Leading together, learning together: Music education and music therapy students' perceptions of a shared practicum

Julie Ballantyne, School of Music, The University of Queensland

Felicity A. Baker, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne

Abstract

The health benefits of musical engagement extend across the lifespan (Cohen, Baily, & Nilsson, 2002), with research documenting developmental and quality of life outcomes in senior adulthood (Hays & Minichiello, 2005). Whilst the psychological functions of music include three broad domains: cognitive, emotional and social (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002), North and Hargreaves (2008) argue that the social factors of music consumption have been for the most part ignored. This project is predicated on the understanding that students 'construct' their own knowledge through engagement with others. It also reflects the belief that it is possible to link the world of learning with a world of action through a reflective process with small cooperative learning groups.

This paper reports on a collaborative creativity leadership project implemented by music therapy and music education students. In particular, it explores the perceptions of the students as they employed a teaching/therapeutic intervention with ageing participants from a local private retirement village. The project involved lyric rewriting and singing performance. Drawing on the students' reflective journals and interview transcripts, four themes emerged relating to students' perceptions of the learning experience. These themes were: learning about facilitating, learning about self, learning about the musical process and learning about the context/ageing. Each of these themes is explored before conclusions about the process of leading a creative collaboration are drawn. The implications of this analysis extend beyond the context of a retirement village, and into various educational and therapeutic contexts where creative collaboration is facilitated.

Keywords: collaborative practicum, music teacher education, music therapy, retirees, work-integrated learning

Collaborative approaches to learning

This paper reports on a project involving music therapy and music education students who worked collaboratively with a group of retirees to create original lyrics to known songs, which were subsequently performed in a public setting. This process will be referred to as 'lyric rewriting', and this paper will explore the perceptions of the students as they implemented the teaching/therapy, to determine what they learned through the collaborative process.

Potential sites of employment for music education and music therapy graduates are continually expanding as the value of music as a lifelong pursuit is increasingly recognised. Given this, we (the authors) regarded it as important that students be exposed to novel potential sites of employment and experience applying theoretical knowledge in unfamiliar settings (such as retirement villages). Knowing that their ways of implementing a lyric rewriting session would emerge from different disciplinary stances, we also wanted to explore how students from the two disciplines could collaborate in this venture. This paper details the initial findings of our project in relation to the students' perceptions of its impact on their learning.

According to Biggs (1996), learning is a way of interacting with the world. Through his constructivist lens he argues that good teaching is about engaging students in the use of higher cognitive level processes, which is achieved when they construct their own knowledge. Collaborative learning has been considered one approach that facilitates such engagement. This pedagogical approach involves students working collaboratively, in groups of two or more, through a process of mutual searching that leads to understanding, making meaning, or creating a product (Dillenbourg, 1999). Boud (2001) postulates that in sharing knowledge, ideas and experience between students, there is a move from independent learning to interdependent learning whereby students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and through participating in activities involving peers.

Panitz (2000) outlines 67 benefits of collaborative learning, including academic, social, and psychological benefits. The academic benefits include: the promotion of critical thinking skills, engaging students actively in the learning process, the exploration of problems in a safe environment, and accommodation of different learning styles. Social benefits include the

development of interpersonal relationships and a social support system for students. Such learning also: fosters greater ability to view situations from others' perspectives (developing empathy), enables students to learn how to criticise ideas rather than people, develops team-building abilities while maintaining individual accountability, and facilitates the development of learning communities. Finally, the psychological benefits include the building of students' self-esteem, increased satisfaction with learning, promotion of mastery, and reduction of anxiety that is triggered by classroom activities.

Methodology

The researchers aimed to explore the perceived impact of this initiative. We approached this topic guided by the perspective that students construct their own knowledge through engagement with others; in this case, peers, faculty, clinical practicum supervisors, and clients (see Wiggins, 2009). A learning-in-action model links the world of learning with a world of action through a reflective process with small cooperative learning groups (Schon, 1995). With this in mind, the aims of the study were:

1. To understand and evaluate the educational outcomes for students and retirement village participants when: lyric-writing groups are established and facilitated by students, and; the song creations are subsequently performed by the retirees in a public performance.
2. To explore and compare music therapy and music education students' perceptions of the process of engaging in composing song lyrics (therapeutically and educationally) with retirees.
3. To explore the perceived impact of this project in terms of lifelong learning and music therapy in the aged care sector.

Project participants

In this project, eight female university students volunteered their time to facilitate and participate in a lyric rewriting initiative with residents at a retirement village. Lyric rewriting is one of a range of therapeutic song-writing methods that have emerged in recent music therapy literature (Baker, Wigram, Stott, & McFerran, 2008, 2009). The approach typically enables participants to rewrite the lyrics to a pre-composed song. Such approaches have been found to be invaluable in assisting older people to remain cognitively active and share in

meaningful group activities (Baker & Ballantyne, 2012; Hong & Choi, 2011; Silber & Hes, 1995).

Over the course of three weeks, eight students conducted five lyric rewriting sessions with residents. There were four music education students (Susan, Rosanne, Brianna, Josie) and four music therapy students (Eloise, Annabelle, Sophie, Carol). Overseen by a university supervisor (Baker) and nursing staff throughout the process, they then facilitated a performance of the songs. Sessions took place in the retirement village auditorium, which was a large performing space, and each session was 90 minutes in duration.

Tables and chairs were set up in a circle and each of the student participants was evenly interspersed between the eight retiree participants, offering individual support when needed. Keyboards, guitars and songbooks were provided, and songs were chosen in collaboration with the retirees. This ensured that the melodies were already known and had some meaning to the learners. While all student participants were co-leaders and offered an opportunity to direct sessions, there was a tendency for one music education student to adopt a leadership role. Sessions took the following format:

Session 1: Student participants introduced themselves and explained what the project would entail over the three weeks. The students engaged the group of retiree participants in a sing-a-long of songs that were culturally and age appropriate. Students then introduced the concept of lyric rewriting to the retiree participants and provided an example created by a student.

Sessions 2–5: Guided by Baker's process (2005) (see Table 1), students facilitated the brainstorming of ideas from the group and assisted them to summarise their ideas coherently. The new lyrics were then co-created, with the students supporting the retiree participants in the process. In each subsequent session, time was spent singing the song they had written. During session 5, a substantial portion of the session was devoted to rehearsing for the performance.

Session 6: Student and retiree participants formed a choral group and sang the songs in a concert for an audience of residents from the retirement village. Retiree participants took turns in introducing the songs and offering comments about how the songs were created or what they were about.

Table 1. Songwriting protocol (Baker, 2005)

Stage	Description
Introduction and singing of songs (approximately 10 minutes)	The student participants led the group in a short song singing activity (between 3-5 songs).
Generating a range of topics to write about (approximately 10 minutes)	Students used probing techniques (Egan, 2010) to stimulate retiree participants to suggest topics on which to write lyrics as well as providing retiree participants with songbooks to peruse as a means of generating ideas. Student participants noted down ideas as they were raised by retiree participants.
Brainstorm ideas directly related to the chosen topic (30 minutes)	Various techniques were used by the students to stimulate autobiographical recall. These included: discussing the lyrics of songs used during the song singing activity, reviewing lyrics in song books, and continued use of the probing techniques (such as wh questions – what, which, where, when, why, who, and how) to stimulate retiree participants to tell their story. A further technique used was to ask each retiree participant to write down 5 ideas related to the topic on a piece of paper and these were then read out to the group.
Select a song for parody (5 minutes)	Retiree participants selected a song that was used for the parody. Student participants facilitated this process.
Identify the principal idea/ thought/emotion/concept (5 minutes)	The ideas generated earlier were reviewed and the main idea/thought and emotion identified
Group related ideas together (5 minutes)	The ideas generated were reviewed, 'like' ideas were grouped together, and some ideas were discarded. New ideas often emerged during this phase.
Construct lyrics (20 minutes)	Lyrics were composed which included the ideas generated by the group. At times, student and/or retiree participants made suggestions for changes to allow the lyrics to have a 'better fit' with the music.

Working with retirees who were 'well'[i] presented an opportunity for students to develop skills where they did not have a duty of care obligation. The risks of the participants being in danger were not greater than that in the general public. They were ably supported by nurses, a university supervisor and the retirement village manager - all of whom could have stepped in if assistance was deemed to be necessary (it was not). This experience was therefore

substantially different from the likely future experiences of students with children and those who are vulnerable and ill, and where duty of care is a more pressing issue. It thus enabled skill development in an environment that was safe for both student and retiree participants.

Data collection

For this paper, drew upon on the following data sources: student participant journals, and a focus group interview.

Student participant journals.

Throughout the 3 weeks, students kept a journal of their observations and reflections. They noted down their experiences of being in the group, the observations of the retiree participants, challenges they experienced, and highlights from the sessions. These were utilised to explore and compare music therapy and music education students' perceptions of the process of engaging in lyric rewriting (**research aim 2**). Students were asked to reflect on ways in which the experience influenced the residents (**research aim 1**), and their perceptions of the effects of the project in terms of lifelong learning and music therapy with older people (**research aim 3**). Students used pseudonyms for the residents and themselves within these diaries.

Focus group interview.

In the week following the concert (on July 24, 2009), a focus group interview of 90 minutes duration was conducted with the eight student participants. The interview explored the participants' perceptions of the lyric rewriting and performance experiences, addressing all three of the research aims. Students were asked to comment specifically on how the experiences affected the retiree participants, and what benefits they considered the retirees to have gained from the experience. Specific questions posed were:

- What do you think you learnt through being involved in this process?
- What do you think others learnt?
- What was good about this experience?
- In what ways do you think it could be changed for the better?

- What did you learn about the other participants in the process? How will this impact on you in the future?
- What health benefits (if any) did you feel were a result of this process?
- What do you think the specific benefits of lyric rewriting are for retirees?
- What did you learn about one another/yourself from the musical and lyrical choices made in the lyric rewriting process?

Analysis

In order to determine the key themes emerging in response to our research questions, the authors followed Creswell's (2005) stages of content analysis. In this way the data analysis addressed the research aims. The process of analysis was as follows:

1. Each researcher independently read the data, noting emergent themes, and cross-comparing these to ensure homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). Emergent categories were initially clustered together, causing (in some cases) the emergence of sub-themes and new themes.

2. Following the initial independent grouping into themes, the authors compared their findings and made adjustments as necessary to ensure that: themes with sub-themes held together meaningfully, and; themes were distinct from one another. Labels for categories were also adjusted at this stage to ensure that they truly represented the content within. The categories were re-examined for similar content, and the data set as a whole re-examined to ensure that no themes had been excluded.

3. Throughout the process of analysis and writing, the raw data were frequently re-checked and themes revisited to check, question or support various arguments as the analysis was written.

Results and Discussion

Drawing on the reflective journals and the interview transcripts, four themes emerged relating to students' perceptions of the learning experience. These themes were: learning about

facilitating, learning about self, learning about the musical process, and learning about the context/ageing. Each of these themes emerged inductively.

Learning about facilitating

During the first session, two sets of students—each comprised of two students from music therapy and two students from music education—implemented an introductory session with small groups of retirees. Over the course of this session introductions were made, and the students proceeded to orient residents to the program. This orientation included vocal warm-up activities, singing some songs and demonstrations of basic song parody approaches. At the conclusion of the group work, a discussion was held to enable reflection on the effectiveness of the session, and feedback was given to students including the need to incorporate activities that engaged residents more actively in the music creation process.

From the second session onwards, due to the small numbers of participating residents, the two groups were merged. This required students to adapt to the new context, including re-negotiating leadership and support roles. From this session onwards students realised that they needed to spread out among the residents to provide more individualised attention, and to ensure that all of the residents' contributions were acknowledged.

By day three some of the students were naturally emerging as leaders in the group, whereas others were more comfortable taking a supportive role. By day four, it was noticeable that there was an increased cohesion in the group, and that quieter participants were beginning to feel more confident as part of the group.

By the time of the concert, retiree participants were able to take an active role in running the performance. Here, the students were supporters rather than leaders and had the critical role of ensuring the fluidity of the performance.

The theme 'learning about facilitating' includes the following sub-themes, each of which will be explored separately below: interaction and communication skills; planning and flexibility; leadership and group cohesion; and managing diverse personalities.

Interaction and communication skills

When beginning to facilitate groups in new situations, both the music therapy and the music education students commented on their need to reconsider their communication approaches:

> Susan: I used to think, 'Well, how will I put this into a sentence?' or . . . 'I know what I'm talking about but how will I speak it?'. This for me was a really good [opportunity] to prove to myself that I really can put [my thoughts] into a sentence and actually 'say something'. . . . A lot of the time I'm saying 'um, um, um' and my Dad's always saying 'stop saying um' or 'like' or 'whatever'. And um, see, (everyone laughs). For me to stop that . . . was challenging for me . . . and that was good.
>
> Eloise: We need some work on . . . slowing our speech as well as speaking loudly and clearly.
>
> (Interview, July 24, 2009)

As part of this, students needed to re-consider the ways that they interacted with the group participants, and how to balance the fact that they were young people leading more experienced and senior members of society.

> If you give someone enough rein so that they feel important and can say what they want to say, then in theory they should respect what you have to say because you let them speak. Rosanne, Interview, July 24, 2009)
>
> I noticed that some members who don't speak up often were able to contribute [when] asked directly. They seem to need a little extra encouragement; more than the ones who are quite vocal. (Eloise, Journal reflection, July 11, 2009)
>
> It was quite difficult with Bronwyn today as she was quite rude and unpleasant to others in the group. However, I think she felt uncomfortable and didn't quite know what was going on and so she reacted this way. This was a good learning experience for me to see how group members can react to certain situations and how to deal with them. (Annabelle, Journal reflection, July 7, 2009)
>
> I think for me it was very much about 'respect the elder'. We didn't want to interrupt them because the way that they [were] brought up they would see that as being rude and we didn't want to come across like that in the first session. (Sophie, Journal, July 14, 2009)

Planning and flexibility

Throughout the process, the students increasingly realised the value of planning sessions to ensure that residents achieved predetermined outcomes. Their plans were initially rigid and did not allow for unexpected events to arise.

I found our group quite challenging to keep as a cohesive whole, even through the introduction. All of the residents wanted to tell every little thing about their musical past, which was great, but we could not get a couple of them to stop talking. (Sophie, Journal reflection, June 30, 2009)

Although there was initially a lack of insight into why their plans were not fulfilling their objectives, guided supervision and reflection enabled their planning skills to develop over the course of the project. Towards the end of the project, the students' plans increasingly allowed for flexibility and they had clearer and more realistic outcomes.

Sophie: I think the last session we had was really quite productive. And that was when we had sat down and worked out this is exactly what we are going to do. And I think that maybe in retrospect, we should have done that beforehand but back at the beginning we didn't know what to expect or what they would want to do.

Carol: I think the last session when we actually had a plan, and we made that very clear in the first 5 minutes then everyone knew what to expect and that was fine. And we didn't have that for the other sessions and then it was sort of "ohh".

Eloise: It wasn't because it was the last session, I really think it was because we had a plan, we were all on the same page. . . . I noticed that our facilitating group (students) had some trouble delegating responsibility; probably because we did it on the fly. I think some more group work, planning meetings [were] necessary.

(Interview, September 24, 2009)

Over the course of the program students were faced with events that they could not predict. For example, students had a plan involving singing songs. What emerged in the session, however, was that the residents took the session as an opportunity to share their musical backgrounds with the students. The residents relished having their stories heard. Respectfully, the students' adjusted their expectations for what could be achieved in the session and modified their approach to accommodate the unfolding events.

Sophie: I think the first session was the most interesting because we had actually been in pairs and the pairs had talked and I know that I had learnt 10 songs but so had these guys and so when we all joined together we suddenly had 40 songs. For the first session we had slightly different plans of which way to go.

Rosanne: And I don't think any of those went to plan anyway because it was so important to them to share their musical background.

Eloise: And we wanted to feed off what the group wanted offered to us too. And so the plan didn't always work.

(Interview, September 24, 2009)

To practise effectively, both music educators and music therapists need to be adept at spontaneously adapting to ever-changing situations. Therefore, the development of flexibility is a key component of their professional knowledge and skills.

Leadership and group cohesion

The emerging roles that each student assumed changed over the course of the project. This was in part a product of the rapport they developed with the residents over time. Residents observably grew more confident in initiating and steering the group lyric creations. Students reflected on the nature of leadership, group cohesion, and the utilisation of the group's strengths to achieve goals. Through this process of reflection, the students realised that the residents within the group were far more capable of taking leadership roles than they had initially thought. By the conclusion of the program, the residents seemed empowered to own the process and their song creations.

> It was still really hard to keep the residents focused on what we were supposed to be doing. Even though we really needed to bring them back on task, I felt like I should not be interrupting what they had to say. It was the traditional 'respect your elders' and 'children should be seen and not heard' sort of business. I did not want to seem rude or upset any of the residents . . . I really liked the way that the residents of the lyric rewriting group interacted between themselves and with the audience. It was like no problems, arguments, or differences had occurred throughout the past three weeks of sessions. (Sophie, Journal reflection, July 4, 2009)

> I hadn't expected to form such pleasant and strong relationships with some of the residents, and originally felt a little apprehensive about becoming so close to some of them. I felt that the group dynamics had shifted quite considerably since early sessions. I felt that we weren't so much facilitating anymore, but friends and members of the group that ended up sharing something very special.
> (Annabelle. Journal reflection, July 18, 2009, day of the concert)

Questioning the nature of leadership and facilitation is important in the development of effective practitioners. The constant negotiation that needs to go on between teacher and student, therapist and client is one where music professionals are guiding their charges towards greater and greater independence over time.

Managing diverse personalities

During the composing of the song 'Good and Bad Memories', which was a song parody to the melody of 'My Grandfather's Clock', residents described their childhood experiences. It was evident to the group that some of the members had vastly different childhoods from others. For example, one resident was raised in a regional centre in the state of Victoria and found it difficult to relate to stories of childhoods in the city. The students were challenged to accommodate, acknowledge, and respect these differences and to incorporate all the residents' 'voices' into the song texts. Music education and music therapy practitioners will undoubtedly work with a range of people with complex life histories, family situations, and personality traits. Effectively managing groups comprising individuals from diverse backgrounds is central to the success of group facilitation. Much of the students' reflections focused on their approaches to dealing with negative situations, and exploring ways to turn the situation into an opportunity for growth.

> Sophie: And I don't know why I didn't expect this because my grandfather has a very strong personality. I suppose I never worked, I mean I can talk to my grandparents, I'm quite close to them but when you have a large group like that its different.

> Carol: I also found for people like Bronwyn who didn't have that type of relationship with us I didn't feel as though they were as big a part of the group as much as though like Harry who were very talkative. And Lex and Corine. Corine was very lovely but she was very shy. And she got very upset at one point and said, 'I don't feel like I belong here' because she felt she didn't have the ability to think of things and just bring things up like that. She needed time to think things through. And Lex, and Bronwyn who had that personality - however I'm sure she had her issues behind all that and I felt that they weren't really taken care of in the same way as those that were really easy going, and talkative, and happy.

> Susan: I kind of imagined myself in a high school classroom and Bronwyn being the really snotty bully person, and there's a couple of shy kids, and smart kids and Bronwyn would be the one trying to kick them down and have her own way. So I was kind of thinking how would I do that in a real classroom, to facilitate their learning so that they are all on the same page. That's kind of how I worked it in my mind. Corine was really quiet, and there [were] so many amazing things she had to say, and same with Lex but most of the time they sat back and it appeared as though they weren't listening or involved but then they'd come out with these really cool things–that's awesome. It was hard for me because I was sitting on one side of the table with Harry because he was always wanting me to come with him (everyone laughs) so I didn't know how else to connect with everybody else.

> (Interview, September 24, 2009,)

The diverse personalities found in this group context required the students to reconsider their role and ways to assist individuals in the group to effectively work together to produce an outcome. It also required them to negotiate the differences in personalities and approaches amongst themselves, as noted by Carol in her reflection after the first session:

> I think that is so far the biggest difference between music education/therapy – that they [education students] are more focused on the result (the songs and the concert) and we [music therapy students] are more focused on the process and how each individual should be in focus in addition to the group.
>
> (Carol, Journal reflection, July 4, 2009)

This was the only reference by any student to differences between music education and music therapy students.

As is often the case on practicum situations, when there is a sense of disequilibrium or conflict, this is when the students feel that they learn the most (in retrospect). This is consistent with the notion of cognitive equilibration proposed by Piaget, and discussed extensively in Fosnot and Perry (1996). In this case, it seemed that the students from each cohort had to re-imagine how the process should continue, given the different perspectives/backgrounds of the students from the other cohort. We would argue that the memories from these situations are useful to students when dealing with similar situations in their professional contexts.

Learning to interact appropriately with students or clients from various backgrounds (gender, age, culture and socio-economic status) is a crucial skill for both music teachers and music therapists. The opportunities that this project presented enabled the students to explore their abilities and skills in this realm, and to develop new skills and abilities in response to the challenges of the context.

Learning about self

The opportunities that a practicum experience such as this presents are rich and allow for students to grow in their understanding of themselves, both musically and professionally. The students' reflective accounts provide rich evidence of their growth in self-knowledge, which can then be applied to classroom and clinical settings. A greater understanding of professional and personal identity also lends itself to a deeper reflection on theoretical knowledge gained through university study. What was clearly seen in the accounts of the

students—in particular Carol, Annabelle, Sophie and Eloise—was that the experience opened their eyes to the unpredictability of teaching and clinical contexts. In reflecting on this, they acknowledged that these types of experiences could be confronting and uncomfortable, but that this was a place for further learning about themselves and their profession.

> I think I learned that nothing turns out to be the way that I expect it to be and I really need to work now to handle that. So for example when I was preparing for the first session we thought we're going to do this and that and blah, blah, blah and then it didn't happen and that made me feel quite insecure and I guess that something you should really be (pause) prepared for and I don't know how to really prepare for that. (Carol, Interview, September 24, 2009)

This practicum seemed to affect the students in different ways, but they had no difficulties seeing the impact it would have on their future practices as music teachers and therapists. Their positive attitude towards the experience was clear when quite a few of the students testified to a shift in their aspirations; whereas before they had not considered it an option, they could now imagine working with the older generation.

> Annabelle: I am more interested in working with old people.
> Sophie: Yeah.
> Eloise: Yeah.
> Annabelle: I think I could work in palliative care or something like that. I was thinking I'd work with children or teens and then I thought no, I could see myself, yeah.
> (Interview, September 24, 2009)

Others felt that the experience provided a rich opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired within their chosen career context—such as the music classroom—and that the intergenerational nature of the experience offered something additional, which would enable them to think of their students in a more individual way in the future.

> Susan: I think for me, when I walk up for the first time to a classroom, it's to me, going to be similar as walking up to that group full of people and being able to deal with so many personalities at the one time. And that was only a small group so I can't imagine myself yet walking into a classroom of 30 dealing with a whole heap of grade 8s.

> Brianna: I think for me the importance of the generations mixing together for both us and them to benefit from it. I think that's very important. So I want to go on to teaching and therapy and somehow integrate the generations together in whatever way I work out how to do that. But I think it's really important that that happens.
> (Interview, September 24, 2009)

The experience also impacted on the students personally; they felt the challenge was rewarding, particularly as they got to know some older people through the musical experience. In addition, they spoke of their growth in confidence generally, although they were relieved that the effort was initially a group one. As indicated below, they would have felt less positive about it had it been an individual practicum experience.

Susan: I thought it was really really awesome. I didn't expect it to be so good. And it was good because it was a challenge with the people that we worked with but also really rewarding for me personally. I thought it was amazing experience. I've never got so close in such a short amount of time with a bunch of older people. And never had the opportunity to. (Interview, September 24, 2009)

Brianna: I didn't really have any expectations. I was just going into it to enjoy it and see what came out of it in the end. And I have really enjoyed it. (Interview, September 24, 2009)

Sophie: Overall, the experience of [lyric rewriting] with this group was really interesting. I must admit that I had doubts of my own ability to work with this age group, as I had never participated in anything that included this generation, apart from my own grandparents. I still do not know if I could run a session like this by myself, and I was glad that it was a group of students and a combined effort, as we provided support for each other. (Journal reflection, July 18, 2009, day of the concert)

Learning about the musical process

Throughout the six sessions the students were interspersed amongst the residents, singing together with them. There was a feeling of excitement from both the students and the retiree participants, and the project structure enabled the students to learn about the process of creating music from a different perspective. Although we (the authors) expected that there might have been more learning articulated by the students in this category, the content analysis revealed that the project predominantly highlighted (for the students) the importance of age-appropriate repertoire, which is central to the success of music education and therapy. Students learnt how to listen to the people with whom they were working, and were open to learning repertoire from them (giving up the reins, so to speak), which is fundamental to effective teaching and therapy practice.

Roseanne: Personally I now love Grandfather's Clock.
Eloise: I had never heard it before so that was a gift.

Susan: I mean I'd just be singing them randomly and my boyfriend would be saying, 'What are you singing?'. He doesn't know. Repertoire was a big eye opener for me because when me and Eloise were thinking about what songs we could do, we were

sticking to the ones we knew so when they were suggesting songs, I was thinking 'I've never heard of that one, or that one'. I wouldn't have imagined picking them so I think, that was kind of a lesson for me, repertoire choice in education. Because there is more than what I know.

(Interview, September 24, 2009,

Notably, aside from repertoire, the notion of how to engage in a lyric re-writing musical process occupied a seemingly trivial role in the students' journal reflections. The students spent much more time and effort reflecting on the experience in terms of their social learning and the benefits of the experience to the residents. However, there was some allusion made to musical process by a small number of students.

When reflecting on their experiences, some students felt that they learnt more about the musical process through being involved with the lyric rewriting experience.

> Josie: As a music education student, I have looked at this project as how it relates to teaching. I think that this project has highlighted to me the process of creativity. The first piece the residents wrote was Que Sera, Sera. In just three verses the residents went from changing a few words, to changing phrases and then changing an entire verse, but still keeping the ideas from the original lyrics. The next lyrics the residents wrote was *Joyful Happy Place* (to the tune of *Yellow Submarine*). The residents kept a similar idea to the original in the chorus, but wrote original verses. By the end of the project the residents were writing their own, completely original lyrics, often using the tune of the original piece to inspire their ideas, rather than the original words. I think it is interesting how quickly they [sic] level of creativity matured in just six sessions.
> (Journal reflection, July 18, 2009, day of the concert)

Learning about context and ageing

The students commented at length about their increased appreciation of the older people as individuals. They acknowledged that many of their prior assumptions had been challenged by the experience, and that by getting to know these people's contexts through the experience and through the songs, they felt that they understood them more and why they acted in the ways that they did.

Some of the comments that they had to share on this matter are outlined below.

> I particularly like the lyrics they wrote to Grandfather Clock, because I think it follows on well from Memories. It brought the reality of what life was really like, which I think was good for them to remember as well as for us to know. If ever they had doubts about 'back in the good old days' that song could possibly remind them of what life really was like, rather than the silver lining that they may try to remember. I personally liked that effect that the song could have (as well as the song itself!). (Rosanne, Journal reflection, July 14, 2009)

I learned to interact better with older people. Even with my grandfather I don't know how to . . . respond to him and to be able to sit down and listen to what he had to say is so interesting. I had never really sat down with my grandfather and listened to his stories and things. I've never really been that close. I just feel more comfortable as I've never really had a strong relationship with him and I want to actually hear what he has to say. I'm interested in his story. (Annabelle, interview, September 24, 2009)

I had June open up as well about her feet and also about her church life and stuff like that. And things about her family, and stuff like that. That they come and visit her but not enough and that she feels she's not connected enough and others that are nice to her face but not really behind the scenes. (Susan, interview, September 24, 2009)

…Personality, too. I know for me, Audrey and I got along really well. We were actually emailing each other. And I think it wouldn't have worked as well if we hadn't had that relationship with them. And they wouldn't have felt the same at the end without the process and how we helped them. (Sophie, interview, September 24, 2009)

Discussion and conclusions

This research aimed to explore and compare music therapy and music education students' perceptions of the process of engaging in composing new lyrics to familiar songs. While the research explored the students' perceptions, from the data generated we were not able to differentiate music therapy and music education students' perceptions as they did not, on the whole, see themselves as separate cohorts in the context of this experience. Indeed, the data generated rendered the 'comparison' research aim irrelevant, as the students' perceptions did not seem to be determined or significantly influenced by their disciplinary background. We also set out to explore the students' perceptions of the impact of the experience on the residents, and the perceived impact of the project in terms of lifelong learning and music therapy for older people. The retiree participants' perceptions are reported in Baker and Ballantyne (2013).

The task of developing effective ways to integrate real-world experiences into tertiary teaching remains a significant challenge for educators who seek to prepare music professionals for the 'real-world' of their profession (Ballantyne, 2007a; 2007b; Ballantyne and Olm-Madden, 2013). The emergent themes—learning about facilitating, learning about self, learning about the musical process, and learning about the context/ageing—revealed that this experience enhanced the student participants' understandings about their future practice, themselves, the musical process and the context of learning.

The students felt that the process that was utilised in the study improved their ability to facilitate group learning processes with adults, and they saw the relevance of the experience to their future lives as music therapists and music educators. It made them question their prior assumptions regarding effective ways to facilitate learning (song-writing in particular). Over the six sessions their reflections show that they moved progressively towards becoming more flexible and responsive to the retiree participants, whilst being more prepared for a variety of eventualities. In this way, the theme 'learning about facilitating' revealed that although this was not a traditional or typical practicum for either music therapy or music education students, it still provided them with many of the opportunities typically associated with practicum experiences. This experience encouraged peer collaboration (Draper & Hitchcock, 2006; Reeves, Herrington, & Oliver, 2002), engaging students in professional networks (Resnick, 1988) and exposing them to complex and multi-dimensional problems which require construction of understanding (Sternberg, Wagner, & Okagaki, 1993) and the investment of time in resolution (Reeves, Herrington, & Oliver, 2002). Practicum placements situate students in the workplace where they can observe the skills modelled by working professionals and develop relevant professional expertise. This experience enabled the students to learn much about themselves and their own developing characters, as well as reflecting on the ways that the experience would influence their professional practice in the future. This forming of professional identity within the context of a practical situation could be improved were the students to try to explicitly link their learning through the process to their prior experiences in both music and education (Ballantyne, Kerchner and Arostegui, 2012). It is possible that this occurred implicitly, but is not evident from the explicit reflective data that we collected. It is additionally possible that although the students were asked to reflect on their experiences in a general way, more guidance through the process of reflection may have provided more opportunities for the students to draw links to prior learning and experiences, assisting them to think more deeply about their experiences. One model that could be utilised for such reflection is the '5Rs of Reflection' (Bain, Ballantyne, Mills, & Lester, 2002): reporting, responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing. In the current project, the areas of relating, reasoning and reconstructing were not typically well addressed by the students.

In much the same way, the reflective framework could be used to assist students to learn more about the musical process, in particular, ways to musically guide others in discovering their musical voice (not enough was said about this, but there was some commentary). The

centrality of repertoire to their concerns at this stage is not surprising, but their willingness to be flexible—by trying out new repertoire in particular—shows a developing maturity.

The students felt that the retirement village context enabled them to learn more about older people, increasing their appreciation for the wealth of knowledge and experience that they bring to the lyric writing process. This was a delightful outcome of this short study, and the mutual respect and rapport that formed between the retiree participants and the young students is certainly something that enhanced the quality of the experience and the students' learning.

Although it was seen as desirable by the retirees, the students identified the brevity of the project as its major weakness. In addition, students mentioned that they would have liked a more structured approach to the reflection journals. Although it is good that the students were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the experience, increased reflection on its impact on their future practice—drawing on their past experiences—would be an improvement in future iterations. In this way, the experience highlights the importance of structured reflections, and explicit linking to discipline knowledge, to assist students in seeing the links that exist between theory and practice (Ballantyne, 2007b; Ballantyne & Olm-Madden, 2013).

Clearly this work has implications for music education and music therapy programs, and we feel that the implications of this analysis also extend beyond the context of a retirement village and into various educational and therapeutic contexts where creative collaboration is facilitated. It has been useful in highlighting the potential for alternative contexts, strategies and assessments (e.g. students in this project were not graded) for music education and music therapy practicum experiences. Further, the pre-determined performance objective meant that there was a clearly delineated time limit, which works very well in a community-of-practice approach.

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Author Biographies

Julie Ballantyne is a Senior Lecturer in music education at the University of Queensland. Her research work focuses on the intersections found between teacher education, early-career experiences and identity development, particularly in relation to music teachers. She favours research projects with a practical outcome for participants, and is currently involved in a project supporting early-career music teachers' identity development (www.musicteachersproject.net).

Felicity Baker is an Associate Professor and Australia Research Council Future Fellow based at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Melbourne. The focus of her work is on the health and wellbeing benefits of therapeutic songwriting across the lifespan. She is currently working towards developing a model of therapeutic songwriting across the lifespan including exploring issues of meaning and flow during and post the song creation process.

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[i] 'Well' refers to the health of the residents – they were not in a high-care situation, and were independent in thought and movement.