INVITING MUSIC STUDENTS TO IDENTIFY AS CONTENT CREATORS TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

A variety of instructional strategies can be used to facilitate effective learning environments. This article reports on a particular instructional strategy, i.e., inviting music students to take on the identity of a content creator. Over a period of 20 weeks, 18 piano students ages 10 to 15 used a mobile app designed as a self-contained social media platform which allowed them to create and share audio recordings of their piano practice with one another. At first, the student participants used the app in limited ways, due to their sense of individualism, as well as their performance-based mindset. After week 10, participants were encouraged to take on the identity of content creator as a means of using the mobile technology to engage in meaningful learning. To support students' envisioning of themselves as content creators, activities were designed to help them celebrate process over product, and to set content-creation goals. Introducing the content creator identity, as a strategy, was effective for increasing and expanding the use of the mobile app for musical thinking and learning. Instructors who are considering ways to engage learners in relevant and participatory ways may benefit from this discussion of the content creator identity strategy.

KEYWORDS

Music Education, Participatory Culture, Students as Content Creators, Affordances of Mobile Tech, Pedagogical Strategies, Social Media, Musical Instrument Practice

1. INTRODUCTION

The pedagogical strategies chosen by a teacher will significantly impact any learning environment, including a learning environment such as a mobile app. Relying only on the affordances of a mobile app to foster meaningful learning gives too much credit to digital technology. Counting on students to have the skill and knowledge to use digital technology for the purposes of learning is expecting too much. While 10 to 15-year-olds today may be highly

skilled in the use of certain digital technologies, this does not guarantee that they know how to use digital tools to maximize learning. Therefore, this paper highlights one pedagogical strategy that was used to help young learners participate meaningfully and feel a sense of belonging in the mobile learning space.

This case study features a mobile app as the learning space, which music students used for a period of 20 weeks. Over time, in response to the content creator identity strategy being introduced, there were changes in how the students chose to use the app, both in terms of quantity and quality. The mobile app, essentially a self-contained social media platform accessible by a group of music students and their music teacher, was a platform students could use to share musical creations and musical thinking with their peers. The affordances of the app, along with one distinct pedagogical strategy, and including explicit instruction, resulted in increased opportunities for learning. This qualitative study sought to answer the question, 'What social and cultural practices do piano students enact when invited to use a mobile app designed to facilitate music learning'? The findings and discussion provide a description of the pedagogical strategy of inviting learners to take on the identity of content creator, so that teachers have a strategy to refer to for relevant, participatory learning.

A teacher's choice to use a digital tool as the learning space is not a neutral act; the affordances of the tool, along with the pedagogical strategies enacted by the teacher, impact how learning will unfold (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2008). In the case of this research study, the intent was to use a digital tool that honoured the social and cultural situatedness of the learners. This type of app stands in contrast to many apps designed to facilitate music learning, which are focused on listening for errors and subtracting points if a wrong note is played, or if the tempo dictated by the metronome is not adhered to. These apps embody a certain ideology of music learning, i.e., that music learning is about playing the right notes at the right time. This research study intended to go beyond this unnecessarily limited view of music learning, and to provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, relevant, and participatory music making.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sociocultural Theory in Music Learning

A sociocultural understanding of music learning acknowledges the social and cultural contexts in which all music making takes place. Sociocultural theory understands learning to be embedded within interactions themselves, in that space which is between the self and others (Glăveanu, 2010). Knowledge, then, does not simply exist within the mind of an individual, but also exists between people and in cultural contexts; it exists within social practices themselves (Gee & Green, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Making music, understood as cultural production, is a way that humans express and represent who they are, a way of perceiving others, and a way to think about and interact with the world through symbolic means (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Therefore, music learning is about constructing meaning through active exploration and in relation to others (Confrey, 1990; Dart et al., 2000; Nurrenbern, 2001).

Sociocultural understandings of music learning expand the possibilities beyond building technical skill and envision music learning as the act of meaning-making, forged through musical inquiry, musical connections, and musical discoveries (Garnett, 2013; Shively, 2015). Music making embodies a multitude of distinct cultural and social practices, which can be organized into musical genres (e.g., jazz and rock), and which can take place in any number of different musical contexts (e.g., school music classes, Indigenous pow wows, or hip-hop concerts). It is in light of such lavish differences that music learning can be understood as making use of a rich set of tools to understand and create music (Wallerstedt, 2013). Over the course of this study, participants were encouraged to engage in socially and culturally situated music making and learning.

2.2 Participatory Music Learning

Music plays a significant role in the life of many young people today, and is intensified by unprecedented access to any music, any time, thus increasing opportunities to 'participate' with music (Allsup et al., 2012; Tobias, 2014). Participating with music can include a range of activities, including spending time practicing an instrument to develop technical skill, but also, just as importantly, can include improvising, composing, listening, and dancing (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2005; Tobias, 2014). Turino (2008) includes movement-based responses such as dancing, singing, and clapping along as meaningful ways of participating with music. Small's (1998) expansive understanding of participating with music results in his coining of the term 'musicking,' to refer to any activity that relates to music making, including all of the activities listed above, and also including composing, collecting tickets at the door of a concert, as well as designing and operating sound and lighting during a musical performance. Each of these people are musickers, allowing us to conceptualize music as accessible and welcoming of anyone and everyone, and not as an exclusive club that is reserved only for those with elite understanding or skill.

As described by Small (1998), interacting with music consists of participating in relationships that bring meaning to the act of music-making. Relationships are embedded between musical notes, between musical ideas, and between people who enact and facilitate a musical performance. Music educators, then, have an opportunity to create opportunities for learners to experience these relationships. Mobile technology is ideally suited to foster such relationships, in partnership with supportive pedagogical practices. Within the mobile app used in this study, students took on various musical roles and engaged in various ways through relationships with music and with one another.

Fostering a participatory environment can help music students feel a sense of belonging in the learning space, since in this type of environment, participants feel that their contributions matter, and that others will care about what they have created (Jenkins, 2009). Participatory music learning is particularly important since it can facilitate differentiation, or different types of music making at all levels of ability and interest, so that everyone can make music together (Bernard & Cayari, 2020). Participatory music making results in many benefits, such as opportunities to foster emotional and social regulation, musical creativity, and a sense of belonging and relaxation (Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2011; Schiavio & De Jaegher, 2017).

2.3 Relevance of Content Creator Identity

Creating a learning environment where students are invited into the world of user-generated content is a way of providing relevant, culturally situated experiences. Students live in a world that is saturated with user-generated content, i.e., content created and shared on social media by any individual who is part of the general public (Daugherty et al., 2008). Content creation is typically engaged in for the purposes of self-expression and actualization (Buf & Ştefãnitã, 2020; Stoeckl et al., 2007), and is made possible by generally accessible, affordable, and user-friendly digital tools (Gee, 2010; O'Hear & Sefton-Green, 2004). Therefore, creating a learning environment where students are invited into the world of user-generated content shared by the content creator is a way to provide experiences that feel like 'real life' for students.

Most often, learning to be a content creator happens through social interactions in distributed, online communities (Harlan et al., 2012), and not within formal learning environments. But teachers can opt to play a role in supporting content creator identity development among their students. The skills needed to effectively engage in content creation are valuable and transferable to other endeavours. Content creators, when surveyed, express that they engage in the act of content creation, not because it is easy, but rather, because they want to communicate something valuable to an audience in creative and productive ways (Buf & Ştefãnitã, 2020), to build their self-confidence (Snelson, 2015), and to imagine new identities and statuses (Berryman & Kavka, 2017; Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2017). The important work of identity development, which our students are engaged in, may be enhanced through opportunities to think like a content creator, making decisions about what is worth sharing, and by implication, what is worth doing.

One emerging pedagogy that appeals to today's learners, as described by Kukulska-Hulme et al., (2022), is 'influencer-led pedagogy.' This is different than inviting learners to take on content creator identities, since it is about accessing content creators as teachers, and not specifically about becoming content creators. Influencer-led pedagogy is a well-suited partner to content creator identity pedagogy because, as students observe educational influencers, they can learn about the content area the creator is presenting. In this way, they can consider the person as a model from whom they can learn about effective content creation methods, including 'talking to camera,' adding appropriate animations and images, choosing and editing effective soundtracks, and personally connecting with the audience (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2022).

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design Overview

This instrumental, qualitative case study (Stake, 1995) is defined by a 20-week time period in which 18 music students, ages 10-15, made use of a mobile app. The intent of the study was to collect and analyze the musical artifacts created and shared by the participants, along with their reflections on what they created and shared, and why. Rich description of screenshots and audio recordings is intended to illustrate the case. The researcher in this study is a music

teacher who chose to take on the role of app designer in order to find out how students would choose to make use of a mobile app in the context of their music learning journey. When, at the halfway point of the study time period, it was clear that students had not used the app very often, and had used it in limited ways, one key pedagogical strategy was enacted to inspire more consistent and meaningful involvement.

3.2 Participants

Before data collection for this study began, ethical clearance from the researcher's university was secured. The participants, as well as the researcher, were geographically located in a medium-sized town in Ontario, Canada. A colleague of the researcher, (who is a music teacher), along with 18 of her students, 9 females and 9 males ages 10 through 15, were recruited to participate. The participants consented to making the mobile app a part of their piano practice routine, during which they dedicated time to piano playing at home, in preparation for their weekly, in-person lessons with their teacher. There was a team effort between the researcher and the music teacher who collaborated to ensure clear communication with the student participants, to observe and oversee the participants' activities within the mobile app, to establish the faithful enactment of ethical protocols, and to make certain that the participants were aware of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time.

3.3 Data Collection

The mobile app used in this research study, which functioned as a self-contained social media platform accessible only by the participants, contained a news feed where audio recordings were posted, commented on, and 'liked.' The set of audio recordings, 'likes,' and comments that participants generated within the app was the primary source of data collection. Participants used the mobile app during their piano practice sessions at home as a means of recording and sharing with others some of the musical things that took place as they practiced. Another data source was the transcripts from four focus group sessions. Each session was organized as an opportunity for the music students to meet together at their teacher's house for one hour, to participate in musical games and enjoy snacks, as well as to engage in discussions about their experiences with using the mobile app. The activities that took place at these sessions were sometimes planned in advance, and other times evolved according to the participants' emerging questions and needs.

3.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of the semiotic signs created and enacted by the participants was conducted in order to determine patterns and themes. These signs, including posts, comments, and 'likes' that the participants added within the mobile app, as well as interactions and conversations that they engaged in at focus group sessions, were examined holistically (Baxter & Jack, 2008). All of the data, considered together, led to an understanding of the behaviour of the participants as they engaged in a musical learning community, and to a nuanced understanding of the case. This nuanced understanding was revealed by examining patterns in the number, type, timing, and frequency of audio recordings, comments, and 'likes' posted within the mobile app, and

considering how the participants perceived their experiences of using the app, both as individuals, and as a group.

This single case is not intended to be definitive, but knowledge and understanding surrounding a certain case does provide a tangible, real-world example that illustrates general principles of human behaviour that are valuable for reflecting and imagining what was and what might be (Flyvbjerg, 2018). What happened in this case may be interesting to teachers who use a mobile app as a learning space and are finding a lack of participation among their students. This analysis provides insights into some of the reasons that students might choose not to engage with a digital tool for music learning when it is offered, and describes an example of how foregrounding an invitation to sociocultural production might enhance participation and meaningful engagement.

4. RESULTS

Two main findings were revealed in answer to the question, 'What social and cultural practices do piano students enact when invited to use a mobile app designed to facilitate music learning'? The first key finding was that when given the opportunity to choose how they would make use of a mobile app for music learning, the participants did not engage frequently, except for in limited ways. The second main finding was that, with the enactment of a pedagogical strategy, the participants were encouraged to think and act beyond their limiting beliefs, and to engage in more frequent and meaningful participation. In doing so, the participants experienced expanded opportunities for meaningful music learning.

4.1 Limiting Mindsets

Participants were found to hold two limiting mindsets: a strong sense of individualism, and a focus on performance. These students had been practicing the piano for years, mostly at home, alone, and did not likely have many experiences which would have led them to view their piano practice as a socially engaged activity. When prompted to explain why they had not used the app, they were not aware of any reason why they would choose to create and share recordings of their practice with their peers. The participants did not have, as part of their schema, a strong sense that practicing music, before it is ready to be performed, could have any value to anyone besides themselves, or that sharing it with others might provide any benefit to themselves.

The participants also exhibited a performance mindset, which limited their participation in the app. When the study began, they did not perceive that a piano piece they were still working on was potentially shareable, so they posted only full pieces that they deemed ready to perform for their peers, or in other words, pieces they could play from beginning to end without stopping. Often, these full pieces represented piano practice that had begun far in advance of the research study. For example, hockeyman (player name) posted his rendition of Beach Buggy Boogie (Mier, 1993). Listen here: hockeyman-BeachBuggyBoogie. This recording was enjoyable for the community to listen to, 'like,' and leave comments in response. The act of creating this recording represented musical thinking and musical skill on the part of hockeyman. But when the participants viewed the mobile app as a repository for only performance-ready pieces such as this, their ability to participate was curtailed. It often

takes weeks or months of piano practice for a player to consider their piano pieces performance ready. Even though the mobile app used in this study was a self-contained learning environment where only the students of one music teacher could hear the audio recordings posted, the idea that only those who had something worthy of public performance pervaded.

4.2 Introduction of the Pedagogical Strategy

A pedagogical strategy was introduced at the halfway point to help participants overcome their limiting mindsets of individualism and performance focus, and to empower relevant and participatory engagement. To encourage the participants to use the app in more frequent and various ways, and to foster a sense of interaction that would prompt musical listening and thinking, they were invited to take on the identity of content creator. This pedagogical strategy may resonate with young learners who inhabit a world of rich media-sharing, in which social and cultural capital tends to be defined by the content that one creates and shares. At the outset, the participants had difficulty understanding how their independent musical practice sessions at home might become part of a community experience. Offering them a new identity they could choose to adopt was a way to inspire content creation and sharing, as part of their lived experience. During a focus group session, an activity was facilitated wherein participants could brainstorm a list of some typical habits and identifiers that would be synonymous with content creators, as well as content consumers. The activity was designed to help the music students realize that, for learning to happen through the use of a social media tool, content creators would be needed. A discussion about the need for both creators and consumers was meant to empower the participants to take the risk to create and share content, not only for the benefit that might ensue for themselves, but also for the benefit of their peers in the music learning community.

The individualistic mindset that students held was a threat to their full participation as content creators. When left on their own to ponder what others might be interested in hearing or why they themselves might share, they tended not to act. However, there was no reason for them to feel alone in deciding how they wanted to create and share content. Therefore, small group content-creation goal setting was introduced at the following focus group session. The participants formed small groups of 2 or 3 and worked together to create a group goal. Groups decided together how often they planned to post, and what types of posts they would like to share. They recorded these content-creation goals and added their signature, submitting this documentation to the researcher as a sign of their commitment as a group. Participants were working together to imagine how they might use an app for music learning through content creation. This resulted in the participants creating a variety of recordings for various purposes, and sharing them within the app, as inspired by collaborative thinking and planning.

The performance mindset also hindered students from participating as content creators. Therefore, a celebration of process over product was introduced. During one of the focus group sessions, the researcher led a discussion on the topic of how musical learning, as a process, might be just as meaningful as the final product of musical practice. Participants were asked to consider what their reaction might be if they heard a recording posted in the app that consisted of a work in progress, i.e., something that did not equate to a performance-ready piece of music. The group worked on co-creating some comments that might be valuable for posting in response to a recording such as this, in order to encourage, cheer on, or offer a

helpful practice technique to their peer who posted that recording. This was an opportunity to work on the skill of creating comments that contained specific musical language to prompt musical thinking and listening behaviours. This co-creative process benefitted both the person creating the comment, and the person reading and reflecting on the comment. Examples of comments the group co-created in response to sample recordings that contained some technical challenges for the players were, 'I hear an improvement near the end with a more even tempo,' and 'I played that song before, and the middle section is difficult. It needs more practice than the beginning and the end.' A sense of trust was built among the group as they saw each other develop the skill to react in appropriate and helpful ways to musical progress, in addition to musical products. After this point, participants launched into sharing parts of pieces (e.g., only the left hand of a piece or only one section of a piece), and they shared pieces where they were clearly having difficulty with one or more aspects of the piece.

It was important, when inviting participants to take on the role of content creator, to provide scaffolded instruction about how the community could effectively support the creators. Not only does choosing to create and share content represent risk and vulnerability in terms of how you decide to represent yourself to your fellow students, but it also necessitates being ready to receive the responses of the community. In an open social media platform, there is often a lack of decorum with no mandate for responding to posts with helpful and intentional comments. Rather, unbridled criticism often happens. It is not reasonable to expect that students already have the skill to craft constructive responses to posts within a learning context.

4.3 Participation Patterns

Throughout the study period, a total of 74 audio recordings were created and shared by the participants. During the first half of the study, 12 recordings were posted, most of which were full musical pieces, i.e., an entire song played from beginning to end without stopping. After the halfway point, at approximately the time that the pedagogical strategy was introduced, participants posted 62 audio recordings, and these posts included partial pieces, technical exercises, tutorials, and invitations to respond. Partial pieces were excerpts of songs that students recorded and shared, either to highlight a particular section they were proud of, or to show partial progress toward a goal. For example, one participant, dessertlover21, posted the following recording of Sheri's Song (Harbridge, 2010), which features her playing only the right hand part, as she has not yet learned or mastered the playing of both left and right hand parts at once. Listen here: dessertlover21-Starting-Sherri_s-Song. Technical exercises are often assigned by music teachers as required practice items for warming up and developing facility on a musical instrument in specific skill areas. Participants shared audio recordings of these exercises, including scales and chords in various keys. As an example, one participant, trebledclef, posted a recording of the D major scale, hands together, 4 octaves. Listen here: trebledclef-scale-Dmajor. Tutorials were posted as a means of describing how to overcome a particular musical challenge. See Figure 1 for a screenshot depicting the newsfeed of the app at the time that one participant named archer posted a tutorial providing instructions on how one might go about achieving a certain tempo when playing a scale.
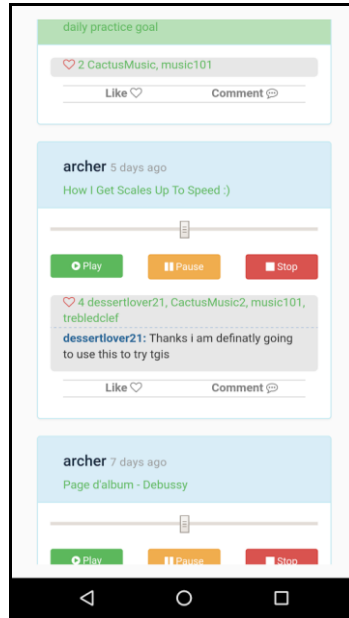
Figure 1. A participant with the username 'archer' posts a tutorial with strategies for increasing the tempo of a musical scale

Invitations to respond were those audio recordings posted by students where they invited a response from their listeners. For example, MinionNumber3 asked his peers to listen to him play a piece twice in a row, and to try identifying the intentional mistake in the second rendition. Figure 2 depicts a screenshot of his challenge to the community. Listen here: MinionNumber3-97_-of-people-can_t-spot-the-difference. Another participant, music101, set his digital keyboard to a different sound than piano, and invited his peers to guess which instrument sound he chose. Listen here: music101-Guess-the-Instrument.

Figure 2. A participant with the username 'MinionNumber 3' posts a musical challenge for his peers

5. DISCUSSION

The participants in this study were initially provided with minimal direction about how to use the mobile app as part of their piano practice. This was intentional, in hopes that naturally

emerging choices, interactions, and patterns would produce meaningful learning. When this did not happen, mainly due to limiting mindsets, a key pedagogical strategy was introduced. With the addition of this strategy, participant involvement and interaction increased and changed.

The impact of the pedagogical strategy is significant because of how it changed student behaviour. The impact of the role of pedagogy also sheds light on the reality that the affordances of a mobile app do not always reside within the app itself, but rather, come forth as various activities enabled by the app are enacted (Beach, 2017). A pedagogical strategy, used in tandem with a digital tool, can expand the affordances of that digital tool. Pedagogy and digital technology, in this case, are not separate aspects of the learning environment, but rather, work in harmony such that digital technology can be made more powerful through pedagogy. The technology is integral to the pedagogy, and so its role cannot be minimized. Even still, pedagogy does not replace the digital technology, but rather, infuses that digital technology with more capacity than it had before it was in the hands of a pedagogue. This study demonstrates that even in a content area such as music, where performance is an integrated social practice in many genres and contexts, a mobile app, paired with a strong pedagogical strategy implemented by an invitational educator, has the potential to change the mindset of the learners to adopt new, participatory social practices.

5.1 Relevant Mobile Learning

According to polls that surveyed children about their career aspirations, a considerable percentage, ranging from 30% to 75% expressed their desire to become a 'YouTuber' or content creator (Dzhanova, 2019; The Harris Poll, 2019). Therefore, using the pedagogy of content creation is a relevant strategy to many young learners. Teachers can be confident that promoting the life of a content creator means advocating for the development of a variety of skills, including technical skills (conducting research, SEO, video production and editing, graphic design, marketing, and understanding analytics and economics), as well as non-technical skills (networking, storytelling, communicating) and certain habits of mind or practices (creativity, consistency, a strong work ethic, and an abundance of self-confidence) (Bhargava, 2022; Bishop, 2019; Sweatt, 2022). Educators who take on some responsibility for teaching learners about content creation can potentially help their students toward critical reflection and wise decisions, perhaps in the context of a career for some, but also, as a regular part of life for anyone who is active on social media and creates and shares content.

In this study, a closed platform was provided for a group of young learners, as a developmentally appropriate space to practice skills and habits together. The learning that took place was significant, in itself, but also might have potential as an opportunity to develop transferable skills that are useful for participants who choose to branch out and create musical content on other open platforms. Music teachers who engage their students in content creation should be aware of some of the potential challenges that could face their students if they become active content creators on open social media platforms. The teacher can be ready to prompt discussions or questions about the challenges of content creation as a means of earning a living. Some such challenges include being subject to manipulation by brands (Harms et al., 2022) and by social media companies (Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020), and being pressured to constantly post content and respond to their audience's preferences and requests (Banjac & Hanusch, 2022; Törhönen et al., 2018). Teachers should not be naïve to the culture of

content creation that veers toward an emphasis on compulsively acquiring material possessions or competition to enhance physical attractiveness, which are also somewhat problematic (Desai-Stephens, 2022; Jin & Ryu, 2020), and may be faced by their students.

Popular content creators continue to raise the production value of the media they share. The famous vloggers of 2010 may not have possessed the skill and video production capacity that today's vloggers exhibit, for example. But many of today's vloggers still leave 'mistakes' within their videos, such as stumbling over words or rambling dialogue, and many include a variety of images of themselves where they are shown in evening gowns and updos, but also in their pajamas with bedhead. There is a certain sense of reality that vloggers are willing to share with their audience in order to be perceived as authentic and as real humans. This is not the same, but is a similar kind of openness that is needed for students to be willing to share in-progress music with a learning community such as the group who participated in this study. If only perfect performance is valued, it prevents the reality of the long and challenging process required to learn to play pieces on a musical instrument from being seen and acknowledged and learned from. Ultimately, encouraging music students to understand and enact music learning as part of social expression and cultural production is possible in the context of encouraging them to take on the identity of a content creator.

5.2 Participatory Mobile Learning

The piano teacher in this study fostered student-centred practices such as allowing her students to make choices about the music they would play, thereby maximizing the agency that her students had, even within the confines of formal piano learning. There were no parameters in place that would limit how these students could contribute to the mobile app, and there was an open invitation to post. At first, participants only posted pieces that were specifically being learned in the context of piano lessons with their teacher, but as the study progressed, pieces and songs learned on other instruments, or in other contexts (such as school music class, or on their own time) were shared.

The mobile app in this study became a useful tool, then, for inviting participation and shifting understanding. The app, being a social media platform designed to facilitate the creation and sharing of content, was not in itself a powerful tool for learning. But the participants in this study realized that the mobile app could be used for a different type of musical engagement than they had first imagined. The shift in emphasis away from performance-focused sharing to progress-focused sharing holds significance in that it empowered the students to make and share music on a regular basis. The piano teacher encouraged her students to regularly share their music with one another at various events that she held at her home throughout the year, which included opportunities to perform for one another. Therefore, the foundation was in place for these students to make use of the app to share not just musical performances, but musical practice. Unlike the teacher in this study, some music teachers might place a stronger emphasis on performance-oriented sharing, and only invite certain students to perform in public, because they want these performances to reflect well on them and their teaching skill (Webster, 1993). Providing opportunities for self-expression throughout the process of learning rather than waiting until a final product is achieved allows for more sharing, sharing more often, and for sharing different types of musical expression. With this openness to sharing musical progress, the amount of sharing and expressing someone can do, based on their ability to reach certain skill or technical levels, is

not constrained. Not only is more sharing facilitated in such a context but understanding how to support one another's music learning through the messy parts of progress, before performance-level is reached, is also increased. Opportunities to interact with music practice, and not just music performance can allow learners to develop skill in musical thinking and musical reflection, as they interact with their own and others' in-progress learning.

6. CONCLUSION

To begin this research study, participants were given a mobile app to use for learning, but not any specific details or guidance about how to do so. This was a purposeful decision, in order to find out if the participants had their own ideas about the social and cultural practices they would like to enact together as a group. Little to no engagement happened, and two limiting mindsets, including a strong sense of individualism, and a focus on performance were uncovered. Pedagogy was invoked to support the learners, in order to increase engagement. Therefore, instructors who conduct learning within mobile spaces, and who want to positively influence social and cultural expression, may resonate with the ideas presented in this study.

The pedagogical strategy discussed in this paper, as a means of framing participation within a mobile app for learning, is inviting students to take on the identity of content creator. This was intended to empower students to engage deeply with learning in a way that is relevant to their lived experience, and to participate meaningfully in ways that honour their sense of self. A different strategy to influence participation within a learning environment is linking participation to assessment. As an example, a teacher might specify that 20% of a course grade can be earned through posting and responding to others' posts a specific number of times. What is assessed is what students do. But this study suggests a different, invitational approach, including offering a new identity for learners, along with scaffolded instruction to empower students to freely choose to participate, as part of a socially and culturally connected experience.

As shown by Brake (2014), content creators tend to represent a singular, privileged socioeconomic group. Therefore, it might be possible for teachers, through empowering their students with the critical thinking and practical skills necessary to engage in content creation and sharing, to disrupt this imbalance, and provide more equitable access to the career of content creator for a more diverse group of people. This study was limited by the social media platform that was used, which only facilitated the sharing of audio content and text, and not video, which is currently the most popular mode for content creation sharing. Future studies could investigate the impacts of a shift from performance-oriented to participatory-oriented engagement on the mental health of music learners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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