys. Where students participated in at least three co-curricular music ensembles, students could be granted exemption from the compulsory co-curricular sport programme.

The limited, yet compulsory, sporting activities available to both girls and boys represents socialised expectations of gender appropriate activities. In particular, the very high participation rates of boys in rugby (73%), illustrates a strong cultural bias within the school consistent with broader social expectations and gender stereotyping (Green, 1997). A perception by students of the existence of different gender social roles can readily influence social behaviour (Snodgrass, 1992) with students less likely to participate in activities perceived to be incongruent with prescriptions (Cramer *et al.*, 2002). The gendered nature of sporting activities and high cultural value placed on boys' sport contributed to the construction of social expectations consistent with student perceptions of a hierarchy within sport. These social expectations were revealed in student survey responses where 13 of the 29 responses that identified sport as an area of importance within the school, referred specifically to rugby rather than sport generally. Figure 1 summarises student survey data identifying areas of perceived importance in the school.

The high value placed on rugby was reinforced during interview conversations.

Interviewer: What do you think the school stresses as important?

I think it is sport, football. It is a kind of a controversy because it is compulsory for males to do football, they can't do soccer. . . . It is so competitive, like with the debating team,

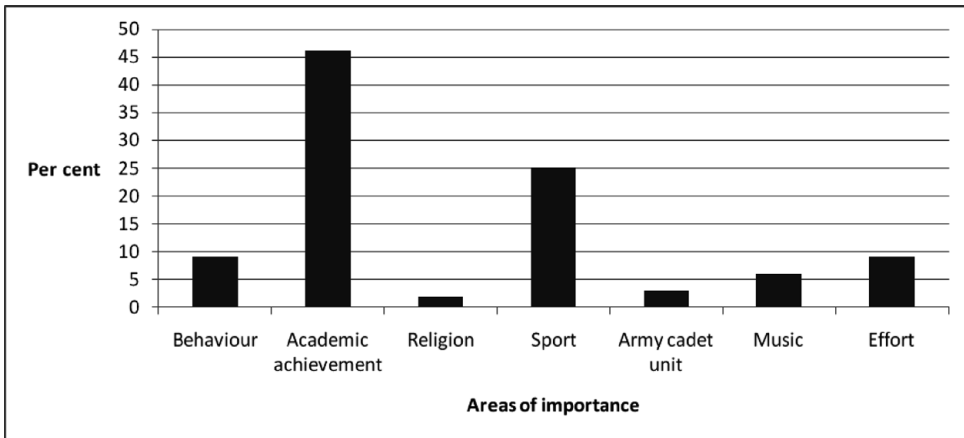


Fig. 1 Survey question: What do you think the school sees as important for the students?

the debating team went up and won everything and we came back and nobody cared. It was just the Firsts won football on the weekend. . . . Same with music, musicianship awards don't really matter. Same with art works and reading prizes. I think it is very over balanced . . . you can sort of see what is low on their priorities it is not as if they try to hide them. (Annie, EMS)

One consequence of the strong sporting culture within the school appeared to be a diminished value placed on music-related activities.

From the school's point of view it [music] is not a very high priority and they [peer group] would want to be in the good books with them [school]. (Jenny, EMS)

Rugby, it frustrates the hell out of us that rugby is just paramount in the school before music and other sports. (Annie's father, EMS)

The high profile afforded to sport, specifically rugby, influenced the decision of some boys not to participate in either the co-curricular ensemble music programme or the elective classroom music programme, despite having demonstrated an interest and level of commitment to music through private instrumental music tuition. This group of boys had participated in instrumental music activities in primary school and did not report a dislike towards music. Rather, the students found themselves having to overcome social and cultural pressures if they were to elect to pursue personal interests in music.

Father: He's good friends with Ray Timms and Ray was in the junior choir in the first years. Ray got such a hard time. I think Ray's pulled out of that now.

Mother: Oh the culture, Anthony said, when thinking about the soccer, he had a lot of pressure to play rugby. . . . But I know when they had to choose whether to go into the orchestra, he was still playing the double bass in the orchestra, or cadets, he said, 'Mum, I can't be a soccer player and in the orchestra.'

Interviewer: That would be too much?

Mother: Yeah, too much ostracism and I thought, 'Yeah, that would be a problem'.  
(Anthony's parents, INMS)

While some parents identified student participation in music as an area encouraged by the school, it was perceived the promotion of music to be for the purpose of advertising an 'all round' education. The school's promotion of a culture supportive of an 'all round' education, however, was suggested to be related to the image the school was trying to develop within the broader community and was not necessarily reflected in the concrete operations that served to institute the goals and values of the school.

The all round education of the child, that's what the school says. Sometimes I think it is for the good of the school. The school really, sometimes comes, in reality, comes before the actual good of the student. (Angus' father, INMS)

I think it [school] encourages academic things but, I think it's like, sometimes it is more concerned with the image of the school. . . . Academic at the top, but sometimes image, and like sport comes with image, you know what I mean? If it wins then the image is [good]. (Ray, INMS)

A consequence of the school's promotion of academic and sporting achievement above all other activities, through school award ceremonies, publications and assemblies, was the development of student values consistent with the school culture.

I think she would perceive it [music] as not an important subject. They seem to learn pretty quickly, or form a view of what is important and what's not. (Allison's father, NMS)

Sport's probably [valued] higher than music because they don't make music compulsory.

Interviewer: If you were the Headmaster, would you change the priorities a little or keep them the same?

Probably keep them the same. (Ben, NMS)

Allison had enjoyed the non-elective classroom music curriculum and sang in a school choir throughout primary school and the first year of secondary school. Her low motivation to participate in the elective classroom music curriculum of Year 9, however, reflected a low value for music developed from her participation in the broader school culture.

I think, not that music is bad, but I think they [the school] put that last. Like I think sport is always, if you're in a hockey game during choir time you have to go. You can't not go to hockey. (Allison, NMS)

#### *Peer group*

While 66% of students were aware of friends electing at least one subject common with their own choices, the influence of a student's peers on elective curriculum decisions was generally reported as a secondary factor. The peer group was, however, becoming

an increasing influence on student motivation and behaviour during the early years of secondary schooling.

I think, as they get older they prefer to discuss that sort of thing [elective curriculum choices] with their peers rather than their mother. She used to share a lot of things but it is becoming less and less. (Elizabeth's mother, NMS)

A lot [of peer influence] in these early years, I suppose in Year 9 and 10 because it's not fun if you don't have a good friend with you. Yeah I was definitely, I wanted to do it [elective curriculum area] with my friends. All of my friends wanted to do it with my friends or me. (Anthony, INMS)

Student consideration of peer group values was found to influence, not only the nomination of curriculum areas, but also the specific timetable grid lines in which a curriculum area was offered. Students compared elective curriculum choices on specific timetable grid lines to ensure members of the peer group were in the same class. Positive peer group influences enhanced a student's motivation to elect a curriculum area as the curriculum area satisfied multiple student goals.

I know one thing that Commerce and Computing are on two lines each and some people changed their lines so they were in their friends' classes, I know that. (Tom, INMS)

If you want to do this class and a friend is doing it as well then that's a big bonus, and if you were unsure about doing this class and another and you found a friend was in the other class then you would choose the other class straight away. (Ray, INMS)

A shift in Alex's peer group's values in the first two years of secondary school resulted in peer evaluations becoming an increasingly negative factor towards school music activities. Alex's motivation for music was evident in his continued participation in a school choir. The shift in peer group music values towards non-school based music activities, specifically in popular music styles, resulted in Alex being one of only two boys in a choir of 28 voices. Increasingly, Alex needed to balance his personal interests and intrinsic motivations with the dominant values of the social group.

I do like it [choir]. I get a bit teased or whatever about being a singer, but I still do it because I like, not that kind of singing, but singing to songs on the radio and so I do it to keep my voice okay. (Alex, NMS)

The social implications for possessing a high level of intrinsic interest in a curriculum area not consistent with those of the broader student population placed those students electing to participate in the classroom music curriculum outside the broader student social network. Despite these social implications, the high intrinsic task values for music minimised the negative role of the peer group for those students electing to participate in the classroom music curriculum.

She is comfortable with that [electing classroom music] at the moment, but if she was a child who was swayed by peer pressure or that she wasn't getting the rewards for the extra hassle, I guess, I think you would lose Annie from music, because you've probably lost other students. . . . The kids [Annie and her two sisters] believe that it's



worth missing out on socialisation with their peers and that in effect is what she is missing out on. (Annie's mother, EMS)

I think if I was, as I am, really happy about music like really like it a lot, then I don't think I would be accepted in the cool group because they're all sport oriented people and Ag oriented and stuff. (Jenny, EMS)

### *Family values*

The role of the home environment and specifically parental values has been found to be pivotal in a child's musical development and interest (Brand, 1986; Chadwick, 2001; McPherson, 2009). The home environment serves as a particular cultural setting that transmits certain values through facilitative actions of parents in exposing, initiating, supporting and encouraging children's engagement in specific areas of interest (Sloboda *et al.*, 1996; Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; McPherson & Davidson, 2002). McPherson (2009) proposes a valuable extension to the understanding of parental goals as factors influencing student musical development and motivation in his model for studying parent-child interactions. In this model, McPherson proposes a feedback loop in which the characteristics of the child together with the social and cultural contexts in which the interactions occur interact with parenting goals. The range of motivational and contextual factors included in the feedback loop highlights the complexity and nature of parental values on children's musical development and motivation.

A large proportion of the parent population was supportive of music-related activities through the provision of opportunities and resources for students to engage in instrumental or vocal music tuition at an additional cost to the school fees. Despite 47% of families in Year 8 demonstrating favourable attitudes towards music education through the provision of musical opportunities and resources for their child to participate in instrumental and vocal music tuition, parental values for music were often limited to intrinsic task values that may be satisfied through the co-curricular ensemble programme.

In choosing to enrol their children in a school that valued academic achievement, parents had selected a model of education that was consistent with their own educational values. This group of parents promoted elective curriculum areas that were perceived to offer a utility value or provide 'academic rigour'. Of the 34 students who discussed curriculum choices with their parents, only three parents encouraged their child to elect curriculum areas that satisfied intrinsic task values. Figure 2 summarises the nature of parental influence on elective curriculum choices, highlighting the importance of parents' perceptions of utility values as a factor influencing student elective curriculum choices.

The perception that elective classroom music is a subject that has high intrinsic task values but limited utility value in terms of future education and career opportunities is a commonly held view in families (McPherson, 2006). This view, together with a perception that elective classroom music was not an academically orientated curriculum area, served as a negative factor in a number of parent and student decisions to participate in classroom music.

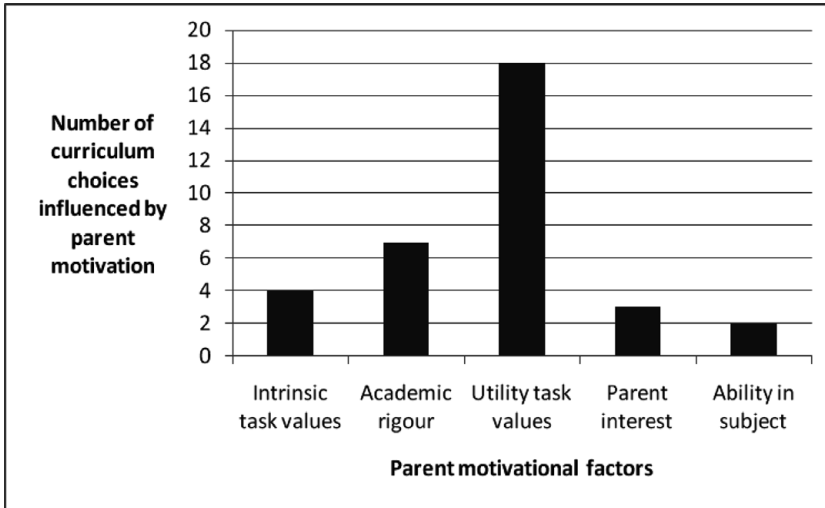


Fig. 2 Survey question: Why do you think your parents wanted you to study these subjects rather than some of the others available?

He knew that I wouldn't approve [of elective classroom music] . . . There wouldn't be anything new there for him, and he is quite academic and I wanted him to push in academics. (Alex's mother, NMS)

Curriculum areas perceived to offer higher utility value featured most frequently as a parental influence on student elective curriculum choice.

And my parents, the main reason they would make me do it [Latin] is that because I'm really solid at maths and science but English, I'm still in A1 but I'm at the very bottom of the class and Mum and Dad would really like me to go well in English and that's my bad spot. And like my sister and brother are very good at English, I'm not good at it so that's why they want me to do Latin because it's . . .

Interviewer: They think it might help?

Yeah, they think it's the base language of all languages (Tom, INMS)

Parents' desire for students to nominate elective curriculum areas that satisfied utility task values served to heighten awareness of the co-curricular music ensemble programme as an alternative means for the satisfaction of intrinsic task values related to interest and enjoyment of music.

Quite a few of my friends play instruments but that is enough for them. They don't want to become, like, play in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra or anything like that. It is enough for them to just be able to play an instrument. (Anthony, INMS)

If you don't want to become a musician there is music at the school that they can do through all the other ways of doing music, so encouraging music as part of their lives not necessarily as a career choice. . . . And with music, our background thing is,

'You're probably not going to end up as a musician and if you are you are going to be poor'. What we know is if you're totally arts based you are going to have a tough life. (Ray's mother, INMS)

While 68% of the Year 8 cohort indicated on the student survey that music satisfied the intrinsically orientated constructs of interest and enjoyment, these positive intrinsic task values were based on practical music-making activities.

Anthony liked, I think in one of the tasks someone set him, in film music ... he had to compose something with the organ and he enjoyed it and spent a lot of time doing it ... and sings, he sings all the time. (Anthony's mother, INMS)

The practical, like with the TV music it was, that was good with the jingles. We did a lot of prac. and generally I found it a lot more enjoyable than just doing straight theory from our books. (Ray, INMS)

The identification of practical music-making activities as the source of intrinsically orientated constructs for classroom music highlighted the potential role of instrumental and vocal music tuition and the co-curricular music programme as alternative means for the satisfaction of intrinsic music task values. The existence of the alternative music programmes weakened the role of the classroom music curriculum as a means for the satisfaction of intrinsic task values. Shah and Kruglanski (2000) refer to this phenomenon as *means dissociation*, where a 'goal's association with a single means is weakened by the presence of other available means' (p. 111). The non-elective classroom music curriculum of Year 7 and Year 8 provided only limited opportunities for performance-based experiences as the course was evenly divided between performing, composing and listening with a limited time allocation of three, 40-minute lessons per fortnight.

The cultural setting within the family environment had been influential in the development of student interests and areas of engagement. This was a common feature with students electing to participate in the classroom music curriculum. The family's provision of musical opportunities for their children from an early age was found with four of the five interviewed students experiencing music making both in the home and through structured group music classes with local music education providers before attending primary school. The facilitative actions of the parents in exposing and encouraging participation in music experiences before attending school reflected the value music enjoyed in the home environment.

I took them, oh they used to call it Kodaly. When they were three, I took them to those ... they were group lessons and they were fun. They used to sing and just move. (David's mother, EMS)

We did take them to a lot of music stuff. I took them to all the Play School and all the little kid things and stuff at the Opera House and we did go to a group music class. (Jenny's mother, EMS)

The motivation for parents to provide and encourage their children's involvement in classroom music originated from at least one parent in each family having enjoyed previous positive music experiences. While this group of parents shared their positive intrinsic task

values for music making with their child, parents' support for participation in the classroom music curriculum was heightened by a sense of regret in their own school music education.

I wanted to do music. I'd actually applied to do music when I was in Year 8 or something and the music teacher had rung six of us up and said, 'Don't do it'. It was a great help. 'Don't do it because the class has too much variation in the standard and you girls have all done Grade 6 piano or something and so you'll be bored' and I think it was the worst mistake I ever made actually. . . . and I now regret that because I was really, I'm really ignorant on the breadth of music, I don't understand music, how something is put together. Doing piano to Grade 7 didn't really teach me very much. (Jenny's mother, EMS)

With the level of parent interest and positive task values for music being significant in the provision of musical opportunities (Howe & Sloboda, 1991), parents with limited or negative experiences of music at school were less likely to promote classroom music as an elective curriculum area for Year 9.

I don't think it's [music] important . . . She did comment on taking up the flute but as I said, extra money. . . . There's no use putting myself in debt. I mean, she can always take it up later. (Sophie's mother, NMS)

I did learn guitar for a while but I hated it. . . . I could never play it anyway, and I think that's why I hate the guitar so much, I can't bear the sound of it. . . . He [Alex] has said yeah, he wishes he could play the guitar, which fell on deaf ears. (Alex's mother, NMS)

The cultural setting of the home environment provided opportunities for the stimulation and development of student intrinsic task values through the support and provision of opportunities for participation in areas consistent with the interests and task values of parents. While 47% of parents demonstrated favourable attitudes towards music education through the provision of musical opportunities and resources, parental values for music were often limited to the co-curricular ensemble programme. Parental curriculum values were generally consistent with the school academic culture that promoted academic achievement in 'core' curriculum areas. The perception that elective classroom music was not an academically orientated curriculum area and offered little utility value served as a negative factor in student decisions to participate in classroom music.

#### *Student perceptions of teachers*

Positive perceptions of teachers were reported to enhance existing student motivation to participate in the respective curriculum areas. The nature of the positive influence was described through the teacher's role in establishing a learning environment that stimulated interest and promoted enjoyment, enhancing student intrinsic task values.

Year 8 was a lot of fun because we had Mrs J., Mrs Jorgensen [English teacher] and that was a lot of fun. . . . I love listening to music but all the theory work you have to do, it didn't interest me so much. It was more the classes with Mr Burton were so fun. . . . I loved music with Mr Burton . . . it was an awful lot of fun, music in Year 8. (Anthony, INMS)

If you have a teacher who makes you like it and gives you a passion for it then you'll almost begin to like it and then if you like it and you like the teacher and you like the work they're doing you almost look forward to it. (Annie, EMS)

Despite a high level of congruence with 67% of students having elected at least one curriculum area that was to be taught by a teacher with whom a rapport had been developed, positive student–teacher relationships were described to be contributing factors and not primary determinants in a student's motivation to elect particular curriculum areas.

Interviewer: Would she take it [elective subject] if she really liked the teacher?

Not necessarily . . . it's a bonus if the teacher's really nice. (Sophie's mother, NMS)

It [teacher] probably came into it but not strongly, not as much as his friends. (Alex's mother, NMS)

Negative perceptions of teachers were, however, reported to be more influential as factors in student elective curriculum choice with those teachers perceived to be less popular featuring in decisions not to participate in respective curriculum areas.

Languages, he was turned off by staff, because that's the way Mitchell is. He's very much a people person. . . . if the personal student–teacher relationship is poor you've lost him for the subject. (Mitchell's father, EMS)

I think some people didn't like Mr Wood, didn't like the way he taught [sic], but that sort of influenced everyone. 'Music, oh I'm not doing music. I don't want to end up with Mr Wood'. (Sophie, NMS)

With a number of elective curriculum areas experiencing declining student enrolments, there was some effort made on the part of teachers in the languages department to promote French, Latin and Japanese during the elective choice process. While this had only a limited influence on student elective curriculum decisions, it was a consideration for some students.

He was also very sensitive to the fact that a teacher had said, 'Look if you're in the A1 stream you ought to be taking a language as a 9 and 10 elective'. . . . And so being only little and under the influence of teachers he thought perhaps he ought to consider Latin and French. (Scott's mother, INMS)

He was actively pursued by the French department. . . . she [teacher] really wanted him to keep going with French. (Ray's mother, INMS)

Congruence between student elective curriculum choice and teachers with whom a rapport had been developed appeared consistently throughout the three interview samples. Despite this congruence, positive student–teacher relationships were insufficient motivating factors alone to influence student participation in the respective curriculum areas. Teachers were, however, frequently described as having a negative influence in elective curriculum choice with those teachers perceived to be less popular featuring in decisions not to participate in respective curriculum areas.

The following discussion provides a summary of the findings related to the contextual factors of school culture, peer group influences, family values and student perceptions

of teachers as factors influencing student elective curriculum choice within this specific setting. The discussion concludes with some suggestions for future research directions.

## Discussion

High values for academic and sporting achievement, for the purpose of enhancing market value, underpinned the school's reward system and were found to cultivate peer group values consistent with salient school values. Where student intrinsic task values did not reflect the socialisation processes evident in the dominant values of the school culture and peer group, students reported the need to consider the social relevance of possible and preferred areas of engagement. This was particularly evident with a group of boys who had been participating in instrumental music and elected not to participate in the classroom music curriculum. This group of boys elected to cease participating in school music activities to maintain peer approval and membership of a social group that shared the dominant school cultural values of sport and academic achievement. This negative, and presumably unintended, consequence of the school reward system cultivated peer group values that diminished student motivation to participate in the elective classroom music curriculum. The level of influence of peer group values was found to override positive parental influences for the elective classroom music curriculum, confirming the development of individual interests in adolescence to increasingly reflect peer group values and gender-typical stereotypes (Renninger, 2000; Harrison, 2007).

Family values were evident in both the development of student intrinsic task values, through the provision of opportunities and support for musical engagement, and in the choice of school for their child's education. The type of school was found to be an indication of implicit family values for academic and sporting achievement. Parent perceptions of the classroom music curriculum were generally less positive as the curriculum was perceived to offer limited academic rigour and relevance to future applications. Positive parental influence for school music was generally limited to performance-based music experiences outside of the classroom music curriculum. Where parental interests, perceptions and values were strong and inconsistent with their child's task values, parents directed student elective curriculum choice through suggested goals and interventions.

Parent perceptions of the classroom music curriculum offering limited academic rigour demonstrate a misunderstanding of the nature of the classroom music curriculum and the benefits of a classroom music education in students' lives generally. McPherson (2005) identifies similar community misunderstandings in the nature of the musical experience and calls for advocacy efforts to relate the goals of music education with those of education generally. Advocacy messages that support the existing perceptions of music's limited utility value by promoting the intrinsic task values of enjoyment and interest as the primary benefits of a music education are unlikely to contribute to changes in student classroom music enrolment behaviour. Strategies aimed at developing understandings of the nature of the classroom music curriculum and the associated benefits in education generally would serve to diminish the negative mediating influence of the cultural milieu on positive student intrinsic task values for music. Such strategies need to highlight the inherent differences between the nature and benefits of the range of school music experiences available.

Data in this study have demonstrated student motivation to be differentiated according to contextual interventions that promoted salient cultural values. These contextual interventions included the balancing of personal interests and intrinsic motivations with the dominant cultural values of the individual's social group, parental values and practices, and student perceptions of teachers enhancing or diminishing intrinsic task values according to positive or negative student perceptions. Caution needs to be exercised, however, when generalising about student motivation to participate in classroom music programmes in broader school contexts as the findings of this study are limited by a focus on a set of selected contextual factors for a group of individual Year 8 students in an independent co-educational school in regional Australia. Despite limitations related to a set of factors within a single site, the data revealed a number of contrasting motivational orientations that offer several positive research directions.

### Concluding thoughts

To gain a fuller understanding of student motivation to participate in a classroom music curriculum, research is needed that examines the interacting relationships between the various contextual and motivational factors to verify that the findings of this study can be sustained in broader school contexts. Investigations with larger and more diverse student samples across a range of age, gender, socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts may contribute to the development of a broader conceptual framework of student motivation to participate in school music curricular.

Educational interventions aimed at promoting student participation in classroom music curricular require future research efforts to explore student perceptions of specific elements and expectations of learning tasks in the elective classroom music curriculum. To this end, research that identifies the effects of specific interventions at individual, class and school levels is needed. This includes an examination of the nature of music curricular and specific classroom music strategies to identify effects on student motivation according to student gender and identity within specific social and cultural contexts to identify any concomitant effects on student motivation. The identification of specific strategies that enhance student motivation to participate in elective classroom music offers significant practical and theoretical interest.

While there exist numerous compelling arguments articulating the value and importance of music education for all students, music education in Australian secondary schools continues to experience low student participation rates. This study provides an insight into the nature of the motivational and contextual factors at play within this specific setting and highlights that an understanding of student motivation to participate in classroom music requires an understanding of the complexities of the relationships between the individual's multiple goal orientations.

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## Appendix A

### *Student survey questions grouped according to motivational categories*

Motivational categories	Survey questions
Expectancies of success	<p>What subjects do you enjoy at school and why do you enjoy these subjects more than some of the others?</p> <p>What school subjects do you think you are good at?</p> <p>Why do you think you are better at these subjects compared with the other subjects you study?</p> <p>Are there any subjects that you find difficult or that you think you are not very good at? If ‘Yes’ what subjects do you find difficult?</p>
Task values	<p>Which two elective subjects did you choose for Year 9?</p> <p>What were your reasons for choosing these two elective subjects?</p> <p>Reasons for choosing your first elective subject</p> <p>Reason for choosing your second elective subject</p> <p>Were there any other subjects you would like to have studied if you could have had more choices?</p> <p>If ‘Yes’ what other subjects would you like to have studied in Year 9?</p> <p>Was there anything that you did not enjoy about Music in Year 8?</p> <p>If ‘Yes’ what did you dislike about Music in Year 8?</p> <p>Was there anything that you enjoyed about Music in Year 8?</p> <p>If ‘Yes’, what did you enjoy about Music in Year 8?</p>
Contextual factors:	
Teacher	Who were your favourite teachers in Year 8?
Peer group	<p>What are some of the elective subjects your friends are doing?</p> <p>Did your parents help you to choose your elective subjects?</p> <p>If ‘Yes’, which subjects did your parents think would be good to study?</p> <p>Why do you think your parents wanted you to study these subjects rather than some of the others available?</p>

School culture	What do you think the school sees as important for the students? Why do you think the school sees this as being more important than other things that occur in the school?
Family values	Does anyone in your family play a musical instrument? If 'Yes' who and what instrument do they play? Do you listen to music at home? If 'Yes', what type of music do you like listen to? You can give examples of bands, composers or a radio station that you like to listen to if you would like. What styles or types of music do your parents listen to? Give an example of a band or radio station if this helps. Have you ever had lessons on a musical instrument? If 'Yes', what instrument and how long did you take lessons for? Instrument . . . . . Number of years you took lessons. . . . . If 'No', would you like to be able to play a musical instrument? If 'Yes', what instrument would you play? Have you had the opportunity to play a musical instrument but chosen not to?

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**Appendix B**

*Student Interview Schedule. Interview questions grouped according to motivational categories*

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Content categories	Student interview questions
Opening questions	What elective subjects are you doing in Year 9? Were there any other subjects that you would like to have done but could not fit in? (What were they?) Why would you like to have studied these subjects? Did anyone help you decide which elective subjects to pick? (Who?) What subjects did they think would be good to choose or at least consider? Why do you think they suggested these subjects?
Expectancies for success	Which subjects do you think you were good at in Years 7 and 8? What were some of the subjects that you found difficult in Years 7 and 8? Do you think you were good at classroom music? (Why?) What do you think it takes to be good at classroom music? ( <i>effort, ability, luck</i> ) (Why?)

Task values	<p>Do you have any ideas about what career you would like to follow when you finish school? (What? Why?)</p> <p>What skills or subjects are important in this career?</p> <p>How would you describe music in Years Seven and Eight? (Why?)</p> <p>Which year did you enjoy more in music? Year 7 or 8? (Why do you think this year was better?)</p> <p>What were some of the things that you liked about music, was there anything you enjoyed?</p> <p>Were there any activities that you did not like about music in Year 7 or 8?</p> <p>What did you think would be included in the Year 9 elective music course?</p>
Contextual factors	<p>Which teachers did you enjoy most in Year 8?</p> <p>Why do you like these particular teachers?</p>
Teacher	<p><i>If the same teacher(s) as elective subject area:</i> Did this teacher help you decide to choose this subject?</p> <p><i>If not a teacher of one of the elected subjects for Year 9:</i> Were you tempted to choose (<i>subject</i>) so that you could stay in their class for Year 9?</p> <p>Were there any classes where the teacher motivated you to work harder and encouraged you to do your best? (Which classes and teachers?)</p> <p>How did the teacher motivate you?</p>
Peer group	<p>Who were some of your good friends in Year 8?</p> <p>Do you know what elective subjects they have chosen for Year 9?</p> <p>Why do you think some of your friends chose their subjects?</p> <p>Do you think any of your friends chose their subjects together?</p> <p>Did your friends help you make your decision? (How?)</p> <p>Do any of your friends play a musical instrument?</p>
School culture	<p>This school has a wide range of activities available for the students. Do you think the school sees some of these activities as being more important than some of the other activities that are available? (What? Why?)</p> <p>Do you think these same things are important? (If no: What do you think is important and why?)</p>
Family values	<p>Have you ever taken lessons on a musical instrument? (If yes: what and how long?)</p> <p>If you could play any instrument you wanted, what would you play? (Why?)</p> <p>What types of music do you like listening to?</p> <p>What types of music do your parents listen to?</p> <p>What types of music do you think would be good to study as part of the Year 8 music course?</p>

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## Appendix C

*Parent interview schedule. Interview questions grouped according to motivational categories*

Content categories	Parent interview questions
Opening questions	<p>How much discussion did you have with [<i>child's name</i>] when s/he was deciding on the elective subjects to choose for Year 9?</p> <p>What things did you discuss?</p> <p>What did you think were important considerations in choosing the elective subjects?</p> <p>Were there any other subjects that [<i>child's name</i>] would like to have done but could not fit in? (What were they?)</p> <p>Why do you think [<i>child's name</i>] was interested in studying these subjects?</p> <p>What other things do you think helped [<i>child's name</i>] decide to study <i>elective one</i>?</p> <p>What about <i>elective two</i>? What do you think helped [<i>child's name</i>] decide to choose this subject?</p> <p>What subjects did you think would be good to choose or at least consider? (Why?)</p> <p>Was there anyone else that [<i>child's name</i>] may have discussed his/her choices with? (Who and why?)</p> <p>Do you think [<i>child's name</i>] was influenced in any way by his/her friends, teachers. What other influences?</p>
Expectancies for success	<p>What were some of the subjects that [<i>child's name</i>] found difficult in Years 7 and 8?</p> <p>Why do you think [<i>child's name</i>] has difficulty with these subjects?</p> <p>Which subjects do you think [<i>child's name</i>] is, or could be, good at? (Why?)</p> <p>Do you think [<i>child's name</i>] was influenced in his/her choice by the results in Year 8?</p>
Task values	<p>Do you have any ideas, or preferences, for [<i>child's name</i>]'s career when s/he finishes school? (If so: What and why?)</p> <p>Did [<i>child's name</i>] ever say anything about how s/he felt about the music class or music teacher in Year 8? (What were some of the comments?)</p>
Contextual factors: Teacher	<p>Which teachers did [<i>child's name</i>] seem to enjoy most in Year 8?</p> <p>Why did s/he enjoy these particular teachers?</p> <p>Do you think [<i>child's name</i>] was at all influenced, or could have possibly been influenced, by teachers likely to take particular elective subjects?</p>
Peer Group	<p>Are [<i>child's name</i>]'s friends in any of his/her elective classes?</p> <p>Do you think any of [<i>child's name</i>]'s friends chose their elective subjects together? (After discussing them with each other)</p>

- School culture From your perspective, as a parent, what activities do you think the school values in the students?  
Do you think some activities are valued more by the school than others? (What and why?)  
How important are these activities in your child's education?  
Do you value these activities as much as the school? (Why?)  
*If no:* What do you think is important and why?
- Family values What activities or features of the school influenced you in deciding to send [*child's name*] to this school?  
Did you ever take lessons on a musical instrument?  
(*If yes:* What and how long? *If no:* Would you like to have learned a musical instrument and what instrument and why this instrument?)  
How would you describe music when you went to school?  
Would you like to have studied music at a higher level?  
What types of music do you like listening to?  
*Do you think it is relevant to have all students in Years 7 and 8 to study music as a compulsory subject?*  
Do you think it is important for students generally to learn a musical instrument while at school? (Why?)  
*Students who are learning a musical instrument:*  
How important is it for you that [*child's name*] learns a musical instrument? (Why?)  
How was [*child's name*] introduced to instrumental lessons, who encouraged them and how did they choose which instrument to learn?  
Is s/he enjoying learning the [*instrument*]?  
How long has s/he been learning?  
Has [*child's name*] ever asked to change instruments or stop lessons?  
*Students not learning a musical instrument:*  
Would you have liked [*child's name*] to learn a musical instrument while at school?  
(What reasons are there for not learning a musical instrument?)  
Has [*child's name*] ever suggested an interest in music?  
How would you evaluate the music course in Year 8 based on what you know from [*child's name*] or that you understand from school brochures, etc?  
What expectations do you have for the music course in Years 7 and 8?  
(Do you have topics or styles of music that you think should be covered or activities like performance, composition or book work that should be included?)
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