Adler, Music, and Movement

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Abstract

The central problem of this Thesis was how can psychology support the claim that music should be taught at public schools. It has been a primarily political issue, with school budgets and classes undergoing cuts. There is no requirement for any political force to show why it shouldn’t be taught. Like Climate Change, this is an interdisciplinary issue. That example involves natural sciences, social sciences, and a variety of approaches. Music in school could be supported by sociology, cultural studies, gender studies and a host of Humanities. What this project does is focus on the work of one particular psychologist, Alfred Adler. Certainly, Jungian and Freudian approaches might also work in this regard. To provide a taste of the wider world of Psychology, this project offers overviews of many non-Adlerian studies. Sometimes these studies are placed within an Adlerian lens, sometimes they stand on their own, but the project focused on Adler, as one part of Psychology, to defend the teaching of music. It drew upon many of Adler’s central ideas, and shows how music would help children in myriad ways. It is a theoretical, speculative work. It cited many empirical studies, but did not perform any original ones. It is the hope of the author that one section of the paper or another might lead others to elaborate, or conduct studies, or brainstorm new ways for Psychologists to interact with School Boards. School nutrition has been terrible for years, through this day, because, in addition to incremental cost, Nutritionists have not consulted with schools. Schools have been interested in the cheapest nutrition that will suffice, and have similarly been interested in classes that have direct, measurable goals. But if we turn the question to how can we produce psychologically “rich” students, or nutritionally rich students, a whole other set of considerations come into play.
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allowed me to be on the other side of the net, weaving some Freud into my own courses. A year long course at OPC (Oregon Psychoanalytic Center) featured Professors with teaching and experiential credentials, and fused ideas from readings with their own practice.

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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 2
Acknowledgments .......................................................................................................................... 3
Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 6
Social Interest and Community Feeling ...................................................................................... 7
Encouragement To vs. Encouragement Of .................................................................................. 9
Adler and Neuroscience .............................................................................................................. 14
Thoughts for the Future .............................................................................................................. 33
Afterword: Adler on Schooling ................................................................................................. 34
References ..................................................................................................................................... 38
Works Consulted, But Not Directly Cited .................................................................................. 41
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Introduction

Funds have been cut in more than 80% of United States (US) school districts since 2008. The very first programs to go are often disciplines such as music, art, and foreign language. One impetus for this project — an Adlerian Defense of Teaching Music in Schools — has been the widespread and drastic cuts to music programs. These programs are not considered as essential as math or science, don’t lend themselves as well to “Teach-to-the-Test” formats, and may be more difficult to measure or calculate in international competitions. Many recent studies have shown how music stimulates many parts of the brain, including ones associated with math and literature. (Humphrey, 2014)

For Alfred Adler, and for psychology in general, some pertinent questions might include: how does music affect a student’s sense of self? How might it allow them to perform better in multiple areas? What kind of social constructions might it facilitate? How might its collaborative nature allow students to experience different kinds of social interactions?

This project will argue for an Adlerian defense of music programs. One way it will do this is by looking at several central Adlerian terms in the context of a music class. The second way will be by backing up these earlier claims with some more contemporary psychology articles. A very brief capsule summary of Adler’s biography will be presented here: his work with women and the economically disadvantaged, among others, and his attempt to intervene with those groups society left behind. If Adler were alive today he might well include a weekly visit to public schools as today’s economy has led to teaching-to-the-test thinking that stands in stark contrast to Adler’s Holism. When courses in music in the arts are cut because they are considered expendable, Adler might recognize the true loss and try to gather the community
around him. He might have musicians volunteer time, or he might try to get school boards to re-evaluate the “use” rather than just “possessive” value of music classes. Parents might think of school music performances and cringe, but that is only because the students are not at the level of the local symphony or orchestra. Those parents might be ready to allow the cutting; but if someone could help them “hear” it from the student side, they will realize that their children are making all sorts of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social progress that might just not be up to par yet.

**Social Interest and Community Feeling**

Adler’s cherished category of “the social” is sadly often invisible. What is the social? 20,000 fans at a basketball or hockey game? Millions of people watching the Oscars, same time, different time zones? Work associates? Friends? A school music class gets closer to this category. Each student is playing her or his own part, but interacting with others in their section, and in turn with other sections, having to listen and communicate through music as they play. The social, in fact, is often invisible, but there. The social is, in part, all of the bridges and skyways that remind individuals we are part of larger things and can play a part in those things. A music class entails multiple social bridges, albeit bathed in sound. These students don’t have to be friends, but their time in class will increase and enrich their concept of friendship.

When it comes to the social community, specifically on a socio-economic level, schools and music might be considered. Schools might be providing some students with their only access to playing music. This might build community by reaching out, but also by receiving, as a number of world class musicians were poor growing up. Class might not be a distinct goal or area but might have a classroom effect. For example, middle or upper class students might have a piano or a violin at home while lower class families might not be able to afford that luxury, so
schools could intervene and allow them the same positive brain effects as those with at-home access to musical instruments.

Beyond the socio-economic positives, direct psychological benefits of music have also been demonstrated in the literature. Some children with learning disorders such as dyslexia have shown a general academic improvement with the inclusion of music (Darrow, 2014). Here we might have an overlap between music therapy and general self-improvement therapy. These students might not have to be ostracized for their disorders; instead they might be able to play music with other children, and see a therapist or specialist later. This kind of inclusion and collaboration is invaluable for young people.

According to Dreikurs, people sometimes experience two aspects of behavior as distinct, when in fact they might be related in ways that would illuminate both of them (Dreikurs, 1960). With the complexity of music, both played alone and with others, it is possible that people will “learn” to understand themselves with the same kind of nuance and variety as music itself. Improvisational music, for example, starts at a point and ends at a point, (but in between are tangents, sidebars - all things music players could nonetheless learn about music and themselves.

One of Adler’s general developmental concepts is Training, Self-Training, and the Rehearsal of Character (Adler, 2011a). Part of this involves how a child will bring him or herself out into the world, and how they will negotiate things. Group music (class, rehearsal, performance) allows for a simultaneous rehearsal of individuality (their specific part) and interactions with others. It is this back and forth movement, unique individual and combined group or community, that is one of the defining features of Adler’s world.

Finally, Adler’s thoughts on Social Adjustment/Adaptation fit well with music. One level is the actual social. The string section, for example, might require the adjustment of some
players, but that very process entails a social interaction. One level is the playing. In terms of
adjustment, students must wait for one’s part, they might need to adjust volume, sitting position,
and instrument position in order to play. The same kind of adjustments a person might need to
make in any class are also here in music, with the difference being that music (or any of the arts)
entails a creative aspect to the adjustment.

**Encouragement To vs. Encouragement Of**

One could read Adler as Encouraging people to complete a task, a goal, get a job, get a
promotion; any end-driven process, accomplishment, or achievement. In the case of music in
school, this might take the form of being the best horn player in the section, having the school
selected for an honor, or having your school defeat other schools. One could also read Adler as
the Encouragement of working towards a goal or, similarly towards a promotion. This is a more
process-oriented format, one that encourages each and every step along the way, regardless of
the “pay off.”

When it comes to music in schools, this process might look like Encouraging students to
learn scales, encouraging students to work together, encouraging them to work towards their
potential. This author draws this distinction as the lay person often hears encouragement as
winning, getting society’s prizes, etc. Adler was thinking more developmentally, in stages, with
Encouragement helping the other person make that arc. (And ideally Encouragement might be
internalized, so the voice comes from the self, self-esteem, but that will explored elsewhere.)

The courage to be imperfect would be essential to a school band, choir, or sport situation.
This idea, in a sense, is practice with a safety net. Coaches, teammates, and band colleagues will
probably not be familiar with Adler and see imperfections as “wrong.” The key for Adler,
however, is growth. Behind every imperfection is a different door to discovering potential and
self. For music, as for other subjects, this idea might embolden a student to push themselves, or try something new or different. This might look like an imperfection in the moment, but real growth requires it.

When it comes to Adlerian concepts, “self-esteem” has emerged as one of the most central Adlerian concepts, albeit one frequently watered down in popular usage. A child’s self-esteem can be raised with a growing proficiency in music but, unlike common versions, Adler’s is not just about the “self,” but also the self in relation to others, to community, to potential. Adler stresses contribution and community feeling. So music in schools isn’t about turning out future orchestra players necessarily, but providing the time and place for children to be creative together. [Note: this creative process is not unlike the process of play, as elementary schoolchildren might do. There is a creativity and freedom and group-individual aspect to both elementary school play and later music and arts classes.] The process of rehearsing is the process of melding self and others, and when the piece is ready to perform the child hopefully hears both her part and the whole in a mutually illuminating way.

In addition, Private Logic might be considered to be any way a child plays music. Perhaps not quite in rhythm, perhaps too fast or slow a tempo, anything unique to the child. When a child is practicing at home it is easy to stay in their zone. Common Sense, in this analogy, might be the process through which the child gets musically “in sync” with the fellow students or players. For Adler, this Common Sense allows individuals to communicate with others, the community.

Also, in a discussion of “Phenomenology,” Adler wrote “[p]erception is more than a simple physical phenomenon; it is a psychic function from which we may draw the most far going conclusions concerning the inner life” (Adler, 1998, p. 50). Music, and the arts more
generally, are the ideal playground for perceptions, senses, phenomenology. Some musicians will describe sound as not just a pitch, but with a specific timbre, feel, vibration. These vary according to individual, but compiled together under a good teacher they could lead toward a “Common Phenomenology.” In other words, students could share the unique ways they hear music and bolster the piece in specific places with specific nuances.

Another key point that Adler spoke of is the concept of Overburdening Childhood Situations. (Adler, 2011a) Some of these situations are not fully overcome, but a music class might help in two ways: (a) A less burdening situation that combines work and fun. (b) Borrowing a bit from Freud’s sublimation, it is possible that these children will transfer their emotional burdens from home life to emotional outpouring with music. (The cliché of artists and sublimation notwithstanding.)

It is tempting to view Adler’s famous idea of Movement as something that can be assisted with movement correlates. For example, sports and dance (physical movement), various arts such as sculpture and music, and any activity or ritual that inspires physical, emotional, creative movement. It would not necessarily be the movement correlate itself that inspires Movement, but it might help clear the space, prepare the individual for Movement by offering a smaller one.

Certainly most instruments require a physical interaction with them to play them. Students interested in, say, the reed family might develop strong breath control. Percussion involves some muscle work, while strings develop dexterity in the fingers. All of these body parts work in music, and this work can help energize the body in a more general way. One of Adler’s most resonant ideas today is Holism. Everything is connected, mind and body. So, perhaps not on the conscious level, every rest in music, every crescendo, offers a form for
creation both in and out of the classroom, and becomes embodied in a way that straightforward subjects might not be.

In the case of Felt Minus to Felt Plus, it would be more important for Adler, and music in this case, that it is FELT. Everyone has some minus (Inferiority Feelings) and some plus (a fantasy surplus). But the degree to which it is felt rather than merely thought is essential. For Adler, as well as “Depth Psychology” and some “Humanistic Psychology,” people can get cut off from their feelings and not experience them fully, as their own. Music, even bad music, involves feeling. Something inside the body is going outward through the given instrument. If students experience this “unity” of feeling, it will make them stronger not only in music, but in math, social studies, English, etc., and after school activities. Someone who can feel is fuller in her or his own body, and has more to offer to the community.

Even though Family Constellation or Family Atmosphere won’t be directly addressed, it is worth briefly noting that Choir and Band function, in some ways, like a pseudo-family. There are children (the students), and a maternal or paternal figure (the teacher). Friendships and relationships form outside of the music component. Working with teachers allows students a different experience with authority figures. This author’s Choir teacher would do quite goofy things during performances to loosen us up, and this was not something observed from my own parents at home. The idea that “goofy” and “authority” might somehow go together vastly expanded my horizons. Adler emphasized the schoolroom is a kind of community (Adler, 2011a).

Truly, Adler’s central concept and idea of Community Feeling alone could underwrite a rationale for teaching music in schools. Adler believed that Community Feeling was a “built-in” mechanism that is activated for most people, but not for all, and many of those develop
disorders. To Encourage (another key Adlerian concept) (Adler, 1998) this Community Feeling (Adler, 2011b) to blossom or grow, children should be in situations where this is encouraged.

Discussions of Community Feeling might include relationships, activities, growth, but, as the title suggests, real feeling must be involved. Almost every classroom is a potential mini-Community, but only Music, and perhaps other Arts, would engage the feeling necessary for Adler. We don’t just have a responsibility to our neighbor, but can feel with them, for them, in any number of ways, as we are all human.

1. Children experience feeling playing or hearing music.

2. Children perform together in a certain way to make a full, pleasing sound.

These two things happen simultaneously, allowing for an organic fusion between feeling and mini-Community. And these children needn’t like one another, in particular. The feeling-infused community environment is stimulated, and should allow them to become Adlerian citizens of the world.

Several other Adlerian ideas come into play in this discussion, including: Belonging [to this band, to this choir], Apperception [how we develop our own unique perception], and Adolescence [which Adler notes is such a pressure-filled atmosphere that having as many tools as possible is useful]. Adler, like many psychologists, stresses the importance of earlier childhood, say 0—6 or so. But Adolescence can be another opportunity for skill-building and self-building. (Adler, 2011a) So with music classes, stronger adolescents are being encouraged, but also fuller future adults.

Today we take many Expressive Therapies, such as art and music, for granted. They are utilized by many therapists around the world. For Adler they would be a natural option and his early recollections exercise is already a protoexpressive therapy, with drawings intertwined with
remembering to shed light on the present. When we return, now, to schools rather than therapy offices, some of the same functions are in effect. Children are playing the required music of the class, on the required instruments, but we still get some expressivity, as well as a sort of “group expressive therapy.” Even without a licensed therapist guiding them, the children might be “expressing” any number of things, and there is some therapeutic value in the act of playing (expressing) without any further consideration.

Finally, Holism suggests that the whole body plays the music, but the other side is less discussed. There is a reciprocal effect, and the music plays the body. That is to say, gains a student might make in music will, holistically, expand the body and mind in any number of ways. Whether it is math, emotionally, or in relations between friends, the prospects of growth through holism are mind boggling.

Adler and Neuroscience

Neuroscience has also investigated the relation between music and the brain. Adler did not, nor did anyone in his time, have access to this kind of mental equipment, but we can suggest that it supports some of his theories. One of the primary goals of this idea was to show that specific music activities reflect in, and in some cases change, the brain. Neuroscience has shown a correlation between musical training at a young age and stronger auditory-cortical “Early musical training has been shown to correlate with stronger auditory-cortical imaging when hearing piano tones” (Johnston, Kraus, Krizman, Skoe, & Tierney, 2013). Even though this is a music-based argument, it does suggest that music can change the brain. In some cases it changes the brain in a way that is fairly music-specific but in many cases, the part of the brain that changes or develops also plays a role in some cognitive activities, affective areas, and communicative skills, among many other possibilities (Johnston et al., 2013).
Neuroscience has further suggested that even in infants, musical training is linked to an increase in the brain’s grey matter for parts involved in motor, auditory, and visual and spatial processing (Johnston et al., 2013). Here we have support for two of the crucial arguments: children, even very young, have “plastic” or malleable brains that can respond to activity; and the areas that musical training affects include non-specifically musical components. Visuo-Spatial processing can help a child in many subjects, such as art, geometry, and geography. Motor skills include most movement (walking, running, etc.), as well as some of the coordination of these activities such as baseball, football, and most other school sports (Johnston et al., 2013). As we see here and elsewhere, a solid musical education helps construct a more skilled, a more well-rounded, and a more interdisciplinary student. Many of these skills go on to produce a more well-rounded person or individual. Better drivers, better at household activities, better with helping their children, as well as people who probably derive more pleasure from architecture, film, art, virtually any activity. Johnston, et al. (2013) went into a specificity beyond the scope of the essay, including such topics as which instruments tend to produce what kind of effect in the brain.

If we combine an Adlerian term with a Freudian one, we might gain insight into what might be propelling these students: “Aggression Drive” (Adler, 2011a) and “Sublimation” (Freud, Civilization and its Discontents). Adolescence is often a time when teenagers are mad at parents, at teachers, at friends, just about everything. Sublimation suggests that we unconsciously channel certain feelings, like anger, into more socially acceptable outlets, so having a music class might allow students to rid themselves of some anger, and become better students, children, friends, etc. in the process.

Significantly, any Adlerian ideas such as Belonging, Cooperation, and Contribution,
(Adler, 2011a) were originally devised to explain the Social Interest or Community Feeling term. These smaller ideas were to be practiced by individuals to make the whole, the community, stronger, in addition to strengthening themselves. High schoolers might feel like they’re part of the “school community” more than the larger societal community. They might not have cars, jobs, love interests, money, etc., things that might help them feel connected to the larger community. (Parker, 2014)

As a result, Adler’s ideas (Belonging, Cooperation, Contribution) work beautifully on the smaller scale of high school and a music class. A primary facet of these ideas is that they are 2-way streets: when students participate they are making the group (music class) stronger, and themselves stronger (both by developing the courage to take risks, and their own music skill). Another important idea, here, is that for the length of the class, the room doesn’t contain 12 or 15 or 20 individuals, but rather one music ensemble. The sound produced depends upon the individuals, but when they are truly successful, one doesn’t hear individuals. A teacher or parent walking down the hallway would hear, first and foremost, a musical ensemble. A parent possibly might not even be able to identify their child’s part, because of the blending.

One of the key things a music class might help a student with is the lessening of their “Hesitating Attitude” as well as their Safeguards in general. The first day vs. the last day of music class is a good illustration of this idea. Many High Schoolers are shy, don’t necessarily introduce themselves to people they don’t know, and when it comes to the music itself they might “hold back” in the beginning, either because they think they aren’t good enough or because they’re worried about standing out from the group in other ways. There is a lot of milling about, probably nervous tension. By the last day of class, the student is at the very least aware of the names of the people around her, and has possibly become friendly with one or two.
When the time comes to play, they do it because they want to, not just because the teacher is signaling them.

Adler’s “Distancing” (Adler, 2011a) has not completely vanished, but the students feel closer to each other, to their instruments, and to the creation of music. This is so essential in high school because that is where peer pressure is probably highest, and identity issues the greatest. Distancing from others is also a distancing from self. One is stunting one’s own capacities to grow, develop, as individuals and as musicians. Music, as well as dance and other sports, allow the children to have less distance from their own bodies.

They are literally, physically creating movement, and it’s not, “how does so-and-so look playing violin or playing drums”, but rather the basic acknowledgment that physical movement is required in most music. Once they’ve achieved their musical movement, their individual or self-movement will have automatically grown as well.

It might not be a stretch to suggest that a music class is a sort of rehearsal space for the Private Logic or Common Sense binary (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Adler’s premise was that many of us have our own Private Logic, particularly growing up, which overlaps with reality but also has personal projections. We operate according to this, in part to protect ourselves (from growing up, from others, from the unknown, etc.). Common Sense would be closer to Community Sense. It is a kind of shared, collective sense, important less that it’s “right” than that it’s “shared.” So for children going to music class with their Private Logic intact, they might be in for a surprise. Many students who haven’t played with others will join them. The music they all make, “good” or “bad,” functions as a kind of Common Sense. When students give up their ideas of “this is what I do at home” or there should be a longer pause there, etc., they might play more freely in the “common” language. With the school setting and presence of a teacher, it
offers a gentle transition. When it comes to performance there is group of (drama, dance, music) students on stage, and their families in the audience. The students face their parents not as just themselves, but as part of a group.

They are allowed, if you will, a chance to demonstrate some of this expanded identity. (This division is clearer if one thinks of schools and stages. The physical, spatial distinctions are very sharp. Sometimes remarks such as “where’s Susie,” “she’s next to the tall kid in the brown loafers” are heard. Similar outfits help visually enforce the group.

Another Adlerian concept that has significant possibilities here is The Useful Side of Life (Adler, 2011). These people are willing to adapt, to compromise, to work together. In a music class it is a given that they will have to work on the Useful Side, but what about outside of class? Some students will possibly be on the Useless Side, not paying attention in math class or starting food fights at lunch. The Useful music class might rub off on some people. The benefits of being Useful are immediately “paid off” in the form of quality music. What would happen if they participated similarly in math class? The class might be more difficult for them, but what would happen if they adapted a Useful attitude? This might be a greater respect for the teacher, their classmates, themselves. This, in turn, might inspire closer listening. This might inspire a clarification of details that allows them to solve one or two more problems.

Usefully, Derikurs (1960) stress on parenting addresses a largely missing term from this discussion: the parents. Child, parent, school form sort of a triangle, or a 3-pronged relationship. High schoolers in particular might be in some stage of “rebellion” against their parents. Sometimes this is a healthy distancing, sometimes this is just “rebel without a cause” and the parents happen to be around. A music class helps provides discipline as well as joy. It is this combination that is often missing at home. It might provide the student a good place to
unconsciously explore these ideas. They might come to treat their parents with more respect, as they themselves have learned more about who they are, and that they don’t need to rebel to prove a point. They might come to treat their parents the same way as before, but now they are on a path. They might not realize how it affected their “self” or their parents directly, but there’s a kernel of potential that might be developed in another class, or with the right teacher, or just over time. The music class as turning point might not even be recognized, but these changes are often gradual and unconscious.

Before turning to contemporary Adlerian theory, it might be useful to provide a brief overview of the kinds of studies that will not be examined thoroughly here. One might be called the specific disorder group: autism, depression, psychosis, etc. In these cases, a therapist might visit the school and work with the student in any number of ways, including music. Another type of study is the hospital setting study involving teenagers. Teenagers who have cancer, or traumatic events, or other hospital-level challenges might be hospitalized. There were several studies on how music has played a role in these hospital settings (Gold, Voracek, & Wigram, 2004). Another important variable in the studies was the kind of music played. These studies generally included whatever music was being taught in school. There are several studies on rap music and therapy which were fascinating, but tended to involve a one-on-one student-therapist relation (Miller, 2014). There were several on intricate classical music, but were more about listening than producing (Humphrey, 2014).

Beyond the high school setting, there are studies on seniors with dementia who listen to music of their era growing up. There are various criminal adult offenders for whom music is used more for calming than for opening up ideas. The present study has tried to limit itself to school locations and group music formations.
Turning now to how contemporary Adlerian theory might relate to the subject of music in schools, Carlson, Watts, and Maniacci (2005) was a focus. Carlson et al. argued that there are four primary goals for the Adlerian Therapist, and two of them are particularly relevant. One of the goals was Increase Functioning. This category is that it works with all disorders, and all people in general. Everyone’s functioning can be increased. As argued throughout this project, music in schools increases functioning in a variety of areas, including math and reading. A second particularly relevant goal is to produce a change in the clients’ perspective (Carlson et al., 2005, p. 130). The authors might intend a conscious, intentional perspective, but that can be opened up to perspective in general. Students’ relation to themselves, each other, and the world are some primary ones. A change in these perspectives might then allow the student to perform better academically.

In similar fashion the same author discussed Adlerian “tactics,” which might be the manifestation of certain techniques. One of the classics here is the Life Style Assessment. Others include the Empty Chair, Spitting in the Soup, and Early Recollections. Early Recollections was discussed in a section called “Imagery Tactics.” Music can be viewed as something of an acoustic image. It might be more abstract that the visual ones, and it might be less clear what it would do, if anything. But Carlson argued “[c]lients frequently motivate themselves by creating images that move them in certain direction” (Carlson et al., 2005, p. 146). This feels closer to music. A student might create and or play notes, scales, scores, etc. And this music might move them in a certain direction musically, but it also might assist in movement in general. Music can be an aesthetic model of the self or of the world, so movement within music class is a sort of “rehearsal space” for the movement of feelings. It would be conceivable that some brief amount of music might be played in the therapy office. As Dreikurs (1960) repeatedly demonstrated, a
Life Style might be played on the piano.

If there is a connection between life and music, at least for Dreikurs, then it might work in other ways, too (Dreikurs, 1960). Just as a therapist might look at and analyze an early recollection drawing, they might listen to and analyze a brief piece of music; but the primary function of music will be for everyone who plays music, not just the exceptional players. Music, next to dreams, might be the royal road to the unconscious, and playing music can help loosen that, create movements within it, in addition to all metaphors of creating. A final thought here might be to note the universality of music. Whether it is rhythm in beating drying clothes or a full-blown orchestra, just about every culture has its music(s).

There are also some, perhaps, more distanced or obscure Adlerian thoughts that can still be brought to bear on this question of music in schools. In his book The Science of Living, Adler presented his theory of the Pampered Child (Adler, 2011). The basic premise was that the child was pampered at home, and then at school — confronting all that was new with redefined roles — confidence drops. One thing music education, as well as perhaps athletics, might provide is a sort of transitional space or buffer. In music class the child is not pampered, but they are not subject to the whims of the other children either. All of the children — no matter their superiority or inferiority complexes — are subject to the music. Friends might be made not on the grounds of standard issues, but simply because they are sat next to each other, or were playing the same instrument. Even the toughest kids in school are playing something, which might provide a window for communication if not friendship.

Perhaps testimony from a couple of students will clarify the ideas being presented in this Thesis. “There was a girl I sat by last year who told me all of this stuff about her home life. Then we would go in the hallway and wouldn’t say a word to each other. But in here, you might be
friends,” wrote Elizabeth Cassidy Parker (Parker, 2014, p. 6). In her article “The Process of Social Identity Development in Adolescent High School Choral Singers,” Parker summarized the relevant literature as well as conducting her own study. Particularly striking was how evenly the students’ own words fell into “individual” (pride, self-esteem) and “group” (team, family, etc.) areas. The essential thing was that these two areas were experienced simultaneously. The self was encouraged as various group dynamics formed. These interlocking forces made the study particularly useful to Adlerians, as both “individual psychology” and “community feeling” applied, and could be applied simultaneously. The whole might be more than the sum of its parts, as, say, individual self-esteem might be doubled in effect with mention of that choir’s section performance, or even a smile or nod exchanged with someone in the same section after a difficult part.

Some of these same ideas, with the addition of socioeconomic status, were discussed by Adria Rachel Hoffman in her essay “Exclusion, Engagement and Identity Construction in a Socioeconomically Diverse Middle School Wind Band Classroom” (Hoffman, 2012). The group of students she interviewed knew who was receiving private lessons outside of school and who wasn’t. And those receiving the private lessons were generally ahead of the rest in performance ability. This foregrounds the awareness of class on the student level, and it also “marked” students during band class. The students didn’t seem to blame those who didn’t get private lessons, they just acknowledged it as a fact of social life.

In addition to class, the subject of cultural diversity was discussed by Kate R. Fitzpatrick in “Cultural Diversity and the Formation of Identity: Our Role as Music Teachers.” (Fitzpatrick, 2012) Fitzpatrick noted how some music students of one ethnicity or background might not relate to the musical piece being performed in the same way. For this, she suggested historicizing
the piece, noting where and when and by whom it was composed. She also recommended keeping cultural diversity in mind when forming groups and, as many diversity classes eventually lead, she suggested that the teacher learn more about themselves, their class and race, their music interests, etc. This essay foregrounds the role of the teacher in smoothing out some of the rough spots that might otherwise separate or estrange students. Even though no study was done, it seems fair to imagine that student performance might correlate to teacher self-knowledge or awareness.

Another interesting “diversity” or “multicultural” approach was described in the article “Let’s Talk Music: A Musical-Communal Project for Enhancing Communication Among Students of a Multi-Cultural Origin” (Amir, Gilboa, & Yehuda, 2009). This study was based in Israel, and attempted to determine if the use of a music therapist might help immigrants get a richer sense of the Israeli students’ thinking, sort of a musical welcome or acclamation. Results suggested that both the Israeli and non-Israeli student groups developed a deeper identification with the culture at large. The authors suggested that music did help students in the areas of acceptance and openness. This example again puts the “feeling” in Adler’s Community Feeling. There are both affective and intellectual aspects to music that allow Community Feeling to be both — first and foremost — a feeling, and then a kind of door or window that allows other things to gain movement.

Arriving at an article that hits Adler’s jewel theory head on was one centered on Community. June Countryman, in “High School Music Programmes As Potential Sites for Communities of Practice — a Canadian Study,” defined types of communities rather than just using it in the standard bland, abstract way (Countryman, 2009). One of the definitions she gave was “fun,” defining it as positive emotion and pleasure, finding a sense of meaning or purpose,
and engagement. A “community” and “individual” quote from interviewed students was now presented.

“If you have a group that’s really tight, that enjoys what they do, it doesn’t matter what piece you get, you’ll find a way to make it better, or more fun, or whatever . . . I guess that’s a jazz band thing” (Countryman, 2009, p. 102). Here we have a mini-community that by its very existence — by its very grouping — is able to adjust to or improve upon anything it wants. This is very important as a proto-community, because students now might leave school knowing that post-graduation groups might also be worthwhile, even if only for the group, and they might tackle any issue.

“Solos are very important. They build up your self-esteem, first off. They allow you to do your own thing and maybe develop yourself more.” (Countryman, 2009, p. 102) Taken together, these two paragraphs point towards a central possibility: one develops as an individual at the same time one develops as a member of a group, and these co-developments might be mutually beneficial. If Adam’s solos give him more self-esteem, he’ll have more to give to the group.

Adler’s Psychology involves a constant push pull between Individual and Community. The more they can be mutually embedded, the healthier (in an Adlerian sense) the person can be.

For good or for bad in America’s teach-to-the-test society, it is scores that count. Nechelle Sharpe examined one group of students who received music class, and one didn’t, and compared their scores in another subject (Sharpe, 2013). Students who received music instruction averaged significantly higher in math. Sharpe concluded that school districts might in fact increase their math score averages if they also offered music classes. High math scores might not be the goal of any music educator, but that might help them remain a program. Perhaps some parents might be motivated to try to bring music back, under the guise of it increasing math
scores.

We might turn here briefly to the Adlerian question of “what might a holistic education look like?” Because there are so many studies about the relationship between music and math, it is easy to wonder how many “self-contained” disciplines were in fact open to a mind trained in others. It is tempting to, hypothetically, dissolve all disciplines, then reconstruct them in new and powerful ways. For example, if a Humanities class and a Natural Science class show consistent benefit, maybe they could be taught together. Or an Arts and a Social Science, etc. Or perhaps the disciplines don’t need to be dissolved, just remember that education is about teaching the student. Subjects, disciplines, etc. are there to facilitate learning. If Psychology can learn things about how people think and feel, the people might be open to revision, re-organization, etc.

One study took a multicultural approach, and focused on African Americans with Changa Miller organizing the research and testing (Miller, 2014). Some took music, then math; others did not take music. The scores of those taking music and math were significantly higher. The study suggested a way towards positive social change by having researchers provide information to educators on how music instruction can be used in public schools, especially those with low Socioeconomic Status (SES) students.

SES really opens up possibilities in music research, and might allow schools a relatively inexpensive way to boost scores. The multicultural question also opens up different types of music. Will music that resonates with a certain group improve scores? There is a whole palette of music and a whole range of students.

Miller’s 2014 study makes several important points. Perhaps most alarmingly, how driven schools are by scores and achievement. “Teach to the test,” as it is known in the United States. Music being used to increase math understanding sounds good. Music being used to
increase math scores, which in turn might influence how much money that country or district will get, sounds a bit more questionable. The Adlerian view of learning would probably not promote a “teach to the test” format. Given that seems the norm, the question comes down to: do Adlerians want music? (to help math scores) or, do Adlerians not want music? An ambitious instructor might allow 5 or 10 minutes at the end of class to try to synthesize things, to answer questions, to veer away from the “teach to the test format.”

Joanna Humphrey had one fourth grade group do a reading class in silence and one group do the reading class with light Mozart — Sonata in D Major — in the background (Humphrey, 2014). The author found that the experimental group outperformed the control group. This was a novel approach among the studies looked at, in that it brought music directly into the classroom of another subject and, of course, this music was just heard rather than played, but it continues questioning along the lines of how does music stimulate the brain in ways that might boost academic performance in general.

Correspondingly, several studies looked at music and specific disorders: psychoses, ADD, etc. These studies were excluded from this project for those reasons of specificity, but it will include here a meta-analysis of school age children with any psychopathology. “Effects of music therapy for children and adolescents with psychopathology: a meta-analysis” examined the effect of music from across a wide range of psychopathologies, and found a “medium to strong” effect in almost every case (Gold et al., 2004). Although this particular study deviates somewhat from the project the brief consideration of youth with psychopathologies along with “normal” children attests to the power of music in therapy in general, and perhaps a school counselor might be able to work with the choir and band teachers to develop a workable version of this therapy with students with psychopathologies.
In a similar vein, Dreikurs wrote an article called “Music Therapy for Psychotic Children” (Dreikurs, 1960). He introduced some ideas that work well with children without disorders, to increase their self-strength and interactions with others. It is this more “universal” part that received the focus here, even though the more specifically “psychotic” section is strong and recommended to those with interests in that area.

In the United States, and many other developed nations, junior high school, high school, puberty and related issues often dominate the life of the student. They possess verbal skills, but don’t want to use them for fear of standing out from the crowd. A music class might allow students to express, without being isolated to the same extent.

Dreikurs (1960) expanded upon his initial emphasis on the nonverbal. The emotional is often thought of as somehow exceeding the verbal. A music class would again work here, as it encouraged nonverbal communication and emotional expression in its very being. A teacher might be quite inept, but if there is a group of students playing music together in some capacity, Dreikurs’ ideas will hold some water.

Accordingly, Michael S. Nystul expanded upon some of Dreikurs’ ideas in his essay, “The Use of Music in Counseling and Psychotherapy.” He argued that one of Dreikurs’ central claims, which followed closely from Adler, was that music could provide members of the group “with ‘a sense of belongingness’ as they participate in making or listening to music” (Nystul, 1977, p. 45) For Adler, belongingness is an almost magical thing. It can lead people to create, open up, produce any number of things, surprise themselves, cultivate relationships with others.

Nystul then moved on to how music therapy might help “the creative self,” another central concept of Adler’s. He argued that there were three phases in addressing the creative self with music: (a) Set the stage. By this he meant that the therapist should have a variety of
instruments available, as well as be available themselves in case the client wants to use a different instrument; (b) Set an example. Here the therapist might play music, might help a client get started, or possibly play together, all at a tentative or example level so there is comfort; (c) Set yourself at ease. In this step, the therapist attempts a creative, artistic, or spiritual dialogue, rather than the more judgmental critiques in general music classes or orchestras.

Music classes are not exempt from the cultural biases surrounding them. “Gender and Musical Instrument Stereotypes in Middle School Children” notes the long history of boys tending to select within a certain range of instruments and girls tending to select within another (Callahan, Wrape, & Dittloff, 2016). Some of this might reflect a genuine preference (always difficult to assess with children), but it certainly reflects cultural bias that could be harmful to personal growth, in Adlerian or other ways. If a girl is drawn to the drums but doesn’t choose them because they are a “boys” instrument, she hurts her own potential and hurts the group’s capacity to play at their best, as well as continues to “model” for other students that these choices are gendered. This might lead us to question the politics of the construction of the group, who makes what choices, etc., before we even get to the more general discussion of the use value of music classes.

One way a teacher might try to circumvent this is to have everybody play every instrument, to the best of their abilities, on the first day. This exercise might clarify instrument choice for some, but, more importantly, every student in the class sees every other student on every instrument. This might not immediately break down gender stereotypes, but seeing someone of one gender on the “other” gender’s instrument long enough might gradually call the stereotype into question. Another possibility is have a gender workshop for the teachers, but focus on applied gender studies. So, for example, the music teacher might think about
instruments, who or which gender is tending to “lead” the class, and, perhaps most importantly for Adler, how to encourage a variety of instruments and how to encourage a classroom with less gender stereotyping.

One scholarly article begins within an acknowledgement of the power of gender in music classes, then moves on to a study of the importance of SES. “Exclusion, engagement and identity construction in a socioeconomically diverse middle school wind band classroom,” begins with the observation that students tend to “model,” in some way, who they are, or who they want to be (Hoffman, 2012). This might involve clothes, food, ways of walking, even possibly the cars they drive. In music class, this involves looking at socioeconomic factors underlying choices made in the class behavior, and self-evaluation vs. teacher evaluation.

One of the first things noted in the study was that all participants would rather “blend in” to class rather than “stick out” (Hoffman, 2012). School, the home par excellence of peer pressure, is also home to the Music Classes, and we should expect some interaction. Music might suffer as a result of this, as many great musicians over the centuries didn’t mind “sticking out.” There was also discussion of “competition” for “first chair” in any given instrument. This project as a whole has focused on the potential of music classes in embodying some of Adler’s idea about community. But this article noted that the group you see looking through the class window doesn’t tell the whole story. Battles for placement (often stressful for the students) occurred, eventually leading up to the current configuration, and students are generally aware of the socioeconomic factor, in terms of who could afford lessons and how that relates to “first chair.”

There are several other socioeconomic studies, all quite different. As a sort of follow-up and balance to the previous article, an article on some of the unexpected positive aspects of music education: “Music to my ears: the (many) socioeconomic benefits of music training
programmes” (Cuesta, 2011). This study looked at socioeconomics not in the music classroom itself, but in life after school. Many students of different economic levels were traced from high school music classes to post-graduation work. The poor students in music class, compared to the poor students who did not take music class, tended to perform significantly better in work. The collaborative nature of music, as well as discipline involved with preparation, potentially prepared them for a variety of jobs and a variety of positions.

One article looked at the place of school therapy within various other positions. It only briefly mentions music, but that is enough to consider it here. “From Scapegoating to Thinking and Finding a home: Delivering Therapeutic Work in Schools” (Music & Hall, 2008) focuses on the child in school therapy, and all the other places that are relevant: perhaps private therapy outside of school, perhaps therapy after school, and whatever rules her Family Atmosphere might have. These forces don’t need to be in conflict, but often the therapist involved will think, hope, or assume that their vision is the primary one.

As previously discussed, music classes can help a student in a variety of the same measures that direct therapy might. “From Scapegoating to Thinking and Finding a home: Delivering Therapeutic Work in Schools” (Music & Hall, 2008) questions would be: does the music class get absorbed at home, or at various therapies? Maybe the child is gaining self-esteem relative to peers, not relative to siblings, but this is still just one child. They are making gains in some ways, falling back in others. Perhaps the music class self-esteem will eventually encourage them to stand up to inequities at home. Perhaps home life will lead them to become disenchanted with music class, and perform at a minimal level.

From his writings, Adler (Adler, 1998) seems to place more emphasis on the positive than on the negative, because a positive can be “brought back.” The gains the child makes in
music class might be subdued by home life, but if they go to college and encounter new
structures, those gains will be accessed much easier. (This point gets to a recurring theme of
Adler’s: some function or capacity being neglected or bruised in childhood, in a sort of
“hibernation,” is then “triggered” by some new circumstance. This is similar to the Freudian
trajectory (“Remembering, Repeating and Working Through, 1914, Further Recommendations in
the Technique of Psychoanalysis II) SE 12:145-156, except with Freud the “triggering” is most
likely done by a Therapist, and with Adler it might also be done by/in the world; Adler, 2011b)

On the other hand, one study takes a more biological approach to the question of music
and its effects. “Playing Music to Relieve Stress in a College Classroom Environment” looks
primarily at the physiological aspects of making music (Ferrer, Polong, Janeke, Garcia, Peng,
Poon, Rathod, Beckwith, & Tam 2014). The music processing center (audio cortex) is located
near the limbic system, which “processes the intuitive, creative, and imaginative information that
induces the body’s psychophysiological responses.” After surveying relevant studies, the authors
conclude that “listening to music becomes an instant reward, releasing enkephalins and
endorphins to change moods, evoke relaxation, and alter pain perception” (Ferrer et al., 2014, p.
489). This beneficial aspect of music could be interlaced with many of the social structures
discussed earlier. If a student feels relaxed and doesn’t perceive pain as much, they might be
more likely to take chances.

Another of Adler’s key concepts, perhaps minimized because of its seeming simplicity, is
Encouragement (Adler, 2011b). For Adler, this is more than cheerleading, but helping to sow the
seeds that will allow the child to grow. One article, “The Socio-Educational Model of Music
Motivation” looks at one aspect of encouragement, motivation (MacIntyre, Potter, Gillian, &
Burns, 2012). McPherson (2008) argued that children hold expectations for learning music and
its value that are established as a result of interactions with their parents even before children arrive at their first music lesson. In addition to expressing praise and encouragement, supportive parents provide supervision of initial practicing, a key form of support that encourages adherence to practice activities assigned by an instructor” (McPherson, 2008). This reads a bit more like “substitution” than Encouragement, a teacher takes the parent’s place. But some Adler can be found in the margins. The overall time spent with the child and music can help, and even things (if there are), like rides to and or from instructor. Basically this article sets the grounds for an Adlerian Encouragement model, which would need to provide a spark within the child, and between the child and the instrument, so they can be self-motivating, self-encouraging.

Another orientation might shed some light on one of Adler’s key principles. Adler was one of the first western psychologists to introduce a theory of Holism, and Gestalt Therapy works with a similar idea. In “The applied music lesson: Teaching gifted and talented students utilising principles of comprehensive musicianship,” Tracy Heavner outlines a theory of teaching music that could cross-over quite nicely into a more Adlerian framework (Heavner, 2016). The central argument of the essay is that music teachers shouldn’t just teach music practice, but also music history, music culture, etc. This holistic view of music teaching clearly fits Gestalt’s approach. It also fits Adler’s in that students are implicitly encouraged to become more holistic citizens through holistic teaching.

Much of Western education has relied on departments, divisions, and sections. By bringing them all together, students learn music in a different way, learn how the sounds of an instrument related to the culture, or how the structure of musical pieces related to history. And these could all be tied to the piece the students are learning. Students might learn that they, like the music, are the convergence of many factors that produce a whole. Some of this would happen
on an unconscious level. They wouldn’t say, “music has history and performance, so do I.” They might, however, realize the showy part -- performance -- is just the tip of the iceberg.

Finally, whatever they think of themselves when they’re doing things, music, tasks, chores, etc., it is not their whole self. Perhaps the main drawback is right in the study’s title, teaching “gifted” students. There is no mention of research involving Gestalt and “normal” students (Heavner, 2016). Perhaps the integrative or holistic approach is challenging, and requires students to be at certain levels to pursue this, but as technology and computers change the way music works, there may come a time when this is a viable option.

**Thoughts for the Future**

We have primarily discussed music in school as a good thing because of what it does in the present: group students together, increase scores in other subjects, etc. We might try to look briefly into the future to imagine what role music in school might serve there. One area that I see is as opposed to, or perhaps in combination with, is technology. With the amount of time students spend on games, Twitter, Facebook, etc. — and, yes, even as young as Junior High — music might be seen as a sort of non-digital source of sensory replenishment. Hearing a drum hit by a drummer as opposed to a simulated drum sound on the computer is all the difference in the world. It is in the sound — timbre, crispness, echo, cracks, etc. — but also in the tactile. At certain volumes, musical instruments create vibrations that are felt in the body. So, in short, music might help put students back in their bodies before or after computer, iPad, IPhone, use. Chalmers stated, “[m]ore specifically, music played at 60 beats per minute has been shown to produce a state of relaxation in both children and adults” (Chalmers, Olson & Zurkowski, 1999). “Music as a Classroom Tool” focuses not on Music Classes, but virtually any given class: lunch, math, etc. It looks for some basic commonalities between music and people. If the claim that 60
beats per minute produces a state of relaxation, that might be helpful in certain classes (perhaps during or just before tests, perhaps if a lunchroom gets out of hand, perhaps theater or literature classes that ask students to imagine themselves in different places, etc.).

This study provides a focus on the lunchroom, and how different decibels of sound tend to have a calming or other effect. The importance of this study for this overview is the idea of “ambient” or “environmental” music, music that we can hear but don’t necessarily focus on. As opposed to the production of music in music class, this angle applies some of the more subtle aspects of music to the given situation. It probably won’t affect the students as deeply, but just a little heard music might prime a student for a test or study hall.

Another thing music might do — and there are probably not enough longitudinal studies yet to formally address this — is help the brain stay healthy longer, possibly through middle age, possibly through senior age. (It would probably help if music was listened to over the years.) The music studies examined tended to be one brain image only, maybe two. But what might happen if we look at a “musical brain” over the course of a lifetime. In addition to music skills, a whole range of brain function might be improved. Of particular note to Therapists, this might increase emotional range and expressive possibilities.

A third possibility was that the instruments themselves might change. Of particular hope here is multicultural instruments — not just as a show and tell, but as instruments to be played. And not just when the student from Kenya is there, but incorporated into the curriculum.

Afterword: Adler on Schooling

Written nearly 100 years ago, Adler’s thoughts sound almost visionary here, today. American culture is leaning towards the “make money” or “get an industrial job” way. The idea that schools might want “independent and responsible collaborators” seems highly unlikely.
Students attend school, leave, and generally don’t collaborate with any given force. The idea of “common work in culture” is very promising. If students just out of school were fighting for some kind of common culture, any number of jobs, professions, etc., it might fit the bill. The “common culture” is, for Adler, an Adlerian one. One where the potentials of the human he stresses in his various works could shine through, and where Social Interest or Communal Feeling would define the contours of the common culture.

Where would people acquire these skills and visions if not in school? It is a serious question. If the workplaces were coordinated, not just via unions, but via a holistic conception of the human, they might be able to guide. If families knew enough, they could guide, but Adler points out how family members are bad therapists. This leaves, perhaps, a collective or group, or a more broadly educational experience there seems to be a transition missing here. The schools seem to serve as “middle men” between the chores of the child and the numbing jobs of the adult. Schools have the power, and schools have students at exactly the right age for shaping.

The question is, how likely is Adler’s vision? Could we turn into a society of common collaborators without a fundamental change in society itself? Could nationwide changes in school be enough to provide students with the vision they need? Returning here to the Master’s Project as a whole, a music class would provide an essential piece in the true (non-monetary, but collaborative) education Adler envisions (Adler, 1998). But these creative skills must soon be united with the logical skills of math. Only in an interdisciplinary setting would students possibly come to think of themselves as more than wage earners. They could critique the system, they could devise a new one based on their holistic education, or they could bring to existing fields a kind of collaborative fire, one spurred on not by the paycheck alone, but by the kinds of interconnectedness learned at school.
Adler makes some crucial developmental leaps. If the family fails the child, she or he doesn’t get sufficient support. If the school fails the child academically, she or he doesn’t do well and risks failing out, having to turn to the outside world with no skills. (Adler, 1998)

Adler’s radical move here is to train teachers not only to teach, but to basically serve as a kind of therapist (“understand and help the development of the child in school”). This argument stresses the importance of school as both an academic or intellectual and more personal or emotional developmental space. In some classes, such as music or arts classes, might help bridge the two areas. To the extent that the child is personally invested in music (which might happen less often with the standard academic subjects), there are developmental issues that might be inadvertently addressed, even while in class. This inadvertent discussion of developmental issues is a place where a new kind of integrated educational system could be devised.

Adler briefly sketched some aspects of this new possible school that do shape the preceding paper. He emphasized the different sensory strengths of the students, such as listening, seeing, and moving. The ideal school would cater in some sense to the individual student, engaging with each with their preferred or strongest sense organ. Classes arranged not necessarily by age or subject but by sensory strength is a novel idea. It might not work in contemporary society, but should still be kept in mind, as parents, friends, etc. should know the best ways to relate to one another.

Sense perception is, here, presented as a gateway to, or from, a large worldview. Adler wanted to start with the sense that is closest to the student, and after having completed some courses and gained some confidence, broaden the spectrum. The “listening” students would probably do well in lecture courses, and in subjects where things are explained verbally. But they would also do well in a music class, where one only plays one part, but has to listen closely to
the others so that they can all play in a collaborative manner. Listening might become a bridge to teamwork or collaboration that happens in many subjects. If that is no longer feared (because first approached via beloved music), it opens up many doors. Some classes, sports, clubs, sociality in general.
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