



# The school song: Molding the child in two nations

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This paper discusses how school songs are designed to influence the developing identity of the child and act as an aid in the creation of a school community. A number of school songs from the elementary and secondary levels of education of each country were analysed to identify themes referenced in the songs. Reasons for similarities and differences are discussed briefly.

この論文では、校歌が生徒のアイデンティティ形成に影響を及ぼし、そして校風を育む助けになるようにデザインされているかを論じます。二カ国それぞれの初等／中等教育校のいくつかの校歌を分析し、校歌に使われている主題を確定します。類似点や相違点についての理由付けは簡潔に論じるのみにします。

*Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life. But, they are also marvelous aids in the creation of such a life. The remaking of the material of experience in the act of expression is not an isolated event confined to the artist and to a person here and there who happens to enjoy the work. In the degree in which art exercises its office, it is also a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity.* (Dewey, 1934, p. 81)

**T**he types and roles of organizational songs have been well documented (Nissley, 2005). School songs, part of the school experience for many of us, share some functions of organizational song types (see Denisoff, 1968). The investigation of types, roles, and patterns of school songs allows

a deeper understanding of the significance of schooling practices in the shaping of learner identities within and across cultures, as well as the construction of a school culture.

This paper discusses school songs in the educational systems of Australia and Japan. The analysis of the text of exemplar songs from these two nations identified themes designed to mold the individual, create a shared school community, and motivate learners.

### Culture, identity, and school songs

In investigating school songs, we are investigating one aspect of culture. According to Parekh (in Merry, 2005), culture is

...a historically created system of meaning and significance. . . a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life. (p. 479)

Culture organizes and legitimates relationships, linking us with a history and language, while providing boundaries via “the authenticity of belief that is a necessary foundation for self-esteem and confidence building, giving children the assurance that the ideas they have formed are, to a degree, reliable and trustworthy” (Merry, 2005, p. 478). Through interactions with family and other members of the community, children “collect impressions of themselves that coalesce to form a sense of who they are, as well as a narrative framework that helps explain the world and their

place within it” (Maccalister, 2004, p. 425). Schools are sites in which children spend a great portion of their lives. The narratives and symbols encountered at school are significant in the developing identity of the child.

However, schools are also organizations structured through power relationships “articulated by and through the deployment of discursive resources” (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, in Nissley, 2002, p. 51), of which the official song is but one. Kvideland (1989, in Davis, 2005) explains, “Songs are the ideal type of cultural expression... the observable and universal phenomenon of singing is a defining benchmark of cultural solidarity” (p. 55). Nissley (2002) reports that organizational songs act as a *sign of community* that exhibit the culture of the organization as well as being an *aid in the creation of community*, “act[ing] as a form of communication through which the commonalities of community are created and discovered” and “support[ing] the development of organizational culture by enabling the sharing of experience” (p. 59).

Through binding words to music, song allows the incorporation of meanings inaccessible by words alone. Davis (2005) reports that recent research has shown that the first musical experience of the child occurs in utero at about 7 months, when the mother sings. As children grow, they hear lullabies and learn a variety of children’s songs and, more recently, advertising jingles and pop songs, all of which arise from and legitimate the culture in which they live. The lyrics and music of songs act together to bear the culture, which reproduces the salience of the mother-child dyad and shapes the template for all subsequent musical learning, requiring music almost uniquely among the arts to be configured as a

vehicle for the communication of care, sympathy, intimate feeling and the emotional grammar of the fully affective, inculturated self. (Nisbet, in Davis, 2005, p. 49)

School songs influence individual identity as well as helping define collective school identity. They simultaneously create and act as a sign of the community in which they are evoked. They function both as spectacle and an arena of participation. Furthermore, Davis (2005) argues that sound is used to create personal or group spaces and to limit our environment by building a *virtual wall of sound*, suggesting that, in the case of lullabies,

The thread of a tune extends indefinitely ... the secure interiority of the home, allowing the singer or listener to venture into the dark, chaotic world of the “unhomely” in the confidence that the reassuringly validating conditions of home inhere in the transferable musical reiteration of remembered songs and cadences, and through the performance of which the unfamiliar is mastered and made safe (p. 54).

School songs similarly instill confidence through repetition, group performance, and identity with the organization so that once one ventures into the “dark, chaotic world” outside the school, the confidence of the conditions of school inhere in the same manner. In this way, they function as *Songs for Life*.

### School songs in Japan and Australia

Although songs have been used in the education of children for millennia, the *School Song* is a recent construct, developing in step with school mottoes, uniforms, and

badges. The first school song uncovered in the research of Australian schools conducted for this paper was penned in 1914 (Horan, 1989) and was inspired by the school songs of England, the first of which was written in 1872 (Horan, 1989). These early school songs were based around the values of “achievement, hard work, patriotism, godliness and honour. Underlying these ... are Victorian notions of self-regulation and the work ethic, self-help philosophy and the ennobling effects of industry” (Synott & Symes, 1995, p. 143). However, the first Australian school song thus discovered is not included in the analysis because the school was amalgamated in the 1980s and a new school song was adopted. For more details, see Bradford-Watts (2007b).

The music of Australian school songs is sometimes written by adult members of the school community, but is more often “borrowed” from hymns, symphonies, or folk music. In samples used for this study, music was borrowed from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 (“Song of Joy”), the Welsh battle-song, “Men of Harlech,” “Waltzing Matilda,” and “Give Me a Home among the Gum Trees.” The singer is linked through the music into a cultural tradition, religious or secular, ancient or modern.

Japanese school songs arose through the songs of the first volume of the *Shougaku Shouka-shu*, published in 1881 by the Music Investigation Committee of the new Meiji government (Matsuura, 1992), at a time that Japan was pursuing nation-building and modernization. Themes included the beauty of nature, Confucian values, and the imperial system, important symbols in the unification of the state and the development of a national identity. The songs combined western music with Japanese lyrics

written by famous poets (Matsuura, 1992). In such a way, according to Davis (2005), “‘Foreign’ musical discourses become redefined, disembedded from indigenous social and political contexts and eventually resituated within the dominant cultural system, becoming, in Graham Harvey’s words, ‘hybrids of modernity’” (p. 58). Many contemporary Japanese school songs appear to have followed this style, reflecting Davis’ assertion that “music education is itself a move within cultural identity” (p. 60)

Texts for analysis for the study of Japanese school songs were selected from those available via the Internet. Four school songs were randomly selected for each of the educational levels: elementary and junior and senior high school. The selection process was subject to constraints of time and availability via search engines. Samples were collected from schools across Japan, with examples included from Hokkaido, Okinawa, Kagoshima, Tokyo, and Kansai. Similarly, texts for the study of Australian school songs were selected from those available from the Internet, in addition to those of the author’s school experiences. A total of four school songs were selected from rural and urban primary schools and four were selected from high schools across Australia. See Appendix 1 for a list of links to the pages from which the school songs were collected and Appendix 2 for those of the author’s school experiences.

An analysis of the songs of each educational level indicates a number of patterns that appear to be common in the construction of school songs in each culture, including themes, metaphors, and selection of music, although only themes will be identified in this paper. Intercultural patterns may also be seen.

### Themes in school songs

Table 1 shows the themes commonly found in primary and elementary school songs in Australia and Japan, while Table 2 shows those of Japanese junior and senior and Australian high schools. Please note that high school in Australia lasts for the years of secondary education following primary school, and so is equivalent to the total time spent in junior and senior high school in Japan.

**Table 1. Primary and elementary school themes**

<b>Australia and Japan</b>	<b>Australia only</b>	<b>Japan only</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School environment</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Identification with the group</li> <li>• Identification with the school</li> <li>• Identification with school symbol</li> <li>• Song for life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification as multicultural</li> <li>• School as co-constructed identity</li> <li>• Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of school</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Australian high school and Japanese junior and senior high school themes**

	Australia and Japan	Australia only	Japan only
Junior high school	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Purpose of school</li> <li>• Identification with group</li> <li>• Identification with group experience</li> <li>• Identification with school</li> </ul>
High school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Identification with group</li> <li>• Identification with school</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Song for life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School history</li> <li>• Work</li> <li>• Place to nurture friendship</li> <li>• Purpose of schooling</li> <li>• School as entity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School as model</li> <li>• School as safe haven</li> <li>• School as homeland</li> <li>• Local history</li> </ul>

Several themes appear in the texts of both the elementary and subsequent levels of education in Japan and Australia: the environment and regional symbols, values, identification with the group, identification with the school, and the role or purpose of school and schooling.

The themes found in the school songs of only one nation also indicate differences in the acculturation of the child. In the Japanese school texts, additional themes of the local history and school as a model, homeland, or safe haven, are found. In contrast, in the Australian school songs, the themes

of identification as multicultural, school as a co-constructed identity, work, and school history are found.

## Discussion

Similarities between themes that appear cross-culturally, and across educational levels point to the roles of the school in education and socialization, while differences in themes reflect differences in culture, in particular, the nature of childhood, school, and work. For instance, references to the environment and school and regional symbols are much more common in the Japanese texts than the Australian ones. However, they are not unique to Japan. In elementary school song texts in both countries, such references act to position the child in the local environment, one in which they can feel comfortable, linking the school to the local area and community, as well as building a school identity. In the Japanese junior and senior high school texts, these references not only point to the increasingly broad arena in which the young adult is, or will soon be, participating; they also reinforce salient cultural visual and poetic symbols. However, there were no such references in the Australian high school songs analyzed in this study.

References to values were found in all school songs used in this study. In the Japanese texts, values espousing hard work are found at the elementary level, adding more values, such as peace, happiness, collaboration, and hope at the junior high school level, and finally, sincerity, purity, and respect in the high school texts. On the other hand, in the Australian primary school texts, values such as play, working together in harmony, fun, friendliness, happiness and joy in learning, respect for all, trying, and doing one's best are to be found. In the Australian high

school songs, however, the values extolled are more focused on working hard.

One example of difference of themes is in the Japanese high school texts, where school is referred to as a model, safe haven, or homeland. This theme, unique to this level of Japanese school song texts, appears to act to create a Song for life, centering the young adult's identity to the comfort and safety of the school environment as they prepare to enter the wider world of work and post-secondary study.

An Australian example of unique themes is that of multiculturalism, found in elementary level texts. Australia is a multicultural country attempting to create a harmonious society in which difference is valued. It is not surprising that this aspect is included in songs of schools with a high proportion of learners from different cultural backgrounds. The way in which this theme manifests links multiculturalism with identification with the group, community, and the school. It is also linked with values of happiness, respect, and freedom.

### Conclusion

Each and every school song acts as a song for life via the use of grammatical and cognitive metaphor to identify the child with the group and school, as well as the inclusion of values and other means of influencing the identity of the developing child. At the high school level in each country, songs use references to make explicit this role of the song: the references to school as a model, safe haven, or homeland in the case of the Japanese texts, and to school history and linkages to the past and future school communities of the school in the case of the Australian high school texts. The texts analyzed for

this study show the multiple roles of school songs in molding the child in a community and nation as well as creating the community of the school. Davis (2005) notes, “dangerous and disturbing [is] the power of music as a signifying system to make realities, to conjure into presence things that might not exist apart from signification” (p. 55). This paper has made no attempt to examine “what other functions may such songs serve (e.g., humor, counter-hegemony=resistance, fellowship, organizational memory, etc.)” (Nissley, 2002, p. 61), however, further examination of the songs is underway to shed more light on the nature of school songs in molding the child.

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Kim Bradford-Watts has been living and working in the Kansai region of Japan for the last 20 years. Her research interests include metaphor, genre approaches, computer-based learning, classroom management, and materials development.

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## Appendix 1

List of links to pages from which school songs were collected for analysis

Country	Educational Level	School Name	URL
Japan	High School	Osaka Furitsu Toyonaka	<a href="http://www.osaka-c.ed.jp/toyonaka/kouka/frame_kouka.html">www.osaka-c.ed.jp/toyonaka/kouka/frame_kouka.html</a>
		Osaka Furitsu Nose	<a href="http://www.osaka-c.ed.jp/nose/">www.osaka-c.ed.jp/nose/</a>
		Osaka Furitsu Yoakita	<a href="http://www.osaka-c.ed.jp/yaokita/2yaokita/kouka/kouka.htm">www.osaka-c.ed.jp/yaokita/2yaokita/kouka/kouka.htm</a>
		Tokyo Toritsu Koyamadai	<a href="http://www.koyamadai-h.metro.tokyo.jp/zennichi.html">www.koyamadai-h.metro.tokyo.jp/zennichi.html</a>
	Junior High School	Toyonaka Shiritsu Daiichi	<a href="http://www.toyonaka-osa.ed.jp/jh01/">www.toyonaka-osa.ed.jp/jh01/</a>
		Toshima Kuritsu Ikebukuro	<a href="http://www.toshima.ne.jp/~ike_jhs/kouka.htm">www.toshima.ne.jp/~ike_jhs/kouka.htm</a>
		Okinawa Shiritsu Yamauchi	<a href="http://www02.bbc.city.okinawa.okinawa.jp/oki/school/sjya/index.htm">www02.bbc.city.okinawa.okinawa.jp/oki/school/sjya/index.htm</a>
		Nagano Kenritsu Kouhoku	<a href="http://www.nagano-ngn.ed.jp/kohokujh/">www.nagano-ngn.ed.jp/kohokujh/</a>
	Elementary School	Morioka Shiritsu Sakuragi	<a href="http://www.ictnet.ne.jp/~sakuragi.es/kouak.html">www.ictnet.ne.jp/~sakuragi.es/kouak.html</a>
		Nerimakuritsu Oizumi Daisan	<a href="http://www.ooizumi3-e.nerima-ky.ed.jp/kouka.html">www.ooizumi3-e.nerima-ky.ed.jp/kouka.html</a>
Sapporo Shiritsu Konan		<a href="http://www.konan-e.sapporo-c.ed.jp/">www.konan-e.sapporo-c.ed.jp/</a>	
Kagoshima Shiritsu Yamashita		<a href="http://keinet.com/yamashis/kouka.htm">keinet.com/yamashis/kouka.htm</a>	
Australia	High School	Newcastle	<a href="http://www.newcastle-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/">www.newcastle-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/</a>
		Sydney Girls	<a href="http://www.sghs.nsw.edu.au/Sidebar/School%20Song/index.html">www.sghs.nsw.edu.au/Sidebar/School%20Song/index.html</a>
	Primary School	Strathfield Girls	<a href="http://www.strathfiegh-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/">www.strathfiegh-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/</a>
		Carlton	<a href="http://home.vicnet.net.au/~carlcomm/html/carltonps/schoolsong.html">home.vicnet.net.au/~carlcomm/html/carltonps/schoolsong.html</a>
		East Carnarvon	<a href="http://www.members.westnet.com.au/ccps/school_song.htm">www.members.westnet.com.au/ccps/school_song.htm</a>
		Kareela Public	<a href="http://www.kareelaps.nsw.edu.au/page89345.cfm">www.kareelaps.nsw.edu.au/page89345.cfm</a>



## Appendix 2

*Words of school songs from author's experience**Stanmore Primary School Song*

(To the tune of “Waltzing Matilda”)

Come to a happy school  
Right beside the railway line  
Where merry children from far lands meet.  
Where the teachers and pupils join in perfect harmony,  
Learning their lessons in the summer's heat  
Stanmore forever. Pupils together.  
Never forgetting the call of the bell.  
When the time comes to leave it  
Remember we achieved it,  
Stanmore, the school where we learned so well.

*Fort Street High School Song*

Here's to Fort Street,  
School of history  
Where each one his fortune made.  
Here we honour student's memory.  
Here, each one a skill displayed.  
Seniors wise and juniors bold  
Are met in one mold.  
Happy we as we strive to pass each test  
For maroon and silver crest  
And turret symbol of Fort.

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