Talking 'Privilege': barriers to musical attainment in adolescents' talk of musical role models

Antonia Ivaldi[1] and Susan O'Neill[2]

[1]Royal Northern College of Music, 124 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RD, UK
[2]Don Wright Faculty of Music, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada N6A 3K7

Antonia.Ivaldi@rncm.ac.uk, soneil25@uwo.ca

Using a discursive approach, this study explores the ways that adolescents construct the notion of social status and 'being privileged' through their talk about musician role models. Drawing on social identity theory (see Tajfel, 1978), we examined how adolescents moved between the relational 'in' and 'out' groups of being privileged versus being disadvantaged as a framework for discussing classical and popular musician role models. Seven focus groups were conducted, each composed of male and female adolescent musicians and non-musicians aged 14–15 years. Participants were asked to discuss 19 pictures of famous classical and popular musicians, commenting on whether they were familiar or unfamiliar figures, and whether they were liked or disliked and the reasons why. Through their talk, the adolescents constructed and negotiated a complex understanding of musical subcultures, whereby high levels of expertise and success were perceived within the notion of privilege. Findings suggest that adolescents' perceptions of privilege may act as a barrier or constraint to their exploration of alternative conceptualisations of musical expertise and success, thereby limiting their own musical aspirations.

Introduction

The idea that celebrities may serve as adolescents' role models has been clearly demonstrated in previous research (see, for instance, Duck, 1990; Raviv *et al.*, 1996; Bromnick & Swallow, 1999). Famous figures have been selected across a number of domains, such as film, television, sport and music; however, there is little research that has concentrated on musician role models specifically. Further still, research has yet to examine in detail how adolescents represent meaning when talking about their role models.

In an earlier paper, we looked at the musician role models identified in a questionnaire by 381 adolescents between the ages of 13–14 (Ivaldi & O'Neill, 2008). Ninety per cent of adolescents identified a famous pop singer as their role model. The three main reasons for admiring a role model were (1) dedication, (2) popular image and (3) ability. Preliminary analyses of focus group discussions highlighted why some of their role models may be liked or disliked. The focus group findings suggested that whether or not the role model

Corresponding author: Antonia Ivaldi

played a musical instrument was of little importance when it came to identifying a famous figure; image and popularity instead were the key reasons adolescents gave for selecting their musician role models.

This paper extends the analyses of the focus group discussions presented in our earlier paper. Using a discursive approach, we examined the ways that adolescents construct categories associated with the notion of 'being privileged'; this theme emerged through the adolescents' talk about musician role models. The paper draws on social identity theory (see Tajfel, 1978) as a way of examining how the adolescents used their talk to move between the in-groups of being privileged, and the out-groups of being disadvantaged. Tajfel (1978) argued that an important aspect of an individual's self-definition is that he or she is a member of many social groups – consequently, such membership, positively or negatively contributes to the image that individuals have of themselves. In other words, belonging to the in-group promotes a positive identity, whereas belonging to the out-group promotes a negative identity.

Social identity theory draws on Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory. Festinger posited that individuals are motivated to evaluate their opinions and abilities, and that such evaluations are formed through comparison with other individuals' opinions and abilities. Social identity theory suggests that an individual's identity is clarified through comparisons with others, but that the comparison is generally between in-groups and out-groups.

Previously, social identity theory has been used to explore adolescent musical behaviour (see Tarrant *et al.*, 2002). However, in the present study, we used social identity theory as a framework for understanding the discursive practices adopted by the adolescents. Antaki *et al.* (1996) argued that many traditional social identity theorists have been resistant to methods such as discourse analysis and conversation analysis. They stated that at the very least, social identity is a membership or label to a category that has previously established features or characteristics. However, Antaki *et al.* argued for the use of discursive methods in order to emphasise that social identities are invoked by individuals within conversation. In other words, we can only begin to see how identities are constructed and negotiated within an interactional structure. This, therefore, results in identities being viewed as highly flexible and fluid.

Using social identity theory and discursive analysis as both a theoretical and analytical framework, this study explores how adolescents negotiate and position themselves in and out of categories associated with being privileged through their talk about classical and popular musician role models**.** Increasingly, social psychologists have been interested in relationships between social identity, privilege and power in studies of interactional diversity and gender identity (e.g. Mulvey *et al.*, 2000), as well as racial identity (e.g. Johnson, 2001). In education, similar interest has been expressed in the area of critical pedagogy where scholars have been considering the learning conditions that foster a critical understanding of exploitation and privilege within and among certain social groups (e.g. McLaren, 1995; Apple, 2001).

In the present study, our aim is to raise awareness of young people's notions of privilege in relation to musical expertise and success in order to inform, challenge, and broaden our conceptualisations and representations of this key area of musical structuring in society. By identifying and making transparent young people's social understandings about their own

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and others' musical involvement, we aim to provide an important first step in encouraging a critical dialogue about a key interpretative framework or 'lens' that young people use to create and sustain the notion of privilege in relation to musical involvement. Such critical understandings can help to create the space necessary for exploring alternative notions of what it means to be a musician that move beyond class distinctions, impact on alliance building across areas of difference, and promote positive changes in young people's musical aspirations.

Method

Participants

Fifty-five adolescents aged 14–15 years were selected from a larger sample of adolescents used in the questionnaire study of musician role models (see Ivaldi and O'Neill, 2008). They were selected on the basis of their questionnaire responses in order to obtain a range of musical experience. Adolescents from two state-funded mixed secondary schools around Stoke-on-Trent agreed to take part in the research. The schools attracted students from both urban and rural areas and from both middle- and working-class backgrounds. Parents returned consent forms for each adolescent and all participants gave permission for the focus group discussions to be recorded.

Seven mixed-gender focus groups were formed, with six of the focus groups containing eight adolescents, and one focus group containing seven adolescents. Out of the 55 participants, 24 were male and 31 were female. Sixteen of the 55 participants played a musical instrument at the time of the discussion, 28 had given up an instrument, and 11 had never played. The discussions were conducted by the first author (adopting the role of moderator) at the participants' respective schools in an allocated room. Each focus group lasted between 60 and 90 minutes (i.e. the duration of one timetabled lesson).

Procedure

Each focus group was presented with 19 cards that contained pictures of famous 'popular' and 'classical' musicians. The musicians were selected from those identified as role models in the questionnaire study (Ivaldi & O'Neill, 2008), with the exception of Jane Glover (a professional British conductor and instrumentalist) and Guy Johnston (a professional cellist who, at the time of the research, had recently won a prestigious British competition for young musicians). They were included in order to elicit further discussion and to address the imbalance of classical and popular musician role models. The full list of 19 musicians included: Britney Spears, Craig David, Madonna, Hear'say, Jennifer Lopez, Eminem, Westlife, Robbie Williams, Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, Vanessa-Mae, Luciano Pavarotti, Charlotte Church, Evelyn Glennie, Beethoven, Nigel Kennedy, Mozart, Jane Glover, Guy Johnston.

Participants were asked to divide the cards up into people who they were familiar with and people who they were unfamiliar with. With the pile of familiar musicians, they were asked to split them into two further piles of those musicians they liked and disliked,

and to discuss the reasons why (the instruction based on the notion of 'liking' was left intentionally vague in order to avoid influencing their choices or discussion). Participants were asked to repeat the process with the pile of unfamiliar musicians, based only on the information they could obtain from the picture. After doing so, they were then given some background information about the person in the picture and asked if their reasons for dividing up the pile in a particular way would alter after having received the new information. Because none of the participants knew who Guy Johnston was, they were informed after initial discussions that at the age of 18 he had won the *BBC Young Musician of the Year*, a prestigious televised competition held in the UK whereby the winner often goes on to achieve a successful professional performing career. This promoted a great deal of subsequent discussion and was therefore a catalyst in promoting discussion based on notions of social status and privilege.

Discursive analysis

The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. All participants were identified using pseudonyms in order to assure anonymity (the moderator is identified as *M*). Where possible, each speaker has been identified, although at times it was unclear who was speaking. In these cases only the sex of the speaker has been identified. Text that was inaudible is represented by question marks in parentheses (e.g. (????)), and text that was audible but not very clear is written within parentheses. Interruptions are denoted by two forward slashes (e.g. //), and overlapping speech is identified by dashes and a vertical line at the point where an interviewee is interrupted by another. The interrupted text is positioned in square brackets underneath the speaker who is interrupted (e.g. - - - - -|[text]). Clarificatory information is denoted by text inside square brackets.

The discursive analysis followed the recommendations for conducting discourse analysis proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987). We began by searching for patterns within the data, focusing on both the similarities and differences found in the adolescents' talk. The functions that the discourse held for the individuals were then considered and grouped according to emergent themes.

Our discursive analysis also focused on the positions that the participants adopted and negotiated during the course of their talk. Positioning is just one rhetorical device that enables us to understand how identity may be constructed. Davies and Harré (1990) posited that individuals adopt and resist positions in conversation, and it is these positions that help us to understand the construction of identity. Once an individual has adopted a particular position, the world and self is experienced from that particular position (Burr, 1995). Since positioning was particularly evident as the adolescents talked about both a classical musician (Guy Johnston) and a popular British pop star (Robbie Williams), we focused our analysis on talk that was associated with these two musicians. The picture the adolescents were shown of Guy Johnston was a formal photograph taken from a concert programme of the musician with his cello. He is wearing a dinner suit that would be considered traditional concert dress and reflects the way he would appear during performances. The picture of Robbie Williams was taken of him on stage giving a concert. He is wearing jeans and a T-shirt and reflects the way he would appear during performances.

Results and discussion

The following extracts provide examples of the ways in which the adolescents talked about their role models in order to affirm or reject categorical memberships and identities. The concept of 'Othering' was suggested in the adolescents' discourse as they positioned themselves and others in a variety of ways. The overall aim of the analysis is to demonstrate how these categories and positions were constructed and accomplished through the notion of being privileged. It is important to note that the discourses the adolescents drew upon and used in their discussions constructed a particular way of understanding how differences separate one social group from another.

In this paper, six key extracts from the focus groups are presented first, followed by the analysis of how the notion of 'privilege' was constructed in four emergent themes: (1) wealth, education and higher social status, (2) 'posh' versus 'common' accent, (3) age and opportunity, (4) family values. The extracts are used to provide linguistic evidence for the detailed discussion of each theme that follows.

Extract 1 (Focus group 3)

Talking of Guy Johnston:

Fred:	he looks like a private school,- - - - - - - - - - kind of person, yeah =
Lucy:	- |[yeah, quite posh]
Fred:	= big manor house
Liz:	Yeah, Prince William or Prince Harry, that kind of person

Extract 2 (Focus group 3)

Kath:	… … .like if you play the cello and you're thinking oh I'm never going to get anywhere with this but then you see that he is only eighteen then you might think, oh maybe
Fred:	And you might think that he is like one of the people who classical music's been forced on him by his parents or someone or he just might be someone who likes classical music
Lucy:	I know but if you're that good at that age he would have started =
Liz:	- - - - - - - - - - - - - |[He does look posh]
Fred:	- |[Yeah]
Lucy	= like when you're about, if he is that good like now he probably would have started when he was about six and you're not going to say =
Liz:	- - - - - |[started when he was about]
Lucy:	= to your mum I want to learn to play the cello
Fred:	Yeah but six-year-olds (?) cello
Joe:	It would be bigger than him

Extract 3 (Focus group 3)

Rachel:	Well he's not not going to be liked but
Liz:	Because he just looks like rich and posh and got whatever he wanted =
Fred:	- -|[And Jamie Bell, yeah, he's got a horse]
Liz:	= because if you're playing the cello when you're six it just seems like you know, you're really posh
Fred:	Because going on how expensive cellos are it's like//
Liz:	You get, got whatever you want you're really spoilt and everything so
Fred:	Yeah, maybe either, either an only child or loads of brothers and sisters
M:	Why either a//
Rachel:	No I think
Fred:	Well only children tend to get spoilt more than loads
Lucy:	From personal experience Fred
Fred:	Yes, I'm spoilt
Lucy:	And then if you are in a big family you try and be individual like
Fred:	Yeah
Lucy:	You thrive for it
Fred:	Yeah and then you persevere more if they are in a big family
Liz:	The thing is though it must have cost a lot to teach him how to play it
Fred:	Yeah because he looks like he's had private lessons
Liz:	Yeah and he's wearing a posh suit
Rachel:	Yeah he could also succeed if he was in a big family because like he'd want you know, he'd want more attention he'd want like y'know
Liz:	But if you were in a big family you wouldn't have as much money to spend on each person
Rachel:	Yeah but then you'd like try
Fred:	Well it depends if it was a big rich family
M:	But you think if you were in a big family that you'd strive
Joe:	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -|[either way he's rich]
Lucy:	Yeah you'd want to try and show that you can do something

Extract 4 (Focus group 3)

Liz:	They're talented but, no [Mozart and Beethoven]
Fred:	- - - - - - - - - - - - -|[There's lots of like, upper class think, like trying =
Lucy:	- -|[German]
Liz:	- -|[yeah German]
Fred:	= to impress other people as well like having wine parties and wine tastings with the Beethoven music on in the background
Lucy:	You'd think like posh people would listen to that, like//
Liz:	And old people, posh old people

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Nigel: He's just an idiot [Robbie Williams]
Tim: He's got the biggest ego ever
Tina: Yeah but you have to have an ego to get somewhere don't you really
Steph: I mean he started out with Take That and then he went down the pan with drugs and drink I mean he worked his way up and that's an example of hard working
Tim: But he is pathetic when he shows off with his (??)
Carol: But it's a shame that he went into drugs,
Tina: He has got a very good voice
Carol: Yeah but the Stoke accent does come through at times, which is a shame
Tina: - |[yeah it does]
M: Why is it a shame?
Carol: Because we've got such a common accent, it sounds awful
Nigel: People like them because of where they come from as well, like where they've been raised, because like a lot of people may like Robbie Williams because he's doing something in Stoke, because he came from Stoke, putting Stoke on the map

David: I like him because he's from the potteries [Robbie Williams]
Clare: Around our area
David: It's like he's normal person
Diane: Just showing that around our area someone can become a popstar really
Mary: He's normal ain't he and he has his problems but he works (?)
Diane: Yeah he's normal like us, (?) these posh little gits

Wealth, education, and higher social status

In the first extract, when talking about Guy Johnston, Fred states that he looks like someone who has been to private school and perhaps lives in a big manor house. His immediate impression of Guy Johnston conjures up associations of wealth and high social status. Liz's reference to Prince William and Prince Harry carries similar connotations, since these two figures are representative of those that have come from a privileged background. The adolescents' discourse implies that this background is one that they cannot relate to, a different category group to which they belong.

The notion of wealth and higher social status is also illustrated in extract 4 in their discourse of Mozart and Beethoven. Fred associates these composers with the upper class and posh people. Fred believes people use classical music 'in the background' at parties to impress other people with their wealth and high social status. Through his discourse, Fred uses categories of social class as examples of categories to which he is

not affiliated. He places himself in a position that is not upper class, and as such is unable to adopt the 'privileged' identity. The adolescents believe that being 'posh' is an undesirable characteristic that is an inevitable consequence of having money and high social status.

This positioning by the adolescents suggests the categorical notion of 'Othering'. The adolescents are presenting a category or group to which they themselves are not members. Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1996) argued that in order to explore 'Othering' we need to ask, who is the other? And who are 'we'? In the extracts above, the adolescents are positioning the privileged as the 'Other'. It is important to note, however, that 'Othering' is socially constructed and that 'Others are constructed by those who do the Othering, by those who reflect upon that Othering, and by the Others' own representations of themselves' (p. 15). So, in the case of the adolescents, how is 'Othering' being achieved?

In a study that looked at discourses surrounding the Royal Family, Billig (1992) argued that when individuals are imagining what a royal life must be like, they are doing so only in relation to their own experiences, that is, what they know to be a non-royal life. This therefore relates to Kitzinger and Wilkinson's (1996) notion that 'Othering' is achieved through an individual's representation of his or her self. Thus, according to Billig and Kitzinger and Wilkinson, the adolescents' representation of 'the Other' is achieved through their own experiences of not being privileged (and rejecting characteristics they view as associated with privilege such as being 'posh'), rather than through experiences of being privileged.

The privileged identity is also constructed by the adolescents in their discourse of Robbie Williams, and it is in these accounts that the adolescents are able to negotiate an alternative identity. In extract 5 Robbie Williams is talked about as a role model because of what he has achieved. The fact that they make reference to his drinking and drug problems implies that he has struggled and that he has made a come-back by working hard. In extract 6, the adolescents' reference to him coming from a normal background implies he is not from a privileged background and this is something that the adolescents can relate to. The fact that Robbie came from the same area as the adolescents also suggests this. In the adolescents' discourse of privilege, they use a device that Billig (1992) refers to as 'double-declaiming'. Billig posited that often in talk, individuals make more than just one single claim, which can be unintentional or intentional. He further argued that when individuals make a claim about another, they might also be making a claim about themselves. Thus, when the adolescents made claims about Guy Johnston and Robbie Williams, they were also 'double-declaiming' in that they were inferring something about their own background, in this instance, an unprivileged one.

Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) argued that one of the primary ways of claiming authenticity of one's own category membership is to undermine the authenticity of an individual's motivation for joining another subculture. They stated that one resource that helps achieve this authenticity is through the use of labels, as labels provide the opportunity to say something specific about the individual that they are labelling. Thus, according to Widdicombe and Wooffitt, Diane's labelling of 'posh little gits' (extract 6) allows her to undermine the authenticity of those in the privileged category, thereby increasing the authenticity of her own group in which she is affiliated.

The analysis may also be interpreted using social identity theory and the notion of in-groups and out-groups. Drawing on social comparison theory, Abrams and Hogg (1990) stated that social identity is clarified through social comparison, which generally occurs

between in-groups (where an individual has membership of a group) and out-groups (where an individual does not have membership of a group).

Through the adolescents' accounts of Guy Johnston, and the reference to Prince William and Prince Harry, the adolescents construct an in-group and an out-group, where membership of the in-group of musicians is determined by wealth, education and higher social status. The adolescents therefore place themselves in the out-group. This exclusion from the in-group has important implications for the adolescents' social identity. Abrams and Hogg (1990) stated that generally, one group is perceived to have more resources, power, status and prestige. Individuals who belong to more subordinate groups are therefore more likely to develop a negative social identity. However, it is possible to negotiate this negative identity in order to maintain a more positive social identity. The extracts show that the adolescents did attempt this negotiation. They achieved this by drawing on the negative characteristics that they associated with this particular in-group, such as not being liked and being spoilt. The adolescents indicated through their discourse that there was not any value or merit in being a member of the in-group, and as a result, were able to protect their own social identity.

'Posh' versus 'common' accent

The notion of being privileged is also implicit in the theme of 'Posh versus common accent', and is explored through the discourses surrounding Robbie Williams and the region in which they live. Whilst the adolescents did not discuss the posh accent per se, it can be argued that this is one aspect associated with having a private education. The notion of being well spoken is also associated with the reference to Prince William and Prince Harry – two individuals who are likely to be considered well spoken as a result of their upbringing.

This provides a contrast to their discourses of Robbie Williams, as it is in this context that the discourse of owning a common accent emerges. In extract 5 Carol, who, in response to Carol's comment that he has a good voice, replies, 'yeah but the Stoke accent does come through at times, which is a shame', first makes this apparent. She explains further, 'we've got such a common accent, it sounds awful'.

For Carol, she equates the sound of her accent with being or sounding common. Carol does not like the consequences that may be associated with her accent. The accent is a form of identity, a label in which she can be identified and located by others. Carol's reference to being able to hear Robbie's accent as a shame may also be interpreted as something that she herself is ashamed of, the shame experienced as a result of where she lives. Through the use of the pronoun 'we' ('we've got such a common accent'), Carol makes relevant her affiliation and identity with the other adolescents that come from Stoke, and as a result adopts what might be interpreted as a 'Stoke' identity.

Age and opportunity

Within the privileged status theme, the adolescents also make reference to the opportunities that are available to those who are privileged. Particular reference is made again to Guy Johnston where they discuss the opportunity that he has been given to learn to play the cello. This they associate in particular with how young he started to learn the cello. For

example, in the second extract, Lucy suggests that Guy Johnston would have been playing the cello since about the age of six, although there is no evidence for such an assertion. Not only does this statement imply wealth (being able to afford to learn to play the cello from early on) but also the fact that he had the opportunity to learn the cello when he was young, which is necessary if aiming to become a good musician. By making these assertions, the adolescents again position themselves in the out-group. Even though three of the group members were currently learning to play an instrument, they do not talk about their own opportunities in the same way. Thus, the adolescents suggest that because they did not have the opportunity to learn an instrument from the age of six, they have already missed out on the chance to become a good musician. Although this does not mean that it is not too late for them to learn an instrument, it implies that the opportunity to become an expert or successful musician has been denied them.

Lucy's comment that Guy Johnston has been playing the cello since the age of six appears to have certain consequences for subsequent discussions, as this age is then adopted by the rest of the group. For example, in the third extract, Liz states that 'if you're playing the cello when you're six it just seems like you know, you're really posh', in which Fred responds 'because going on how expensive cellos are it's like'. For Fred, posh is used to symbolise wealth rather than other aspects that are associated with the word 'posh', for example, dress and accent. Thus, his reference to the cost of the instrument suggests that money is a determinant of the kinds of instruments that can be chosen to learn to play. However, Liz affirms more the notion of privilege in her use of the word 'posh', stating that 'got whatever you want you're really spoilt and everything'.

By referring to 'posh' in this way, Liz excludes herself from the group membership that is afforded by wealth and privilege. It is a category in which she feels she does not belong. It is of interest to note that Liz was one of the three adolescents that played an instrument at the time of the group interview, and previously played another instrument. Because she has previously given up an instrument, she has already given up her chance of becoming a talented musician with the instrument she now plays. As such, she does not belong in the same privileged category as musicians such as Guy Johnston.

The adolescents' discourse suggests that being given opportunities is not a position that they are familiar with, and instead are required to construct an alternative identity. By implication, this identity is that of unprivileged or disadvantaged. The 'disadvantaged' identity suggests that the opportunities are not readily available to the adolescents in the same way as they are for those that are affiliated with the privileged category. However, they suggest that their lack of opportunity may be overcome through hard work. This idea is supported in extracts 5 and 6 where the adolescents refer to Robbie Williams as someone who has worked hard to achieve such privileges. Through their discourse the adolescents are also placing those in the privileged category in a position of power by virtue of the fact that opportunities are available to them. Those in the disadvantaged category are powerless in the sense that they have limitations imposed as a result of financial constraints and lack of resources, which may only be overcome through hard work. This notion of power is supported by Carabine's (1996) claim that the 'Other' (in this instance, the privileged) is often a feature of power relations.

The adolescents do however attempt to manage this alternative identity by interpreting opportunity in a negative way; that is, by associating it with being spoilt. Thus by doing so,

the adolescents imply that there is no value in belonging to the in-group of opportunity as they would not want to be perceived as spoilt in turn. As a result, the adolescents are able to protect their own social identity.

Family values

The reference to a musician being 'spoilt' did not necessarily mean being spoilt financially. The adolescents discuss the notion of being spoilt within the context of the family unit, which takes on a slightly different meaning. This is the first time that a member of the group (Fred) moves out of the collective identity of disadvantaged to an individual identity of one who is spoilt. However, this identity is one that is imposed upon him. For example, in response to Liz's comment (extract 3) that if you were like the cellist you would be really spoilt, Fred responds with 'Yeah, maybe either an only child or loads of brothers and sisters' with his rationale being that only children tend to get spoilt more.

Lucy places Fred in a position of someone that is equally spoilt by stating, 'from personal experience Fred'. Fred adopts this position through his admission of 'yes, I'm spoilt'. By positioning Fred as such, he temporarily resists the disadvantaged category by taking up the categorical identity of privileged. By being placed in the position of privilege the adolescents form new constructions of the in-group and out-group. Now, it appears that Fred is in the out-group by being someone who is perceived as spoilt, in contrast to the rest of the adolescents who are in the in-group, whose membership is determined by being disadvantaged. Billig (1996) argued that when contexts change (as in this instance) the individual can be described as 'taking the side of the other', in other words, 'positions which were previously assumed to represent the other side are advocated as one's own side' (p. 271). According to Billig this does not mean that the individual has changed their membership, indeed in this case, Fred was positioned in a way that resulted in him taking the side of the 'Other'. Billig argued that when this change occurs, the individual, in order to justify themselves, might take justifications from the 'Others'' repertoire. Fred attempts this by continuing to talk about the cellist looking as though he has had private lessons, thus resisting having to take the side of the 'Other'. As Fred has not had the opportunity of having private lessons, he is able to disassociate himself from the out-group of privilege and thus rejoin the in-group by taking on the identity of someone who is disadvantaged.

The privileged identity is also resisted as the group negotiates the position that Fred has been placed in by suggesting that being spoilt might instead be about getting attention. Lucy states that if you are in a big family you try to be individual. Kath states that, 'Yeah he could also succeed if he was in a big family because he'd want more attention'. Her reference to succeeding implies something slightly different when placed in the context of the family. Kath's comment suggests that the cellist has already been successful because of his perceived wealth and privileges. However, in a large family it is perceived that there will be more financial strains, as Liz notes, 'but if you were in a big family you wouldn't have as much money to spend on each person', to which Fred responds, 'well it depends if it was a big rich family'. Thus, success in the context of the large family may be seen in terms of his musical ability, receiving attention because he stands out from the rest of the family as a good player.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to demonstrate the ways that adolescents construct and negotiate the notion of 'privilege' as they talk about classical and popular musician role models. Our analysis contributes to our understanding of the ways in which young people create and sustain notions of privilege, power and identity within a musical context. To date, there has been little research into the influence of role models on adolescents' construction of identity. Further still, research has yet to appreciate the significance of analysing talk in a musical context as a way of increasing our understanding of the ways young people make sense of lived experience and the musical structuring and practices of a given society and subculture.

In this paper we have seen how the adolescents have constructed the identities of privilege and being disadvantaged, and how these have been taken on and negotiated by different members of the group. Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) posited that individuals might implicitly affirm the importance of their category membership by referring to a subculture in which they do not wish to belong. They found that participants were unwilling to talk about the characteristics of their own subculture but could discuss in detail the categories in which they were not affiliated. Additionally, the ways in which individuals referred to these alternative categories were negative or depreciatory.

In the current analysis it appears that much of the adolescents' discourse is based on the category in which they do not belong, rather than their affiliation with their own subculture. Further still, their reference to the privileged category is negative and depreciatory. This enables the adolescents to justify the category in which they also belong. Because it is a category based on privileges, it is possible that the adolescents perceive their membership to have occurred somewhat by default, thus presenting the idea that their identity is a result of circumstance. However, they negotiate this identity by suggesting that the alternative (privilege) is one that they would not wish to have either. These findings provide an interesting link to sociological notions of social stratification and aesthetic taste. For example, Bourdieu (1984) argues that aesthetic preferences function as a sort of social orientation, a 'sense of one's place', that guides and orients individuals towards certain social positions and practices associated with those positions. As such, different social classes teach different aesthetic preferences to their young that both serve to differentiate and perpetuate class fractions. Our findings indicate that the prominent discourse of privilege may indeed be the result of socialisation processes that have led to deeply embedded notions about the connection between musical preferences and social class hierarchies. In other words, our participants have been socialised into notions of privilege that have become internalised and guide them towards 'appropriate' social positions and the musical behaviours thought to be associated with those positions, and an aversion towards other lifestyles.

Thus, it appears that the adolescents construct and perpetuate a sense of their own subculture through how they talk about their musician role models. Through the categories that the adolescents have affirmed and rejected, they understand and interpret musical behaviour through the lens of what it means to be privileged. The privilege discourse emphasises difference in a way that avoids or closes down the potential and possibility for positive meaning, thereby adding to the barriers and constraints associated with young

people's view of musical involvement. According to O'Neill (2006), it is morally and ethically necessary for music educators to 'put into practice a mutual respect for musical qualities and experiences that are different from our own' (p. 465). As such, it is necessary for educators to focus their attention on deepening young people's understanding of musical diversity and increasing the lenses through which adolescents come to see themselves and others.

In addition, the findings have important implications for the future of adolescent engagement in, and perceptions of, musical involvement. The adolescents' perceived notion of privilege – associated with a high level of musical attainment in traditional Western art music – suggests a barrier towards their own expectations and aspirations for achieving a similar level of musical expertise and success. In other words, it is not about playing an instrument per se that places the musician in a category of privilege; rather, it is the social class distinctions associated with musicians who attain certain types of expertise and success in music. Providing young people with role models that contradict this notion of privilege may help to break down these stereotyped assumptions. However, as O'Neill (in press) points out, 'knowledge of musical practices rarely translates into understanding the multiple perspectives of those who are most affected by different musical events, policies, and practices' (p. 10). Instead, what it needed is an approach to music education that allows for the dis/positioning of existing notions of privilege in order to provide space for alternative notions to emerge. For young people to change their existing beliefs they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences and the experiences of others, which in turn leads to transformations in their perspectives (see, further, Mezirow, 1991). Music educators need to develop curriculum initiatives that seek to change students' attitudes and foster tolerance toward the musical practices of others. Future research is needed that focuses on practical ways that will best assist young people in the task of critical reflection about what it means to be a musician if they are to overcome the invisible or taken-for-granted barriers and constraints to their own musical aspirations.

Acknowledgement

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