B. J. Music. Ed. 2010 27:3, 225–239
doi:10.1017/S0265051710000203

Immigrant students' development of musical agency – exploring democracy in music education

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In this article, we argue that the musical schooling of immigrant students could be seen as forming a healthy test for any educational context in terms of how democracy is enacted. We engage in a discussion linking music education, agency, pluralism and democracy. In our theoretical reconstruction of multicultural music education we first make a review on how music education literature has approached the cultural and musical schooling of immigrant students. We then attend to sociological theories to discuss why development of musical agency may be of particular importance to first generation immigrant students and how agency-enhancing music education may be connected to the development of sound democratic practices in the 21st century schooling.

Multiculturalism, music education and social justice

Due to the dynamics of late modernity (Giddens, 1990), we live in an increasingly globalised and multicultural reality. Even within countries such as those in Scandinavia, which until recently have perceived of themselves as relatively homogeneous and culturally coherent, the number of immigrants is increasing rapidly, as is the general and political consciousness connected to the responsibilities and challenges of integration and inclusion and of being citizens of a multicultural society (see Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2006; Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2006; Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008). While Scandinavian societies contain old ethnic minorities like the Sami people in the North, the Roma and Jewish populations, and the Swedish-speaking Finns or Russians in Finland, and even hold longstanding immigrant groups such as the quite large number of Finnish people who immigrated to Sweden after World War II, the 'boom' of first-generation immigrants[1] from Asian, African, Latin-American and the former Eastern European countries is a quite recent and rapidly growing phenomenon.[2] In other words, compared with countries such as the UK, USA or Australia, in which immigration and multiculturalism have a much longer history, the Scandinavian countries are still very much multicultural societies 'in the making' and about to be established as such. Immigrants who arrive in Scandinavia enter rich welfare societies, yet they are also faced with tough challenges connected to, for example, harsh and unfamiliar climate conditions, small communities in the sense that they have access to

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relatively few persons with a similar background, and quite strict and politically founded expectations that they will assimilate quickly and learn the language of their new place of domicile. Language is seen as the tool above all that will promote assimilation as well as ensure the immigrant's citizenship in the new country.

The situation of increasing cultural diversity is also bound to affect the field of music education and the everyday practices of music teachers (Nerland, 2004), not merely as an increasing responsibility to include a variety of world musics as part of the curriculum and possibly the related ways of learning music. It also implies that music teachers have to consider what the value of music education could be (Westerlund, 2008), as seen from, say, the perspectives of immigrant students. The challenges music teachers face are thus not only connected to coping with musical diversity, but also to making music education meaningful for students with a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds. However, due to the Scandinavian demography changing fast, and teachers therefore struggling to understand the emerging complexity of the cultural landscape, there are several difficulties connected to such an approach. For example, how, as a teacher, can you gain an understanding of and build on your students' previous musical knowledge when this is highly diverse and acquired in contexts largely unknown to you? What do you do when the music-related activities that you planned suddenly appear as incompatible with your students' religious background? How can you facilitate your students' experiences when you have very little knowledge about what the content or activities that you provide might *mean* to them – socially, culturally or even spiritually? Hence, the move from homogeneous to multicultural societies seems to require an intensified attention from the teachers' side towards the *experiential conditions* of their students.

In the recent, still ongoing and North-American-dominated debate concerning music education and democracy (Allsup, 2003; DeLorenzo, 2003; Allsup, 2007; Woodford, 2008; Gould *et al.*, 2009), matters of social justice, inclusion and music teachers' responsibilities in this respect are lifted to the fore, as are those of the enhancement of students' access and agency. Several attempts in the late 1980s and the 90s preceded this debate to articulate the questions of multicultural music education (Elliott, 1995; Volk, 1998).

In this article, we will join the discourse of democracy and inclusion taking the 'multicultural discussion' a step further, and argue that instead of being viewed as a challenge for the (majority) population, immigrant students could be seen as forming a healthy test for any educational context in terms of how democracy is enacted and developed in music education. This approach is justified through the belief that paying attention to an immigrant student, his or her experience within education, forces us to rethink music education in terms of its potential for expanding the individual's powers as a socially capable actor in pluralist societies. In other words, in focusing on immigrant students' music education we may need to rethink our choices and educational approach as a whole.

At the same time, this article is also a consideration of a theoretical starting point for an empirical study aiming at investigating conceptions of immigrant students' development of musical agency on different levels: how music teachers express their understandings of this matter; how the students report their experienced access to musical cultures and practices, forms of knowledge and music-related identities through their education; and which musical paths of identity the students are seen as offered in the investigated music

education practices. The project, named *Exploring democracy: Conceptions of immigrant students' development of musical agency*, is based at the Sibelius Academy, Finland, and has a Scandinavian approach which implies that data will be collected among teachers and students in three secondary school music education practices in the immigrant areas of Helsinki (Finland), Stockholm (Sweden) and Oslo (Norway).

In exploring what kind of framework is needed, we will engage in a discussion linking music education, agency, pluralism and democracy. As part of our theoretical reconstruction, we will first review how music education scholars have approached the cultural and musical schooling of immigrant students internationally as well as in Scandinavia in order to collate and build further on the ideas found within this literature. Then we will attend to sociological theories to discuss why development of musical agency may be of particular importance to immigrant students, and also how agency-enhancing music education, when enacted so that it embraces and encourages pluralism, may be connected to the development of sound democratic practices in the 21st century music education.

Multicultural approaches in music education

In music education, as well as in general education, several North American writers have engaged in discussions concerning multicultural issues. One example is Volk (1998), who, through a historical reconstruction, shows how music as a school subject was used as a means for 'Americanization' and nation-building in the USA during the years following World War I. By incorporating patriotic and specifically American songs in the curriculum, music educators were seen as contributing to the assimilation of 'the new immigrant population into mainstream American life' (p. 33) and hence amalgamating a culturally and ethnically diverse population. As the political and educational climate changed, this line of assimilation into uniformity was left and instead schools were encouraged to emphasise diversity and accept coexisting cultures. This was mirrored in music education through inclusion of a broader diversity of musics into curricula.

The significance of diversity in music making is emphasised by Elliott (1989) who points out that the essential, underlying values of a society often are 'reflected in the way music is learned and taught' (p. 13). Elliott leads our attention to how access to a variety of musical practices may provide experiences of different ways of being musical or even human. Above all, he stresses the importance of recognition, recommending that music teachers should pay attention to their students' cultural backgrounds when they select the contents of the curriculum and hence include music from the students' countries of origin. Such an approach may in his view 'contribute significantly to [each student's] self-identity' (Elliott, 1995, p. 212).

Speaking from within a Scandinavian context, Westerlund (1998, 2002) acknowledges the perils of Elliott's recognition approach in suggesting that the musical identity of immigrant children may not automatically and without consideration be associated to the ethnic, racial, religious, national-geographical, or linguistic background of the students or their families. This view gains support from Saether's (2008) study on music education in secondary schools in the immigrant areas of Malmö, in which music was certainly seen as a tool for inclusion but where the inclusion came through immigrant students wanting

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051710000203 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to play 'mainstream popular music' because, as the teacher explained: 'They are in a new country with new friends, they want to learn the same music as they [the new friends] play and listen to' (p. 38). Consequently, when faced with a music education environment in which the teaching of popular music has been the dominant discourse for decades (see Westerlund, 2006; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010), the students choose mainstream youth music as a strategy for *self-chosen acculturation*.

From a New Zealand perspective Drummond (2005) gives voice to discourses much related to Elliott's (1995) point concerning recognition by claiming that teachers should acknowledge subcultural identities because this potentially might lead to 'removal of disadvantage' (Drummond, 2005, p. 2). However, he also suggests that the effect of multicultural education may be out of date because students nowadays master very flexible forms of identity construction and see – whether they are immigrants or not – the cultural and musical diversity which surrounds them as a self-evident asset and 'accept plurality as a fact of their contemporary lives' (p. 9).

In outlining the historical development of the field of multicultural education in general, Banks (2004) emphasises five dimensions, namely '(a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) an equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure' (p. 4). Further, he claims that among many practitioners, multicultural education has been viewed as content integration primarily or only, and that the other four dimensions often have been ignored. In our understanding, this has also been a quite typical feature of the practice of and research on multicultural music education. The scholarly discussions have often concerned either how various kinds of musics could be integrated into curricula (Schippers, 1996; Lundquist *et al.*, 1998; Cain, 2005), or the challenges of authenticity, which arise from teaching vernacular music outside of its original context (Elliott, 1995; Berry & Singh, 1998; Hamill, 2005). Mainly, the multicultural situation has been approached from the teacher's point of view, and little effort has been made to investigate the experiential conditions of the immigrant student.

In sum, the following points from the above review can be synthesised: (1) music education may function as an arena for enculturation in which the essential values of a society are mediated; this may happen either as enforced assimilation or self-chosen acculturation or something in between; (2) music education may also be a tool for inclusion, integration and removal of disadvantages, through teachers recognising and strengthening students' identities, yet, the features that enable this recognition may unfortunately, if utilised reversely, also permit exclusion and alienation; (3) the practices in schooling open up for the possibility of students experiencing several ways of music making and thereby multiple ways of knowing and being.

Much like Drummond (2005), we believe that the flexibility of lived or available identities is a quite 'normal' state in contemporary societies. However, unlike him, we do not think that the basic motives of multicultural education are out of date; rather we believe that music education needs to find new ways and forms to channel students' experience. More importantly, we believe that our stance to plurality and multiculturalism is tested precisely by how we approach the music education of immigrant students in our own societies. Hence, immigrant students within the larger institutional framework can be seen as the critical factor that begs us asking questions like: What are the conditions for developing a sense of selfhood in contemporary society? What are the frames for action,

and how is agency constituted – individually and socially? What does music have to offer in this regard? And what relevance does the answer to the latter question have for the musical schooling of immigrant students?

Negotiating the self in a multicultural world

Regarding the emerging, pluralistic societal forms taken as a point of departure in this article, their inherent conditions for identity work have been discussed by several writers both in sociology and educational philosophy. These authors conclude, aligning with Drummond (2005) above, that the contemporary, societal complexity entails that we are 'represented and addressed' (Hall, 1992, p. 277) in a multiplicity of cultural systems, and often in more than one system at the same time. Hence, a flexible mastering of a fluid, multilayered self is both enabled and required, and the individual should have the possibility, and will experience a need, to develop multiple, parallel and even contradictory identities, also within educational contexts. However, this 'indefinite range of possibilities' (Giddens, 1991, p. 189) also involves serious challenges connected to unification and fragmentation: If we are unable to understand our selves in a coherent way, we may experience scattering and dissolution.

Literature offers diverse ways of theorising as to how the self deals with plurality and how it may 'become plural', so to speak. While Ricoeur (1981) points out, in general terms, how narrating is a way of constructing 'meaningful totalities out of scattered events' (p. 278), Bruner (1996) acknowledges this narrative meaning-making as essential when it comes to managing knowledge and constituting the self. This latter idea is also a widely accepted understanding in sociological theory as an explanation of how individuals who face pluralistic realities still are able to maintain a coherent experience of self. While identity in what sociologists call late modernity is considered non-unitary and fragmented, what keeps us together as individuals are the stories we tell about our lives and our ability to 'keep a particular narrative going' (Giddens, 1991, p. 54). Consequently, while being and learning we construct, maintain and negotiate our selves through a constantly ongoing, reflexive identity work, narrating our selves to ourselves as well as narratively staging our selves to others. Still, as pointed out above, if we are not able to spin the tales of who we are, feelings of instability and even fatal disintegration may appear.

The identity challenges of the pluralistic state of late modernity affect us all, yet for first-generation immigrant students the challenges are even more profound due to the extensive border work between previous and new socio-cultural contexts (Phelan *et al.*, 1993). The bridging of these contexts may demand extensive efforts on the student's side – imagine, for example, the large gap, experientially, between growing up as a street child in Mogadishu and then later on being expected to behave like a diligent and contented student of a secondary school in Oslo; or being raised as an Afghan boy whose authoritative figures were all men and then finding yourself in Finland, dealing with the fact that most of your teachers, your headmaster, boss and even your president are all female. In other words, enculturation is not the only task that these students have to deal with. While enculturating in their country of domicile, they must also acculturate and learn how to become 'functionally multicultural' so as to connect their previous, present and future experiences and selves. Sometimes, this means connecting seemingly incompatible

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051710000203 Published online by Cambridge University Press

discourses and balancing multiple and contradictory cultural identities, even in the field of music. For instance, you may have grown up in a Muslim religious environment which strictly forbids the popular music you are expected to deal with in your music lessons in a Swedish comprehensive school, or in a culture in which the making of music is reserved for people from a certain class or even certain families and to which you do not belong. According to Olneck (2004), for immigrant students, schools are only one 'among the multiple, incongruent, and noncomplementary worlds they must negotiate each day' (p. 388). Hence, as hinted at above, these students' negotiations concern truly profound matters, such as different concepts of God, what it means to be a person and to participate in a society, and gender identities and roles. Self-evidently, these challenges have 'profound consequences for the experiences of immigrant youth' (p. 388) – consequences that will also colour their experiences of what happens within the music classroom, their expectations, wishes, motivations, misunderstandings, fears and enjoyments.

For immigrant students, negotiating one's self and one's deepest beliefs and values also implies negotiating frames or possibilities for action in the various cultural systems in which one is addressed. An individual who is able to narrate herself within and through different cultural systems or discourses, and as such has experienced developing *multiple identities*, also faces the challenges of exploring how changing between different identities within one system or discourse, or choosing to carry one particular identity across discourses, transforms her room for action. A young Muslim girl might be allowed to dance at family gatherings, but at the same time her religious or cultural identity may restrict dance activities during mixed-sex group music lessons. In a sociological understanding, this girl's experiences while exploring, coping with and perhaps expanding her opportunities for action in this particular situation may be termed *negotiations of agency*.

Sociological aspects of agency – individual and social dimensions

The notion of agency is one deeply intrinsic to sociological theory and concerns the relation between the macro-level of societal structures and the micro-level of individual agents, and in particular what may be understood as the direction of causality between these two layers: 'Do occurrences and processes on the micro-level determine macro phenomena, or does macro determine micro?' (Guneriussen, 1999, pp. 277–278). Or, in other words: What is the actual and experienced room for action available to individuals participating in social–human interaction? This question will have different answers, depending on how and where scholars place themselves within the sociological discourse. Searching for a framework to understand the immigrant students' agency – the individual negotiations of agency in a pluralistic society – we choose to attend to the theories of Giddens (1976, 1984a, 1984b) in which individuals are described as knowledgeable actors within society's institutional frames.

Abandoning theories in which agency is seen merely as 'the determined outcome of social causes' (Giddens, 1984a, p. 222), Giddens emphasises individuals' meaningful and intentional behaviour and their power to act independently and freely. Still, he does not discard the concept of macro structures altogether, but shows how such structures must not only be seen as obstacles, but rather as carrying *affordances for action*. Macro structures are not fixed entities; they are something we produce and reproduce in the course of

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everyday life through *routinisation* (Giddens, 1984b), in other words by repeating patterns of action but while still being open to conscious changes and adjustments of those patterns. Thus at the same time, structures – a category to which music certainly can be seen as belonging – become points of departure for as well as products of action. This dualism of actor and structure – individuals consciously producing the structures which again carry the affordances for their actions – leaves much power, but also much responsibility, to the individual. Giving a definition of agency as understood within his own framework, Giddens (1976) emphasises that it implies that 'a person 'could have acted otherwise' and . . . that the world . . . does not hold out a pre-determined future' (p. 81). Since the determining powers of the macro level are absent, the individual – in our case the immigrant student – is seen as having considerable opportunities for negotiating freely her 'room for action' against the affordances of the world.

Claiming that Giddens' view of agency places too much emphasis on the individual's ability to act as an independent entity, Barnes (2000) instead directs our attention to the social dimensions of agency and humans' abilities to transcend individualism: 'Human beings are not independent individuals; they are social creatures. More specifically, they are independent social agents, who profoundly affect each other as they interact' (p. 64). In his understanding of collective agency – what individuals achieve in and through such interaction – the responsible agent is an occupant of a social status, which is achieved through accountability and susceptibility. The former is required 'if agents are to co-ordinate their understandings, sustain a shared sense of what they are likely to do in the future and hold each other to account of what they have done in the past' (p. 74), while the latter is necessary for 'the co-ordination of actions and their coherent ordering around collectively agreed goals' (p. 74). The status of being a responsible agent is one assigned to each person by the individual taking the position as 'other' during interaction, which also implies assigning 'a certain basic human dignity' (p. 117). This complex social dimension can be seen as conditioning the negotiations of agency also when navigating through educational events.

Musical agency – capacitating the self in and through music

While Giddens' and Barnes' explanations of agency may be seen as somewhat contradictory, they may also be perceived as complementary, explaining how the construction of agency can be seen from an individualistic and inward as well as from a socially constituted perspective. In sum, the nexus of facing the social and cultural life in one's individually experienced musical agency can be described through two horizons (Westerlund, 2002; see also Fig. 1): (1) the vertical as a subjectively and temporally experienced and negotiated unique narrative in and through the socio-cultural events and environments; and (2) the horizontal as a social and cultural structural level that can be examined independent of any individual experience, but that yet provides the bedrock for both (a) shared and enjoyed musical experiences as well as (b) the potential disruption and alienation within.

This view to experienced agency can be elaborated through DeNora's (2000) recent analysis which also can be seen to draw together the perspectives of Giddens and Barnes. On the one hand, DeNora emphasises how actors actively draw on music's affordances to

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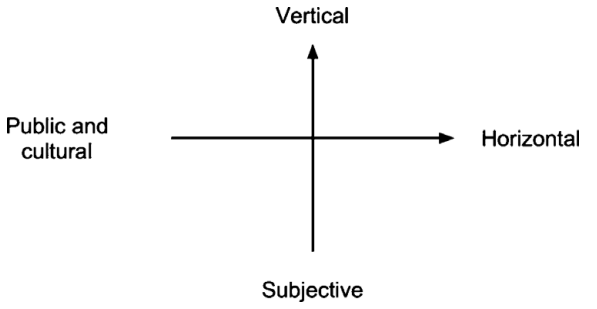

Fig. 1 The two angles of experience in music (Westerlund, 2002, p. 18)

'regulate, elaborate, and substantiate themselves as social agents' (p. 47) while engaging in musical practice: music is seen as a technology of the self, a medium through which humans negotiate their position of the self in the world and empower themselves. Music, understood through Giddens' (1984b) theories, possesses structural properties, which carry affordances for individuals' reflexive action. On the other hand, similar to Barnes (2000), DeNora (2000) calls attention to the social dimensions of agency, by claiming it as the opposite of 'social sleep': 'To possess agency, to be an agent, is to possess a kind of grace . . . [it is] the ability to possess some capacity for social action and its modes of feeling' (p. 153). Through the feeling and sensitivity we are afforded while engaging cognitively, emotionally and bodily with music, we become capacitated, not only as empowered, sole selves, but also for social co-ordination and interaction.

In her later writings, DeNora (Batt-Rawden & DeNora, 2005) shows how music-enhanced agency can be connected to individuals' total ability 'to use music' (p. 289), and how this ability can be enhanced and agency achieved, through learning how to *musick* (Small, 1998), in other words drawing on a wide range of music-related practices or actions, conducted towards, with or alongside music. The musicking includes 'inward' practices such as using music for self-regulatory strategies (regulating feelings, mood, concentration and energy level) or for constituting the self through 'emotional, memory and biographical work' (DeNora, 2000, p. 45) as well as more outwardly directed practices such as 'staging' the self to others by the help of music or simply playing or singing in interaction with fellow musicians. Also, DeNora emphasises that using music in such ways can be taught and learnt.[3] Hence, by developing knowledge about 'what music does, what it can do and how it can be tapped for social purposes' (Batt-Rawden & DeNora, 2005, p. 299) the individual may experience increased autonomy and empowerment, or, in other words, strengthened music-related agency. For immigrant students, the aspect of empowerment may be even more crucial in terms of their *whole conduct* than for non-immigrants who may not have similar existentially dramatic processes of negotiation constantly taking place in their daily affairs. Music may, for example, become one of the means that first-generation immigrant students use for releasing the added stress that comes from being in a situation of constant acculturation; it may be employed for remembering, recreating and coping with the loss of an imaginary homeland; or it may even be useful as a means of concentration when forced to read homework in a language that you struggle to understand.

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Why development of musical agency may be important to first-generation immigrant students – re-narrating the self and exploring democracy

As explained above, first-generation immigrant students face the challenges of negotiating their selves and their room for action in a multiplicity of social and cultural contexts, some of them seemingly incompatible. In this important and necessary work, they may need help and tools, some of which the authors of this article believe music education might offer. Relating to the challenges presented in the introductory part of this article, we believe that one of the main validations of music education for immigrant students may come through being taught, learning and being allowed to practise the many ways music can be used for *negotiating identity* and *experiencing* oneself as an agent. However, at the same time they should have the possibility to decide for themselves the *intensity* of the involvement, i.e. how they involve themselves into the practice and whether the practice plays a role in their future life or not. Drawing on our review of discussions and research within multicultural music education as well as our sociological points of departure earlier in this article, we will go on to present four reasons for why developing musical agency through music education practices might be especially beneficial for first-generation immigrant students.

First of all, as mentioned in previous sections, music may be used for staging our identities in the public world as well as for constructing our selves through more inward, emotionally significant, subjective practices (DeNora, 2000; Westerlund, 2002). Through engaging in different musics, it is also possible to experience different ways of being musical or even being in the world (Elliott, 1989) and thereby develop or maintain multiple identities (Hall, 1992). In a music education classroom where the teacher is able to provide different paths for identity construction (Nerland, 2004) for the students, they may have an opportunity to practise their balancing of multiple, multicultural identities, the mastering of this being a presupposition for their successful acculturation into a new society. One way this might happen is through facilitating for students' explorations of different musics and their delineated meanings (Green, 1999) in order to make them try on the different outward stagings that the various genres afford. Another approach might be to let students present – either in writing, through musical examples or both – their own 'musical life stories' or stories on their musical learning. Performed in a classroom environment in which mutual trust is a central component, such life story presentations might give students a chance to make visible, both to themselves and others, the struggles and benefits of living in between socio-cultural contexts and even provide a scene for the complex negotiations of belonging. For example, a student may choose to bring Kurdish folk music as a symbol of her heritage and origin and also because, due to her father being a singer and an oud player, this was the music that was available to her during her childhood. At the same time, she may also present Korean pop music with which she has become familiar through her best friend, a girl of Korean origin, and which symbolises their bond and friendship. A third choice might be the winner of the Swedish X-factor's top hit because that is what is currently on her iPod, maybe as part of her efforts to integrate into Swedish mainstream youth culture. A public presentation of this kind might hold the potential to reveal to herself, her classmates and even her teacher some of the many aspects of who she is.

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Secondly, the practising of the balancing of multiple identities may also lead to an exploration of the possibilities of action inherent in or experienced as connected to those identities. DeNora (2000) holds that negotiating agency in or alongside music may lead to capacitating and empowering the self. In a similar way as described above, learning to negotiate music-related agency may provide first-generation immigrant students with some of the tools they need for reflexively changing and negotiating their position in and against other societal and cultural structures (bearing in mind that the reverse is also possible). Then, with musical agency as a hub, it would be possible for the students to *re-narrate* their selves and also *re-negotiate* their positioning in the world. For example, by being allowed or even prompted to play the drums or sing the lead in a classroom re-creation of a heavy metal piece, an otherwise timid and perhaps beveiled Muslim girl may experience some of the power that comes with taking the role of the rebel. Likewise, by being appointed the leader of a group of students whose task it is to explore collaborative composition through GarageBand® or similar software, a Russian boy who by the help of his laptop and during his leisure time has developed great experience in this area, may be allowed to take the position of being a 'good student' – a social space otherwise largely unavailable to him because of language problems in his new country of domicile – Finland – and therefore generally poor performance in exams. Of course, such facilitation for negotiations requires, from the teacher's side, an intimate knowledge about the students' capacities.

Thirdly, through creating and performing music as a group activity, whether in a composition group, a rock band or a school orchestra, students may experience and develop a sense of collective agency (Barnes, 2000; Westerlund, 2001, 2002) and practise their abilities to bridge their individual experience and that of their peers. Joint musical interaction certainly presupposes that the participants assign each other the status of responsible agents and that they are accountable and susceptible, musically as well as socially. Being assigned 'human dignity' (Barnes, 2000, p. 117) and respect in and through such interaction may lead to both recognition (Elliott, 1995) and inclusion (Saether, 2008), although this is then achieved in a totally different way than through teachers taking their students' different traditional music cultures into account when planning the curriculum. For students whose origin is in cultures where most educational activities have been strictly teacher-led, the popular music-related and often student-centred approaches found within Swedish comprehensive school music classrooms, for instance, might provide new and hitherto unknown opportunities for practicing musical and social susceptibility through negotiations with peers concerning power, musical timing, bodily presence and so on. Conducted in and through music, aspects of communality can be tested and explored even without all participants sharing or fully mastering the same language.

Finally, by being involved with diverse musical practices both immigrant and non-immigrant students become part of shared practices, goals and ideals. It may be claimed, as John Dewey did, that sharing goals and aims constitutes an important part of a democratic process (Dewey, MW 9, p. 105; MW 11, p. 57), and likewise that being allowed to express different identities and live according to different ideals and ideas are inevitable rights in a democratic society (Dewey, MW 9, p. 315; see also MW 6, p. 430; LW 7, p. 362). Hence music teachers who are able to provide multiple ways of being musical and human, and who also facilitate for musical environments in which the development of collective agency (see above, e.g. Barnes, 2000) – through sharing, negotiating, discussing, creating

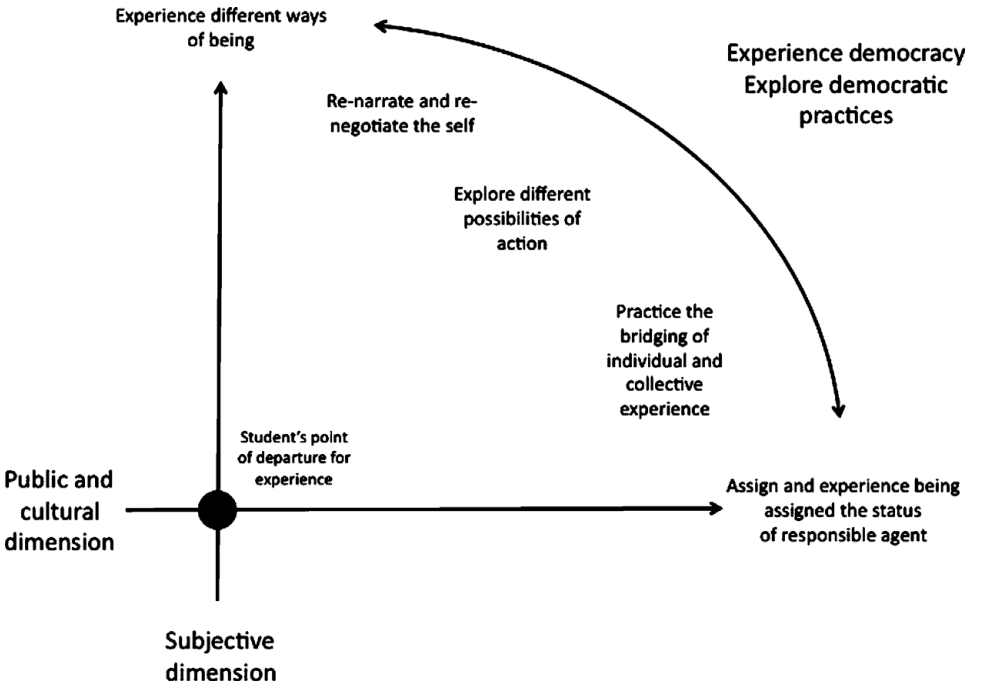

Fig. 2 The experiences potentially provided through music education that may enhance exploration of democratic practices and provide democracy *as experience*

and performing music together – is an important matter, may arrange for their students to be able to explore democratic practices or even provide democracy *as experience* (see Fig. 2). For example, students arriving with fundamentalist backgrounds may be presented with educational designs that will challenge them – cognitively, bodily and emotionally – and also make them *experience* in and through music what it implies to be citizens of a democratic society. In an unforced, non-assimilative way then, the music education classroom may, as Elliott (1989) suggests, function as an arena for enculturation, in which first-generation immigrant students may learn, become accustomed to and try out, on their own terms, the practices that are connected to the underlying values of their new country of domicile.

The discussion above can be linked to the ideas of radical democracy proposed by the political theorist Mouffe (1992, 2005). In outlining an alternative to liberal democracy, she emphasises the embracement of pluralism – the different identities people choose to express and the ideals and ideas according to which they choose to live – as perhaps the most important feature of a 21st century democracy: 'Modern democracy's specificity lies in the recognition and legitimation of conflict and the refusal to suppress it by imposing an authoritarian order' (Mouffe, 2005, p. 30). While not denying that consensus is needed when it comes to the institutions constitutive of democracy, namely liberty and equality for all, she points out that publicly enacted antagonism is essential, so as to maintain and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051710000203 Published online by Cambridge University Press

mobilise political passion, to struggle against authoritarian forces and to give disagreements 'a democratic outlet' (p. 30). The demand for pluralism does not only exist on the societal level; Mouffe (1992) also reminds us that it is necessary to embrace the diversity that exists within each individual, 'the contingency and ambiguity of every identity' (p. 10). Within this framework, plurality and diversity are thus not problems to be overcome. Instead, they are the very condition for the expansion of democracy, even to such an extent that any attempt of a democracy to bring about a perfect harmony 'can only lead to its destruction' (p. 238).

Considering Mouffe's understanding of *radical democracy* in the context of the Scandinavian countries, the increasingly multicultural realities that those societies face can no longer be seen merely as challenges that need to be overcome. Rather, the new diversity, which increased immigration unavoidably brings about, appear as one of the most important presuppositions for the future development of sound democratic practices. The framework of radical democracy likewise brings new dimensions to the work of the music teachers who are able to provide and facilitate for pedagogical practices such as those indicated above, of celebrating and nurturing a multiplicity of identities, different ways of being and acting in the world, experiences of transcending individualism as well as intense negotiations in and through music. While still holding that such work may be of particular value to first-generation immigrant students, for reasons already mentioned, we also wish to emphasise that for *all* students it brings promises of participation in and enculturation into practices which underpin and mirror radical democracy. In this context, the immigrant students are no longer something 'to be dealt with'; rather, they represent an asset, an invaluable resource for possibly diverse and antagonist perspectives – a resource into *constant democratic deliberation in the processes of music education*. To reiterate Mouffe (2005), 'in a pluralist democracy [. . .] disagreements are not only legitimate but also necessary. They provide the stuff of democratic politics' (p. 31). Similar thoughts can be found already in the works of Dewey, who saw that enhancing *creative democracy* is the starting point in any education and that conflict, which challenges the conventions of a community, will steer us to observation and memory, instigate invention, and shock us out of sheep-like passivity (Dewey, MW 14, p. 207).

This kind of radical and creative democracy is an ongoing moral process, and at the same time it is an ideal constantly present when deliberating between options in daily activities in schools (Dewey, LW 11, p. 182). The moral criteria by which to try school and music education may be summed up from the individual and subjective, on the one hand, and from the perspective of associated collective life, on the other, as follows: 'The test is whether a given custom [. . .] free[s] individual capacities in such a way as to make them available for the development of the general happiness', or, 'whether the general, the public, organization and order are promoted in such a way as to equalize opportunity for all' (Dewey, MW 5, p. 431). It is natural, however, that constant testing of practices and reflection of structures from multiple perspectives will not come without pain. It is obvious too that rapid changes, like the new immigration in Scandinavian countries, may create resistance to change and fear of losing what has for long been experienced as valuable and worth attaining in general education. Yet, only by seeing conflict at the heart of all pedagogy (Gadotti, 1996, p. xvi) and change as vital for any intellectual activity can we keep on justifying music in schooling in present societies. Teachers are after all part of the

same experiential fabric of music education that for immigrants may potentially appear as meaningless, incomprehensive, or even fearful equally as it may appear as meaningful, fulfilling and enjoyable.

Concluding remarks

In this article we have argued that focusing on the musical schooling of immigrant students would form a healthy test for the development and enactment of democratic practices in music educational contexts in general. Furthermore, by doing so through sociological and music sociological lenses, we have highlighted how music's capacity as a means for human growth and enhancement of agency is connected to its nature as a medium for action and plural meaning-making. Consequently, instead of thinking simply in terms of repertoires or contents in music education, we, as music educators, should ask what the music taught *does* in relation to students' experiential outcome, how it carries affordances for actions and supports the sustainable growth of selves. Music is not an ultimate good in all situations – it may hinder as well as help students in the processes of re-narrating their knowledge as well as their selves. We have pointed out that allowing the processes of conflicting negotiations to take place and offering further an arena for dynamic resolutions may be one of the greatest responsibilities and challenges for democratic processes to take place in music education in pluralist societies.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements go to the Academy of Finland for financially supporting this work.

Notes

1 Well aware that there are different ways of designating immigrant groups we here choose to use the term 'first-generation immigrant' to imply a citizen or resident who is an immigrant or has immigrant parents.
2 Using Norway as an illustrative example, the number of first-generation immigrants was approximately 50,000 in 1970 while in 2009 the number had expanded to 508,000 or 10.6% of the population (Statistics Norway, 2010).
3 See also Blair (2009) for descriptions of learner agency development within a classroom-based music learning community.

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