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Student Musicians' Reflection on Their Experiences of Belonging Whilst Serving Others: Findings From a Three-Year Arts-Based Service-Learning Programme on Therapeutic Community Music

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Abstract

This exploratory study reports findings from an *arts-based service-learning* (ABSL) programme where student musicians facilitated *therapeutic community music* (TCM) (Aigen, 2012) for, with, and alongside children and seniors in different community settings. The data primarily comprised student musicians' reflective logs and feedback forms and were analysed through a quality of life lens (Raphael, 2002). This paper discusses the student musicians' reported experiences of belonging (Raphael, 2002). Belonging manifested itself in physical, social, and community aspects. For example, facilitating TCM within a circular format helped the student musicians experience deeper social interactions and a greater sense of inclusion. Moreover, the sense of belonging became a resource for developing resilience, expressing creativity,

building professional networks, and experiencing the possibilities of their careers. The study concludes with implications for embedding ABSL in higher education programmes to support learning, enhance well-being, and promote community.

This study contributes to a growing body of literature from music education, community music, and community music therapy, primarily coming from USA contexts (Bartolome, 2017; Forrester, 2019; Knapp, 2013; Siebenaler, 2005; Soon-Jin, 2019), with fewer studies from Australia and South Africa (Bartleet et al., 2016; Cloete & Erasmus, 2012; Harrop-Allin, 2017) on the positive impact of *arts-based service-learning* (ABSL) experiences on higher education music students' academic, civic, and personal learning. Service learning¹ is a form of experiential education that enables learners to enhance their academic knowledge, develop practitioner skills and techniques, reflect on their feelings and assumptions about their practice, and develop “socially responsive knowledge” (Cloete & Erasmus, 2012, p. 14) regarding the service offered. ABSL uses the arts to “bring people together, to support collective action, [and] to create opportunity for envisioning” by focusing “the educational objectives on an exploration of social issues” to meet a community-identified need (Krensky & Steffen, 2008, p. 15). Krensky & Steffen (2008) argued that ABSL could function “as a creative practice and a teaching method to fulfil arts-based education objectives” (p. 15) alongside developing competencies with discipline-specific standards. This study provides an example of an ABSL programme that combined the “power of art [music] to transform” with “the power of Service learning to engage” those providing and receiving the service (Krensky & Steffen, 2008, p. 18), rendering it an ideal pedagogy to promote academic, civic, and personal learning. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first UK study that reports on an ABSL model for supporting student musicians to develop academic, civic, and personal learning within the field of *therapeutic community music* (TCM) (Aigen, 2012).

With the aim of using active music-making to enhance quality of life—also termed health musicking (Stige, 2012)—in diverse community settings, Aigen (2012) conceptualised a continuum of participatory musical engagement (traditional music therapy, community music therapy, therapeutic community music, and community music) facilitated by different specialists. On the one end, Aigen located traditional music therapy facilitated by trained music therapists working mostly in clinical settings, often through one-to-one interaction with clients. Next to music therapy, Aigen placed community music therapy (CoMT) (e.g., Ansdell, 2002; 2014; Ansdell & Stige, 2016; Murphy, 2018), a movement within

¹ For a comprehensive discussion on the distinction amongst volunteerism, community service, service learning, field education, and internship as five distinct types of service programmes, see Furco (1996).

contemporary music therapy that promotes sociocultural and communal change through a participatory approach in non-clinical and inclusive settings.

Therapeutic community music (TCM) was positioned between CoMT and community music, which was placed at the other end of the continuum. TCM describes musicking (Elliot & Silverman, 2015; Small, 1998) within a community setting, facilitated by community musicians or music educators that focus on enhancing the quality of life of community participants, often suffering from a physical or mental health condition (e.g., dementia, Parkinson's Disease; children with disabilities). In TCM, the participants' physical, social, emotional, and cognitive well-being is more important than their musical learning processes and products. TCM has blossomed over the last decade as a result of growing evidence on the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive benefits of participatory musical engagement (Creech et al., 2014; MacDonald et al., 2012; Morrison & Clift, 2012a; 2012b; Vella-Burrows, 2012; Vella-Burrows & Hancox, 2012).

Community music is a vast field of musical practices that seek to transform and mobilise communities through active and creative participation in music (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018). According to Veblen (2007), community music intends to bring people together, nurture individual and collective identities, and promote social and personal well-being, musical learning, lifelong learning, and open access. Core values of community music practice are musical learning (Creech et al., 2021; Veblen, 2008), social justice, human rights, cultural democracy,² participation, and hospitality³ (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018, p. 11). The benefits of engaging in community music include enjoyment, personal creativity, self-expression, and the enhancement of individual and group identity (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Willingham, 2021).

This study was exploratory in nature, for it originally aimed to investigate student musicians' experiences of facilitating TCM for, with, and alongside others and the impact of these

² Cultural democracy describes community musicians' aspiration to engage people from different cultures, abilities, ages, backgrounds, and "historically excluded voices" (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018, p. 8) in active music-making experiences that are meaningful to them, enabling them to create culture and not having culture made for them. It can be manifest by approaching music making in different contexts (school classroom, prison, care home, online space) with sensitivity, offering equal opportunity to participate to all, and celebrating diversity. See - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_yKOqZyhi8

³ Higgins (2007) described community music as an "act of hospitality" (p. 284), in the sense that during musicking, both participants and facilitators could become guests and hosts in their shared musical praxis. For instance, a community participant, in their role as a guest, could be invited and welcomed to musicking by the facilitator, who acts as the host. At other times, the facilitator could become a guest when hosted by the participant's community. Facilitators could also become guests during musicking by accepting an invitation and a welcome from community participants to enter their personal musical worlds. This intertwining of relationships during musicking could lead to transformative experiences for participants, facilitators, and those that surround them (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018).

experiences on their academic, civic, and professional learning (Bennett, 2008; Creech, 2014). The community-identified needs, as expressed by the communities we contacted, were to promote the participants' (a) physical well-being through singing and warmup exercises; (b) social and emotional well-being through intergenerational interactions, sharing musical experiences during listening and creative activities, and socialising during session breaks; and (c) cognitive well-being through rehearsing familiar and new repertoire. However, an analysis of the student musicians' feedback responses and self-reflections revealed that their ABSL experiences also significantly impacted their quality of life. For instance, the student musicians reported that engaging in ABSL was a worthwhile experience, and they experienced a sense of belonging in the community groups they served, which empowered and challenged them. Also, facilitating TCM supported the development of values, knowledge, and skills that could be useful as they progress in their future musical careers. These benefits from their ABSL experiences reported by the student musicians align with Raphael's (2002) three pillars comprising quality of life.

Raphael (2002) defined quality of life as "the degree to which a person enjoys the important possibilities of his or her life" (p. 135). Raphael argued that enjoyment occurs in three major domains of life: being, belonging, and becoming. Being recognises that people have physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions; belonging that people need to belong to physical places and social groups; and becoming that they need to distinguish themselves as individuals by pursuing their own goals and making their own choices and decisions (Raphael, 2002). See the table below.

Table 1

The Centre for Health Promotion's Domains of Quality of Life (Raphael, 2002, p. 136).

Domains	Subdomains	Contents
Being	Physical	Physical health, mobility, nutrition, exercise, fitness, and appearance
	Psychological	Independence, autonomy, self-acceptance, and freedom from stress
	Spiritual	Personal values and standards and spiritual beliefs
Belonging	Physical	Physical aspects of the immediate environment
	Social	Relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances
	Community	Availability of societal resources and services
Becoming	Practice	Home, school, and work activities
	Leisure	Indoor and outdoor activities, recreational resources
	Growth	Learning things, improving skills and relationships, adapting to life

Therefore, this study also makes a unique contribution to the field of ABSL by analysing and reporting on the student musicians' experiences through a quality of life lens. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study exploring student musicians' ABSL experiences through this particular theoretical model of quality of life. It complements other studies that have explored the links between a sense of belonging and well-being through other quality of life models, such as PERMA (Verneert et al., 2021; Waddington-Jones et al., 2020) and flourishing (Ansdell & DeNora, 2012). The research question driving this paper is: How did facilitating *therapeutic community music* (TCM) for, with, and alongside others support student musicians' experiences of belonging? Student musicians' experiences of being and becoming are discussed in other publications.

Situating TCM within the Broader Field of Health Musicking and Community Music

Over the last decade, research on the intersection amongst music, health, and well-being (e.g., MacDonald et al., 2012) across the fields of music education (e.g., Creech et al., 2020), community music (e.g., Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Willingham, 2021), and community music therapy (e.g., Ansdell, 2002; 2014; Ansdell & DeNora, 2012; Stige et al., 2010) has illustrated how musicking helps people to experience a sense of connection, belonging, agency, mutual care, amongst other benefits, which subsequently contribute to enhancing their overall quality of life. Bonde (2011) recognised four health-related benefits or "purposes" (p. 122)—the development of communities and values, the shaping and sharing of musical environments,

helping individuals, and the formation and development of identity—that musicking can support. In the same vein, Ruud (2012) underscored that engagement with the communal practice of musicking enhances four dimensions of quality of life: (a) vitality by boosting emotional life, aesthetic sensibility, and pleasures; (b) agency through mastery, empowerment, and social recognition; (c) belonging in networks and communities; and (d) meaning through continuity of tradition, transcendental values, and hope.

Ansdell (2014) and Moss et al. (2021) recognised that despite different community contexts, as illustrated by Aigen (2012), the practices and values shared amongst CoM therapists, therapeutic community musicians, and community musicians are often indistinguishable. They often share the same facilitation approaches, e.g., being collaborative and offering participants autonomy and agency through repertoire selection and during improvisation, composition, and arranging activities (Ansdell, 2014; Creech et al., 2021; Verneert et al., 2021). Moreover, they often share similar values, e.g., promoting inclusion, participation, hospitality, equality, and respect (Creech et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2021; Wood & Ansdell, 2018). However, the most salient differences might lie in the training these practitioners receive. For example, CoMTs receive specialised training as music therapists, which includes supervised clinical practice, where they use improvisation, songwriting, and lyric analysis to achieve specific goals and objectives for their clients (Murphy, 2018). Community musicians (CM), on the other hand, usually register on undergraduate or postgraduate programmes in music or community music where they study a principal instrument (including voice), participate in ensembles, take modules on a variety of music disciplines (e.g., music technology, music history, keyboard skills), and engage in community service learning initiatives (Willingham, 2021; Willingham & Carruthers, 2018).

The student musicians of the ABSL programme in focus were enrolled, like CMs, in a three-year bachelor in music degree that offered modules on the various music disciplines mentioned above. In addition, it offered two elective modules (each lasting 13 weeks in their second and third years of studies) on music for health and well-being in community settings. During these modules, students explored scholarship on the benefits of singing, e.g., for people with dementia (Vella-Burrows, 2012), Parkinson’s disease (Vella-Burrows & Hancox, 2012), struggles with mental health (Morrison & Clift, 2012), and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (Morrison & Clift, 2012). In preparation for their ABSL experience, the students observed a community musician for two weeks teach music classes in a local school for children with disabilities and a health practitioner facilitate two music sessions at a local care home for people with dementia. Further, the students engaged in ABSL for five weeks during each of the two elective modules in their second year at a community centre for healthy older people and in their third year at one of three community centres in the Southeast of England (one for older people with dementia; a charity providing

specialist end of life care, and a school for children with disabilities). The student musicians had no prior experience with TCM. I was the tutor in both modules. My background is in music education with specialisation in primary school music, children's choirs, and research experience in music for well-being projects. I facilitated all seminars and workshops prior to the ABSL programme and then mentored the students during the ABSL programme sessions. There was no input from a music therapist as part of the teaching of these modules (see the conclusion and recommendations section of this paper).

The core values of this ABSL TCM programme, which strongly resonate CoMT values (Ansdell & Stige, 2016, pp. 603-4), enabled the participants in the care facilities we served to experience:

- freedom to engage in musicking in personally meaningful and creative ways and through connecting with relatives, carers, and the music facilitators;
- equality and inclusion, in terms of their access to the resources used, the attention that they could receive from the facilitators and the other participants; and
- respect from their fellow musickers for their contribution to musicking, whether as a soloist or as a part of the group.

A core value was also to enable the student musicians to experience solidarity with the participants in the care facilities we served through an enhanced sense of belonging, purpose, and shared identity as music makers.

Higher Education Students' Experiences of Belonging through ABSL

The following section reviews three programmes from around the world (similar to the UK ABSL programme that this study explored) where higher education students reported experiences of belonging in the communities they served. These experiences appeared to be transformative, significantly impacting the student musicians' quality of life. Although these studies did not explicitly link experiences of belonging with quality of life, the findings of each study reflected the three subdomains of belonging—physical, social, and community—as described by Raphael (2002).

Harrop-Allin (2017) described an ABSL community music programme coordinated by Wits University (Johannesburg, South Africa), which took place in rural north-eastern Limpopo province over three days. During the daytime, the student musicians facilitated music and drama workshops in local schools. At night, the students stayed with local families. Harrop-Allin analysed student diary entries and essays and found that students felt physical, social, and community belonging. Physical belonging came from lacking personal space and a strong culture they experienced during their homestays of sharing everything. Social belonging was facilitated through music sharing in homestays enabling them to build relationships with the host family, e.g., adults showed the student musician steps of local dances whilst the children

played musical games with them. Finally, community belonging developed through exploring local musical cultures, which helped student musicians advance their improvisation skills and “to realise [their] own creativity in being less restricted by the expectations in western music” (p. 241).

Bartleet et al. (2016) reported on an ABSL community music programme for and with Indigenous communities in Australia. The student musicians and Indigenous community members built intercultural relationships through jamming, songwriting, performing, and sharing hands-on tasks. The authors reported instances where student musicians reflected on physical belonging, for example, in Circle Stories performances, where all performers physically faced each other. The student musicians also had opportunities to use music to connect and learn about each other and to socialise and interact with the Indigenous communities before and after musical exchanges, also described by the authors as “facing others together” (p. 173) (social belonging). Lastly, the programme offered networking opportunities, creative exploration, learning a new work ethic, and appreciating cultural and other differences (community belonging).

Finally, Feen-Calligan and Matthews (2016) reported on an ABSL programme for music education and art therapy students in the United States. The music education students offered instrumental group music lessons to homeschooled children who visited them on the university campus. The art therapy students participated as service learners in different community settings (e.g., a children’s hospital, a soup kitchen, programmes for senior citizens). The importance of experiencing a sense of belonging to a community emerged prominently through the students’ reflections, artwork, and surveys. The music education students, for instance, reflected upon creating a sense of physical belonging by using a larger font in printouts of music scores to support the inclusion of learners who required extra visual support. Similarly, in terms of social belonging, the music education students reflected on their team teaching experiences and how they built connections with the children to understand their motivations and beliefs about learning a musical instrument. The programme facilitated community belonging through relationship building between the university and the different agencies and their participants, e.g., art therapy students spoke about creating networks as a community resource that could support their learning and improve their practice. In summary, the three ABSL programmes shed light on how experiences of physical, social, and community belonging enriched the students’ learning and positively influenced their quality of life.

Methodology, Methods, and Sample

Data were collected between 2014 – 2017 from three different cohorts of undergraduate student musicians (fifty student musicians aged 19-26 and one student musician in their mid-

40s. Total n= 51, 6 males and 45 females⁴). This UK-based study was exploratory in nature and adopted a phenomenological strategy (Williamon et al., 2021) to explore and understand how the experiences of facilitating TCM with, for, and alongside others supported student musicians' academic, civic, and personal learning. Although, typically, interviews provide the primary source of data in phenomenological studies (Williamon et al., 2021), the data for this study came from reflective logs and feedback forms.⁵ Engaging in written and spoken critical reflection is a core component of ABSL experiences (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Bartleet et al., 2016; Harrop-Allin, 2017; Feen-Calligan & Matthews, 2016); therefore, at the end of each session, the student musicians—whether they facilitated or participated—were encouraged to write a short reflection, which they discussed with their tutor and fellow learners during on-campus seminars. The third-year student musicians expanded on their reflections by editing them to compose an essay on their experiences of ABSL as part of the final module assessment. In the essay, the third-years wrote about their experiences of observing and facilitating, offered examples of facilitation methods they adopted,⁶ and outlined the challenges they faced. All reflective essays were graded at the end of the module by me (the tutor) and a second staff member.

After reading the responses to the feedback forms and the reflective essays, I decided not to undertake individual or focus group interviews with the second or third-year student musicians as their written responses provided rich and in-depth narratives on their ABSL experiences (see limitations). Finally, given that both the feedback forms and reflective essays focused on understanding the student musicians' experiences of and learning through ABSL, the data were combined during the final stage of analysis (deductive analysis).

On the whole, 81 sources were analysed as part of this study. These included 36 individual reflective essays (RE) (from third-year student musicians); 40 feedback forms (FF) (from second and third-year student musicians); four lesson plans (LP) devised by four different groups of student musicians and used when they facilitated TCM with different music groups

⁴ The student musicians in this study only identified as female (F) or male (M).

⁵ The feedback forms asked: How did this [ABSL] experience support your education? How could this experience support your future career? What did you enjoy the most from your ABSL experience? What skills do you feel that you have developed from facilitating TCM for others? What skills would you like to develop further? How do you need to be supported to develop these skills further? How do you need to be supported to be creative?

⁶ The six methods of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1989), namely: modelling, coaching, scaffolding and fading, articulation, reflection, and exploration, were adopted as a framework to support the student musicians' planning, action, and reflection. To develop music leadership skills, the student musicians explored the three orientations to facilitation (gatekeeper, midwife, or fellow traveler) proposed by Jones (2005). Student musicians' responses around facilitation methods and orientations (also described by the student musicians as facilitator styles) are discussed elsewhere.

in the community (from cohorts 1 and 2); and written feedback from one stakeholder offered unprompted. The stakeholder offered written consent to include the feedback in the data. To protect student anonymity, gender (Female – F or Male – M) and a number allocated to each student will be used alongside information on the cohort and the source, for example, F2, Coh2, RE.

TCM Session Structure

The sessions typically started with physical and vocal warm-ups, followed by group singing of repertoire familiar to the participants, which aligns with existing practice in community music and music therapy (Creech et al., 2014; Moss et al., 2021). Short performances by the student musicians engaged the participants in music listening, leading to group discussions that were part of the formal session but often continued over a short tea/coffee break. The sessions resumed with singing repertoire new to the participants and creative activities such as short improvisations. The sessions concluded with cool-downs or guided relaxation activities. The repertoire for each session was selected by the student musicians in consultation with the tutor. Each session was facilitated by a different group of four or five student musicians. The expression *for, with, and alongside others* has been adopted to illustrate that when a specific group of student musicians facilitated the musical activities, the rest of the cohort and the tutor were present in all the sessions, seated alongside the community participants and making music with them, whilst offering musical and emotional support to the facilitators.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to undertake this study was sought and obtained at departmental and faculty levels. Feedback forms were distributed to all second and third-year student musicians and completed anonymously at the end of each module. At the bottom of each feedback form, the students could opt in or out of the study. The final draft of the reflective essays of the third-year student musicians who opted into the study was included in the analysis.

Approach to Analysis

Data were analysed thematically using NVivo 12 with open, axial, and selective coding (Creswell, 2007). The open coding process involved identifying categories achieved via regular examination of the written data and repeated coding and comparisons. Axial coding followed, where blocks of categories were grouped into themes. During this first inductive stage of analysis, I analysed the feedback forms, reflective essays, and lesson plans separately. Lastly, I used selective coding to map key themes onto the domains and sub-domains of quality of life identified by Raphael (2002). During this second stage of deductive analysis, I combined the data from the different data sources. Table 2 (on the following page) presents

axial and selective coding examples and several coded references to illustrate how the analysis was undertaken. Some categories, such as *placing participants in a circle* and *intergenerational connections through musicking*, were mentioned extensively by the student musicians (73 references in 27 different documents; and 33 references in 26 different documents, respectively). Other categories, such as *enjoying being a music leader* and *community as a resource for network building*, were scarcely mentioned (2 references in 2 documents, respectively).

Table 2

Experiencing Belonging through Facilitating TCM with, for, and Alongside Others – Student Musicians' Responses

Belonging			
Sub-domains	Categories	Documents	References
Physical – Physical aspects of the immediate environment	Placing participants in a circle	16	47
	Using printed copies	8	17
	Using name labels	5	6
	Experiencing physical rejection	4	4
Social – Relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances	Intergenerational connections	26	30
	Socialising during break time over tea and coffee	7	28
	Making participants happy through musicking	20	25
	Experiencing anxiety as a music leader	3	3
	Experiencing enjoyment as a music leader	2	2
Community – Availability of societal resources and services	Community as creativity resource	15	18
	Community as a resource for feedback	8	10
	Community as a resource for network building	2	2

Findings

This section illustrates how the student musicians wrote about their experiences of physical, social, and community belonging whilst facilitating TCM for others.

Physical Belonging

Raphael (2002) described physical belonging in relation to the physical aspects of the immediate environment. The student musicians reported that during their sessions, they placed the participants in a circle (47 References in 16 documents) to promote social interaction for all involved (F27, Coh2, RE) and to create a sense of “collective,” a “musical bubble” (F12, Coh1, RE). At the same time, a circular formation reportedly allowed those student musicians facilitating to become more collaborative in their facilitation approach (“[I adopted] a midwife facilitator style,” F25, Coh2, RE).

Within health musicking, it is imperative to allow each participant to feel as if they belong within the group and are just as important to the group as anyone else...For example, sitting in a circular formation, whether it's sitting on the floor for young children or sitting on chairs for more elderly patients such as the sufferers of dementia...I believe the activities should be conducted in a circular formation so that every individual can see one another and the facilitator equally and feel part of the group. (F27, Coh2, RE)

Furthermore, the student musicians used resources such as printed copies in large font sizes (17 references, 8 documents) or name labels (6 references, 5 documents) to promote inclusion for all involved.

I typed the lyrics of the songs and presented them clearly with a suitable font size to ensure clarity when reading, and then I photocopied plenty of copies for everyone. (F1, Coh1, RE)

We ...wrote [the name of each participant] down on a label and gave it to them to stick on their chest so that throughout the session, we would be able to use their names. This is a good thing to do for older participants, as they will feel more empowered as an individual in the group if the music facilitator can address them by name during the session. It also allows the participants to call the facilitators by name, as we wear name labels, too, which makes them feel less vulnerable around strangers by bringing familiarity. (F4, Coh1, RE)

Lastly, on one particular occasion, some session participants withdrew from the rehearsal space for the duration of the session but reappeared at the end. The student musicians experienced this withdrawal as rejection: They felt that participants did not want to belong to the music group. This rejection reportedly had a negative impact on their confidence as music leaders.

If there is a negative energy about the group at the time of the music sessions, then the facilitator may not feel completely comfortable, which can affect the whole session. I can recall when this happened to me at [location], and members of the group called out that they found the session boring and were not enjoying themselves. For me, this really knocked my confidence, and I struggled to continue the session, partly through anger but mostly I was hurt and upset. (F9, Coh1, RE)

Social Belonging

Social belonging refers to the human need to create relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances (Raphael, 2002). Facilitating TCM with, for, and alongside others gave the student musicians opportunities to create intergenerational connections (30 references, 26 documents), to socialise with seniors over tea and coffee breaks (28 references, 7 documents), and to enhance the participants' happiness through musicking (25 references, 20 documents).

Intergenerational Connections

Talking to the [older] people there about their families made me feel like part of a community, and I could see that the social interaction we provided for those people there made a real difference, bringing joy to those who are often isolated. (F4, Coh1, RE)

Socialising During Break Time

...we had a tea break halfway through the sessions in order to give the participants a chance to socialise with not only each other but also with all of the music facilitators who were running the sessions. We ensured that all of the participants were included in a conversation, and it was rewarding to hear the members talk about how much they were enjoying the sessions. In particular, one man talked about how he had felt awful that morning and had not wanted to get out of bed, but he did and said he felt so much better and that the session had made him uplifted in spirit after joining in. (F2, Coh2, RE)

Enjoyment By Making Participants Happy

Also, I enjoyed playing piano in front of them [children with disabilities], as they were clearly listening to it attentively. By the end of the session, they seemed lively, both physically and mentally. I was very happy that the pupils seemed to have enjoyed the session. (F5, Coh1, RE)

Three facilitators also spoke about instances where they experienced anxiety in their efforts to effectively promote social belonging. They managed, however, to overcome it through thorough preparation.

...I found myself becoming very nervous before the session as I felt it was a high-pressure situation where I was responsible for the well-being and enjoyment of the participants. Ways in which I tackled these nerves were by having real-time rehearsals with my fellow participants where we imagined and dealt with scenarios that may have occurred and by ensuring that if one of us encountered any difficulty that we could not overcome, another of us would step in to help. (M1, Coh1, RE)

Finally, two facilitators underscored that being a group leader led them to experience a greater sense of connectedness with and belonging to the group they facilitated.

I would facilitate shared leadership principles in a group by firstly allowing each member who wanted to, take turns in giving suggestions of songs that they may wish to perform with others, and with each new session, every participant will get the opportunity to play or sing/perform their choice of repertoire (F30, Coh2, RE).

Community Belonging

According to Raphael (2002), humans need to belong to social groups to draw upon for emotional, material, or other support. The student musicians reported that the communities they served became resources for creativity. For instance, they “bounced [musical] ideas [about the materials and the activities] off each other” (F11, Coh1, FF), and they “shared” their ideas with their community groups and “gained more confidence” to develop them (F7, Coh1, FF). Moreover, participants and colleagues “encouraged [their] ideas” and made them “believe that they are actually good!” (M1, Coh1, FF).

In addition, the student musicians reported receiving supportive feedback on their facilitation approaches and the repertoire they used from fellow musicians who attended the sessions, the tutor, the community participants, and the managers of the organisations served. This feedback boosted the student musicians’ confidence.

On my second visit, the participants liked to shout out comments and suggestions. Even though this might seem like a distraction, it was helpful to know if they were enjoying each activity within the session. The participants were happy to discuss which songs were their favourites and what they would like to sing again. (F2, Coh1, RE)

The recital was well received, the listeners clapped enthusiastically, and the student regained her confidence and led the harmony activity at a later session. She confided in me that she was pleased with the opportunity to lead the activity and had regained her self-assurance. (F1, Coh1, RE)

Finally, some student musicians reported building a network of contacts (from centre managers to fellow facilitators) that could potentially support their future professional careers. In her reflective essay, one of the student musicians nicely captured the essence of community belonging through TCM as a two-way process whereby both the individual and the community experience mutual benefits.

On reflection...community work through music could benefit everyone as we can learn from each other and share our experiences. Patients want to feel that they can give, and therefore, caring is a two-way process. (F1, Coh1, RE)

Discussion

According to Raphael (2002), who provided the theoretical model for this study, enjoying a sense of belonging to physical spaces and social groups contributes to an enhanced quality of life. Raphael's concept of belonging applied in the analysis of the data from student musicians' reflections and feedback was useful in shedding light on how the physical environment and its resources influenced these students' orientations to facilitation when planning for the inclusion of all involved in their sessions. It also supported them in developing resilience as leaders. Moreover, it revealed that intergenerational musical and social interactions were enjoyable and enriching for them, leading them to appreciate their role as music facilitators in the communities they served (Ansdell & DeNora, 2012; Mitchell, 2021; Verneert et al., 2021). Finally, the concept of community belonging helped to illustrate that the communities they interacted with supported their academic, personal, and civic development in aspects such as creativity and confidence through offering and receiving feedback and by joining community networks (Ansdell, 2014; Bartleet et al., 2016; Verneert et al., 2021).

Small (1998) recognised that physical space shapes social space. The student musicians used a circular layout to satisfy the session participants' sense of belonging to the physical environment where the sessions took place. This allowed for better eye contact, listening, and communication amongst all circle participants, which were particularly useful in the sessions with seniors (Creech et al., 2014) and children with disabilities. Circular formats facilitated connections that led to experiences of enjoyment, togetherness, and sharing of the musical environment (Bonde, 2011). This finding is aligned with community music and CoMT studies that have adopted circular and semi-circular formats in group music-making sessions (Ansdell, 2012; Bartleet et al., 2016; Moss et al., 2021). Furthermore, Hess (2012) emphasised that circular formats nurture a pedagogy of community. To maximise experiences of equality and access to resources for all, the student musicians used printed copies in large font sizes and name labels that could enable all to address each other by name, making them feel included and valued, as found by Feen-Calligan and Matthews (2016). These approaches celebrated equality and inclusion, core values shared across CoMT, TCM, and CM.

At the same time, when some participants chose not to engage in a session by withdrawing to another physical space, the student musicians' experiences of musical togetherness and belonging were disrupted. Whilst this choice led some student musicians to experience rejection, which challenged their confidence as musical leaders, it helped illustrate the two faces of musical hospitality: when hosts can suddenly become guests and guests hosts (Ansdell, 2014; Higgins, 2007). These disruptions celebrate each individual's freedom to musick (or not) in personally meaningful ways, honouring community music's commitment to access as open-ended (Higgins, 2007). These disruptive experiences also showed the student musicians of this study that TCM facilitators should always be prepared for uncomfortable moments during music sessions.

According to Raphael (2002), social belonging concerns the human need to connect with others through building relationships. Intergenerational musical interactions and social interactions during breaks made the student musicians happy to contribute to the participants' happiness. Over tea and coffee breaks, musical hospitality and conviviality between guests and hosts were enhanced (Ansdell, 2014; Creech et al., 2014; Stige et al., 2010). Moreover, the quote from the student musician who overcame his anxiety around group facilitation by systematically rehearsing with his fellow musicians illustrated the positive force that experiencing social belonging to the group one works with could bring to one's practice and confidence.

Experiencing community belonging empowered the student musicians to seek and receive support and feedback from fellow student musicians, session participants, and stakeholders on developing their musical creativity and leadership skills. This connects to the studies by Bartleet et al. (2016) and Harrop-Allin (2017) discussed earlier. Building a community network with fellow musicians and stakeholders could also support student musicians professionally (Bonde, 2011; Feen-Calligan & Matthews, 2016).

In summary, experiences of physical, social, and community belonging (Raphael, 2002) enhanced the quality of life for the student musicians of this study and allowed them to

- experience agency as music leaders,
- feel a sense of meaning as musicians using their musical and social skills to improve others' quality of life, and
- manage and express feelings of rejection and anxiety that they had experienced during this ABSL programme.

Limitations of the Study

First, it is important to acknowledge that only ABSL programmes published in peer-reviewed academic journals and books have been reviewed as part of this study. Potentially significant unpublished projects from around the world that link ABSL with health musicking remain excluded from scholarly work when their inclusion could make a unique contribution to both theory-research and practice-research on TCM. Second, the tutor-student relationship could have led to a potential bias on the part of the student musicians' responses: I taught the students and assessed their work; therefore, their responses to the feedback forms and reflective essays might be positively biased. These personal biases may have influenced the findings of this study. Third, there might also be a bias in sampling as the student musicians who selected the modules and opted to participate in the study might be the ones who enjoyed their ABSL experiences. Fourth, there is a gender bias in the sample: The female student musicians who selected the modules outnumbered the male musicians. Fifth, the surveys were modified slightly each year,⁷ not allowing all student cohorts to answer the same questions. Finally, as this ABSL programme primarily focused on the student musicians' learning experiences through TCM, the students were never explicitly asked about their experiences of belonging. In hindsight, interviews could have provided more elaborate personal narratives on experiences of belonging and links to quality of life.

Conclusions and Recommendations

⁷ For example, the question "how do you need to be supported to be creative?" was included in the first year's feedback form but then removed.

This study suggested that facilitating TCM with, for, and alongside others supported (and often restored) the student musicians' quality of life. This was achieved by promoting a sense of (a) freedom to engage in musicking in personally meaningful and creative ways; and (b) equality and inclusion by respecting the contributions of all involved in musicking.

Furthermore, all participants demonstrated solidarity with individuals experiencing challenges with a lack of confidence or leadership experience. Therefore, ABSL programmes in TCM, as outlined in this study, can be used as interventions within higher education environments and beyond to enhance facilitators' (students and staff) quality of life. Moreover, using their musicianship to serve others positively impacted student musicians' sense of meaning in pursuing music studies (see also Perkins et al., 2018; Willingham & Carruthers, 2018). Regardless of their musical specialisation (e.g., in performance, composition, musicology, or education), higher education programmes have a responsibility to encourage student musicians to consider how their musicianship could be shared with and communicated to a variety of audiences for entertainment, learning, or leisure (Bartleet et al., 2016; Willingham & Carruthers, 2018). Harrop-Allin (2017) argued that "as opposed to a culture of individuality that may characterise professional arts degrees" (p. 246), ABSL programmes could help cultivate students' civic and social responsibility. Furthermore, combined with regular critical reflections on one's learning (Eyler et al., 1996), ABSL programmes in higher education could be uniquely placed to support student musicians' academic and personal learning and career trajectories.

This study proposed that ABSL experiences should be embedded in all higher education programmes and be valued as core and regular educational experiences for all learners. Serving the same community groups, even for the short period of five weeks as in this programme, was instrumental in enabling student musicians to "develop a committed relationship with the community" (Cloete & Erasmus, 2012, p. 4) that could lead to experiences of musical togetherness and belonging.

Group singing was a central activity in this ABSL programme on TCM. Future ABSL programmes on TCM could explore how drum circles, listening, and improvisatory activities in various musical genres could promote and sustain an enhanced quality of life for all people involved in the sessions, including facilitators, participants, and stakeholders. Encouraging more student musicians specialising in jazz, folk, traditional or world musics, composition, improvisation, musicology, and music technology to get involved could truly enrich TCM practice. In addition, input from different specialists working across the spectrum of health musicking (e.g., music therapists, music educators, and community musicians), as well as across different forms of performing arts (e.g., dancers, dance therapists, drama educators, drama therapists) could make higher education student musicians' preparation in TCM richer and well-rounded capitalising on the power of the arts to promote quality of life. Lastly, as

participatory music-making moves to online environments, it would be worth exploring how a sense of belonging is experienced by student musicians in virtual spaces and to what extent virtual TCM promotes physical, social, and community belonging for all involved.

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