Narrative Inquiry in Music Education

Troubling Certainty
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Introduction

Margaret S. Barrett and Sandra L. Stauffer

We live in a “congenial moment for stories” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 30), a time in which narrative has taken up a place in the “landscape” of inquiry in the social sciences. This renewed interest in storying and stories as both process and product (as field text and research text) of inquiry may be attributed to various methodological and conceptual “turns,” including the linguistic and cultural, that have taken place in the humanities and social sciences over the past decades. The purpose of this book is to explore the “narrative turn” in music education, to examine the uses of narrative inquiry for music education, and to cultivate ground for narrative inquiry to seed and flourish alongside other methodological approaches in music education.

In a discipline whose early research strength was founded on an alignment with the social sciences, particularly the psychometric tradition, one of the key challenges for those embarking on narrative inquiry in music education is to ensure that its use is more than that of a “musical ornament,” an elaboration on the established themes of psychometric inquiry, those of measurement and certainty. We suggest that narrative inquiry is more than a “turn” (as noun), “a melodic embellishment that is played around a given note” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 2007, n.p.); it is more than elaboration on a position, the adding of extra notes to make a melody more beautiful or interesting. Rather, we suggest that narrative inquiry in music education may provide a means to “turn” in the active sense, as a verb, “to change direction and follow a different course” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 2007, n.p.); in short, narrative work provides a means to re-conceptualise the ways in which we think about music engagement, music education, and inquiry in music education. Please note our caution – “a” way; as John Dewey reminds us, there are no singular solutions to issues that arise from social phenomena.

Early on in the process of developing this book, we asked ourselves, “What are our intentions?” Margaret’s first response was to provide a forum for the work of narrative inquiry contributors (Part II) and for that work to be presented, responded
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Early on in the process of developing this book, we asked ourselves, “What are our intentions?” Margaret’s first response was to provide a forum for the work of narrative inquiry contributors (Part II) and for that work to be presented, responded
to, and contextualised within the larger conversations of music education research (Parts II and III). For Sandy it was primarily to have, in one location, a collection of pieces that demonstrate what narrative inquiry is, does, and can do in music education and examples for ourselves, our colleagues, and those students with whom we work. And underlying both these intentions – ones that focus on making public, of providing space, and of contributing a narrative perspective to conversation and dialogue in music education – rests another intention, to “trouble” certainty.

Whilst the notion of “troubling” suggests a desire to agitate, to disturb, or to disrupt, our use is less antagonistic. Rather, it is to provide alternative accounts of why, when, where, and how people engage in music experience and learning and, in that process, to prompt our readers (music education practitioners and theorists in school, tertiary education, and community settings) to consider other ways of engaging with people in and through music. In doing so, we hope to make a space in the discourse of inquiry in music education, one in which “troubling” may give pause for thought and prompt the community to consider the many ways in which we know and come to know. “Troubling” in this sense becomes a means to prompt “wide awakeness,” a concept Maxine Greene (1995) employs to prompt educators to look beyond the familiar, to attend to the tensions that underlie the surface of experience, and to consider the ways in which we may come to understand alternative accounts of the ways in which lives are lived and storied in and through music and education. For Greene, “the teacher open to the mystery, open to the wonder, open to the questions is the one who can light the slow fuse of possibility even for the defeated ones, the bored ones, the deserted ones” (2001, p. 146). In such instances we can begin to see the world through the eyes of others, to experience empathy, and to move towards an understanding of the ways in which worlds are experienced and “othered.”

So what is it that narrative inquirers do? And how does what they do trouble certainty? At the simplest levels, narrative inquirers live and work alongside research participants in order to understand the ways in which individuals and communities story a life and live their stories. Why are these stories and storyings important or relevant? Although it might be argued that the only story each of us knows is our own, we seem drawn, in our human experience, to connection with others, and we find connection in and through stories. Amidst the spinning of our individually and socially constructed webs of meaning (Geertz, 1973), we seek places and moments of intersection and reflection that help us understand ourselves and each other. Listening to and for each other’s stories seems to serve our human connection-finding and understanding-seeking purposes well. But that is not enough.

Listening to each other’s stories to know that we are not alone (if that is what we are doing) may be a necessary (if somewhat selfish) proposition and even a condition of being human, but it is not (yet) inquiry. The “turn” – what makes an account a narrative inquiry rather than a story – is one’s willingness not only to look for connection and consonance, but also to recognise that different perspectives, voices, and experiences exist and can inform. The moment of disquiet, the instance of unsettling, and the recognition of certainties troubled may be the very times and spaces where insight takes root – the places of fertile ground. As Geertz noted in
the waning days of the last century, wrestling with “competing conceptions of how matters should be arranged and people related to one another” is not an issue of ‘relativism,’ as it is often put by those who wish to insulate their beliefs against the force of difference. *It is a matter of understanding that talking to others implies listening to them, and that in listening to them what one has to say is very unlikely, not at the close of this century, not in the opening of the next, to remain unshaken.* (2000, p. 259, italics added).

Without troubling certainty, we would have only sympathetic vibration, a kind of resonance that, while satisfying in some respects, would be unnatural or, at the very least, artificial. In a state of sympathetic vibration, we would experience agreement only and never deal with any issues – the ultimate rose-coloured-glasses society, at least for those wearing the glasses. And as Eisner (1991) reminds us, consensus is only consensus – agreement, not truth. As narrativists we listen to story (as does the ethnographer), we listen for story (as does the portraitist), and we listen in and through story to find meaning, to experience resonance and troubling, and, ultimately, to prompt further consideration of what it might be to be “wide-awake” in and through music.

The text is divided into three sections, each serving to present a different perspective on the uses and purposes of narrative in and for music education. In Part I we explore the origins of narrative research across a range of fields of inquiry including anthropology, historical and literary studies, psychology, sociology, and educational inquiry (Chapter 1). We then unfold our conception of narrative inquiry as resonant work (Chapter 2). We conceive of resonant work as that which is deep, rich, and lasting. We define resonant work as respectful to all those involved, responsible to the public good, rigorous procedurally and in presentation, and resilient in its ability to speak not only of here and now, but also across time and place and to varying constituencies.

Part II, the core of the text, provides seven examples of narrative inquiry studies. Each of these studies, undertaken by early career researchers in the field of music education, is accompanied by a reflective commentary written by an experienced music education scholar. These commentaries provide us with a view, a window into the narrative accounts. They suggest further questions that arise from the inquiry and provide insight into the potential uses of the narrative account for the theory and practice of music education.

It is perhaps no accident that the narrative accounts that feature in this book arise from the work of early career researchers. As Graham Welch remarks in his response to David Cleaver’s account of a lived musical life, whilst the world of educational research has a considerable history of taking up methodological innovations, music education has been “relatively slow” to adopt these, “at least in its published journals” (this volume, p. 57). By contrast, in the work of early career researchers, including doctoral students, considerable innovation is often evidenced in both the methodological approaches adopted and adapted and the substantive issues with which these researchers engage. Part II of the text provides an environment in which these innovations may be cultivated in the field of music education, attended to carefully, and considered against the wider landscape of educational inquiry.
Part III of the text brings together the perspectives of two eminent theorists and practitioners from within and beyond the field of music education. Music education philosopher Wayne Bowman brings to the consideration of narrative inquiry an interest in its purposes, its uses, and its potential to “transform” the project of music education. Jean Clandinin, working in the field of educational theory and practice, is concerned with two key issues: the ways in which educators are prepared, and prepared for, the development of “wide awakeness” in their theory and practice, and the ways in which we cultivate such a propensity in the lives of the children, families, and communities with whom we work. Jean and Wayne were asked to respond to the narrative accounts and commentaries presented in Parts I and II and contextualise these within the larger discourses of educational inquiry. In that process, these scholars prompt us to consider the possible narrative futures and, importantly, the future narratives of music education.

We are indebted to many colleagues in music education and in the wider worlds of education, music, and the arts and social sciences who have informed our thinking. We are particularly indebted to those who have given so generously of their time and expertise in the preparation of this book, including the authors and commentators as well as the friends and colleagues who read drafts and challenged us with margin notes and other troublings. To each of you, thank you. Finally, we are grateful to Tammy Jones, the editorial assistant for this project, whose keen eye and unstinting efforts contributed to the final shape of this book.

References


Chapter 1  
Narrative Inquiry: From Story to Method

Margaret S. Barrett and Sandra L. Stauffer

“Narrative” is a term that has been pressed into the service of a multitude of ideas and theories. It is viewed variously as “story,” as a “mode of knowing” and constructing meaning, and, more recently, as a “method of inquiry.” At times it is all of these simultaneously. Perhaps the most enduring description and understanding of narrative is as “story,” an account to self and others of people, places, and events and the relationships that hold between these elements. The capacity to speak, and, through that medium, to construct a version of events, is a distinguishing human trait. It is through narratives, both “grand” or “master” and personal, that we have understood and communicated our knowledge and interpretations of our past and our present worlds and are able to speculate about our future. Through this chapter we shall provide a brief overview of the journey from narrative as “story,” through its conception as a “mode of knowing,” in order to explore the ways in which narrative is being put to use as a “method of inquiry” in educational research.

The roots of narrative go long and deep into the inquiry landscape. Although the emergence of narrative as an inquiry process is a relatively recent phenomenon, its lineage may be traced through the varied disciplines of anthropology; the arts; historical, literary, and cultural studies; psychology; sociology; and more recently, educational inquiry. It is not our intention here to provide a definitive account of the development of narrative inquiry; rather we shall trace some of those pathways in the inquiry landscape along which “narrative” has travelled, with a particular focus on those pathways that have crossed the field of educational research. We shall take up issues specific to music education in Chapter 2, in order to address the uses and purposes of narrative inquiry in music education (there are other accounts, e.g., Barone & Eisner, 2006; Bresler, 2006; Bowman, 2006; Bruner, 1986; Chase, 2005; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988).

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The tradition of storying and story-telling is one that pre-figures the emergence of written language, as evidenced in the revered, and sometimes feared, role of seers and story-tellers in pre-literate cultures. This human capacity to story may be linked to the emergence of conscious thought. A number of scholars have suggested that early humans may not have been “conscious” of being conscious and that they attributed much of their thought processes to the gods (Jaynes, 1976). This is described by Jaynes as an instance of the bicameral mind. In this notion, the mind was divided into two chambers. The gods controlled one chamber, providing ideas, thoughts, and feelings, by “breathing” into the mind. Individuals experienced these “breathings” as “inspirations,” as voices or urges. The other chamber of the mind was used for everyday thoughts, for speech, and eventually for other means of expression and forms of representation including writing and music – in short, the means by which the “inspirations” received from the gods might be communicated to others. Planning, volition, and action did not come about through conscious or unconscious thought, but rather through inspirations “told” to individuals in a familiar language by a “voice,” which at times might appear with a vision of a friend, authority figure, or god. In Homer’s Iliad, the characters’ actions are an outcome of instructions received from the gods rather than of introspection – an early recorded instance of the bicameral mind. It is suggested that with the appearance of the Odyssey, a text which portrays humans initiating and perpetrating deceit rather than acting as agents of the gods, came the possibility of modern consciousness, of introspection and reflection, and of falsification, a phenomenon that relies on the human capacity to create different versions of self and events – in short, to story.

Whilst stories and the process of storying are distinguishing features of the human experience, these phenomena are not necessarily narrative inquiry. As Riessman and Speedy caution, “all talk and text is not narrative” (2007, p. 428). They go on to identify other forms of discourse such as “chronicles, reports, arguments, question and answer exchanges” as examples of non-narrative forms (2007, p. 429). Narrative as story is usually understood as “sequential” (Barone, 2001a; Bruner, 1990), featuring plotline/s, character/s, setting/s, and action/s (Bal, 1997) – aspects that are not central to all forms of discourse. Paradoxically, narrative is not all talk and text, nor is it always sequential. The arts provide us with examples of “narratives” that are neither language based nor inherently sequential. For example, whilst historical narrative paintings by exponents of early romanticism draw on Greek and Roman classical literature (as evidenced in the painter David’s admonition to his former student Gros, to “Vite, vite, mon ami, feuilletez votre Plutarque!” (“Quick, quick, my friend leaf through your Plutarch!”) (Brookner, 2000, p. 22)), they rely on media other than language for their sense-making and often seek to challenge the representational form in and with which they work. This is perhaps more evident in the work of contemporary artists, who “rarely tell straightforward narratives employing standard narrative tropes available within their culture, but rather ironize, layer, and otherwise subvert the standard tropes from a position of extreme cultural self-consciousness” (Mateas & Sengers, 2002, p. 10).
Nevertheless, there is a considerable history of the use of narrative as “languaged story” in various scholarly disciplines. Working in the 19th century, for instance, scholars of folklore drew on “story” in their explorations and interpretations of myths and legends (Toelken, 1996). Historians working with oral history methods, as well as textual analysis, have drawn on “narratives” – stories told and recorded – as have literary theorists and sociologists working in the first part of the 20th century.

... Narrative as a mode of knowing ...

In 1984 at an address to the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Jerome Bruner challenged the psychological community to consider the possibilities of narrative as one of two distinct and distinctive modes of thinking, namely the “paradigmatic” or logico-scientific mode and the narrative mode. For Bruner, each mode constituted a unique way of construing and constructing reality and of ordering experience. Importantly, neither of these modes was reducible to the other, as each was necessary in the development of human thought and action. Taking up these ideas in later writings, Bruner (1986) presents the narrative mode of meaning-making as one that “looks for particular conditions and is centred around the broader and more inclusive question of the meaning of experience” (p. 11), whilst the paradigmatic mode is characterised as one that is more concerned with establishing universal truth conditions.

Bruner has pursued the notion of “narrative” modes of thinking and explored the ways in which we draw on “narrative” modes of knowing as a learning process (1996a). For Bruner, we construct our understandings of the world “mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on” (2003, p. 44). In earlier writings, he points to the power and import of narrative as a meaning-making process, commenting that “our capacity to render experience in terms of narrative is not just child’s play, but an instrument for making meaning that dominates much of life in culture – from soliloquies at bedtime to the weighing of testimony in our legal system” (1990, p. 97). Importantly, Bruner suggests that our “sensitivity” to narrative constitutes a major link between our “sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us” (1986, p. 69) and is the mode through which we “create a version of the world” with which we can live (1996a, p. 39).

Bruner’s work in the field of cognitive psychology constitutes one way in which narrative has been conceptualised within scholarship and has led to the establishment of the field of narrative psychology. It is perhaps serendipitous that Bruner’s account of the narrative mode of thinking occurred at a time of growing interest in the ways in which narrative might be drawn upon for research and inquiry purposes. As educators and scholars took up the “call of stories” (Coles, 1989) to provide alternative means to explore, interrogate, interpret, and record experience, “it helped that the messenger was Bruner, an enormously powerful scholar with unusual cross-disciplinary knowledge, stature, and impact, who ventured to articulate what narrative could mean to the social sciences at large” (Bresler, 2006, p. 23). Crucially,
Bruner’s work leads us to consider narrative as more than a means of presenting meaning and to consider the role of narrative and narrative forms in “re-presenting,” in the sense of constructing meaning, both individually and collectively. For Bruner, narrative operates simultaneously in both thought and action, shaping the ways in which we conceive and respond to our worlds. In short, all cognition, whatever its nature, relies upon representation, how we lay down our knowledge in a way to represent our experience of the world. Representation is a process of construction, as it were, rather than of mere reflection of the world (Bruner, 1996b, p. 95).

Here, a narrative might become a “template for experience” (Bruner, 2002, p. 34) that works on the mind, modelling “not only its world but the minds seeking to give it its meanings” (p. 27). This move from narrative as “story presented” to narrative as a “form of meaning-making,” indeed, a form of “mind-making,” has played an important role in the development of narrative as a method of inquiry in the social sciences.

. . . Narrative as method of inquiry . . .

The emergence of narrative as a method of inquiry in social science research may be linked in part to the growth of interest in qualitative methods in the latter part of the 20th century. Pinnegar and Daynes identify four “turns” in the move to narrative inquiry as a research method, those of a re-shaping and shift in the relationship between the researcher and the researched, a move to “words as data,” a focus on the local and particular, and a blurring of genres (2007, p. 3). Whilst these turns are described as “narrative” turns, we suggest that they are characteristic of qualitative methods and approaches in general. Perhaps what distinguishes narrative inquiry is the way in which “story” can operate as a “relational” mode of constructing and presenting meaning. Working towards this distinction requires two shifts in perspective: first, a shift in our understanding of what is meant by narrative, and second, a shift in our understanding of what it means to be a narrative inquirer. The first of these involves a shift from a view of narrative as “story,” to encompass one of narrative as simultaneously storied presentation, representation, and meaning-making process. The second shift in perspective requires narrative inquirers to re-consider their roles as researchers and to reflect upon their inquiry dispositions and the set of values and beliefs that are brought to the inquiry process. And just as narrative is a term that has served many uses, narrative inquiry has come to mean a range of things as it stems from varying scholarly traditions. In the following we shall explore these issues further.

. . . The “story” shift . . .

As we noted above, whilst narrative is story, not all story is narrative inquiry. Riessman and Speedy suggest that the narrative scholar pays “analytic attention to how the facts got assembled that way” and asks,
For whom was this story constructed, how was it made, and to what purpose? What cultural discourses does it draw on – take for granted? What does it accomplish? Are there gaps and inconsistencies that might suggest alternative or preferred narratives? (2007, p. 429)

Narrative inquiry in this account is more than the collecting and re-telling or re-presenting of stories; it requires the careful analysis of narrative data against a series of frames including those of the research participant, the researcher, and the larger cultural narratives in which these individuals are situated. For example, through their studies of teachers’ personal and professional knowledge landscapes, Clandinin & Connelly (1996) identified a range of “paired narratives” that exist in dynamic tension in these settings. They write of “stories of school” and “school stories” and of “stories of teachers” and “teachers’ stories,” where the former provide “professional” accounts of how schooling occurs in particular settings, whilst the latter provide “personal” accounts, accounts that may at times run counter to and in conflict with the “stories of.” The examination and analysis of these paired narratives provides opportunity to explore alternative views of the ways in which schooling is understood, enacted, and lived by all participants. In a later work, Clandinin et al. (2006) refer to other types of stories that emerge in narrative inquiries, including “secret stories,” “told only to others in safe places,” and “cover stories,” “told to maintain a sense of continuity with the dominant stories of school shaping a professional knowledge landscape” (2006, p. 7). In this careful distinction between the types of stories told, the places in which they are aired and shared, and the purposes they serve, Clandinin and her colleagues draw our attention to the need to move beyond the simple “telling” of stories. Rather, they suggest that narrative inquirers are engaged in “living” with and through stories in the research context, in order to work towards an understanding of the varying and complex meanings and interpretations all participants bring to their experiences.

... The “shift” to relational narrative inquiry ...

Connelly and Clandinin make a distinction between narrative methodologies that tell and those that live (2006). Drawing on this notion, Clandinin and colleagues suggest that telling narrative methodologies work from “told stories of participants,” whilst living methodologies work from “living alongside” participants (Clandinin et al., 2006). Whilst both telling and living approaches may draw on similar methods and techniques, the distinction is in the purpose of such inquiries – a purpose that moves between “life as lived in the past (telling) and life as it unfolds (living)” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 482). In the latter, the researcher lives alongside the participants in a process that is deeply relational and re-focuses the inquiry disposition of the researcher.

In a description of narrative inquiry as “shared relational work” between researchers and researched, narrative inquiry becomes a work that “leads to collaborative stories, where the researcher is no longer the ‘scribe’ of others’ experience, but a ‘story-teller’ and ‘story-liver’ alongside research participants” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12). Pinnegar and Daynes take up this notion, noting that a
distinguishing feature of the narrative researcher is a “move away from an objective conception of the researcher–researched relationship” (2007, p. 11) to one in which the researcher is deeply involved in the research relationship. Importantly, this research relationship is one in which the researcher too can be changed. In this process, narrative inquiry becomes to varying degrees a study of self, of self alongside others, as well as of the inquiry participants and their experience of the world.

It should be noted that careful observance of and attention to the relational aspects of inquiry are not the sole prerogative of narrative inquiry; however, they rest as a central tenet. Cultural anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson, for example, places relationships at the centre of her inquiry processes, proposing “a definition of relationship as knowledge, achieved and exchanged through information exchange—through conversation and communion” (1984, pp. 292–293). She takes this theme up in later work as she writes of the ways in which “stories of individuals and their relationships through time offer another way of looking” (2000, p. 247) and emphasises that the story/ies of the researcher/s is/are “interwoven” with those of the research participants.

Relationships or “interaction” (consideration of the personal and social) is one of three dimensions that shape the interpretive lens of Clandinin and Connelly’s metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (2000). Drawing on Dewey’s (1938) notions of continuity and interaction, these narrative inquirers suggest that any narrative inquiry is shaped by the dimensions of interaction (consideration of the personal and the social), continuity (consideration of the past, present, and future), and situation (consideration of place) (2000, p. 50). Clandinin suggests that

Narrative inquirers cannot bracket themselves out of the inquiry but rather need to find ways to inquire into the participants’ experiences, their own experiences, as well as the co-constructed experiences developed through the relational inquiry process. This makes clear that as narrative inquirers, inquirers too, are part of the metaphoric parade . . . they too live on the landscape and are complicit in the world they study (2006, p. 47).

In later works, Clandinin and colleagues identify “three commonplaces of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality, and place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007), a refinement of the original dimensions.

. . . The narrative inquirer disposition . . .

Clandinin and Connelly suggest that “one of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher’s own narrative of experience, the researcher’s autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry” (2000, p. 70). Implicit in the identification of a researcher’s autobiography as the starting point of narrative inquiry is the need to interrogate the set of beliefs and practices that are brought to the inquiry endeavour, the researcher’s epistemological and ontological stance, and the ethical obligations that extend from these. Careful consideration of the ethical purposes of research, as well as the ethical issues that
arise from conducting research, is central to another approach to using narrative in educational inquiry, specifically literary nonfiction.

... Narrative in educational research ... 

In his use of narrative as a form of educational research, Tom Barone strives to “challenge the prevailing educational imaginary” (2003) through the presentation of texts that are “accessible, compelling and morally persuasive” (2000, p. 248). Barone argues that it is the responsibility of educators to inspire and persuade the general public of the value of schools and school people and suggests that it is through the employment of narrative approaches to research that this may be achieved most effectively (2000). For Barone, the educational enterprise is fundamentally political, unavoidably enmeshed in the social and cultural contexts in which it operates, and, crucially, pivotal to achieving social justice. Recognition of these social and cultural contexts compels us to find ways of describing, interrogating, and interpreting educational interactions that are reflective of their complexity, depth, richness, and perplexity.

Barone locates the roots of his use of narrative as a research method in two fields: those of ABER, or Arts-Based Educational Research, as he experienced this in his graduate student work with Elliot Eisner, and of his early interest in literary nonfiction. This latter has led Barone to draw on genres not traditionally associated with academic scholarship, including art criticism and the New Journalism of writers such as Truman Capote, Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, Hunter S. Thompson, and Thomas Wolfe, and to recognise and work with the aesthetic dimension of human activity. In this work, Barone portrays art criticism as a form of literary nonfiction and, simultaneously, suggests that the New Journalism is a form of criticism as it is concerned with “the criticism of human events and experiences, the very sorts of phenomena that comprise the experienced curriculum of a classroom or a school” (2000, p. 22). It is also of significance that Barone draws on the work of philosophers of the arts such as John Dewey and Susanne Langer in shaping his approach to the use of narrative in educational inquiry. For Barone, education is an “aesthetic project” in which the teacher strives to develop an “empathic understanding” of the “life-texts” students compose and live through (pp. 129–130). In striving for empathic understanding, he suggests, we seek to develop a student who is “a social being, and a moral agent, a responsible citizen of a shared community” (2000, p. 130). Barone borrows Harold’s (1973) term the “strong poet” to describe such individuals and notes that the strong poet

Is someone who refuses to accept as useful the descriptions of her life as written by others. Instead, the strong poet is a strong storyteller, continuously revising her life story in the light of her own experience and imagination. The strong poet constantly redescribes her past interactions with the world around her, constantly reinvents her self, so that she may act in the future with greater integrity and coherence. The strong poet plots her life story toward her own emergent ends and purposes (2000, p. 125).
In Barone’s view, education and schooling should be “more life-enhancing for youngsters of all sorts and for the culture at large” (2000, p. 4), an experience that leads to “educational virtue” and that is unavoidably narrative in nature.

In his body of work, Barone initially appears to be more concerned with the endpoints of the research endeavour, the “challenging of the educational imaginary,” than with outlining explicitly a narrative research methodology. Perhaps in this he is challenging us, initially, to a Wittgensteinian “game” in which we must look to his use of narrative in educational research as a means to understanding the methodological issues, rather than providing us with definitions or detailed accounts of methods and techniques. However, his defence of ABER and narrative research has led him to write compellingly about the distinctive features of these research approaches and their function for the educational community. The informative and interrogative qualities of the suggestive, the connotative, and the qualitative, over the methodical and denotive (2000, p. 23), are illustrated in his writings. His use of narrative as critical nonfiction is grounded firmly in the research setting, with careful attention to the characters, including descriptions that “should consist of a host of personality indicators, of physical attributes and characteristics of human behaviour, in actual incidents, recorded comments, and so on” (2000, p. 25). For Barone, good narrative research provokes “imaginatory” participation in alternative realities that may lead to “perceiving educational phenomena in a strange new way” (2001b, p. 25).

One distinctive feature of Barone’s approach lies in his use of “fiction,” a notion that recognises, as does Geertz (1974), that narrative writings, as anthropological writings, are “fictions,” or “something made” (p. 15). Barone’s researcher adheres to fewer (and of course different) canons of procedure than the “normal” scientist, and may even confront his or her materials without pre-established guiding principles for selecting and arranging them. Invention pervades every phrase and aspect of that kind of project, even if this invention has parameters of its own (2000, pp. 26–27).

Barone reminds us of Greene’s espousing of good literature (fiction) as a means to question values, prompt new imaginings, and outline new possibilities (2001a). In this way, narrative research might “facilitate reflection about, and even change in prevailing teaching practices” (2001a, p. 736). Whilst some might question the validity of using fictional devices such as constructing composite characters, fictionalising some events in order to make a point more emphatically, or elaborating descriptions, Barone asserts that fictional texts do not partake of the traditional notion of research “validity.” Validity serves an important function in research texts that aim to enhance certainty about particular features of the real world outside of the text. Because fictional texts serve a heuristic purpose, their usefulness is determined by their ability to evoke in the reader’s mind a vicarious experience that reduces certainty about the matters in which the dimensions of the “outside” world are regarded (2001a, p. 738).

Barone draws on the features of the “New Journalism,” specifically those of “theme”; “characterization,” including consideration of the comportment of the
character, their commentary, and their products; “landscape”; and “plot” (2000). Within his discussion of the last, his emphasis on the careful placement of interpretations and theoretical analyses reminds us of the distinction he is making between the “New Journalism” and educational inquiry that aims at criticism of the experienced curriculum (2000, p. 42).

Barone provides a compelling example of what narrative in educational research looks like in his seminal text *Touching Eternity* (2001c). He describes *Touching Eternity* as an arts-based research study of the “curriculum-in-retrospect” that seeks to explore the long-term consequences of education and, in that process, generate a number of questions about the purposes and the effects of teaching and teachers’ work and the ways in which teaching is shaped by the personal, theoretical, and cultural contexts in which it occurs (2001b). The text does not aim for definitive answers to these questions; rather, it seeks to highlight the ambiguities and tensions that underlie all teaching endeavours. In his conclusion to the text, he reminds us that

the literary text is at least as suspect as other discursive forms. . . . My own aspirations for this text bear repeating. They were not to trick the reader into viewing the portraits of characters as neutral representations of reality, but to rhetorically persuade them to ask questions about important educational issues (Barone, 2001c, p. 162).

In this, Barone returns us to the purpose of his endeavour, to “challenge the educational imaginary” – a purpose that resists propaganda, deception, or self-interest in order to entice the reader, through an act of “writerly persuasion” to wonder “about what has been previously taking for granted. . . . to persuade readers to question prevailing notions of educational significance” (Barone, 2001c, p. 179).

. . . The uses of narrative . . .

Bruner suggests that narratives should be judged on their “lifelikeness” and their “usefulness” (1996a), a notion that has resonance with Barone’s criteria for judgement, those of “usefulness” and “persuasiveness” (2000). This emphasis on usefulness is taken up by Clandinin and colleagues in their emphasis on making explicit the “social significance” of narrative inquiry work and the contribution it makes to the larger body of literature in the field (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 485). The purposes, aims, and goals of narrative in research must always be at the forefront of the research endeavour. As Clandinin and colleagues remind us,

Narrative Inquiry is so much more than deciding at the last minute that a paper or dissertation or talk would be more compelling if a researcher was to tell a story. When researchers say they want to “do narrative” and what they want to do is to take their data and turn it into a story, that is, they want to somehow incorporate story in their research texts, this is not what we think of as narrative inquiry. For those of us engaged in narrative inquiry, we work from a set of ontological and methodological assumptions and the questions of representational form follow from these (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 31).
Concluding Comments

In the above sections we have traced some of the pathways through the landscape of narrative inquiry that have been followed by those engaging in educational research. There are a number of other pathways through varying disciplinary terrains that we have not pursued here. Narrative inquiry is still in its early stages of development (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). It will be subject to contestation over the years as the methodology develops, and other pathways are marked out. Our intention here has not been to provide a definitive text; rather, it has been to outline some key considerations and to provide music educators with a context in which they might consider the purposes and uses of narrative inquiry for the field of music education. For us, narrative inquiry projects are deeply relational and committed to the pursuit of questions of educational significance – questions that challenge taken-for-granted notions of the nature of life and learning in and through music. These are ideas that we shall pursue further in the following chapter.

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Chapter 2
Narrative Inquiry in Music Education: Toward Resonant Work

Sandra L. Stauffer and Margaret S. Barrett

Narrative inquiry is evolving in music education and in the social sciences. In some respects, scholars engaged in narrative in music education have grown, collectively, beyond the “turns” described in the first chapter and have metamorphosed into a community of narrative inquirers. Narrative has been used in music education dissertations and other studies. Two international conferences addressing Narrative Inquiry in Music Education have been held. Narrative pieces have been published in the profession’s research journals and in this book. Narrative studies are in progress as we write and read these words. Music education researchers who use narrative have found resonance with colleagues in other disciplines, as well as spaces and places where narrative can flourish (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This collective interest in and turn towards narrative is consistent with the music education profession’s move away from singular grand tales of music, music making, and music teaching and learning and towards consideration of multiple stories, multiple voices, and multiple meanings of music and musicking. The collective turn towards narrative in music education is also consistent with the profession’s move towards embracing multiple means and multiple lenses for examining the new and recurring complexities of music in life and learning.

In other respects, however, the narrative turn in music education is still in progress as individual researchers move differently, for various reasons and in various ways, towards narrative thinking and narrative work (Pinnegar, 2008), while others choose different means and methods. This is as it should be. Researcher positionalities differ, as do research questions. Narrative is not a panacea, but rather one way to make audible the voices, experiences, and meanings of individuals and communities engaged in music and to raise those questions that are often left unasked. Among the challenges to those who choose to use narrative are the crucial and critical questions of when, why, and how narrative may be used or is useful (Bowman, 2006). In this chapter, we explore the means and methods of narrative as inquiry in music education and wrestle with the potential inherent in and

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through narrative to inform and perhaps transform music learning and teaching in its many iterations. We position this discussion of narrative inquiry in music education within a theoretical and philosophical framework that we have come to call “resonant work,” work that reverberates and resonates in and through the communities it serves.

. . . Toward resonant work . . .

Despite the history and theory outlined in Chapter 1 and elsewhere (see, e.g., Clandinin’s *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*, 2007), the question asked most often about narrative as scholarship is, “What is it?” In the panoply of approaches available to researchers, narrative is located within the qualitative research domain, a domain that is “defined by a series of tensions, contradictions, and hesitations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 24). (Those seeking exactitude should turn back here.) Painted with the broadest brush, narrative is among the modes of inquiry that engage the search for meaning (Bruner, 1990) and that emphasise both the socially constructed nature of reality and the situational restraints and constraints that shape inquiry. Historically, narrative is a form of educational inquiry that draws from the wellsprings of literature and the social sciences. In some instances and iterations, it is a genre blended with arts-based educational research and literary nonfiction. It is deeply relational – even co-relational – work. It is inquiry that makes evident to readers the lived experiences of individuals and groups by foregrounding their narratives and their understandings. In doing so, narrative inquiry, at its best, invites “conspiratorial conversations” (Barone, 2000a, 2008) aimed at resisting those master stories that dominate the current socio-political discourse about education, the arts, and the people involved in education and the arts. Narrative troubles certainty.

Narrative that aims to “prick the consciences of readers by inviting a reexamination of the values and interests undergirding certain discourses, practices, and institutional arrangements” (Barone, 2000a, p. 193), wherever they occur, holds some similarities with what Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon (2001) have called “good work.” They describe good work as work that represents both high-level performance and social responsibility or “work of expert quality that benefits society” (p. ix). In short, good work is excellent, ethical, and engaged. But something more is required. For music educators and others, narrative is also artful and art-full. It is aesthetic in its purposing, its processes, and its presentational products. It is intertwined with the arts in content, practice, substance, and form, and like the arts, narrative seeks communication beyond the immediate or surface meanings, and reverberation past the present moment. Narrative is resonant work.

We define resonant work as having four qualities: it is respectful, responsible, rigorous, and resilient. Further, these four qualities are both symbiotic and obligate in narrative, meaning not only that they are present in the living work of narrative, but also that these qualities, as interdependent rather than autonomous acts and attributes, comprise an ethical grounding and imperative for narrative work.
Respect has become a familiar ethic for researchers, though not via an uncontested path. During the middle of the 20th century, the complications, missteps, and tragedies associated with the treatment of individuals in research studies, particularly (but not exclusively) in medical trials, brought public and political attention to the matter of respect for research participants. The guidelines for ethical conduct of research that were developed and revised following various calamitous events became, in some ways, a means of codifying respect for, and respectful treatment of, individuals involved in research that requires the participation of fellow humans. Respect, though, is not so easily reified. Rather, respect is a dynamic quality, a living norm that transcends codification, and, for researchers in many disciplines, it signifies something more than complying with the regulations of ethics review boards and obtaining informed consent. As Lawrence-Lightfoot notes,

Respect is not something one can imitate, but something one must embody. While we might say that a person has a disposition to act with respect, it is only in the individual acts of respect that the quality becomes actual. “Respect” as an integral aspect of life, both personal and social, is maintained by the respectful acts of individuals. Both individually and collectively, we are entrusted with the responsibility of preserving respect (2000, p. 57).

For narrative inquirers, respect is a living norm that exists in the relational space between and among individuals. More than mere consideration or thoughtfulness, respect in the inquiry process is transactional – a negotiated quality among all parties that affects everyone and functions on multiple levels. In some ways, this is a familiar state for educators. Cushman comments that “in a high school classroom, respect and trust travel a two-way street between teacher and student – and have everything to do with learning” (2006, p. 16). Put another way, one cannot “know” without “getting to know” and “becoming known” to the other in the context of respectful transactions and relationships. As Lincoln and Guba assert of qualitative research in general, “The way in which we know is most assuredly tied up with both what we know and our relationships with our research participants” (2000, p. 182, italics in original).

The narrative inquirer enacts respect through deep listening and prolonged engagement, or “living alongside” (Clandinin et al., 2006), and does so with humility and perseverance, particularly when stories are difficult or uncomfortable. To do less, to turn away too early, or to disengage at moments of discomfort, risks disempowering individuals or trivialising their experiences. Such an action can lead to the conditions that Sennett (2003) describes when recalling the failures of the Cabrini projects in Chicago:

The project denied people control over their own lives. They were rendered spectators to their own needs, mere consumers of care provided to them. It was here that they experienced that peculiar lack of respect which consists of not being seen, not being accounted as full human beings (p. 13).

Enacting respect requires recognising that everyone involved – inquirers and participants – is indeed “fully human” and potentially impacted by the research process.
at multiple levels. People participating in research “may feel discomfort, anxiety, false hope, superficiality, guilt, self-doubt, irresponsibility – but also hope, increased awareness, moral stimulation, insight, a sense of liberation, a certain thoughtfulness, and so on” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 162).

Finally, respectfulness in narrative inquiry is also thoroughly rooted in the epistemological groundings of narrative as research. Narrative inquirers accept as a fundamental premise that multiple realities, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple ways of coming to know exist. Knowing is locally, socially, and temporally situated; knowledge is provisional and complex. More than honouring the voices of participants or telling their stories, narrative recognises that what and how each person knows has worth, merits space and time, and has the potential to inform. And it is this “recognition that is humanizing” (hooks, 2003, p. 103), respectful, and a hallmark of resonant work.

... Responsible ...

Researchers’ motivations for engaging in inquiry emanate from diverse musical, educational, artistic, personal, professional, and social concerns and curiosities. Beneath these worthy motivations lies an ethic of responsibility that functions on multiple levels in resonant work. Like respect, responsibility is neither easily defined nor can it be reified by checklists or policy statements. Rather, responsibility is a conscious ethic enacted and embodied by the researcher. In other words, resonant work is responsible work: responsible to the public good, responsible to research participants, and responsible to ourselves (inquirers).

At the broadest level, responsibility is aligned with Van Manen’s question, “what does it mean to be an educator and a human science researcher?” (1990, p. 137) and with Denzin and Lincoln’s observation that the “seventh moment” in the history of qualitative research “asks that social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community” (2000, p. 3). Writing about qualitative research in general, and critical stories in particular, Barone suggests that a research approach “that is intensely empirical but politically disinterested is insufficient” (2000, p. 192). He asserts that “the ultimate aims of the critical storyteller should match those McLaren (1989) imputes to the members of that cadre of concerned educationists known as critical theorists: ‘to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices’” (p. 160)” (2000a, p. 193).

In narrative, responsibility to the public good is intimately intertwined with responsibility to the individuals participating in the inquiry. Within the narrative community, the desire to represent unheard and marginalised voices runs strong; however, in narrative inquiry, responsibility to the individuals participating demands more than a compensatory impulse, more than providing an opportunity for voices to be heard. In narrative work, inquirers enact responsibility to individuals by creating a relational space – an “in between” place (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 120) – during the inquiry process, in which individuals can tell and re-tell, live
and re-live, their stories. And, in the process of doing so, participants make evident to those who listen (and themselves) their interpretations of lived experience and their situated constructions of reality. The “lingering effects” of such inquiry, Van Manen suggests, can be “new levels of self-awareness, possible changes in life-style, and shifting priorities of living” for inquiry participants (1990, p. 163). But when responsibility to (and respect for) individuals is absent, inquiry “may instead lead to feelings of anger, disgust, defeat, intolerance, insensitivity, etc.” (1990, p. 163). The enactment of responsibility throughout the research process has the potential to enable “personal agency: autonomous individuals who have the capacity to imaginatively shape their own lives by having the courage to write their own stories” (Siegesmund & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p. 244) and to empower individuals “to tell their own critical stories to themselves and to us all” (Barone, 2000a, p. 197).

Negotiating the intersections of responsibility to the public good and to participants involved in the inquiry is further complicated by the researcher’s responsibility to herself and to her professional community. This interweaving of responsibilities in both the conduct of research and in its representation (presentation and publication) raises axiological questions. Values may be questioned or challenged; value judgements may be required. The inquiry process can be “a form of deep learning” for the researcher, “leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness and tact” and other personal growth (Van Manen, 1990, p. 163), as well as intensified intellectual insight and renewed commitment to the research agenda. But in the eagerness to open public spaces and empower marginalised voices, in the desire for change and transformation, or in the enthusiasm for the inquiry process, care must be taken that the researcher’s agenda does not dominate the narratives of the research participants and their meanings, for when this occurs, the researcher enacts a power relationship that can overwhelm and subvert the participants’ voices to serve ends that are neither individually nor collectively responsible. Resonant work in narrative is “courageously empirical,” honest, and critical (Barone, 2000a, p. 192) and is responsible to the public good, the individuals involved in the inquiry, and the researcher and her professional community.

... Rigorous ...

The word “rigorous” may make some readers nervous. How is it possible to contemplate rigor in the context of inquiry fully grounded in human experience, relationships, and stories lived and told? Isn’t the notion of rigor antithetical to the interpretivist epistemology of narrative inquiry, the reflexive nature of engaging in the inquiry process, and the artistic qualities of narrative? How can one think about rigor while simultaneously grappling with the dilemmas and complications of respect and responsibility? Qualitative researchers in general, and narrative inquirers in particular, seem to have an uneasy relationship with rigor. Rigor in qualitative research does not hinge on conventional notions of precision and generalisability,
but rather on transparency, accountability, and an underpinning of ethics involving “trustfulness, openness, honesty, respectfulness, carefulness, and constant attentiveness” throughout the research process (Davies & Dodd, 2002, p. 281). The ethics of respect and responsibility described in the sections above require, even demand, similar ethical care in the conduct of research from its conception and planning, throughout the inquiry process, and in the presentation of research processes and products. Rigor in resonant work is, in part, the means through which respect and responsibility are enacted.

Research of any kind, conducted well, is meticulously planned and carefully implemented and requires an investment of time, energy, and resources. In narrative work, the relational nature of inquiry brings weight to the phrase “researcher as instrument” and sharpens focus on the ethical decisions made at every step of the process. Narratives are situated performances; the participants unfold them in time and in context, making and re-making meaning as they share their stories and live their lives. The researcher is likewise fully engaged, conscious of her own story, with her own subjectivity acknowledged and understood. It is impossible to know what participants will say of their past, how they will story and restory their experiences, and what their lived experiences will be or become. It is equally impossible to know, at the start of inquiry, how the researcher or the researcher’s role will change as the project unfolds, and what dilemmas and tensions will arise. Josselson comments that

the essence of the ethical conundrum in narrative research derives from the fact that the narrative researcher is in a dual role – in an intimate relationship with the participant … and in a professionally responsible role in the scholarly community. Interpersonal ethics demand responsibility to the dignity, privacy, and well-being of those who are studied, and these often conflict with the scholarly obligation to accuracy, authenticity, and interpretation (2007, p. 538).

Eisner’s (1998) suggestion that qualitative researchers must attend not only to the finest details of the inquiry process but also to the moral and ethical implications of their work captures the spirit of rigor in the conduct of narrative inquiry.

Matters of rigor also confront the narrative inquirer in the slow recursive shifting back and forth from the field, to field texts, to interim texts, to research texts – a process that is organic and dynamic and “layered in complexity” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132). And such “complexity demands that researchers give up the attempt to dominate and control the world” (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 32). In other words, narrative inquirers accept, as a fundamental premise, what Kincheloe and Berry describe as “epistemological complexity” or “epistemological diversity” (p. 27) in qualitative research in general. Drawing on Lévi-Strauss’s (1966) concept of inquirers as bricoleurs (i.e., those who make use of multiple research approaches and theoretical constructs), they note that “bricolage is grounded on the multidimensionality of the research act directed at better understanding and acting upon the complexity of the social, psychological, and educational world. The better research accomplishes this complicated task … the more it deserves to be described as rigorous” (p. 44).
There is a subtle but crucial distinction between admitting to the possibility of diverse perspectives and acknowledging that multiple ways of understanding and constructing knowledge exist and are useful in the research process. Accepting epistemological complexity, particularly in matters of interpretation, resonates with the ethic of respect for participants and responsibility towards their interpretations. As Kincheloe and Berry note, “Every aspect of human knowing – a.k.a. interpretation – is linguistically filtered, contextually grounded, power-saturated, implicated in a particular social process, shaped by narrative forms, and inscribed by tacit theories about the nature of reality. The smell of complexity permeates these dynamics” (2004, p. 87). Researchers conscious of complexity, and working as bricoleurs, “understand the existence of these unseen dynamics and make more humble claims for their interpretations” (p. 87). Writing about arts-based educational research (a research method that draws on narrative), Barone (2008) argues similarly for “epistemological humility,” describing such work as

socially committed research that evidences an interrogatory rather than authoritative attitude . . . [and] that challenges the comfortable, familiar, dominant master narrative, not by proffering a new totalizing counter-narrative, but by luring an audience into an appreciation of an array of diverse, complex, nuanced images and partial, local portraits of human growth and possibility (p. 38).

But how is the audience to be lured? How can one construct a research text that represents the lived experiences and meaning of participants while also being theoretically informed? How does one account for researcher engagement and subjectivity without obscuring the lifeworlds of the participants? How does one raise questions that trouble certainty while maintaining epistemological humility? Here, artistry, craftsmanship, and care in writing become the makers and markers of rigor. Eisner (1998) comments that “it is very difficult for an unskilled writer to reveal the qualities of classroom life in narrative” (p. 167), and indeed, skillful writing is required in narrative accounts, whether located in schools or elsewhere. Barone lists three dimensions of nonfictional storytelling with the potential for educating members of the general public about life in schools. The first two dimensions, accessibility and compellingness, are achieved primarily through mastery of formal textual characteristics, including the form of language used and the compositional format of the text. Achievement of the third dimension, moral persuasiveness, depends on the substance of the stories told (2000a, p. 210).

Artful writing is simultaneously transparent and evocative, connotative and metaphorical. Artful writing draws the reader into the verstehen building among those involved in the inquiry and makes visible the otherwise invisible worlds of participants. Artful writing respects the reader as well as those represented in the text, anticipating that the reader is responsible for and capable of grappling with questions, considering contradictions, and bringing additional interpretations. Indeed, writer and reader are conceived as being in dialogue in much of qualitative research, particularly in the traditions of literature and literary nonfiction from which narrative inquiry draws. In some skillfully crafted narratives, this conception might be extended to writer-reader-participant dialogue. But something more is required
of the narrative inquirer. To be inquiry, narrative aims for expanded, more complex, and more sensitive perceptions and more sophisticated and nuanced understandings (Eisner, 1998). Narrative, when it is rigorous, enables readers to see and hear what they might otherwise have missed; it engages them in “thinking about how to create public spaces in our local communities where personal narratives and collective stories of marginalized people can be heard by – and can jolt out of their complacency – those who occupy more powerful subject positions and social locations” (Chase, 2005, p. 671).

... Resilient ...

Shulman comments that, in the absence of artefacts that capture its richness and complexity, “teaching is a bit like dry ice; it disappears at room temperature” (2004, p. 457). If teaching is to become recognised and valued, he argues, we need to “write it up,” to make it evident, thereby turning private practices into “community property” – something that “can be shared, discussed, critiqued, exchanged” and “used again and again in the building and rebuilding of knowledge” (pp. 305, 457). Like teaching, stories, music, music making, and other lived experiences can be equally ephemeral, unless we take on the challenge to “write it up,” to turn these experiences into “community property.” Life is richly variegated. Narrative inquiry is one means of capturing the dynamics, tensions, and complexities of lives lived in and through music by individuals and groups, children and adults.

Like lived experience (and like any other form of research), narratives are not all of the same quality. Some are better than others. Some withstand the heat of criticism better and the test of time longer than others. Shulman suggests that “research becomes more robust and sturdy the more often it is used by its author and by others to support new arguments and to undergird new claims” (2004, p. 305), but what are the qualities of research artefacts that claim repeated attention? What makes a single instance of narrative scholarship, or any other research, resilient?

Narrative that is resilient – and resonant – aims at troubling certainty. It speaks to multiple audiences and is open to multiple interpretations. It rests on the principles of respect and responsibility. It is rigorous inquiry, conducted with methodological and theoretical integrity. It retains its appeal and persuasiveness across time and contexts through honest and critical storytelling directed at matters of social justice, educational equality, and human dignity. At its best, resilient narrative builds autonomy, independence, and resolve so that readers and those who participate in the inquiry are moved to take on resonant work themselves.

... An example ...

Early in our pursuit of narrative and long before we met at a research conference, we were drawn individually to Tom Barone’s narrative account “Ways of Being at Risk: The Case of Billy Charles Barnett.” Barone describes the account as “critical storytelling” and as a “case study that was designed to raise important questions within an audience of practitioners (and others) about how, especially for youngsters from
 marginalized subcultures, the aims of school can conflict with worthwhile purposes of education” (2000, p. 179). We describe it to each other as resonant work. Nearly 20 years after its original publication (in 1989), “The Case of Billy Charles Barnett” still reverberates with educators and members of the public (see, e.g., Barone, 1993, 2000b). The resilience of this work is evidenced in its publication and use in a range of texts and settings. We point to “The Case of Billy Charles Barnett” not only as “a work” – an artefact of inquiry, but also as “resonant work” – the embodiment of the qualities of doing research that has the power to empower in tenuous and troubling times. We end with a quote from Barone and offer, in the sections that follow, examples of narrative from early career researchers who have begun the journey towards resonant work in music and music education:

“In the absence of honest story telling,” the novelist/essayist Robert Stone (1988) has remarked, “people are abandoned to the beating of their own hearts” (p. 75). Once a secondary school teacher, I have lived what he describes. I still recall the shapes of the obstacles that prevented meaningful conversations with my colleagues about our daily struggles and the ultimate purposes of our work. Memories linger of a workplace, the features of which (including the content-centered and skills-driven curriculum) diminished my access to life stories – the heartbeats – of my students, and theirs to mine.

Slowly I became aware of the extent of the problem. Over the last years the themes of isolation and silence have been prominent in the testimonials of my students, who are themselves public school teachers. And recent professional literature has attended to the need for a greater sense of community in our professional lives (Flinders, 1989; Miller, 1990). Episodes of story sharing – honest or otherwise – remain hard to come by in the American public school.

It is, therefore, to the crafting of worthwhile stories, that I, now as a teacher educator and especially as a qualitative researcher, devote a significant portion of my professional energies. Unlike most public school people, I possess the time and resources needed to gather the threads for weaving my tales. I envision a day when this privilege will be extended to empowered school people working in dramatically restructured educational settings. Meanwhile, however, I want to insist that to be worthy of our privileges, we educational academics produce stories that promote two particular kinds of activities. The first is the introduction to each other of school people (especially teachers to their students) who are locked within the present system of schooling, enabling them to hear, if you will, each other’s heartbeats. The second is inquiry into how schools may be transformed so that the people who live there will no longer need to be introduced to each other by external intermediaries such as educationists. (Barone, 1992, p. 142)

References


Prelude: Framing and Re-framing the Narrative Possibilities for Music Education

Margaret S. Barrett and Sandra L. Stauffer

The language of thought allows us to frame a situation in different and incompatible ways. (Pinker, 2007, p. 4)

Stephen Pinker here reminds us of the mutability of human thought, of the ways in which humans might frame an instance or event in a range of ways. In the seven narrative accounts of living music stories in school, university, and community settings, we are invited by the authors and the accompanying commentary writers to consider the conundrums, the incompatibilities, and the puzzlements that underlie the ways we come to understand music education and experience.

David Cleaver and Tom Langston provide accounts of the ways in which people engage with music across the boundaries of school and community, of the reasons that underlie such engagement, and of the hopes and aspirations that are embedded in these. Jan Peterson, the Year 11 student at the centre of David’s account, lives a life in and through music. She is held within a web of relationships – with peers, with parents and family, and with teachers – that support her account of herself as musically adept and dedicated to a life-long engagement with music. Jan is the student who shines in the music class, the student for whom there is a well-defined pathway and a series of institutional structures that will support her in pursuing that pathway. Tom Langston introduces us to Henry, a long-term community music participant for whom music engagement is something he “does” as a marker of social participation. Henry’s story provides a means to examine a range of reasons that underlie individual participation in community music activities – from the altruistic to the self-interested, from the communal to the individual – and, in that process, points again to the seeming incompatibility of these reasons and the ways in which they are lived out in an individual life-story. It is through the frames we assign to Jan and Henry that we make sense of their stories as researchers, as readers, as music educators, and as fellow music makers.

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Kaye Ferguson and Jeff Davis explore the ways in which two groups of participants in the teacher education process experience stories of music learning and music learning stories. In Kaye’s account of two teacher education students’ pathways towards the profession, we see the ways in which sanctioned narratives of music learning lead to particular ways of understanding the role of the music teacher and the nature of her work. For both student teachers, the struggle to make compatible their views of their “performer” selves and their “teacher” selves is one that shadows their work in both domains and shapes their views of their identity as learners and teachers. Jeff’s account of Nora, an experienced cooperating teacher, disrupts the stories of music learning in teacher education through its questioning of experience and expertise.

Catherine Kroon, Andrew Goodrich, and Lorrie Niebur Walker provide us with accounts of individual teachers, the personal epistemologies that inform their practice, and the conundrums they encounter in their lives in music education. All three authors/researchers explore the ways in which our histories shape us, as well as the music experiences we offer. Importantly, these individual teachers’ accounts acknowledge the ways in which institutional structures and practices – be they those of schools (Kroon), of a particular music culture (Goodrich), or of institutions beyond the arena of education, such as the military (Walker) – act as a powerful shaping force for all participants in music education.

The accompanying commentaries provided by Graham Welch, Rosalynd Smith, Marie McCarthy, Magne Espeland, Kathryn Marsh, Peter Dunbar-Hall, and Janet Barrett help us to frame these narrative accounts in different ways. Through their consideration of alternative perspectives, these writers invite us to frame, to re-frame, and, in so doing, to re-shape the experience of music education for ourselves and for those with whom we work.

Reference

Chapter 3
Storying the Musical Lifeworld: Illumination Through Narrative Case Study

David Cleaver

Abstract  In addition to the exploration of the general, music education will continue to benefit from the study of personal meaning from the perspective of the particular. This idea aligns with the field of psychology where a strong case has been made for idiographic perspectives to act not only as support for but also as antidote to the prevalence of nomothetic viewpoints.

To support the case for the particular, this study takes the form of a narrative case study portrait of the musical lifeworld of Jan Peterson, a musically dedicated school student. Purposefully, the research has set out to illuminate the complexity, depth, and uniqueness of individual music meaning and the nature of a particular “identity in music.” With implications for music education, many of the prime structures of personal meaning illuminated are those connected to music learning experiences and processes. The storied representation of individual musical lifeworld experience reveals how music may permeate life. Importantly, the study reinforces the case that music teachers should no longer simply teach a subject – but develop sensitivities to the nature of musical identity and musical life texts.

The narrative portrait is accompanied by the theoretical and technical details that were considered when constructing a narrative case study portrait.

Don’t try to get rid of your motivating force when you find it, but use it to study yourself.  
(G. I. Gurdjieff, as cited in Anderson, 1962, p. 62)

Baudolino:  But maybe my story has no meaning.
Niketas:  There are no stories without a meaning. And I am one of those men who can find it even where others fail to see it. Afterwards the story becomes the book of the living, like a blaring trumpet that raises from the tomb those who have been dust for centuries... Still it takes time, you have to consider the events, arrange them in order, find the connections, even the least visible ones.  
(Eco, 2002, p.12)

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Jan Peterson: *Music is my life.*

David: *What would you do if you couldn’t do music?*

Jan: *I wouldn’t want to be without the thing that keeps me going a lot of the time.*

David: *When do you get time to do homework?*

Jan: *I don’t. I just try and find minutes that aren’t there and squish it all in.*

**Introduction**

Jan Peterson¹ is one of five musically dedicated students who participated in my doctoral research inquiry into lived musical experience. In addition to Jan, the other volunteers were Polly, Mario, Kristin, and Jeremiah, and all allowed me into their lives in order to understand the ways that music is used and lived and how musical identities and intense individual relationships with music are formed. The project was formulated using a combined narrative and phenomenological focus, and each participant was viewed as an intrinsic case study. Before the case study portrait of Jan is presented, I provide some important background information, and at its conclusion, I return to descriptions that are intended to make the methods and procedures visible.

As narrative inquiry is a collaborative conjoining of lifeworld experience, researchers and their participants live in each other’s storied accounts and data is generated through an intersection and interweaving of researcher and participant experience.² In this study, lifeworld connections were made through semi-structured interviews, from my observations of each participant in musical performance, and also from interviews with parents and music teachers. From the gathered “lived experience material” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 53), I fashioned phenomenological narrative musical portraits³ that reveal some of the inner qualities of how individual musical lives are lived. Like Niketas Choniates (see epigraph 2 of this chapter), when he promises to help Baudolino find his lost story, my plan was to “consider the events, arrange them in order, find the connections, even the least visible ones” (Eco, 2002, p. 12).

¹ Self-selected pseudonyms were used throughout the study.

² Similarities can be made here with “new ethnography,” where observers acknowledge that they cannot operate like a fly on the wall. Our presence alters the context. Philosophically, this point also links to the important issues of researcher subjectivity and placement of self into the picture. My plan was to avoid an objectivist view from nowhere or a God’s-eye-view approach to research (see Johnson, 1987). I acknowledge that I am “embodied in the research – not existing in a transcendent realm” (Lather, 1991) and “authoring a self within the context of others”² (Goodall, 2000, p. 191).

³ In the dissertation, I combine the complementary aspects of narrative theory and phenomenology to form a useful tool for the exploration of lived meaning and lived experience. I argue for a combined use of the theoretical principles of both domains when strategically applied as methodologies or research strategies. My decision to form a personal research design is supported by Denzin & Lincoln (2003). They state that the qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur will deploy strategies and methods at hand, and “if new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this” (p. 5).
During the fashioning of each musical portrait, I sought to highlight and illuminate the individuality of each participant, his or her particular musical way of being, and the meaning and significance he or she had ascribed to music. I also sought to identify and illuminate the meaningful experiences that had led each participant to become attracted to music and to develop insight into the meaning structures created through personal encounters with different types of music learning experiences. Importantly, the aim was to honour the meanings stored within narrative. Rather than simply presenting naïve description, educational criticism was included through the strategic placement of personal anecdotes, vignettes, and comment and by drawing attention to music teaching and learning processes and issues from the perspective of each student.

When following the story of Jan Peterson, the reader should consider an important theoretical stance that has influenced the structural and theoretical design of the portrait. Importantly, I set out to pragmatically explore and engage with Jerome Bruner’s theory (1986) that assumes there are two contrasting universal human cognitive modes, the logico-scientific or paradigmatic mode and the narrative mode. Bruner described these as “meaning-bearing forms of communication,” “modes of reasoning, knowing and understanding,” and also “ways of construing reality” (p. 11). He added that although the modes are contrasted and distinct, they are also “complementary but irreducible to one another” (p. 11). While both the narrative and the paradigmatic are meaning-making modes, as processes of reasoning and inquiry they are functionally different. The paradigmatic mode produces knowledge of concepts, while the narrative mode produces knowledge of particular situations (Polkinghorne, 1995; Smeyers & Verhesschen, 2001). While the paradigmatic mode is concerned with “truth-finding” and is “the prerogative of science and logic” (Bruner, 1996, p. 148), narrative reasoning is directed to the situated and contextual ways that humans experience the world. Paradigmatic reasoning is aligned with scientific explanation and inductivism, while narrative thought “attempts to maintain a subjective perspective on the world it represents, incorporating aims and fears into the picture” (Murray, 1995, p. 188). While these two cognitive forms or ways of knowing may not be clearly delineated in one’s day-to-day thinking processes, I deliberately pursued a literal understanding of the contrast between them and sought to highlight and delineate them in sections of the research writing. This elicited a reflexive process that helped me to forge a personal, deeper awareness of living inside and seeing through both the narrative and the paradigmatic lens. I began to grasp the choices available when considering lifeworld issues through each lens and, in short, achieved a clearer awareness of my narrative and paradigmatic selves. While the boundaries are soft, these delineations and transitions (in my thinking) are made visible in the portrait, through the use of changing

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Barone (2001) points out, through reference to the work of Elliot Eisner, how educational criticism is “a form of research and evaluation in which the researcher-evaluator brings the tools of art criticism to educational matters . . . that storylike descriptions are insufficient” (p. 170). I added a critical component by including vignettes, at certain points, of my personal music educational experience in order to highlight and introduce educational issues.
fonts.\(^5\) Paradigmatic thoughts and discussions – sections of text with an unambiguous, objective, explanatory, cause-and-effect, inductive function – are juxtaposed with narrative thinking – text that includes contextual, worldly knowledge based on lived experience (including direct interview transcriptions), is less inductive, and “maintains a subjective perspective on the world” (Murray, 1995, p. 188). These transitions were carefully considered and placed strategically in order to highlight my perception of the contrasting ways of seeing and, importantly, to highlight and advocate for narrative dimensions of understanding. The reader is invited to follow these transitions in order to engage in personal interpretation and understanding of the two ways of seeing. My purpose is not to be persuasive or describe the truth but to invite further dialogue, ongoing discussion, and debate.

**Jan Peterson: The Story**

Jan Peterson – singer, pianist, flautist, actor, dancer and self-confessed musical “perfectionist” – attends St. Catherine’s College for girls, and I am here in the college auditorium to hear her perform. The students have assembled outside the auditorium and now begin filing into the room. Tension is generated by the sense of formality that is designed to simulate that of a professional concert. As the students move to their seats, they are hushed – although an occasional whisper and nervous giggle echo around the auditorium.

Eight of the students are about to take turns performing in this assessment concert, which is part of a pre-tertiary music course. When everyone is seated, introductions are made; there is loud applause – the students are sympathetic to each other’s nervousness and hence are supportive of each other. Everyone wants everyone to do well. I have set up the video camera in the aisle, close to the front of the staged area. Jan Peterson is about to sing, performing for her peers, guests, and class teacher. Pressing the record button on the camera, I move back to my seat – to listen and watch.

Jan, being slight of build, looks vulnerable and nervous as she prepares to sing. She straightens the music on the stand and pushes up the sleeve of her cardigan as if to say “I mean business” – the piano introduction starts. Soon the room warms – her tone has a charming quality and she sings tentatively at first with care and attention, but soon relaxes as the song unfolds. We are drawn in, captivated.

Jan is in Year 11 and entered the college in the previous year – enticed by its renowned arts programme and a scholarship. Her parents and music teacher describe

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\(^5\) In many forms of qualitative and arts-based research, the use of changing fonts is now commonly used to highlight contrasts between different voices. Influential to this particular study has been Barone (2001) who used the design feature to “signal shifts across three distinct perspectives of events and sources of information” (p. 70).
her as “very strong” academically and “having many roads she could go down.” However, music has come to the forefront, and she plans to study music at tertiary level and then make it her career. Jan’s parents support and encourage her musical direction and goals.

Jan sings soprano and prefers classical music to pop and jazz, but at present it is the music theatre repertoire that fires her imagination. Despite articulating clear preferences about musical styles, there is an element of doubt about the future and which genre to pursue. “I don’t know what direction to get into – whether to go to musical theatre, like I am at the moment or whether I want to get into professional opera. It sort of depends on how my voice develops.”

The last two years have been very busy. Participation in music and dramatic stage productions, pantomimes, and eisteddfods, programmes both in and out of school, have provided a variety of performing experiences and stage roles.

Jan’s piano playing is at the same examination grade level as her singing. However, referring to Jan’s career aspirations, her mother says she is “more comfortable singing and it is her primary aim.” Jan agrees saying, “I think of myself as a singer more than anything else. That’s basically what I excel at more.” As a flautist she is primarily self-taught. “I picked it up in primary school, know the notes and because I can read music from playing the piano, I just teach myself and pick up whatever I can from orchestra tutorials.”

Versatility is a feature of Jan’s involvement in the college arts programmes, for in her various roles she is always in demand, always occupied. Her timetable includes choir, vocal ensemble, orchestra, and personal preparation for vocal and piano assessment, and there are often rehearsals underway for music and drama productions, which are staged regularly. Jan’s college timetable is full, and music structures and fills her lifeworld.

Jan’s musical identity has been constructed and nurtured within family relationships and home-space. This became evident in the first few minutes of my arrival at the family home where her parents, Joanne and Brian, had agreed to talk to me about their eldest daughter’s life in music.

The Petersons live in a northern suburb that is located on a hillside, overlooking the Derwent estuary and facing across the water to the city of Hobart.

I had arranged to meet at the family home, and it was dark and raining hard as I drove across the bridge. Looking back across the water, the city lights were barely visible through the mist and spray. Eventually, after having peered past the slapping, sloshing windscreen wipers for the street names and the house numbers, I finally pulled up outside the home – the glow from lights in the house looked warm and inviting.

Jan opened the door and greeted me. Recorded orchestral music sounded in the upstairs living area, but we by-passed that room and Jan ushered me down the stairs through a large family room and into an office.
“Have a seat, Mum won’t be a moment; she’s in there,” she said pointing to a door at the other end of the room. “She’ll only be a moment – she’s just finishing teaching.” I heard the faint sound of a piano and voices from behind the door. I thanked Jan and she left to go back to whatever she had been doing, I sat down in the chair and was left to reflect. I imagined she was in the process of “squishing” in some homework.

The house was set up for music. The piano room had a solid door that I could see had been especially built for soundproofing. The music emanating from the room was quiet and muffled.

Soon Joanne Peterson emerged from the music room, and we made introductions – to Corinne also, the youngest member of the family.

“I was just helping Corinne with some music that is coming up for her exams soon,” Joanne explained. I later discovered that Joanne, a competent pianist, regularly guided both of her daughters as they played through their repertoire and prepared for exams.

We begin our interview and, shortly, Brian Peterson entered the room and joined the conversation. Their stories paint a picture of Jan’s musical family life, but first I will tell of Jan’s perspective of family and music.

At my initial meeting and interview with Jan at the college, I had asked what it was that attracts her to music.

Jan: I think the general attraction to music is . . . it has been in my family for a long time so it’s something I have been brought up on.

The connection to family and family history was quick, and Jan acknowledges their significant and influential contribution to her musical world.

**Lived Musical Space, Relationships, and the Family “Script”**

Borthwick & Davidson (2002) suggest that there are many influencing factors within family life that contribute towards a musical identity, with immediate family members often playing a shaping role. Particularly from parents, there may be a *parenting script* that is a blueprint of musical values and expectations for development. These are passed on and are external factors influencing children (p. 76).

Joanne Peterson has been the primary musical influence in her daughter’s life.

Jan: My mother has been the one who has basically brought me up with the musical background. She helped develop an appreciation of music from quite a young age.

David: So basically you can remember listening to her play?

Jan: Ah, well she has started playing again in the last five or six years because my sister and I take piano lessons. She began playing again to bring herself back up to scratch so she can help us – recognize our mistakes and call them out. I think she did up to Grade 8 in the Trinity examinations. And it was just too much work with the family so
she ended up letting it go. But she is a very musical person herself and she has got a very broad range of knowledge. She is really helpful.

David: And she has been encouraging?
Jan: Very much!

Extended family and maternal and paternal grandmothers were also pianists. Brian Peterson, Jan’s father, is not a musician (I used to learn as a kid and can read music but I have trouble making two hands co-ordinate!), but within the extended family, there have been other singers and pianists. A great aunt, “heavily involved in the arts,” is acknowledged as recognising Jan’s “natural ability,” and it was she who suggested formal training. From that moment, encouragement and music lessons began.

Talking with Joanne and Brian Peterson, it becomes clear that Jan’s individual musical identity is an extension of a larger family musical identity sustained through a “family script” and “transgenerational plot” (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002, p. 63). From the following conversation, a co-construction of the family script emerges, revealing its contribution to Jan’s musical life.

Brian (father): My mother plays the piano and her sisters do – and my grandmother, on my Mum’s side, used to. And I’ve got a funny feeling that my grandmother on my Dad’s side – yes she did too.

Even before Jan was born there was a piano here. She would have heard Joanne playing. (To Joanne) You always reckon she used to jive to music when you were carrying her.

Joanne: Yes, she has had music since before she was born if you think about it. If she was particularly restless, I would go and play the piano and she would calm down. When she was young, I would always play the piano – I would sit her on my knees and sing songs to her; she used to pick things out on the piano and fiddle around. As a baby and when she got to be, not much past twelve months old, she would climb up on the piano stool and have a poke around. She was a very advanced child. We were hearing her first words at ten months. By twelve months we were getting sentences. By about twelve months old she was fiddling around on the piano by herself but she never actually started formal music lessons until she was about eight.

Borthwick & Davidson (2002) state that, within the transgenerational plot, “parents see their own parents as key players in their children’s current musical identity,” and often “musicianship [is] an inevitable part of continuing the family identity across the generations” (p. 63). A love of music, its high status, and role are seen as an inheritance passed on through family and extended family members, a musical legacy passed down through generations. Relating this concept to script theory (Byng-Hall, 1995), Borthwick and Davidson show how family musical involvement and values are passed on. However, Borthwick and Davidson also state that often parents, possibly due to negative experiences within the family, might be cautious of “scripting their own children’s futures” (p. 63). Joanne’s caution is expressed as a pragmatic interest and concern that her daughter’s own script would be allowed to unfold without pressure.
Joanne: *Jan never actually started formal music lessons until she was about eight. I wasn’t a firm believer in starting them young – before she was ready – and said she really wanted to learn. At about nine years of age she joined a small entertainment group – singing at old people’s homes and she joined that because she couldn’t do gymnastics or sport or anything like that. She had bad ankles and she wanted something more than the piano so she went in that direction and just wanted to do it for a bit of fun.*

I reflect on the uniqueness of family musical “scripts” and “plots” and conclude that they are as individual as the people immersed in them. As a teacher, I was introduced to a great variety and diversity of these whilst talking to parents at parent-teacher evenings. I would hear and discuss parents’ stories of their child’s musical past and aspirations, expectations, hopes, and fears for their musical futures.

It seems to me that most people have interesting stories about family and the music that filled childhood. I thought I would randomly test this statement by asking some of those close to me.

I talk to my wife, Eilish nee McCarthy, who hails from County Cork in Ireland, about her memories of music in the home – of her family musical legacy. In the Irish tradition, the stories are easily at hand.

I remember Granny Mac – playing old 78 records – of John McCormack singing *Marble Halls, The Moon Behind the Hill.* Mum – singing *Silence is Golden,* understandable – with eight kids in the house it was always bedlam. Also, *We’re all Going on a Summer Holiday* – while slaving over a hot stove or doing the housework and great piles of laundry. And Dad – he would often sit at the bottom of the stairs late at night after coming home – “full up.” *Sittin’* there he would sing rebel songs – *Patriot Game* and *Foggy Dew.* More bedlam if Gran Howard was over from England. The next morning she would counter attack by singing *Jerusalem, Lambeth Walk* at the top of her voice and she would play Elgar and Vaughan Williams records.

Eilish and I joke about this family knack of communicating and passing on messages through the selection of songs. The lyrics would often cleverly reflect the expression of feeling at the time and also communicate a distinct, often cryptic, message to other family members.

A friend, Sean Donahue, says his memories of family musical scripts are more about *talk* of music rather than actual music itself. His parents didn’t sing or play but seemed constantly lost in reverie and reminiscence of music in their childhood, although a legacy did come, he says, in the form of an artefact – his grandfather’s ancient mandolin. It was his father’s keepsake and seemed to contain “locked up” memories. Sean’s father would talk fondly of *his* father sitting in a huge armchair and gently strumming the mandolin, entertaining the family seated on the floor around him. It was Sean’s dad’s nostalgic and fleeting childhood memory of music in the home.

Sean’s mother would also tell stories of music in her young life – about her piano lessons and the grumpy, strict teacher who would rap her knuckles when she got it wrong. She would talk about her mother’s and brother’s love of music. These stories
too were always accompanied by nostalgia for the music she had “given up” or had
to give up because of circumstances – “moving overseas and the war.” The first time
Sean heard her play was the first time she had played in 20 years. They were at a
friend’s house. He remembers how his mother looked nervously at the friend’s piano
and after being prompted to play, said, “Oh, I’ve forgotten everything.” Tentatively,
as though drawn to it like a moth to a flame, she sat down, thought for a moment,
and then began Chopin’s Prelude, Opus 28, number 7. She played the first four bars
perfectly, but as the memories came flooding back, tears welled in her eyes; she
stood up, closed the lid of the piano, and walked out of the room.

The Peterson family’s musical relationships appear to take place in a positive atmo-
sphere that includes musical nurturing, support, and encouragement. According to
Joanne, no hot-housing techniques or pressure take place. I ask if Jan was naturally
motivated towards music.

Joanne: Yes, there has never been any pushing from our point of view. Encouragement and
a bit of harassment when exams are due and “You are not ready, Jan” – but apart
from that, she sets her own goals and off she goes.

The Peterson’s home environment had always been saturated with music, and
music had been a familiar experience for Jan, even prior to birth. A strong musical
identity was forming as she played at the piano with her mother and sang with her
aunts. I envisage Jan as a toddler, when activities such as poking around on the
piano and hearing and seeing family musical play were an integral part of a “non-
dualistic” childhood consciousness. What I mean by a “non-dualistic childhood
consciousness” relates to William James’ theory of the two components of identity,
the “I” and the “me.” “The ‘me’ is the part of our identity that can be observed
and known, whilst the ‘I’ is the part that is able to reflect on the ‘me,’ i.e. which
has subjectivity and is the knower” (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002, p. 9).
Before these processes of self-definition and self-concept are formed, no boundary
exists between self and other; there is only one component. Jan’s developing self-
awareness and self-concepts have formed alongside growing awareness of self in
relation to music. Reflecting on Bruner’s theory that “meanings of self grow out of
contexts of practice” (1990, p. 118), I see how, for Jan, music is a meaningful part
of self. Music and growing up are integrated. For Jan, as a toddler, there was an “I”
apprehending “music” but no “me” separate from “music” – just music experienced
pre-conceptually and pre-reflexively as sounds, sights, and sensations.

As identity formation relies on the developing sense of a “balance between self
and other” (Kroger, 1989, p. 5), Jan’s musical identity is closely related to and bal-
anced through interaction with the musical identity of her mother.

Importantly, when a child’s life has been infused with music from birth, a sense of
naturalness with music occurs. Howe & Sloboda (1991), in a study of the influence
of family upon musical background, present a quote by a parent talking about her
son’s natural acceptance of music as part of life. Initially, Howe and Sloboda say,
In a number of instances it was clear that although music undoubtedly formed an important element of the child’s early childhood, the child was not at the time aware that a family background in which music played a role was in any sense unusual. Music as an element of home life was simply taken for granted.

[The parent states] It never occurred to him [the child] that it wasn’t part of our natural world. The doctor came one day with a black case and he said, “What does the doctor play?” (p. 43)

Other participants who took part in my research described to me how their commitment to music had commenced from a particular inspirational moment or a defining transformative experience. However, for Jan, the decision to dedicate her life to music may be described as a dawning. Music didn’t arrive dramatically later in life; it was always there. There was no fanfare or fired-up single imaginative moment of delight that started the ball rolling. There was just a steadily growing self-confidence in ability and love for music involvement. Music doesn’t simply surround Jan; it is infused into her life to the extent that she says, “Music has become my life – it is what I do.”

While there was a developing awareness of the importance of music, it was accompanied by growing self-confidence. It grew with continued success at events and competitions. By the time she had reached Year 10, Jan had sung in the chorus of a professional production of *Oliver*, performed in several pantomimes and played an extensive summer season as a lead in *Aspects of Love*. These experiences were positive, and the success helped to promote a move from self-doubt to firm conviction. Jan recognises a moment of transition, locating it in a particular experience.

Jan:  Right up through primary school until Grade 8 I had always wanted to be a teacher. Music was just something I did outside of school and it wasn’t something I ever thought of moving into. It wasn’t until Grade 9 really when I got into the chorus of Oliver. And that was the trigger. And I decided well maybe I can – I want to do something more. And so at the end of Grade 9 I was offered a scholarship here and I think by that time I had decided. Also I had won a lot of prizes at the eisteddfods during that year as well and I thought well if I could do this I can keep going. Now music has become my life – it is what I do. So it was probably getting into the ensemble chorus of Oliver that triggered it the most. To say “Okay well I can do this!” That was probably it.

Successful performance experiences have triggered positive feelings, a growing sense of achievement and self-confidence. These factors are tied to self-belief and self-esteem and are an important part of her musical identity. We will later see how she monitors these through music and musical performances.

I am reminded again of Jerome Bruner’s assertion that meanings of self grow out of “contexts of practice” (1990, p. 118). His description points to how our sense of self and self-identity develop as a result of what we do and our contexts of experience. This perhaps could be simply put as “we are what we do.” An example also comes to mind.
There is a scene in *Rumpole of the Bailey* where Rumpole (the actor Leo McKern) is alone in his office, sitting at the desk, perusing a complicated legal document. He is thinking aloud. He is suddenly distracted by an intruding thought. He looks up and pauses, and his mouth opens. He appears aghast as he asks himself, “Who am I?” He is dumbfounded by his own question. He looks vacant and is suddenly rather anxious at not finding an answer. Then he looks down at the legal document and then with a relaxing feeling of recognition says, “Oh yes.” He carries on working.

**The “Me” in Music**

Jan is serious about her music and school life. This is evident not only in her vocal tone and demeanor when in conversation, but also in the particular descriptions of her experiences and her critical reflections of her own musical performance and behavior. I proceed by following the theme of Jan’s characterisation of herself as a perfectionist, and how a degree of self-criticism assists her in the achievement of high standards.

Davidson (2002) comments on the personality of solo performers who engage themselves in many long hours of lonely practice. Helpful, she says, is a degree of introspection, self-containment, and “an ability to be self-critical as well as the ability to take criticism in order to conquer the challenges of learning” (pp. 101–102). However, the attributes of introspection and self-criticism may be developed not solely to conquer learning, but exist prior to learning, and music is used as an agent to sustain these attributes. DeNora (2000) concurs with this by stating that music may be “appropriated by individuals as a resource for the ongoing constitution of themselves and their social psychological, physiological and emotional states” (p. 47). From my informal conversations with Jan, her mother, father, and music teacher, I discover how music is the agent in the ongoing constitution of a critical self. Music engagement provides Jan with a way to closely monitor self-worth and self-image.

As we are talking about her broad range of skills, as a singer, pianist, flautist, actor, and dancer, I ask which of these are most important to her. Jan answers the question, but an admission that she is self-critical is offered out of the blue.

Jan:  *I suppose I think of myself as a singer more than anything else. That is basically what I excel at more. Although I don’t go around saying I am a pianist and singer and I play the flute as well. I guess it’s because as a classical singer – with people my age – there are not many of them and so rather than being a pianist – which there are millions – being a classical singer when you are younger isn’t so much of an obvious choice. So basically I call myself a singer. I must admit I am my own critic.*

David:  *Are you?*

Jan:  *Yes, I am my own worst critic. I have really high expectations of myself and I don’t always meet them so I go through stages of depression – every now and then when I don’t do as well as I think I should have.*
Kathleen Cooper, Jan’s classroom music teacher, recognises this specific tendency. In conversation, she describes it in the following way:

Kathleen: Jan puts incredibly high expectations on herself and then assumes that everyone else has got them of her too.

I continue this point with her parents.

David: Would you describe Jan as being self-critical?
Joanne: Too much sometimes.
David: Positively, you can be your own best teacher really.
Joanne: Yes, but sometimes she doesn’t give herself credit for her ability. She is telling herself that she can do better and better rather than saying “I think that was pretty good and I am happy with my performance – but next time I could do this and this,” she tends to go, “That wasn’t good enough.” Well, being artistic, she tends to sort of be that way – it is one of those things. But we try to temper her emotions and say, “Look, Jan, try and give yourself credit.”
David: Or perhaps be just a little more content with results. Maybe it is quite common with artists – to be perfectionists.
Joanne: But I think there is equilibrium somewhere.
Brian: She is too much of a perfectionist.
Joanne: Actually one of her former teachers – a Grade 6 teacher she was talking to in the school holidays asked Jan, “Are you a fully fledged perfectionist now or are you still in training?” So right back – even in Grade 6 when she was only 11 years old it was evident.

Jan’s self-criticism extends over to the analysis of her performances, and she may often become disappointed when she does not meet her own expectations. But she also declares that she is trying not to “hang on to disappointment” after performances that do not go so well.

Jan: I have tried to learn from experience – not to let performances get me down because I did that last year and I was a mess.

Jan and I continue discussing this issue, and she ascribes some of the specific emotional issues attached to performing to the sensitivity and difficulty of being a singer.

Jan: As a singer you are emotionally involved with the piece because the instrument is inside you. If you are a pianist – I know if I stuff it up – I can actually forget about it and leave the instrument behind. But being a singer it is in your head, it is – what you perform is actually you, so if you are disappointed with the performance you are more disappointed with yourself. And the disappointment lasts longer.
David: So, is performing a bit of a roller-coaster ride?
Jan: It is, very much.
David: Although you have to take the good with the bad.
Jan: You do.
David: I guess you have to learn to move on from bad experiences.
Jan: Yeah, it is still . . . I haven’t been performing long enough probably to be able to get over it quickly.
David: You may find that many musicians are like that . . . are self-critical. You are like that?
Jan: Yes.
David: You really want to do your best?
Jan: Yes, I am probably a lot harsher on myself than anyone else is. My teachers know it; my mother knows it especially. Most of my good friends are really good musicians. One of them is my accompanist and he knows that I pick myself to bits. And so he is very reluctant to point out anything that – unless it is terribly wrong he won’t point anything out because he is afraid I will start criticizing that point and take it too far. I am getting a lot better and I am a lot more confident with it but it is still . . . I don’t show it as much but there are still things that really irk me that I have done wrong. And so I will criticize myself about it until I can try and fix it . . . or until I make it really worse and then I get really angry and it comes right out.

Jan’s tendency to be self-critical has been part of a high achievement strategy and part of the reason for her success with music and her generally high academic level. Of concern to her self, parents, and teacher is the resulting depression and dissatisfaction that often accompanies a post-performance analysis. Jan, however, has a coping strategy, for she has another way to use music.

“*The Lion Tamer*”

From the first interview with Jan, I went away with an impression of a young girl with a rather intense, stoical composure. She seemed very serious and resolute about everything she did. I heard purposeful and precise explanations of music, her family, school, and lifestyle. I reflect on Jan’s criticisms of her musical performances and behavior and of admission and characterisation of herself as a perfectionist. Subsequent interviews and observations point to the fact that she is perhaps a little too hard on herself.

Later, I listen to the recording of Jan singing at her exam assessment. The song, *I’d Like to Be a Lion Tamer*, is built around metaphor and irony. It is melancholic, a poetic expression of adolescent angst, of not accepting how one is, and also of the fantasy and need to be different. Jan sang the song appropriately, reflecting the sentiment with a clear, pure, and delicate tone and with a rather sad expression. I wondered whether the irony within the song was poignantly used as a reflection of part of her life and whether she was expressing herself through it. While I reflected, I returned to the interview transcripts, and there I believed was a key to the way Jan locates her self in music. I read and re-read her response to my opening question – “What attracts you to music?”

Jan: It’s the opportunity music provides to be able to express personal opinions and feelings through a different form without having to say to somebody, “I feel very strongly about this.” You can find repertoire that expresses exactly how you feel without — and you can put your own interpretation into it. It’s a very — although it is appreciated by so many people — it’s a very personal thing. It’s a good way of being able to release tension.

As I listen again more intently to the song, focusing on the lyrics, I make a connection. It occurs to me that there is a reason for Jan’s purposeful selection of reper-
toire. I assume that the song reflects an expressive need – a chance to feel “through a different form,” an opportunity in the midst of a busy daily life, with associated tension and occasional depression caused through self-critical perfectionism – to let go, to relax, and to dream a little.

I’d like to be a Lion Tamer, sequins and tights and silk top hats.  
I know I could be a lion tamer, I’ve always gotten along with cats. 
I’d have a whip but never use it; I’d simply hold it in my hand.
I’d like to be a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer
I would be someone grand.

I couldn’t be a ballerina; I never could stand on my toes.
I couldn’t be a Spanish dancer, I’d look ridiculous with a rose.
But everyone has a special calling, something that only she can do.
I could be such a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer
I would be special too.

I could begin with baby leopards, move on to tiger cubs and then,
After I learn to handle lions, maybe I could work up to men.
I never wanted fancy mansions, butlers and footmen liveried,
I never wanted lots of money; money can’t buy what you really need.
I never prayed for any favors, but here I am on knobby knee.

Please let me be a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer
Wouldn’t he have to finally notice me?

(The Magic Show, Schwartz, 1973)

Jan counters the perfectionist and critical self by selecting repertoire to support, and give credence to, the self that perhaps is softer and needs to have a voice. She prefers to give vent to certain emotions through this self, using music to express some of the more hidden feelings. The particular self that Jan locates in the music is a private hidden self that she reveals to the world in her own particular form and process. Importantly, that self is an antidote to the critical self that is focused on perfection.

For my wife’s family, expressing sentiment or communicating messages to others through song lyrics is an overt, often humorous musical peculiarity. Jan’s expression of personal opinions and feelings through a different form is a more hidden process of expression, an example of music as a “technology of self” – where it is used for the “emotional and personal constitution of self” (DeNora, 2000, p. 46). DeNora goes on to explain what she calls “musically composed identities”:

The sense of “self” is locatable in music. Musical materials provide terms and templates for elaborating self-identity – for identity’s identification. Looking more closely at this process highlights the ways in which musical materials are active ingredients in identity work, how respondents “find themselves” in musical structures. It also highlights some of the ways that music is attended to by its recipients, how music reception and the units of meaning that listeners find within music differ dramatically from musicological and music-psychological models of music reception and their emphasis on the perception of musical structures (2000, p. 68).
DeNora describes how with this particular use of music, we “can follow music as it comes to be converted or transposed – in and through interpretative appropriation – into something extra-musical, something social, [a] registration of self-identity. Music is a ‘mirror’ that allows one to ‘see one’s self’” (p. 70). Jan, like the participants in DeNora’s study, is engaged in the process of seeing herself, composing her identity through music, and locating within its structures the “me in life.”

I wondered about Jan’s self-reflections – particularly about how she saw herself as being both self-critical and a perfectionist.

David: Have you ever thought where that pattern [self-criticism] comes from?
Jan: Um, I think it is just … . It hasn’t really come from anywhere I think it is just something that I have. It is just part of me. I’m very much a perfectionist. I try to be very much … a perfectionist and I have for quite a long time. A lot of my teachers have noticed it because I try and do the best the whole time and if it is not to my standard then it should be better. Even if I can’t get it any better. But it is something I am working on.

… Which I why I have to try and sort of fix myself up and find my standards because I was making myself very unhappy. I have never been optimistic. I always had a pessimistic attitude towards it even if I couldn’t do any better. I wanted to do better and I told myself I could.

Using music as a mirror of the self, Jan is undergoing a process of self-discovery. Projected into the future, Jan will continue a process of self-understanding as she explores her musical identities. In her own words and interpretation, she is “working on” or “fixing” her tendency to perhaps be overly self-critical as she is aware that it often leads to disappointment and depression. This study of her motivating force need not mean analysis or introspective dissection of self. Perhaps through reflection, with music as a mirror for self-perception, Jan will be able to create a balance of selves or write a new story.

**Lived Musical Time**

Jan structures music listening into her daily routine and divides its use into different social and personal functions. She will often listen with serious intent to a recording of a song in order to learn it for a performance, an exam, a show, or an eisteddfod. However, when not in the repertoire learning mode, Jan will put on CDs or tapes of her favourite music theatre pieces simply “for fun.” She qualifies this by saying that just recently she has been too busy or “not at home long enough” for much “fun” listening.

Jan uses music as an aid to study and will often play background music while doing homework. Specifically, it has to be classical music, and she often tunes in to the local Classic FM radio station. Unfamiliar music is preferred for, problematically, if she knows the music, it draws her attention away from the study. Jan explains that this is why she will not listen to theatre music or music she knows well, for “I will be waiting for a song the whole time and get nothing done.”

Additionally, music is used for relaxation and as an aid to sleep.
Jan: A friend lent me a tape of some theatre music that I now listen to at night because ... I know it so well that I fall asleep listening to it. Because I know what is coming next and my brain is going – OK this is coming next and I just go to sleep. Which is ... I have found is the easiest way of getting to sleep when I am so tired.

At the appointed time for the next interview, Jan walks into the classroom looking quite stressed. We exchange greetings and settle down at the desk where I have positioned the recorder and microphone.

David: What has happened this week?
Jan: Well, I have been at school every evening again for drama and that is just starting to get rather stressful. I have a lot of homework to do that I haven’t got time to do because I don’t go home in the evenings.

David: My, it is a full life, isn’t it? So the drama performance is on Thursday evening?
Jan: Yes.

David: Then things will level out a bit.
Jan: Hopefully, but then the musical starts so –

David: It is back into it?
Jan: Yes.

David: When do the holidays begin?
Jan: In 3 weeks.

David: In 3 weeks’ time! So you start the musical before then?
Jan: Yes, we’ve started rehearsals already. But we don’t have one this week because we have drama until late tonight, tomorrow and Wednesday and we start again next week and we will go right through until the holidays. And then get right back into it as soon as we come back.

David: In the holidays, do you actually get time off?
Jan: No.

David: You try to catch up with things?
Jan: I try and get everything done that I haven’t got done and there is a dance eisteddfod from 31 May to 10 June and I am there every night. I am either dancing or my sister is dancing or I have friends who are dancing. I have got 2 nights, my sister has about 6 and the rest we are just going to see so we are there, basically every day.

David: When do you get time to do homework?
Jan: I don’t. I just try and find minutes that aren’t there and squish it all in.

David: Is it music and drama that are taking all your time? It is not anything else?
Jan: No.

David: It’s a full life but do you enjoy it? Do you love it?
Jan: I do. It is just drama at the moment, more than anything because it is production week and so everything is just so stressful and being here every day is getting a little bit wearing.

Jan’s musical lifeworld is caught up in a web of passion and angst. I sense the simultaneous forces of both a pushing and pulling in her relationship with music. On the one hand, music, as she had stated, is her life, the very thing that keeps her going, but on the other hand, she uses it (according to her music teacher) “to
beat herself up.” These complex and opposing functions serve to fuel different parts of her personality. As a perfectionist, music causes her tension and worry as she strives for distinct goals. It is also used as a medium, a way of voicing thoughts that cannot be voiced in any other way. There is self-concealment when she first creates a musical mask and then expresses herself from behind it.

Jan is living life from within these musical complexities, and I wonder how she will resolve the tension created by the forces that motivate her – where she both loves music and uses it as an intimate form of self-expression and where she challenges herself with it. She believes that music is her life, but she uses her musical experience as a mirror of self, and it is through the reflection that she critically studies herself and her life experiences.

**Paradigmatically Justifying the Narrative**

Good stories stand alone as the dimensions of narrative meanings are the *raison d’etre*. However, story-telling as research remains problematical, and an intuitive story-teller (like Niketas Choniates) may not survive in the research academy. Principally, I think this is because, as Usher (1997) states, “we think of story-telling as ‘unserious,’ as fictional, whereas our image of research is that it is about ‘truth’ and is therefore altogether more serious business” (p. 27). My task in this section is therefore to paradigmatically justify the narrative – to explain and make the methods and procedures visible so the reader may be able to make a reasoned and informed assessment about the authenticity and validity of the research (see Mishler, 2000, p. 130, for a discussion of “trustworthiness” of the research through the “visibility of methods”).

Initially I shall describe the interview structure and follow with a description of how the lived experience material was interpreted and re-storied using a combination of *phenomenological reflection*, *narrative analysis*, and *narrative synthesis*.

**The Three Interview Series**

The interview schedule conducted was designed around Seidman’s (1998) “structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing,” which involves a series of three interviews with each participant (p. 11). The purpose of this series is to get a broader exploration of context. Seidman describes how his “three series plan” takes context into consideration. He states that

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6 A justification for research as story-telling lies in the postmodern view that recognizes knowledge generation as a process of world-making through languaging, where language is not simply regarded “as a mirror held up to the world, as simply a transparent vehicle for conveying the meaning of an independent, external reality” (Usher, 1997, p. 31). Kvale (1996) supports this view stating that “a postmodern approach forgoes the search of true fixed meanings and emphasises descriptive nuances, differences, and paradoxes. There is a change from a substantial to a relational concept of meaning, with a move from the modern search for the one true and real meaning to a relational unfolding of meanings” (p. 226).
The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience. The second allows the participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them (p. 11).

The interviews were kept to approximately 30 minutes each, and while adhering as closely as possible to Seidman’s plan, I adapted his ideas to my needs. For example, the interviews were configured as semi-structured as I retained a loose framework of guiding questions. For rapport, I presented myself not as a teacher but as a fellow practicing musician engaging in “conversations about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1996, p. 125).

To further illuminate each lifeworld, I also conducted single, informal, conversational interviews with the parents and music teachers of each student participant. By including interpretations of parent and teacher experiences and stories, I could develop a more dimensional or crystallised (see Richardson, 2000) picture of the participants’ musical lifeworlds and therefore more elaborate and composite narrative portraits.

**Phenomenological Reflection**

Phenomenological reflection is designed to “transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Here, I assume, essence does not refer to a single, objective truth or concrete fact existing independently of the phenomenon, but to the structures of potential meaning available for interpretation. Importantly, the textual expression we compose is “concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself” (Smith, 1996, p. 263).

In addition to the work of Van Manen, I also adopted specific guidelines for phenomenological reflection and interpretation from the work of Wertz (1984) and Moustakas (1994), which are both based on the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl. Wertz (1984) states that

> With phenomenological reflection we magnify and amplify details, slow down, patiently dwell and linger in the described situation while attempting to maintain (as far as possible) an empathic presence to the described situation (p. 42).

Phenomenological reflection, according to Wertz, begins with “a bracketing or suspending of preconceptions and a fresh immersement in the lived reality to which the description refers” (1984, p. 42). He advises the following steps and guidelines:

1. **Empathic presence to the described situation.** The researcher uses the description to enter and immerse him/herself in the situation just as it was lived by the subject.
2. **Slowing down and patiently dwelling.** The researcher spends time lingering in the described situation.
3. **Magnification, amplification of details.** The researcher allows each detail of the situation to be fully contacted, to loom large for (his or her) consideration.
4. **Turning from objects to immanent meanings.** The researcher attunes him/herself particularly to the meaning of objects and events as they are lived by the subject.

5. **Suspending belief and employing intense interest.** The researcher extricates him/herself from the straightforward naïve absorption in and commitment to the veridicality of intended meanings and becomes interested in their genesis, relations and overall structure.”

This process of reflection or dwelling on the lived experience material may incorporate what Husserl called “imaginative variation.” With this we “seek possible meanings through imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97–98). By “revolving descriptions in imagination,” we open up ways of considering lived time, space, body, causality, and the relation of the phenomenon to the participant self (see Van Manen, 1990, p. 69, and also Burnard, 2000, p. 231). An important imaginative variation step that I took was to reflect on the “underlying themes or contexts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). For example, reflection on the context and circumstances surrounding a participant’s particular musical experience opened up “hidden connections” (Kvale, 1996, p. 4), “potentialities of meaning” (p. 193), and “causal links among ideas” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 332). With the process of phenomenological reflection, I recognise that there is “no single inroad to truth, but that countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99).

### Narrative Analysis and Narrative Synthesis

In addition to phenomenological reflection, I interpreted sections of lived experience material using processes based on the Brunerian (1986) concept of the *paradigmatic* and contrasting *narrative* mode or way of construing reality. Adapted to inquiry and research writing, the texts constructed from paradigmatic and narrative reasoning are distinct as they have different functions. Smeyers & Verhessen (2001) describe the contrast stating that in paradigmatic text meaning is stored within concepts, whilst in narrative text meaning is stored within narrative (p. 76). Polkinghorne (1995) also distinguishes between the texts that are formed from the different modes. He states that a *paradigmatic text* will focus on “particulars as instances of general notions and concepts” and that it “functions to generate general knowledge from a set of particular instances” (pp. 14–15). Conversely, a *narrative text* “configures people’s accounts into stories” and is “actually a synthesising of the data rather than a separation of it into its constituent parts” (pp. 14–15).

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7 Moustakas (1994, pp. 33–36) describes the history and background to the concept of imaginative variation, tracing it back to the ideas of Descartes and Husserl.
For the sake of clarity, in the research writing, I refer to the interpretive procedure that uses paradigmatic reasoning as **paradigmatic analysis** and the procedure using narrative reasoning as **narrative synthesis**.

When using narrative synthesis, I focussed solely on the particular and “connections among self-relevant events” within the data in order to create a “coherent developmental account” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). “Potentialities of meaning” (Kvale, 1996, pp. 4, 193), significant lived experiences, and episodes were sought within the data, and then a shaping and story-telling process occurred during which the new meanings were textually developed into a more elaborate narrative (Kvale, 1996, p. 193). Conducting this process, I specifically held in mind the musical lifeworld events that are unique to each participant and sought to construct a picture of the whole person rather than construing codes or categories from the descriptions.

The benefit of **narrative synthesis** is that it avoids disaggregating people into units of analysis and focuses on the whole of a person’s account – “the parts of the story become significant only as they are placed within the context of the whole narrative” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 95).

In paradigmatic sections of text, storied accounts are configured into elements and instances of general notions or wider conceptual themes (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13). Following Polkinghorne’s model, the wider conceptual themes are arrived at in two ways:

1. They are derived from previous theory. The researcher applies the concepts to the data to determine whether instances of these concepts are to be found.
2. They are inductively derived from the data by the researcher.

I used both of these designs but placed more emphasis on the second because with the inductive process, the themes are “empirically rather than theoretically derived” (Mishler, 2000, p. 129). By deriving themes from within the data, I sought to move outward from each participant’s experience to wider concepts. This contrasts with the process first described that begins with themes and imposes them on the participant. The second process, I assumed, was more suited to the aim of the study, which sought to retain focus on the intrinsic idiosyncrasies of individual musical realities.

Finally, the overarching aim of this particular design has been to advocate the importance of narrative meanings when presented as research as they help to portray the events and meanings for individuals in a direct relationship to lived experience rather than through the more oblique route that conceptualises experience. In this regard, the methods help to capture the essence of lived experience. Importantly, I sought balance, assuming that a study based solely on paradigmatic analysis would leave individuals disaggregated into categories, with their behaviour and experience simply recognised as examples of wider conceptualised phenomena. The idea to adapt and combine phenomenological and narrative interpretive procedures was seen as a holistic process, a means to return to the lifeworld, to explore and illuminate the everyday meanings of being a dedicated music student.
I acknowledge the openness with which Jan, and all the participants, shared their stories. By participating, they invited me to understand something of the way that intense, intimate, and complex individual musical identities may form and evolve and how “musical functioning . . . become[s] an inherent and intrinsic part of total human functioning” (Regelski, 1986, p. 214). Through listening to and engaging with their stories, my own ideological positioning has been challenged. A shift takes place in the perception of my function and role as a music educator. “Attuning to the subjectivity of students” (Van Manen, 1991, p. 154), and understanding their complex musical identities, take precedence over any desire to lead them to externally imposed curricula or objective notions of what I think music is.

References


Chapter 4
Challenges in Storying a Musical Lifeworld – A Commentary

Graham F. Welch

Introduction

One of the major shifts in music education research over the past decade or so has been the emergence of a diverse range of studies that makes full use of available qualitative research methodologies. This trend has emerged alongside an increased awareness and confidence among music education researchers to engage in qualitative approaches that have been relatively mainstream in the wider world of educational research, but which were relatively slow to be adopted by the world of music education – at least in its published journals. Furthermore, this expanded perspective on research methods within music education has been part of a much wider interest in the use of educational research data to inform the actions of national and local government policy makers as they engage with educational reform, often badged under the umbrella of “evidence-based” or “research-based” practice (e.g., Davies, 1999; Oakley, 2002; Oakley, Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2005). Key principles in this type of research are that the methods are explicit, transparent, and accountable, as well as demonstrate key user involvement (EPPI-Centre, 2007).

Mainstream education research, as part of its social science underpinning, has long recognised the need to understand the nuances of educational experience at the level of the contextualised individual or group. Recent research examples embrace case studies on the following: special needs and inclusion in early childhood education in different parts of the world (cf. UNESCO’s special needs programme; see UNESCO, 2004); schools responding to an official report on the needs of environmental education in South Australia (Department for Environment and Heritage, 2003); the power of cases in developing transferable skills in engineering education in the UK (Raju & Sanker, 1999); and a US Department of Education-funded series of case studies of the Japanese educational system (Stevenson & Lee, 1998).

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Although music education research has acknowledged such perspectives (e.g., Abrahams & Head, 1998; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; Marsh, 2002), it has also needed to address the inherent challenges, recognising that “music + education” implies at least the likelihood of combining an applied arts and social science focus. Consequently, one early concern for many of the leading figures in the field was an engagement with philosophical debate as they sought to clarify our understanding of the nature of music education per se; that is, what it means to be educated musically. These writings (such as those in English by Eisner, Meyer, Reimer, Elliot, Small, Swanwick, and Jorgensen) were important in seeking to make explicit the contested nature of education in relation to music as an art form, as well as engaging with the emergent debate concerning the nature of “mind” in relation to symbolic worlds that were different from spoken language.

The recent growth in qualitative research studies in music, whilst still demonstrating an awareness of the foundational disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history, is more in line with mainstream educational research. There appear to be several reasons for this. For example, there has been a growing awareness of the need to situate music education research in real-world contexts (addressing the issue of ecological validity; cf. Brewer, 2000). This is in contrast with an earlier bias towards investigations that used more controlled research settings, being likely related to an influence of the parallel emergence and growth in the field of music psychology that was more experimental in its research bias (e.g., five out of the six articles published in the first edition of the journal *Psychology of Music* in 1973 were experimental in design). It was not until 1994 that the USA hosted its first “Qualitative Methodologies in Music Education Research Conference” (with papers subsequently published by the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*), and the list of speakers included many of the established luminaries from mainstream qualitative research, including Denzin, Erickson, Peshkin, and Stake. In addition, the shift towards diversity in music education research approaches reflected a recognition – as reported in the opening section of David Cleaver’s chapter on Jan Peterson concerning the writing of Jerome Bruner – of the need to balance “big theory” (predictive theory and universals, i.e., the search for generalisable explanations of observable events that might apply to large sets of phenomena) with more in-depth studies of local complexity and multifacetedness, such as through the use of case study (cf. Stake, 1995). These individual (e.g., person, event, location) or small group studies do not seek to offer widespread explanation (although this may be inferred), but rather to generate insight into the particular. There may be features of the emergent data that have wider applicability (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2001 – see below), but the initial purpose is to understand the nature of something more specific – in the case of this chapter, the musical life of a specific individual, anonymised as “Jan Peterson.”

The acknowledgement of the significance of individuality, of the particular as well as the general, is also demonstrated in the debates surrounding constructivist versus constructionist perspectives related to social and cognitive psychology (e.g., Raskin, 2002). Understanding “reality” for the individual is likely to be related to how we make sense of the world around us, an epistemological perspective that...
favours the interplay of cognitive psychology with the social world and that has been manifest through the recent impact in the field of social psychology in the work of Vygotsky, Leont’ev, Bruner, Engeström, Lave and Wenger, Bandura, and others in relation to social cognition.

Collectively, these various intellectual movements demonstrate an underlying interest in systems theory – the interlinking of relationships within some form of organisation – (cf. von Bertalanffy, 1968), alongside what Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 66) refers to as the “power of example,” namely that context-dependent knowledge is essential in “the study of human affairs” (p. 73). Furthermore, Flyvbjerg argues that “case studies often contain a substantial element of narrative” (p. 84), which he sees as an advantage because of their potential for ambiguity and use of phenomenological detail. His perspective resonates with the underlying concepts of narrative case study (see Barrett & Stauffer, this volume).

The underlying implication for music education in the various concepts mentioned above is that to be educated in music implies some form of exploration and personal engagement with music as a sonic phenomenon that has enabled our inbuilt human propensity for musical behaviour to be extended and developed in some way – a fostering of knowledge in music and not just about music. Such fostering has individual and social aspects, both formal and informal. Similarly, our understanding as researchers in music education of what it means to be musically educated can benefit from an exploration of the use of narrative, in that it presents an opportunity to engage first hand with participants’ diverse relationships, understandings, inferences, and related ambiguities in which the researcher is bound up.

Jan Peterson: The story

David Cleaver’s use of narrative inquiry to make sense of the musical life and background of Jan Peterson presents us with a challenge. The sectionalisation of the text delineates different foci in the researcher’s exploration of the topic. At one moment, there is a sharing of insights into details of the participant’s musical life, drawing on established qualitative methodologies, including observation and interviews. This is contrasted with a more reflective view of himself and his own biography in relation to the participant, such as in the relaying of his underlying feelings in visiting Jan’s house and reflecting on the experience afterwards in conversation with his wife. This duality in the text challenges us to understand what each might be contributing to the other.

The overarching focus on the family as a key nurturing agent in musical development has an established literature, exemplified in recent years in the UK by the studies of Howe, Sloboda, and Davidson on the musical biographies of young people attending a specialist music school (e.g., Howe & Sloboda, 1991) and then, subsequently, by Borthwick and Davidson in their use of family script theory (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002). Cleaver’s chapter extends this perspective by offering explicit insights into the impressions, thoughts, and reflections engendered in him by the
particular research experience, set alongside detailed case study evidence of the particular individual. The narrative approach is used to explore the way that language is central to the construction and de-construction of the research evidence and experience. Data have multifaceted treatments. The resultant account can, in turn, resonate with readers as they are reminded of their own familial and other musical experiences. For example, the reported comments from David Cleaver’s wife concerning her childhood memories of County Cork generated, for this reader, an instant mental association – with musical accompaniment – of my regular visits to the West Coast of Ireland. In Cleaver’s narrative case study, as in Newfoundland where (unexpectedly) I first experienced “Irish” traditional music, I am struck continually by the way that music and dance are interwoven into the national psyche and sense of cultural identity, both in schools and in the local communities. Notwithstanding the presence of mainstream popular and classical musics, Trans-Atlantic cultural and musical ties are regularly evidenced in the music of the Céilí bands in the upstairs rooms, pubs, and hotel bars on weekday evenings and Saturday nights.

Early familial experience in musical development is highly formative (a recurrent theme in my own research studies into children’s identities as “singers/non-singers”). Reading this narrative account offers both researcher and readers three challenges. First, there is a danger of romanticism attendant in reconstructing a lived past from accounts constructed in the present. Although the commentary on Jan Peterson’s identity as a “toddler” appears to go beyond the reported evidence, such as in the statements “For Jan, as a toddler, there was an ‘I’ apprehending ‘music’ but no ‘me’ separate from ‘music’ – just music experienced pre-conceptually and pre-reflexively as sounds, sights, and sensations” and “when a child’s life has been infused with music from birth,” there is sufficient evidence elsewhere to suggest that this particular family was especially supportive, and it would have been very likely that precocious musical behaviour was evidenced. These few comments reflect the difficulty faced by the author in using post-hoc language to give a real sense of the lived experience of Jan Peterson – a shared and common challenge that we all face in reporting the outcomes of social science research.

Secondly, linked to the first and notwithstanding the tensions within Jan herself concerning her developing identity and sense of excellence, the portrayal of the mother harks back to a Durkheimian functionalist viewpoint in which society is viewed as a system of social institutions and in which the child might be socialised (pace Talcott Parsons) into the dominant views of the value of music that are held by the family. Not all families are as supportive as in this particular case. Borthwick’s doctoral thesis, for example, suggests that different children within a “musical” family have diverse experiences and that these are not always positive (as cited in Davidson & Borthwick, 2002).

Thirdly, it is not essential for the family to be the key factor in the developing child’s engagement with skilled instrumental performance. Research into the musical biographies of undergraduate performers in non-classical music genres, such as jazz, rock, and traditional musics, indicates that the family were less important compared to the influence of particular established artists, experienced through listening to recorded media or attendance at live concerts (Creech et al., 2008).
This chapter represents an important contribution to our understanding of the need to take a wide range of perspectives into account in our music education research practice. It does this by adding to our portfolio. The strength of this approach is that it tries not to privilege certain kinds of data, but rather seeks to explore the continuities and discontinuities between them. Cleaver’s narrative illustrates how this might be done by mining the evidence base from different inter- and intra-personal viewpoints whilst seeking to create a holistic and engaging “story” that extends our understanding of the phenomenon and the case in question. As with more “conventional” reporting, there is still a need to select elements from the data set in order to construct the narrative. This narrative approach has potential for deepening the ways in which these elements become, through designed, in the final analysis and presentation.

References


Chapter 5
The Importance of Being Henry

Tom Langston

Abstract The extensive literature on social capital and its generation and use in communities sheds little light on the ways in which social capital is manifested in community music settings especially at the level of the individual member. Within communities and individuals, social capital is identified through the presence of indicators such as trust, community and civic involvement, and networks. This chapter identifies those indicators of social capital that are present in a particular individual, Henry, in a community choir in regional Tasmania. Narrative analysis of interview and observation data was employed to construct Henry’s individual story of engagement within the choir and community and his participation in the generation and use of social capital. Analysis of these data suggests that social capital indicators identified in the literature, specifically those of shared norms and values, trust, civic and community involvement, networks, knowledge resources, contact with families and friends, and feelings of fellowship, are present in the life and actions of Henry. Henry’s story emphasises the importance of family and upbringing in the creation of a propensity to participate actively in the life of communities and community organisations. From this active participation, social capital is created. Henry’s story holds significance for understanding why individuals participate in community groups and how social capital within groups and groups themselves develop.

Contextual Introduction

I cannot remember a time when I was not involved in a community or church choir, a band, or some other kind of community activity. When I became the Head of Music and Community Education Officer at Milton Senior Secondary College (a school catering for students aged 16 years onwards) in 1984, it seemed second nature to develop a network of community contacts, particularly in the area of community music. The music department of the college acted as a resource centre for community music groups as well as the college music programmes, and the college
curriculum included pre-tertiary music and evening classes that targeted people from the wider Milton community, providing tuition in music theory, music appreciation, solo and ensemble instrumental performance, and the Milton College Choir. As economic rationalism took hold of educational decision-making in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the community emphasis of the music department was no longer supported at senior administration levels. One consequence of this was the cessation of the choir as a college activity and its subsequent transformation as the Milton Community Choir.

Milton is a small place with approximately 17,000 inhabitants and over 20 musical performing groups. The leaders of the various musical groups and many of the members of these groups have had close musical-working relationships with each other for many years. This interaction between the various leaders and groups fosters a spirit of cooperation, collaboration, trust, willingness to share knowledge and resources, acceptance of the values and skills of other individuals and groups, willingness to exchange leadership, and an environment where people work for the mutual benefit of all concerned. There appears to be little rivalry between the groups. Indeed, there is a certain degree of fluidity, with members often participating in other groups or taking part in activities organised by other groups. It is this strong community spirit that has, in the intervening years, played a significant role in the ongoing development of the Milton Community Choir.

The Milton Community Choir has an established membership of 30, of which a core of approximately 25 attend all rehearsals. The active membership varies according to the music being performed and the time of year (winter sees a major reduction in rehearsal attendance). For example, Christmas performances of Messiah result in a significant rise of approximately 50% in both membership and participation levels. Membership of the community choir is open to anyone, and there is no audition process; consequently, levels of competence and experience vary widely. The majority of members are retired and, in 2003, there was only one member under the age of 40. In this aspect, the community choir reflects demographic trends of the city and of the region in general, which indicates that nearly 37% of the population is over 45 years old (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). The community choir provides free concerts to the community and occasionally travels outside the community to perform.

In participating in and observing this community as musical director, I began to wonder what it was that enabled this community to work in the way in which it does and what it was that enabled members of the community choir to interact so easily with other groups. Putnam (2000a) suggests that social capital enables groups to work together. If choir members did, indeed, possess social capital, I began to ask, how is social capital manifested in the community choir?

**Social Capital**

Definitions of social capital are diverse. Social capital is defined variously as a process, a product, a resource, and/or a set of outcomes. It is viewed as a property of individuals and/or groups. It is also seen as both a benefit and a problem to society.
Most definitions are therefore descriptions of what social capital does rather than definitions of what social capital actually is. Hanifan is considered to have first coined the term social capital in 1916, in a report on community schools. For Hanifan, social capital referred to “those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals who make up a social unit” (as cited in Putnam, 2000a, p. 19).

In recent years, Putnam (1993, 1995a, 1996, 2000a) has explored how social capital (defined as social norms, networks, and trust) developed at regional and community levels not only encourages cooperation for mutual benefit but also serves to support major democratic organisations and economic growth. In this context, 

- social norms may be understood as the “shared understandings, informal rules and conventions that prescribe, proscribes [sic] or moderate certain behaviors in various circumstances” (National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 2004, p. 37);
- a network may be understood as “an interconnected group of people who usually have an attribute in common” (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 10); and
- trust may be understood as the “level of confidence that people have that others will act as they say or are expected to act, or that what they say is reliable” (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 11).

For Paldam & Svendsen (1999), trust is the mutual expectation arising from cooperative behaviour based on community acceptability and shared norms such as religious or justice values, professional standards, and codes of behaviour. Questions hang in the air as a consequence of these thoughts. Who are the people who participate? What are they actually like? If community acceptability and shared norms are important, not only for social capital but also for trust, are people who participate similar to or like the other participants? Do they share characteristics?

For Putnam, active civic involvement and social capital appear to be symbiotic. However, Putnam’s conclusions have not been universally accepted. For example, Putnam’s earlier work (1993, 1995a,b, 1996) has drawn criticism from Foley & Edwards (1998). Foley and Edwards suggest that the arguments that “associationism per se produces habits of cooperation and trust, social networks and norms that, at least in certain sorts of groups, ultimately issue in the social trust and civic engagement that healthy democracies need” (1998, p. 12) are flawed and/or fail. Foley and Edwards suggest that Putnam’s pro-association standpoint grew out of a 1950s fear that an “effervescent and contentious civil society would undermine democracy in the face of the ‘threat of communism’” (1998, p. 13). These authors further suggest that the degree to which participation in organisations promotes the attitudes that support civic engagement and/or commitment to democracy varies among different organisations.

Social capital is also understood as “social fabric” (Cox, 1995) and the “glue that holds society together” (Serageldin, as cited in Grootaert, 1998, p. ii). This concept of social capital as a measure of civic cohesion has gained in significance since the work of early scholars such as Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988). Social capital has produced a mass of literature and a wide range of definitions and descriptions
in an attempt to explain it. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has led the way with its generic description of social capital as “networks, norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups” (OECD, 2001, p. 5).

There is agreement in the literature that social capital can become a “public good” (Coleman, 1988, S98) and that social capital is the determining factor in “how easily people work together” (Hjollund, Paldam & Svendsen, 2001, p. 3; Paldam & Svendsen, 1999, pp. 4–5). Other benefits ascribed to social capital include improvements in human capital through improved education and educational opportunities (Blakeley, 1997; Coleman, 1988, S98-112), less crime (Putnam, 2000a, 2001), improved economic benefits (Falk & Kilpatrick, 1999; Fukuyama, 1995; Serageldin, as cited in Feldman & Assaf, 1999), and improved government (Putnam, 1993, 1995a). Whilst there is little agreement on a singular definition of social capital, there is widespread recognition that it takes specific forms.

### Three Forms of Social Capital

In recent literature, the phenomenon of social capital has been sub-divided into three forms:

- bonding (Giorgas, 2000; NCVER, 2004; Portes & Landolt, 1996; Putnam, 1995a, 2000a, 2001);
- bridging (NCVER, 2004; Putnam, 2000a); and

### Bonding Social Capital

Putnam suggests that bonding social capital is “a kind of sociological superglue” (2000a, p. 23). Australia’s National Centre for Vocational Education Research defines bonding social capital as typically referring to “relations in groups with a sense of identity and common purpose such as families and ethnic groups” (NCVER, 2004, p. 37). Commonality of identity and/or purpose may lead to the formation of exclusive groups and solidarity of groups with specific interests and “bolsters our narrower selves” (Putnam, 2000a, p. 23). Such groups tend to be inward looking as they look to participants of similar social/economic/cultural background (a point raised by Henry when he indicates that “A lot of my friends are exactly the same, so we have similar interests”) and tend to be self-reliant (Portes & Landolt, 1996; Putnam, 1995a, 2000a). For Giorgas (2000), a feature of these groups is a collective efficacy that is seen to be stronger in homogeneous communities.

In a discussion of social capital on an Australian Broadcasting Commission radio station in Australia, Putnam suggested, “bridging good, bonding bad” (Putnam, 2001,

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1 Coleman’s (1988) study appears in a supplement to the *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, S95–120. In the supplement, page numbers are identified using “S” rather than “p.”
However, the literature tends to suggest that, generally, bonding is good but bridging is better.

**Bridging Social Capital**

Bridging social capital is outward looking, involves people across a wide spectrum, fosters the generation of “broader identities and reciprocity” (Putnam 2000a, p. 23), and is required for broader issues such as educational or welfare change and dealing with major collective problems. For Putnam, bridging social capital is a “sociological WD-40” (2000a, p. 23) as it facilitates smooth interactions between “groups with significant differences” (NCVER, 2004, p. 37). Individuals, such as Henry, who are members of many community groups foster the development of bridging social capital.

Sometimes a community group requires powerful help beyond that of a bridging association in order to accomplish a goal and needs to call upon another form of social capital known as linking social capital.

**Linking Social Capital**

Linking social capital “pertains to connections with people in power, whether they are in politically or financially influential positions” (Woolcock & Sweetser, 2003, p. 2) and gives a “capacity to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community” (Woolcock, 2001, p. 4).

Having social capital of various forms available for use or developed within a community does not guarantee that the community will profit from it. Woolcock and Sweetser suggest it is how people use these various kinds of social capital separately and together that “shapes their well-being” (2003, p. 2).

**Characteristics of Social Capital**

As we have seen, social capital has been defined, described, and grouped in different ways and can assume a variety of forms. In this section, I shall examine three pertinent characteristics of social capital, identified in the literature, that make it valuable to communities. These include the characteristics of being

- a glue;
- a community resource; and
- a contributor to a civil society.

**Social Capital: A Glue**

Cox’s reference (1995, Lecture 2) to social capital as a glue, which provides social cohesion to hold the community together, has become an accepted image (Blakeley, 1997; Grootaert, 1997; Serageldin, 1998). Serageldin, for example,
considers social capital to be a fundamental ingredient (the glue) in the mix that allows society, with its multitude of institutions, to exist and includes the “shared norms and values that governs interactions among people” (1998, p. ii).

Social Capital: A Community Resource

A community that contains all the “forms of social capital” identified by Coleman (1988, S101-S105) (obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures; information channels; norms and effective sanctions) may be regarded as a community rich in social capital and able to access social capital. Such a community may also use social capital as a resource that provides benefits to the community or be drawn upon for community benefit (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000a).

Coleman describes the relationship that “allows the resources of one relationship to be appropriated for use in others” as multiplex (1988, S109). A community rich in multiplex relations is one in which groups have connections with each other through a common membership in a variety of organisations and social groupings. Such a community may use the resources of groups to benefit others and may be regarded as having the potential to develop considerable social capital (Coleman, 1988, S99). Community members such as Henry who are members of many community groups facilitate the development of such a multiplex society.

Social Capital: A Contributor to a Civil Society

The characteristics of social capital outlined above have common features of connectedness, trust, reciprocity, and mutuality. For Bullen & Onyx (1998a), social capital is the raw material of civil society and is created from interactions between people that form social connections and networks based on principles of trust, mutual reciprocity, and norms of action. Cox (1995) suggests that adequate levels of social capital enable us to enjoy the benefits of a truly civil society and argues that a civil society is characterised by individuals voluntarily working with others in egalitarian organisations in which trust grows.

Indicators of Social Capital

Indicators of social capital have been developed in order to identify the presence of social capital in individuals, groups, and communities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000, 2002; Bullen & Onyx, 1998a,b; Fukuyama, 1999; Onyx & Bullen, 1997, 2000; Putnam, 1993, 1995a, 1996, 2000a; Serageldin, 1998; Stone, 2001). Given that many researchers accept that social capital is a group phenomenon, most indicators of social capital have a group or community focus and simultaneously examine the degree to which an individual actively participates in group or community activities such as voluntary organisations, churches, political organisations, parents and friends associations, and choirs. As part of this, an individual may be assessed for his/her civic mindedness evidenced through perceived willingness to participate,
to do things for others, to reciprocate, to be a good neighbour, to be a good family person, and to value others.

The literature suggests that involvement in community activities facilitates the creation of networks, cooperation, and collaboration for mutual benefit (Blakeley, 1997; Cox, 1995; Falk & Kilpatrick, 1999; Putnam, 1993, 1995a, 1996, 2000a; Sirianni & Friedland, 1995). The interlinking of the lives and experiences of people facilitates social capital creation, inclusion, efficient information flow, resource use, formation of groups, knowledge about others, and community cohesiveness for the mutual benefit of the individual and the community. Putnam holds that networks of civic engagement (such as those possessed by Henry) foster “norms of generalized reciprocity;” (1993, p. 3) indicative of a more trusting society.

In early work drawn from an analysis of a successful region in Italy, Putnam (1993) suggests the presence of social capital indicators such as networks, norms, and trust that came to form his definition of social capital. For Putnam, social capital in social organisations may be identified through the presence of “networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (1993, p. 1). Putnam also identified “networks of civic engagement [fostering] sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity” (1993, p. 3). In later work, Putnam (1995a, 1996) identified other social capital indicators:

- voter turnout;
- newspaper readership;
- membership in choral societies and literary circles, Lions Clubs, and soccer clubs;
- social trust; and
- faith-based engagement.

Further social capital indicators arising from Putnam’s later works (2000a,b, 2001) stress the importance of neighbourliness, spending time with family and friends, and various aspects of civic engagement and include:

- concern for others;
- helping others;
- social participation;
- involvement in community groups;
- social connectedness; and
- involvement in politics.

Social capital indicators, then, have been grouped in a variety of ways relating to:

- participation, interaction, and civic involvement (with the resultant development of networks and connections);
- regular contact with families and friends;
- actions based on reciprocity and obligations;
- trust;
- norms and values;
• faith-based engagement;
• knowledge and identity resources;
• learning;
• concern for and willingness to help others; and
• involvement in politics.

Individuals such as Henry, with strong social capital, are also often people with good community knowledge, who are valued by the community for their knowledge. Social capital-rich individuals also care for and value others and are, in turn, cared for and valued by others.

In the following narrative account, I examine the manifestation of social capital of a community choir member (Henry) and explore how Henry, as a social capital-rich individual, is important to the wider community.

**Narrative Research Approach**

Data were generated through extended semi-structured interview with Henry (2 hours). Narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) of interview data was employed to construct an individual story of engagement and participation within the choir and community, focusing on the manifestation, generation, and use of social capital. Within the story, my personal reflections from field notes, diary entries, and later thoughts or interpretations on the story facilitated the re-creation of the “mental atmosphere, thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters in the story” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 77) and provided further interpretive material. Such an approach facilitated the co-creation of a persuasive, reasonable, and convincing story.

**Henry: I’m a Joiner Because I Grew Up That Way**

It was a beautiful day and the sun glinted on the sea on the horizon. The interview took place in Henry’s well-appointed Upper Milton house where we sat in the study drinking coffee. My personal knowledge of Henry is that he has a reputation in the community choir for bluntness and for frank expressions of his views. It would be interesting to see how the interview would proceed.

Henry is a fit, lively, 65-year-old ex-teacher, retired for 10 years, well qualified and articulate.

*The highest level of education I have reached is Bachelor of Arts, second highest – Diploma of Education. Tasmanian University. I had to go right through to Grade 12 to get into university. My last paid employment was Principal of Kelsey High School.*

He sings bass in the community choir:

*But like 99% of people in the choir, I’m not a bass, neither am I a tenor, so I sing as well as I can bass, because I can handle that a bit more comfortably than tenor.*
This was something of an understatement! Henry has a very pleasant and accurate light voice with a good range. He appears to have little difficulty with anything that he sings.

He has fostered music within his family, encouraging his children in their interest in music. We talked surrounded by instruments, some belonging to Henry and others belonging to family members. Henry is very proud of his family.

Putnam considers that family is the most fundamental form of social capital (1995a) and suggests that family and friends provide the most intimate social network for most people (2000a). With this in mind, I asked Henry, “What about your own family?” In all the years I had known Henry, we had never talked “family.” Our conversations had usually been about music or teaching. I knew that he had a son in Chelsea because I had met him, but I knew no family details. As Henry began to talk about his family and his choral music background, his voice warmed and he began to relax.

My two sons are very musical; you can see we play a variety of musical instruments, five keyboards in here at one stage. My family are a lot more musical than me.

Settling himself into a story-telling position, arms leaning on the table he talked of his childhood:

As a child, I had tremendous exposure to music. At one time...for quite a bit of the time we had two pianos in the house, my mother was A.Mus.A. [an Australian music diploma], pianist and pipe organist. Played pipe organ in Mitchell, St Michael's, Albert Street Methodist. The family all learned the piano and one of my sisters was probably the best of the lot, she was an organist, pianist, accompanist. In my opinion, she’s the best.

Henry sat back in his chair and gazed out of the study window at the view of the town stretching down to the sea, running his life through his mind. Having got his thoughts in order, he turned from the view, looked straight at me, and said, as if defying me to contradict him:

I’ve liked singing all my life, been in choirs all my life from school onwards, everywhere I’ve been, I’ve been in choirs. Well, I grew up in a time when school choirs were girls and I think I was in the first group that included boys at Mitchell High School, perhaps my grade A class, B class. Always Sunday School choirs and we had huge ones in those days, 100–150 kids, parts.

Henry went on to describe his earlier life. I sat and listened, nodding occasionally to encourage him to keep going:

Motivation ... must be basic ... genetically; I have inherited a lot of music just in me. Before that [involvement in school music], in my family we always sang. At home, we sang in the car and if someone pinched the tenor I sang alto, and if someone pinched the alto I’d sing the bass, I just put it in. I learned piano but did not do singing formally.

I understood well what Henry was talking about. In my family, my grandmother, father, and uncle played piano and sang. From an early age, I was encouraged to join in with family music-making. I didn’t ever find it quite as easy as Henry apparently had, but the experience was close.

I asked Henry, “What happened next?”
When I started teaching, Tara had quite a good choral society and I sang in that. Moved to Kimberley and joined the Kimberley Chorale and I was in that for donkey’s years, perhaps 15 years, 20 years. President of that. And nothing happened until I came back to the Milton area and I joined the Madison Male Choir and Milton Community Choir and church choirs of course.

I asked him to describe his musical abilities. He smiled openly at the thought of his abilities as a keyboard player:

I play no other instruments apart from keyboard, I don’t play keyboard very well. I learnt to play for seven years when I was young but I don’t have the ability to read, and never cracked the code. It was fairly liberating when I just sat down and selected a key. G suits me because it only has one sharp in it, and I now play everything in the key of G. I can’t read it in the key of G but I can play most things. I’m much better on the organ because I can then fill in with the foot, and fill out the harmonies on both manuals.

I had heard about his keyboard abilities in the key of G from mutual friends who attend the same church. They admire his skill, even if everything he plays is in the same key.

I did have some lessons in singing just for the heck of it when I was at Tara [as a teacher] and a fellow came, I think he eventually went down to the Con [the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music]. He came out to Tara and gave singing lessons to the choral society members.

We started talking about the community. I asked him how he saw the Milton Community Choir in relation to the community and what sort of a role if any did he think that it played:

The Milton Community Choir fills a niche in the community, I think it’s a very small one, but for those people who go to the Milton Community Choir it’s a significant one for them. If you like singing and like singing a little more of serious work, the Milton Community Choir fulfills that role.

“Why do you think the current members participate?,” I asked him. Henry thought for a moment before giving his opinion.

They love to sing. Some of them take part in the Milton Community Choir because they love that type of music and I’ve heard some say that if we didn’t sing that type of music they probably wouldn’t come. I think that’s a bit unfortunate but that fulfills something for them. I think, we made this comment at a meeting recently, most of the people in the Milton Community Choir are not strictly community people they are mainly people with church affiliation, and I don’t know what comes first, the chicken or the egg there, whether because of the type of thing we sing, it attracts people with religious beliefs and affiliations or because the church people are there we sing that sort of thing, or because Tom Langston likes that sort of thing.

I wasn’t sure if this was a jibe at the others in the community choir or at me. I didn’t take it too personally. They were interesting comments. Initially (years ago), we began to specialise in oratorios because we had access to a large collection and it cost us, as a choir, nothing to use them. Maybe people had begun to attend because we were doing “their kind of music.” Certainly, our repertoire has changed little over the years. We still specialise in religious music, and we still get “church people” in the community choir.
I indicated for him to continue. It seemed to me that, for Henry, the community choir does not necessarily meet all of his choral music needs. I wondered to myself if this accounted for some or all of Henry’s absences from rehearsals at different times. He shifted awkwardly in his chair. Talking about the community choir repertoire in a negative way to me, the choirmaster must be putting him in an awkward position:

I’m a little more eclectic in my musical taste. I have sung in Milton. We had a Jazz Quintet at one stage. I’m not a great Jazz fan but I enjoyed singing that, it was something different, Manhattan Transfer stuff. The Milton Community Choir is a vital part of the community in that rather small, oratorio, serious works [way], and I enjoy that, but I would like to see a little wider scope of music. Just for variety.

Given his apparent ambivalence to the music the community choir sings and his love of other kinds of music, I decided to ask Henry why he participated in the community choir. Henry continued to be blunt:

I don’t think I can look for any deep and meaningful reasons why I participate in the choir. I think it’s reasonably self-centered. I enjoy singing, and if the only place I can sing is the Milton Community Choir, that’s where I go. It sounds a little bit rough, but it’s a fairly selfish motive. Sometimes I thoroughly enjoy rehearsals, there’s a bit of humor; we make some progress, the sound coming out suddenly starts to gel and it makes it all worthwhile. Other times rehearsals are absolute purgatory (laughter). So, no I if you are wanting me to say, or thinking I might say, I want to put some sort of culture into the community, that I want to expand people’s horizons, that I want to give them something, that would come way down the bottom of the list, I’m afraid.

“Good old Henry,” I thought. He specialises in being blunt and honest. I can cope with this. He might have been born in Yorkshire, like me. He had done some research into the kinds of questions I had been asking the others and been prepared for the interview. Henry had always been open and frank with me, both privately and in public. This frankness had not affected our relationship before, and it did not seem to be doing so now.

I relaxed as Henry began to relax more. The awkward moment seemed to have passed. Becoming a little more open and expansive, Henry talked about his love of singing and began to describe himself as a choir member:

I’m usually fairly quiet, enjoy singing and provide a little bit of stability, in pitch at least, for those that I’m unfortunate enough to stand next to.

Henry smiled to show that this was intended to be (possibly) a little tongue in cheek. I wondered if many a true word was said in jest:

Mainly, because I love singing, I love music so much, and I love singing so much because singing is the only part of music that I can really do. I’m not competent enough with another instrument, so the voice is the one, and it will be a very sad day when I’ve got to give it up.

I asked Henry what he thought he contributed to the community choir as an individual:

I think my contribution to the choir is that I am blessed or cursed with an ear which recognizes a note and finds it very difficult to tolerate anything that is off that, and I sometimes hold three or four (others) together. As I said modesty forbids me from saying that, but that’s what I feel. If you say, “You’re off the note,” they can’t understand what you’re saying. So
sometimes, I feel that I have a weight on my shoulders because if I don’t carry them then
they are not there.

These were interesting comments. I wondered, but didn’t ask, what he thought
happened in the community choir on those evenings and those weeks when he was
not there.

I asked Henry if he thought that singing in the community choir had an impact
on his self-esteem. He looked surprised at the question and took a moment to think
through his answer. Having thought about it, Henry was surprisingly open about the
impact that participating in the community choir has on his self-esteem, although he
was still a little hesitant:

I don’t suffer from great self-esteem, if you can put it in that way, and over the years I
suppose I have become less panic stricken about singing by myself. I still don’t like it, but
sometimes if I do, I get a feeling, well, well, I did it! And I think that is a great lift to
self-esteem. But that is why I sing in a choir. So, if you are looking for basic selfish reasons,
[such as] I would like to sing like Placido Domingo, I never will. Not even if I was a Buddhist
and came back a second time, (shared laughter) so the only way that I can sing and sound,
in a way that’s just thrilling, is to belong to a choir. The overall sound then subsumes your
level, your voice. And, if I sang into that tape recorder it would be pretty chronic, if I add
my voice to ten other basses singing in a choir, I’d love it.

We had a laugh at these comments. This was a new side to Henry, for me. The
modest Henry! I wondered if he was fishing for compliments but decided that this
would not be like him. Henry certainly has nothing to be modest about. His skill
level is exceptional, and I think most people in the community choir appreciate his
talent.

I asked Henry to describe his involvement in community activities. I already
knew some of what Henry described to me, but the depth of his involvement came
as something of a surprise:

I have been in the Lions Club, the City of Milton Lions Club, since I came here in 1983,
I have been president and most positions within that club and very active. I’ll be cooking
pancakes for Targa patrons tonight [Targa is a Tasmanian car rally]. I have run Neighbor-
hood Watch in Upper Milton area, pretty well since its inception in about 1991. And I’m
area co-ordinator of that.

Henry is clearly a person who cares for others and is a leader. The Uniting Church
in Milton provides another opportunity for these leadership skills to be used.

I am fully involved in the Uniting Church in Milton, and I do things. I have produced for five
years a quarterly magazine with my wife, church council and so forth. Choirs, I’m involved
in the musical side with Milton Community Choir, and the Madison Male Choir; we get
roped into all sorts of performances and events. That’s about it, I suppose. I forgot to say I
write School for Seniors. All voluntary of course. I think I’m one of the ones who goes to a
lot of things. I think I participate in a wide range of things, concerts, cinema, either going
to concerts or participating in them or through Lions Club. You know, cooking hamburger
and sausages or pancakes tonight, working doing other projects for Lions, there’s a lot of
work that I do and yeah, I think I attend most things but I don’t make it my business to be
at everything. My wife is often very much involved, and I go along to support her. She does
work, with Crossroads for example, which helps out people with special needs and quite
often I go down and I carve the meat and I serve and I clean up and set out the tables, and
no-one knows that it’s done, but it’s done. I put in a lot to the local community, never a
front-runner, never upfront but I do things.

There was clearly something of a paradox. Henry had admitted to “selfish” reasons for participating in the community choir, but had such a deep investment in social capital in other contexts, such as participation in a wide range of community activities for the benefit of others. I suspect Henry has a love of the community choir that he is not prepared to admit to and an interest in participating for community benefit that he wishes to keep to himself. Maybe he doesn’t want to encourage me.

From his amount of involvement, Henry is clearly someone who participates in the community. I asked him to describe the people he thought participated in community activities and what the demographic profile is:

I think they tend to be upper middle class, traditional, they went to church when they were kids, they still do. Solid attitudes towards the community, towards morals, and I think it all ties together. We tend to be those that like to put in instead of saying, “Who’s going to do something for me?” We’re joiners, my generation. I can almost see the 21st century struggling to get anyone to join a service club, a neighborhood watch, or a community choir. I mix with people who like music; I mix with people who have the same sort of values as I do. Because I’m a belonger, I belong to various groups. A lot of my friends are exactly the same, so we have similar interests, and while some of my good friends are not Lions, they belong to Rotary or Masons, or other churches or other groupings, it’s birds of a feather I suppose.

I was going to ask Henry to define “joiner” for me, but Henry put out a hand to stop me and continued:

In the 21st century and the latter part of the 20th century, people don’t want to commit to belong where they have to go along every week, and in a choir you have to because you let everyone else down if you’re not practicing with them. And probably it’s a more essential part now, because there are so few things in our community where people do band together, where they are not going to get monetary reward out of it, they put a lot of effort into it and they are doing it for other people.

I wondered how Henry reconciled his comments about attending every week with his lapses in attendance. Then, I thought, even after all the years we have known each other, I still don’t know much about his personal life. I thought I would wait for Henry to enlarge upon this statement, if he chose to. Henry had always seemed to me to be such a private person.

We have a family situation in Chelsea where sometimes we have to go down, to a granddaughter who has a dreadful medical condition.

So that was (possibly) why Henry’s attendance was irregular. I was glad I hadn’t pried. I didn’t intend to pry now, either.

We sat a little while and pondered. Henry got up and made coffee. I took the opportunity to change the tape and ensured that it was ready for when he sat down. We organised the placing of the coffee on the table, and I started the tape recorder. In order to resume the interview where we had left off, I asked Henry for names of people who were involved in the community and if he could describe them to me in some detail:
I think it’s a fairly small percentage of the community who are involved and they do a tremendous amount. I contact them because I know all the fellows in Lions, two Lions clubs. I know most of the fellows in Rotary, both here and Kelsey, [and in] The Good Old Variety Show [an annual community concert, in Kelsey]. I taught at Kelsey so I know all those fellows, and all the choirs and the churches. So those are the people that put in. Through Neighborhood Watch, both here and Upper Milton, I know quite a few people there, and I go to Western District meetings of Neighborhood Watch in Kimberley. At the moment this group of people my age or even ten years younger than me who have come through, a lot of us are now retired, put in a huge amount into the community. I did when I was working. We tend to be those that have had reasonable jobs, reasonable education, wider interests. We tend not to be, and I don’t want to sound elitist, people who see the pub, or the one arm bandits, the gaming machines, as the highlight of their career. Quite a few people in service clubs and Neighborhood Watch are ex-business people. Very few school teachers, a few professional people, a couple of lawyers, but mostly people out of business. But that wouldn’t apply to the choir. I think we get most of the people who put into choirs through church affiliations.

With Henry appearing to be such a community-minded person, I asked him how well he knew his neighbours. Did he know their names, their jobs, their families, and so on?

I know the neighbors reasonably well now. The fact that we don’t get on with the ones next door is their business, not mine, but I know them.

At the end of the interview, Henry again surprised me. I was expecting to finish the interview in the usual way, with me playing a piece of music and Henry talking about his feelings regarding that music. Henry, who had clearly been talking to other members of the community choir about the interviews, had decided to turn the tables and played me a piece of music, “You are the New Day,” sung by The King’s Singers (composed by John David, arranged by Peter Knight), which he found to be particularly moving.

Henry’s voice raised a little higher; his eyes misted and he was at one with the music. He appeared to be in a state of transcendence. Even though Henry did not have the technical musical knowledge to appreciate and explain the finer points of the construction of the music, in just a few words he managed to convey powerful reasons why he participated in community music, especially when the music really appealed to his inner self. In describing his feelings for the piece of music he had played to me he said:

It’s got involvement, and it’s got dynamics and it’s got harmonies, which grab. I can’t explain why but they do. And there’s emotion in that. Oh it’s a sweet feeling. The harmonies are a lot more complex and a lot more modern, I can say that. You know more about harmonies than I do but they’re much closer harmonies. The other harmonies were very traditional, which I like. You see, sometimes intervals in a tune just are emotional to me, and they will get me, and some of those intervals there, in that tune are of that type, but despite the impression I give, generally no-one really knows me. I’m very emotional. So if you could get a group that could sing that in the Milton Choir I would be there five days a week (laughs), waiting for the door to open, but as I did say at that meeting, we’re too old and we can’t do it.

So, Henry, at last! Emotional and private. I’d suspected as much, but never dared to ask him outright. Maybe the brash, blunt honesty was a front. I still
wasn’t sure, but that was his business. I wondered about including the piece in the community choir repertoire. Then I thought again. The community choir does perform oratorio and other religious music very well, but we had tried singing syncopated music before. Even with significant work, it had not been stunningly successful.

In interviews with other choir members, I had learned that it was common for participants to want to add a postscript, usually after we had packed up and I was ready to leave. So, I waited, tape recorder running. I asked Henry if there was anything else he wanted to say; if there was anything he thought we might have missed out. Henry sat for a short while toying with his coffee cup. There was clearly something on his mind, something he needed to say. At last Henry let go of the cup and, lifting his head up, looked at me and said:

In my era, 1936 onwards, in the last century, we belonged to things, we were part of things. If we didn’t belong we felt that there was something wrong and we put in, whether cubs, scouts, service clubs, choirs, the lot. So I grew up that way. We grew up joining and we have a sense of belonging and kids these days are encouraged not to belong, to be themselves. If you want to do something, you do it yourself; if you don’t want to do it you don’t have to. Whereas, yeah, I’m a joiner because I grew up that way.

I backed the car out on to the street and headed off down the hill, for the next interview. Henry had presented himself in a complex way – apparently indifferent to what other people thought, but very much involved with others. Unemotional and blunt, on the one hand, and yet misty eyed over a piece of music. Henry, a passionate man? Something to think about.

Social Capital and Henry

Henry’s story is about individual social capital, how it formed, and how it is used. In the previous story, Henry hints and suggests (albeit probably unknowingly) at his individual social capital as identified through social capital indicators such as those mentioned above. Henry describes how, as a child, he participated in music-making at home and in association with others in choirs in church and school. In his early adulthood he participated in community choirs and continued his involvement with church activities. He now participates in and/or is associated with many kinds of community groups.

Henry describes his networks and how they were formed. For Henry, reciprocity and obligation as social capital indicators are not immediately apparent but appear as sub-sets of Henry’s attitudes towards trust. Henry lives by firm norms and values. We can discern from his story how these possibly came into being. Henry is both a community knowledge resource and an identity resource himself. His story describes how he puts these resources to use to support others in the community. Importantly, membership of a faith-based organisation is a major feature of Henry’s life. He describes in some detail how he works to support and care for others through the church and also within the community.
Henry’s narrative presents his life simply, but Henry himself is quite complex. Henry has had a lifetime of participating in community activities. Indeed, he considers that he “grew up that way.” There is evidence that “early experiences in volunteering and associational activity appear to be highly predictive of community engagement in later life” (United Kingdom Performance and Innovation Unit (UKPIU), 2002, p. 63). Henry is proof of this.

Henry is committed to his family, a strong bonding social capital indicator. Many of his other activities involve bridging social capital through linking with others (individually and in groups) and caring for others outside of the immediate family circle. Henry is not only a leader in the bass section in the choir but also a community leader with significant networks within community welfare organisations and civic groups such as Neighborhood Watch. Henry sees himself as working quietly in the background supporting his wife and others, “I put in a lot to the local community, never a front runner, never upfront, but I do things.” These activities exemplify Henry’s valuing and caring for others. Through his wide networks, Henry also acts as a catalyst for the development of social capital in others.

Henry’s narrative acts as a powerful record of him as a community member and a person who embodies bonding and bridging social capital. His involvement with the community choir links the community choir network to the networks of other groups. Henry’s activities manifest individual social capital and show how his activities work to develop social capital in the community in general and in the community choir in particular. His upbringing and the life events he describes have shaped his own attitudes towards participation and his own social capital. There has been a subsequent impact on the social capital of the groups and communities with which he has been involved.

The importance of being Henry is that his upbringing and social history led to a propensity to participate and interact with others in a variety of community activities. These interactions within such activities facilitated the development of personal social capital. Henry’s use of his personal social capital subsequently facilitated the development of social capital within the wider community. However, the development of social fabric or social capital was not the primary intention of Henry’s involvement, but as Putnam suggests, “members of Florentine choral societies participate because they like to sing, not because their participation strengthens the Tuscan social fabric. But it does” (1993, p. 3).

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Choirs are not democratic organisations. Like orchestras and some other musical performance groups, they are ruled by a conductor or director whose (perhaps benevolent) dictatorship holds sway, at least in the domains of rehearsal and performance. As in choral performance, so in research: the voices of individual participants are rarely heard. The bulk of research on choral singing and choral education has taken the perspective of the conductor or teacher as its starting point and focuses on repertoire, technical aspects of conducting, rehearsing, and performance or has taken an historical approach (see recent articles in the International Journal of Research in Choral Singing, the Choral Journal, and Journal of Research in Music Education). Although there is still little research that investigates the stories of individual singers, recent research has included more qualitative studies that include interviews with choristers among their data (Ashley, 2002; Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Faulkner & Davidson, 2006; Kennedy, 2002; Richards & Dur rant, 2003; Smith, 2006; Welch & Howard, 2002).

Yet these performance organisations are rich, complex, and diverse organisms that no amount of research based on rehearsal observation, public documents, or even member surveys will enable us to understand fully. The values, motives, and understandings, as well as the skills and practices of members, shape the character of any choir, and choral singers are not typically short-term participants – they are more likely to pursue an amateur “career” over a long period (see Stebbins, 1992; Pickert, 1994, on the concept of “careers” of singers and other amateurs). Their participation in a particular choral organisation therefore needs to be understood against the background of this longer time span.

Langston’s research into social capital in a community choir recognises that such an inquiry must begin with the choristers, who generate the social capital. It is not so obvious that narrative inquiry is an appropriate methodology: narrative research...
tends to take life experience as a starting point, rather than a theory such as social capital theory. However, there are obvious advantages in a narrative approach, given the close connection between social capital and the choristers’ life experiences: their engagement with both the choir and the community can be revealed through their individual stories. The indicators of social capital that Langston is seeking all require continuity for their generation. Shared norms and values, trust, community involvement, and networks develop over a life span, rather than being characteristics that can be discerned in isolated activities or at a single moment in time. Because the inquiry focuses not only on relevant events in a chorister’s life but also on the opinions, motivations, and understandings of the singer, those views need to be explored as part of the life experiences that are their natural context.

**The Interview**

From a larger number of participants from the choir, Langston presents here a single character, Henry: a blunt, straight-talking, skilled, and experienced singer and an active participant in community life. The data for Henry’s story come largely from a two-hour, semi-structured interview in which Henry talked extensively and frankly about his life and participation in the choir and community. He comes across as a vivid and convincing character, his story being presented largely in his own words. However, there is a second character in this story: the interviewer.

Narrative researchers are aware that their own backgrounds and perspectives, the way they structure an interview, and their very presence as a particular audience will affect the narrative they are told. Langston plays a more dominant role in the interview than would an interviewer with no direct connection to Henry’s life. Because Langston has been the conductor of the choir in which Henry has sung since its inception, he influences the narrative in a number of ways.

First, there is much information about the choir that Henry need not mention because he knows the interviewer is aware of it. In his text, Langston fills in the background as it seems necessary; however, we cannot help wondering how Henry might have described his choir experience to an outsider. Second, Langston’s knowledge of the choir and of Henry puts him in a position to evaluate and even contradict some of Henry’s statements: he knows from his own experience that Henry is more than the solid, useful voice he describes, and he knows from acquaintances that the keyboard skills about which Henry is so self-deprecating are much admired.

Third, Langston’s position of authority as conductor creates the potential either for reticence on the part of the singer in relation to opinions that might sit uncomfortably with the views of his conductor or for tension if those views are expressed. Fortunately, Henry seems to be confident enough to air views that he recognises might be unwelcome, and the interviewer does nothing to inhibit the flow of opinion. Henry advances reasons for belonging to the choir that he thinks Langston might disapprove of (“... if you are wanting me to say, or thinking I might say ...”);
he makes one direct criticism of the choir (“Other times rehearsals are absolute purgatory”); he has reservations about the choir’s repertoire.

Langston has structured the interview so that opportunities for Henry to tell the story of his involvement with the choir and singing in his own way are followed by more focused questions that probe the nature of Henry’s involvement with the community and his perspective on that involvement. But here too Henry’s answers take a largely narrative form. He describes his past and present community activities, but also refers back to his generation’s upbringing to explain the values that made them “joiners” and looks forward in the present century to contrast the attitude of the next generation. He also looks beyond his own activity to his wife’s involvement and then to others in the community, commenting on motivation and values.

An interesting twist occurs at the end of the interview: Henry takes control. Instead of allowing Langston to play him the prepared music for him to comment on, Henry produces his own. In commenting on his feelings about this music, Henry is able to speak more eloquently and movingly than we imagine he might have done about music of the interviewer’s choice. He also reveals more of himself and his feelings about singing. This variation in the planned interview format had been carefully planned by Henry after consulting other choir members about the interview process, and it suggests that he has also thought in advance about his answers in the rest of the interview. Certainly he used the opportunity of playing his CD to back up his previous comments about the restrictive repertoire of the choir.

**The Research Text**

Although rich data about the lives of members of an organisation seem a natural starting point for exploring the existence of social capital within the organisation or its members, a tension arises when this is explored in a narrative way, that is, in a manner that empowers the participants by allowing them to influence the determination of important themes. Here, the most important theme – social capital – has already been determined, and in his interview, Langston to some extent restricts the latitude allowed to Henry through the focus on this theme.

Langston manages to steer a middle course between narrative and formalist perspectives in the organisation of his text. After a brief description of his own background and that of the choir, he discusses in some detail the forms, characteristics, and indicators of social capital – an unusual beginning for a narrative inquiry text. But then he makes a second beginning, introducing Henry, and largely allowing him to tell his own story.

Langston constructs this main part of his text as a narrative on another level, told more or less chronologically as the story of a conversation, but with Henry’s contribution privileged. Henry’s words are framed by the interviewer’s questions, so that the reader is able to make some assessment of their effect on the flow
of Henry’s story. Linking Henry’s narrative are Langston’s observations, filling in background detail, adding interpretation based on the inside knowledge he has as conductor, and reflecting on them from his perspective as a knowledgeable insider. It is clear that he not only reads Henry’s narrative for content, but also attends to nuances, ambiguities, and silences. He recognises the influence he himself has on the interview process by describing his own role and background and the gaps in his knowledge (such as the reason for Henry’s rehearsal absences) that determine the way the conversation progresses. He fills out his own character and perspective as well, by noting experiences in his own life that parallel those of Henry or offering contrasting points of view. In these interpolations, Langston moves back and forward in time as he expands on or interprets Henry’s statements by referring to past experiences in the choir. Rather than retreating from the risk of an “overly vivid signature” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 148), Langston realises that the reality of his influence on the interview data needs to be acknowledged and, therefore, situates himself in the narrative as a second character with his own plotline, as he describes his past experience and thoughts about the choir, and considers Henry’s repertoire suggestions.

In constructing a storied account of Henry’s involvement in the choir and community, Langston has, as he states, employed narrative analysis in the sense used by Polkinghorne (1995), who contrasts this with the analysis of narrative approach, where storied accounts are subjected to a process of paradigmatic analysis “to identify particulars as instances of general notions or concepts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.13). Langston has rejected the paradigmatic approach, in spite of his aim to identify indicators of social capital in Henry. The result is that rather than merely adding to our knowledge of the concept of social capital through identification of certain instances, the knowledge produced is about a particular set of experiences that enriches our understanding of how the generation of social capital can occur in a particular life and in relation to involvement in choral singing. This does contribute to our knowledge of social capital, although it produces a different kind of understanding, and Langston has, within the framework of his story of the interview, investigated and identified indicators of social capital. Perhaps Polkinghorne’s two types of narrative inquiry are not so clearly distinguishable.

Finally, it is Henry who validates Langston’s choice. Even when the questions do not require it, he tends to answer by relating a story of his experience. He understands the matters they are discussing narratively and expresses them that way, stressing the holistic nature of community participation through his life and the continuity that underlies his values, actions, and networks. As he sums it up, “I’m a joiner because I grew up that way.”

**Conclusion**

Although this paper presents to us only one member of the choir, it demonstrates the potential of narrative inquiry for our understanding of musical organisations, an area still under-researched and prone to stereotyped characterisation. The complexities
and ambiguities revealed in even one individual’s narrative serve as a warning against the shallow understandings that can result from snapshot views of a group made up of diverse members. The overlap of participation in church and secular choirs mentioned by Henry is just one example of an aspect of choral singing that could be illuminated through narrative inquiry.

The text also demonstrates clearly how the ways in which an interview is structured can shape the outcome and the need for transparency in reporting the context of data collection. Rather than giving the false impression that he speaks for the participant, Langston shows that it is possible to make a virtue of closeness to the subject by constructing a story that includes both interviewer and interviewee as characters.

Finally, this piece draws our attention to the tensions likely to arise when narrative inquiry is used in conjunction with a formalistic framework and suggests one way of resolving it.

References


Chapter 7
Filtered Through the Lenses of Self: Experiences of Two Preservice Music Teachers

Kaye Ferguson

Abstract In this study, I explored ways in which two preservice music teachers’ views of themselves operated as personalised lenses for their teaching and learning experiences. I observed and talked with the participants throughout an academic year as they interacted with university and public school instructors, peers, family members, and public school students. Focusing on events and ideas they emphasised in our conversations, I constructed narratives to highlight ways in which self-views filtered their experiences and influenced their actions. Both general teacher educators (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998) and music teacher educators (Kokoski, 1991; Kukanauza, 2001; Schmidt, 1998; Snyder, 1997; Stegman, 2001) have reported that preservice teachers’ ideas and beliefs can exert powerful effects on teaching behaviours.

The two preservice music teachers created individualised meanings within a social context, revising self-views based both on interactions with others and on personal reflections about their experiences. The participants emphasised the importance of relationships with past and present music teachers, and they expressed appreciation and desire for personal connections with current teachers. Their perceptions of these relationships influenced both their views of themselves and, in turn, their responses to new information and strategies encountered in their music education programme. When talking about their undergraduate programmes, the participants focused primarily on individual violin study and music education courses, sometimes struggling to balance and integrate performer and teacher selves in their evolving music teacher identities.

The two participants in this study recognised some self-views that filtered their experiences, but other self-views were invisible or ambiguous to them, suggesting that music teacher educators might provide valuable support as reflectors and clarifiers. Forming trusting teacher-student relationships and promoting honest dialogue in supportive learning environments could aid preservice teachers as they identify
existing self-views and consider alternatives. This study supports the notion that successful teacher education programmes “build on the beliefs that already exist” (Wideen et al., 1998, p. 144) by recognising the potency of views that preservice teachers bring to their undergraduate programmes.

**Introduction**

Individuals use beliefs about themselves to help them make sense of their environments. Because of the “existence of the self in the perceptual field,” each person can choose what to view from the almost-unlimited number of things to be perceived at any given time (Combs, 1999, p. 68). The self also provides a means of connecting the individual to a group, fostering identity development that “allows us to differentiate ourselves from others” and “adapt and navigate within complex social structures and hierarchies” (Robins, Norem, & Cheek, 1999, p. 466), such as those experienced by preservice teachers.

Filtering experiences through a lens of self increases efficiency in processing information, but it also produces highly individualised interpretations of events, situations, and relationships. Individuals create personalised meanings involving reflections on past experiences and new information from current encounters, which in turn influence future thoughts and actions in a continual process that is unique to each person (Bruner, 1986; Combs, 1999; DeBerry, 1993; Dewey, 1938; Laing, 1961).

Theories about the self are abundant, reflecting agreement about its central role in human development and evolving perspectives about its construction and constituents (Dweck, 1999; Robins et al., 1999). In describing the “peculiarly tortured history” of defining the self, Bruner (1990) notes that psychological theorists often searched “as if Self were a substance or an essence that preexisted our effort to describe it, as if all one had to do was to inspect it in order to discover its nature” (p. 99). After the 1950s, as social scientists emphasised cognitive perspectives and contextual influences, social psychology grew in influence, and some psychologists expanded their notions of self to include ideas from fields such as interpretive history and cultural anthropology. Researchers in these fields have long considered the self to include a “cultural-historical situation” as well as “private consciousness” (Bruner, 1990, p. 107), suggesting that self is constructed both from interactions with others and from personal reflections. Integrating this contextual focus with the individual personality role of self, some recent psychological theorists propose viewing the self as a multiple, rather than single, concept (Bandura, 1999; Dweck, 1999; Robins et al., 1999; Swann & Schroeder, 1995).

Theories about self that include contextual influences and multiple functions seem suited to studying preservice teachers’ perspectives because of the complexity of teaching and learning environments. In recognition of this broad view of self, I use the idea of “self-views” (Swann & Schroeder, 1995, p. 1316) in this exploration of lenses that filter preservice teachers’ experiences. Self-views encompass all beliefs and feelings a person holds about herself, including identity, the part of self
that tends to be defined by society (Swann & Schroeder). For preservice teachers, in this context, salient members of their “society” may include instructors, peers, family members, and their own students.

If preservice teachers use self-views as filters for events and interactions, then it seems likely that their perspectives about these experiences reflect differences in personal biographies. This impact of biography on preservice teachers’ beliefs is one which has been acknowledged both in literature on general teacher education (Britzman, 2003; Carter & Doyle, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996) and in music teacher education (Kokoski, 1991; Kukanauza, 2001; Schmidt, 1998; Snyder, 1997; Stegman, 2001). Based on their review of general education literature, Carter & Doyle (1996) suggest that the increasing research emphasis on personal biography since the early 1990s reflects a growing acceptance of the importance of “personal agency” in learning to teach (p. 120). Richardson (1996) describes the strength of personal history as one of the “powerful forces” contributing to the challenge of creating a meaningful preservice teacher education experience (p. 109). According to Kagan (1992), teacher educators oversimplify the process of becoming a teacher if they do not view it in relationship to “biography and conceptions of self-as-teacher” (p. 162). Because preservice teachers spent many years in school as students, Britzman (2003) suggests that their “sense” of what it means to be a teacher is “strangely established before they begin learning to teach” (p. 1).

Music education researchers have also found that previous life experiences play an important role in the process of learning how to teach (Kokoski, 1991; Kukanauza, 2001; Schmidt, 1998; Snyder, 1997; Stegman, 2001). In Kokoski’s (1991) study of reflection activities, “it was evident through the interviews and discussions that each preservice teacher brought to the field experience differing sets of prior knowledge” (p. 92). Schmidt (1998) reported that personalised ideas about “good” teaching affected what each student in her study learned from music education courses. Snyder (1997) found that cooperating teachers influenced student teachers’ classroom management approaches more if the two held similar beliefs about management than if their ideas were different. According to Stegman (2001), student teachers who viewed themselves as skilled musicians adopted more teacher-centered instructional strategies than those who saw themselves as facilitators. Kukanauza (2001) noted that the six preservice teachers in her study reacted differently to teaching and learning situations partly because of “personal beliefs acquired through their experience and cultural background” (p. 101).

Self-views constitute part of preservice teachers’ general belief systems about teaching and learning, which reviewers of educational research describe as strong, influential, and resistant to change (Pajares, 1992; Wideen et al., 1998). Based on their literature review, Wideen et al. (1998) argue that it is futile for teacher educators to try to change preservice teachers’ beliefs because “evidence supports their enduring quality” (p. 144). Instead, these researchers support strategies that “build on the beliefs that already exist” (p. 144). Pajares (1992) agrees that preservice teachers’ beliefs are resistant to change and suggests that “research on the entering beliefs of preservice teachers would provide teacher educators with important information to help determine curriculum and program direction” (p. 328).
Based on evidence highlighting the strength and influence of preservice teachers’ beliefs, music teacher educators may find it helpful to gain insight into the self-views of their students. “Images of self-as-person and self-as-teacher are critical to the process of becoming a teacher,” suggests McClean (1999), “because they constitute the personal context within which new information will be interpreted” (p. 58).

To gather information about ways in which self-views might act as lenses for experiences, I explored the following research questions by observing and talking with two preservice music teachers throughout an academic year: How do preservice music teachers perceive themselves? What factors contributed to self-views? How are their self-views reflected in their thoughts and actions as developing music teachers?

Research Methods

My research questions suggest an inquiry process based on the researcher “coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them” (Glesne, 1999, p. 5). By observing behaviour and listening to the stories of two preservice music teachers, I hoped to gain information about the ways in which they organised and assigned meaning to their experiences (Perry, 1970). I asked open-ended questions and followed the participants’ conversational leads, trying to avoid a process in which “human Selves that emerge from our interviews become artificialized by our interviewing method” (Bruner, 1990, p. 115). I encouraged the participants to tell their stories first, adding my voice in the process of “trying to make sense of the life as lived” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 78). I hope that the reader might “take the text home into the world of her daily experience to see what it might say about familiar conditions, conventional practices, and the values and ideologies that support them” (Barone, 2001, p. 178).

To gather information for this study, I observed and talked with two undergraduate music education students regularly throughout an academic year. I based my narrative report on 10 conversations and 20 teaching observations with each student. Conversations ranged from 20 minutes to an hour each, and each teaching observation lasted approximately an hour. Throughout the research process, the relationships I developed with the preservice teachers appeared to engage them in the research, facilitate a free exchange of information, and build sufficient trust so each could tell their respective stories (Janesick, 1998).

I asked Josh and Anne¹ to be the primary participants in this study based on their personal characteristics and the nature of my existing relationships with them, factors that would provide the greatest “opportunity to learn” (Stake, 1994, p. 243) about self-views. Both Anne and Josh had worked with me on a previous qualitative research project (Ferguson, 2003), during which I had found them willing and

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¹ All names used within this chapter are pseudonyms.
able to articulate their views and reflect on experiences, important inclusion criteria since much of the information in this current project was to be generated through conversations.

**Participants**

During the year of this study, 21-year-old Anne and 22-year-old Josh were music education majors at a large southwestern US university, enrolled in several common courses. Both violinists, they played in the same large (approximately 100-member) university symphony orchestra and were classmates in an instrumental music education methods course, which met twice a week for a total of approximately 5 hours. Anne and Josh were also enrolled in private violin lessons, although they studied with different teachers. During both fall and spring semesters, they participated in field placements at different metropolitan-area public schools. Both were also enrolled in other music and general studies classes, completing requirements towards the goal of student teaching during the next academic year.

Josh and Anne also taught in the university’s String Project classes during the year of this study, each instructing one class of approximately 10 fifth- and sixth-grade string students that met twice weekly at the university in the late afternoons. Josh and Anne team taught their classes with other undergraduate music students, including both music education and performance majors. Prior to their university experiences, Anne and Josh had each taught private violin lessons for several years, and Josh had been a sectional coach with his hometown youth orchestra.

Although Anne and Josh shared experiences at the university, their individual musical histories and family circumstances were quite different. Anne’s mother was a professional cellist and music teacher at a well-known university, and her father was a businessman in their mid-sized northeastern US city. Josh came from a mid-sized southwestern US city not far from the university. His mother was a nurse practitioner and his father a mosaic tile setter. Anne described high musical expectations from her parents, and she began playing the cello at age 3 before switching to violin a year later. Josh started playing the violin in a fourth-grade public school music programme, and he said his parents enthusiastically supported any college major that he chose to pursue.

**Narrative Report**

Focusing on events and processes that Josh and Anne deemed important, I constructed a narrative report highlighting ways in which they reflected self-views in thoughts and actions related to becoming music teachers. Josh’s and Anne’s descriptions shaped the final report because I wanted to portray as authentically as possible their personally constructed meanings. Yet while I focused on Anne’s and Josh’s
words, I understood that lived experience and narrative are never the same; “the retelling of another’s story is always . . . selective, partial, and in tension” (Britzman, 2003, p. 35).

My research questions reflect a belief that preservice teachers’ self-views are worthy of exploration and support. Although skill development is essential in music teacher education programmes, personal development is also critical because teachers use themselves as primary instruments in their work, “combining knowledge and understanding with their own unique ways of putting them into operation” (Combs, Avila, & Purkey, 1978, p. 6).

As teachers draw on themselves as a teaching resource, so may qualitative and narrative researchers serve as their own principal research instruments (Creswell, 1998; Eisner, 1998; Glesne, 1999). In selecting and re-telling Josh’s and Anne’s stories, my own lenses of teacher, counsellor, and musician influenced my choices. According to Eisner (1998), “this unique signature is not a liability but a way of providing individual insight into a situation” (p. 34). Although my personal filters affected this report, my purpose was to highlight and contextualise tensions rather than to resolve them with an authoritative voice.

In the following sections, I introduce Anne and Josh and the narratives of their experiences in performing and teaching, the two areas that emerged as being of most importance to them during our conversations. Following the narratives, I discuss possible interpretations of Anne’s and Josh’s self-views as filters for their experiences. Finally, I suggest ways in which these perspectives might inform the work of music teacher educators.

Anne

**Love-Hate: Anne’s Violin Performer Self**

Anne bypasses empty chairs at the front of the section when selecting her seat for the informal chamber orchestra rehearsal. The outside chair of the first stand remains open after everyone else has chosen places. Josh, who is sitting in the inside chair of the first stand, turns to Anne and motions her to move up. After shrugging her shoulders, she slides her case forward and settles into the empty “first” chair with her violin. Anne and Josh laugh and exchange comments as they tune and warm up for several minutes. When the director asks the group to try the first piece, Anne’s strong, resonant tone is easy to hear, and she leads her section by indicating tempo and preparatory beats with body movements. Since the group is small, they play without a conductor, and the musicians follow Anne’s bow as they release the final note together.

Anne began her college career as a performance major but switched to music education at the end of her freshman year. Describing practice expectations in the
performance programme that were more than she could handle, Anne declared during one interview, “I hate performing.” Anne says her mother and her violin teacher “forced” her to audition for high-school all-state groups and enter concerto competitions because they thought it was “good” for her. She claims she would lose competitions “on purpose” in order to avoid public performances and reports being a “nervous wreck” during the one time that she won and had to play with a local orchestra.

Anne remembers enjoying playing for people when she was a child until a sixth-grade music camp experience changed her feelings. Following a memory lapse during her performance of a Mozart Concerto, she remembers, “the pianist didn’t help me out at all. That just ruined me right there, because I sat there and was crying on stage. He would not help me.” She connects this feeling to ones she currently holds when describing her anxiety prior to a recent university student recital. Anne says that she constantly wondered, “What is my teacher going to think of my Bach? What is she going to think I’m doing wrong?”

Anne defines her relationship with her current university teacher, Dr. Valerie Brady, as “love-hate,” although she goes on to say that they enjoy a “special bond” after working together for four years. Anne describes feeling “guilty” after some disappointing lessons and performances, “because I know what she expects of me and what I should expect of myself.” Recently, however, Anne has been excited about her lessons and motivated to practice on what she calls her “dream piece.” When Dr. Brady suggested that Anne study the Tchaikowsky Violin Concerto in the spring, Anne was initially hesitant. Dr. Brady insisted that she was “more than ready for it,” and Anne said that she trusted Dr. Brady’s opinion because she had been “honest” with her before.

Anne also relates feeling anxious about her parents’ expectations for her performances. She was nervous about their reactions to the university recital because they had not heard her perform a public recital since her senior year in high school, and she worried that it would not be “up to their standards.” Anne’s first music teacher was her mother, a professional cellist. They began cello lessons when Anne was 3 years old, but soon, Anne says, “we both got smart” and decided Anne should switch to violin and study with someone else. Anne remembers her mother’s strong support of her performances, but she also describes high expectations her mother held for both Anne and her younger brother, who is also a music student. According to Anne, her mother believes that she has great potential but that she does not always apply herself to performances the way she might. “So, when I don’t fix something that’s out of tune, or I’m practicing just running through stuff, she gets really pissed at me,” Anne says with a defiant smile.

Anne says that her mother remained supportive when she changed her major from violin performance to music education, but was “also kind of saddened to see the talent going to waste.” Because Anne hates to practice, her mother expresses concern that she will stop practicing and playing “seriously” when she starts her teaching career. Responding to her mother’s admonitions that she is not using her musical talent fully, Anne says, “Cause I don’t want to. If I wanted to be at Juilliard, I’d be at Juilliard, and I don’t!” About being a perfectionist concerning her own
performances, Anne says, “I’ve never been that way! That was my mom. No, if a note was out of tune, I just left it out of tune.”

**What Not to Do: Anne’s Teacher Self**

Anne waits while the 11 sixth-grade students arrange their music on the stands. “Let’s take a look at measure 17,” she says. “We’re going to work on that slur. See how much bow you can have left over and still make a pretty sound.” She stops them after they have played a few measures, saying, “It’s C natural, so low second finger.” She starts them again with “Ready, set, go,” in rhythm, and she lets the students play through the section before saying, “OK, good.” Next, Anne instructs the students to “find the measure with the up-bow slur,” and they repeat this measure several times. “Who can tell me how long that G is in measures 15 and 16?” she asks next. A student ventures the answer “Five?” and Anne confirms with a head nod, saying, “Let’s just practice holding that for five beats. Very slow bow.” After several repetitions, Anne says, “All right. From the beginning, really counting the ties.”

“I’m not a fan of lesson plans,” Anne says. “It’s not that it’s hard, it’s just tedious. And it seems pointless. . . . Why can’t I just get up there with the music and work from there? Why do I have to have a set plan?” During a guided videotape review of a previous lesson, Anne tells a teaching assistant that the required plan was too rigid, and she thinks she could have accomplished the same things with notes in her music. She describes her preferred class teaching method as “running through the music and seeing what needs to be fixed.” Anne says she knows what she wants to accomplish and she can teach without written plans because she has been playing her instrument for so many years. She finds it difficult, however, to describe her teaching process, because “I don’t think it through, I just do it!”

When comparing her current year-long university methods class and her experiences in school field placements, Anne complains, “It’s nothing the same! They’re telling us one thing, and then reality is something else.” When the university professors suggest that students incorporate activities from their methods class in their field experience settings, Anne says she usually ignores their suggestions because “high schoolers are not going to sit there and clap and sing.” She says that many of her classmates feel the same way, but they are all afraid to bring it up to the instructors. “I think we’re scared to combat with them. I don’t know why, but they’re scary,” Anne says with a laugh.

Anne negatively describes a methods class exercise in which they used recorded music to accompany rhythmic clapping. She remembers feeling uncomfortable teaching the lesson and functioning as a student during peer teaching. “I don’t know why. I just remember not wanting to sing and clap,” she says. She speculates that it might have been different for her if she had done those types of activities as a
younger student. Still, when Anne witnesses other preservice teachers in her class trying this activity with a high-school group, she describes student participation as enthusiastic. But she reasons that some of this enthusiasm may have been for “show” just because the high-school students were glad to get a “day off” from rehearsal with their regular teacher.

At the end of the year, Anne claims not to have changed her teaching based on her music education course content, and she attributes the small changes she did make to “watching other people and knowing what not to do.” She says she values information from Dr. Anderson, the string music education professor, more than comments from Dr. Hall, the band specialist who co-taught the year-long methods class. Although she says she will listen to Dr. Hall’s comments about “basic stuff,” she complains that Dr. Hall “doesn’t know anything about strings.” Describing her interactions with Dr. Hall, Anne says, “I get this uneasy feeling from her.” However, Anne identifies one of her most powerful feedback experiences of the semester as a peer-teaching episode in which Dr. Hall gave her positive comments about her conducting. Although Dr. Hall also gave her the same notes on paper, Anne says, “When she told me verbally, it was like, ‘Oh, she does pay attention to me.’”

Anne cites the poor quality of her own school string teachers as one reason she decided to become a teacher. She became interested in a teaching career during high school, but Anne says she probably entered college as a performance major because of her mother’s career as a professional cellist and her own opinion that “music ed students didn’t know how to play their instruments.” She remembers thinking, “I don’t want to be classified as one of those!” Now, she says that Dr. Brady tells her that she is the “strongest music ed player,” which pleases her. “I still put pressure on myself to keep up my playing,” Anne says, “because I’ve had too many bad teachers that can’t play. I don’t want to become one of them.”

**Josh**

**Work to Be Done: Josh’s Violin Performer Self**

Josh’s piano accompanist has joined him at his lesson this week because it is their last rehearsal before the recital performance. His teacher is clapping as Josh plays, constantly reminding him to keep a steady beat. Josh returns to a place in the music where he entered late during one trial and rushed the tempo during another. He straightens his posture, pushes his glasses up on his nose, and takes a deep breath before setting his bow on the violin. When he starts the passage, Josh’s tone sounds secure and full, but when he arrives at the trouble spot, he catches himself rushing the tempo again. He corrects himself aloud, stops playing, and asks the accompanist to return to the same passage.
“I really need positive reinforcement,” Josh says when describing his violin study. “As soon as someone keeps telling me something negative, without any break-up with a positive, I really don’t do well. I start feeling really bad, and I kinda shut down, and I get angry.” Although Josh doesn’t characterise his current violin teacher, Mr. Alan Matthews, as the “greatest teacher,” he says, “he’s a great player, and his teaching skills are improving.” Rather than the constant negative comments he remembers receiving during his first year, Josh reports that now he receives specific remedies for problems. Still, Josh thinks that he has to “work hard to figure out what he wants me to do. . . . Maybe it’s just because I’m a slow learner, I don’t know.”

Josh transferred to the university from a community college. He says that he has felt successful in most of his music education programme so far, and it is not often that he is “really, really discouraged” as he has been with some of his violin lessons. He speculates that he might take the negative comments from Mr. Matthews better if he “ever asked me once how my life was going, seriously, instead of just in passing, you know.”

Despite his dissatisfaction with their student-teacher relationship, Josh credits Mr. Matthews with helping him to build technical skills that were lacking as a result of Josh not having started private violin lessons until he was in high school. Josh says that he thinks his violin performance skills are improving, but “I don’t think I’ll ever be where I want to be. The ultimate goal is to be the best performer I can be. I think I’m making good progress toward that end, but there’s a lot of work to be done.”

Josh recalls positive memories of elementary and middle-school music teachers, although he admits that he did not practice very much. “Even into high school, I sort of showed up and started over every year. High school was the first time I ever practiced during the summer,” Josh remembers. He describes his motivation as a desire to move up to a higher-level community youth orchestra so he could avoid the early Saturday morning rehearsals with the lower-level group. He practiced hard for the youth orchestra audition and was admitted with the stipulation that he would take private lessons with the director, Mr. Bennett, in addition to his orchestra participation. For a year after high-school graduation, while he was attending his hometown community college, Josh took two lessons a week with Mr. Bennett to compensate for his “late start” on private instruction.

Josh still attends a summer camp each year led by Mr. Bennett, and he says he always feels motivated to do his best when he plays for him. “I don’t ever remember leaving a lesson feeling really disappointed about my playing. If I was doing something incorrectly, he had an exercise for me to do. But he didn’t say, ‘That really is the worst thing I ever saw,’” Josh says. Rather than presenting criticism in a personal way, Mr. Bennett offered Josh ways to improve. If Josh performed well, Mr. Bennett was very complimentary. “I like an encouraging teacher,” says Josh, “someone who gets me excited about the music and gives me the reason to want to play technically better.”

Josh recalls wanting to be a musician from the time he was in junior high, and, when he began college, he did not want to major in music education because he still had “that ego problem” of wanting to be a performer. He enjoys performing for
others and remembers fondly a recital he prepared several years ago for family and friends. Josh said it gave him a lift that so many people “cared enough” to come to hear him play and wish him well.

Josh says that when he gets discouraged in his private lessons, he doesn’t want to play his violin. “If I have a good lesson and there’s encouragement, then I want to go play again. I’m having fun, so I’ll definitely work more,” he notes. “It’s like that vicious cycle. I need to be on a good track, and if I get off it’s really hard.”

**Where I Should Be: Josh’s Teacher Self**

Josh stands in front of a semi-circle of 10 fifth-grade violin students wearing a blue T-shirt sporting the message “I touch the future . . . I teach.” When it is time for class to begin, he asks a small, vivacious girl to lead the class in warm-up stretches, and she performs her task enthusiastically. When everyone is seated again, Josh says, “I learned a new game last week. Want to try it?” He holds his left hand in the air and taps each of his fingers, one at a time, against his thumb. Josh encourages the students to move their fingers lightly and quickly, trying to increase the speed without missing contact with the thumb. He tells them to remember the light feeling as they play their scale, and then he directs them to try the first piece that is written on the board. Josh sings as they play, using the words “up, down, slow bow, r-e-a-ll-y slow bow.” For the next piece on the list, Josh plays two measures on his violin, asks the students to repeat it, and gives feedback after each segment. “See if you can use just an inch of bow and make it sound like this,” he says before modelling the last section again. The students respond with a very soft version of the two measures they played before.

“I feel like I’ve learned a lot, fast, in that class, and I feel like I’m going to keep learning more and more as it goes on,” Josh says about this year’s music education methods course. “You definitely improve by doing and reflecting, not one or the other,” he adds. Josh says that he feels more confident that he is “where I should be” in teaching as opposed to his performance and that he can see continual improvement in his teaching this year. Before this year, Josh describes his teaching as “imitating what I thought I’d been through before.” As a result of knowledge gained from this year’s music education courses, his school field experiences, and his String Project teaching experience, he believes he is clearer now about his teaching processes and ways to improve.

Josh mixes information from his music education professors with his own ideas as he works to improve his teaching. He says he accepts each instructor’s evaluations about his teaching “unless I’m totally convinced that I’m right. I don’t think I really have any reason to go against what a professor says.” As an example, Josh recalls specific feedback from a music education instructor about reducing his talking time
and says this fits his own memories of being an active learner. “I would zone out when I was a kid,” he says. “I think the lesson goes a lot better if you do less talking.”

Josh has targeted lesson planning as a specific area he wants to improve upon this year, but he admits that his efforts so far have been inconsistent. In String Project classes, he says he is “making more of a conscious effort to actually plan lessons” because he has become more aware of the way planning helps him be a better teacher. Now, Josh realises that “I could have done better if I had worked something out, whereas before I think a lot of the time I felt that I did just a fine job when I didn’t plan at all.” Josh attributes this change in attitude to experience with planning and seeing the results in the university methods class. “I’ve been forced to write more lesson plans now and teach in front of the class with a planned lesson,” he explains, “and they’re coming out better and better, and so I see what I can do in front of the class.” In teaching String Project classes, where he is not expected to do detailed planning, he says his lessons are “not up to the same level.”

After high school, Josh sent audition tapes to several colleges and was accepted by his first-choice school and several others. Although his parents (both non-musicians) supported his educational choices, out-of-state tuition proved to be too much for family finances, so he opted to attend a state university near his hometown. Josh was torn between majoring in violin performance or music education, and he expresses frustration about his perception that music education students are considered inferior to performance majors at the university he attends. “Teaching music is, I think, ultimately a higher art than performing. We’re teaching not just music but using music to teach about life. . . . It’s hard for me to really believe that and keep it when people are always pushing us down,” Josh says. “But, I’ve realized which is the greater good. So, I’m really happy about being a music educator now.”

**Interpretations**

Anne’s and Josh’s self-views seemed to be influenced both by interactions with others and by personal reflections, supporting the notion that construction of self “proceeds from the outside in as well as the inside out” (Bruner, 1990, p. 108). In the following section, I explore interpretations of Josh’s and Anne’s narratives and reflections about themselves and their relationships with music teachers and mentors. These ideas focus on Anne’s and Josh’s self-views as performing musicians and developing music teachers, the areas about which they chose to talk most during our conversations.

**Reflected Self-Views: Influence of Others**

Anne’s and Josh’s stories demonstrate that the ways in which individuals see themselves can be strongly influenced by others’ responses. In both performance and teaching settings, Anne and Josh pool their visions with those of others as they
construct and revise their self-views, supporting the idea that “an important source of self-knowledge is the social feedback people receive from each other” (Baumeister, 1997, p. 686).

Anne interprets her relationship with her current private instructor as being more supportive than Josh’s experience, but both preservice teachers rely heavily on information from their instructors as they revise their performer self-views. Anne’s self-described “love-hate” relationship with her current university violin teacher seems to reflect a conflict between internalised performance expectations and her desire for caring and support. Josh’s difficulty in maintaining a positive self-view as a violinist may be rooted in his inability to replicate with his university instructor the close relationship he enjoyed with his high-school violin teacher.

Anne’s reactions to Dr. Hall – one of two professors in her music education methods course – suggest that relationships with others can be complicated as well as powerful. As Britzman suggests, “The meanings one makes from practice are in a state of continual and contradictory reinterpretation as other contexts and other voices are taken into account or are ignored” (2003, p. 37). Despite Anne’s expression of uneasiness with Dr. Hall, she responds strongly to praise of her conducting on the basis that Dr. Hall finally “paid attention” to her. Anne’s interpretation of the feedback through a lens of personal connection in addition to content (conducting) seems to imply that Dr. Hall might be a more powerful influence, or her feedback might be better considered, if Anne perceived their connection as being stronger.

**Balancing Performing and Teaching Self-Views: Music Teacher Identity**

Anne and Josh also use information from others as they construct and revise their music teacher role identities. Their words and actions reflect a struggle between performer and teacher self-views echoed in other music education studies regarding preservice teachers’ professional role development (Cox, 1997; Froehlich & L’Roy, 1985; Roberts, 1991; Woodford, 2002). Both Josh and Anne had developed strong performance identities by the time they entered college, which is common among music education undergraduates (Roberts, 1991; Woodford, 2002). In their experience of university music school, performance majors seem to enjoy higher status than education majors, a hierarchy described in other studies regarding North American universities (Cox, 1997; Roberts, 1991). However, Anne and Josh sometimes respond differently to the messages received from their “society” about the perceived value of music teachers and performers.

Anne’s and Josh’s individualised responses may have resulted partly from differences in primary socialisation, an important component in music teacher identity development (Cox, 1997). Anne’s early musical socialisation, including years of private violin study and performances, may have contributed to her tendency to reject teaching strategies presented in music education courses and express opinions such as “high schoolers are not going to sit there and clap and sing.” Anne has viewed
herself as a violin performer since she was a young child, and she seems invested in retaining that view in spite of her eventual rejection of performance as a declared major. Josh reflects more openness to new teaching ideas from his music education instructors than Anne, perhaps because his primary music socialisation influences as a performer were weaker and he invested little time outside of school in music study until high school. However, like other music education undergraduates, Josh also judges that “social status is afforded them on the basis of perceived level of musicianship and not teacher expertise” (Woodford, 2002, p. 682), and he continues to value his violin study, saying that his “ultimate goal” is being “the best performer I can be.” Josh expresses commitment to a teacher identity (“using music to teach about life”), but also frustration about retaining this commitment when he perceives that those who value performance over education “are always pushing us down.”

When they receive information about teaching from others, Anne and Josh filter their experiences through views of themselves as violin students, performers, and developing music teachers. Their responses to new ideas in music education methods classes and their attitudes towards other music education students and professionals reflect the personalised nature of their self-views, including their emerging professional identities. Anne distances herself both from past school music teachers and other music education students with comments such as “I don’t want to be classified as one of those!” Her pursuit of performance excellence seems at least partly fuelled by the desire to avoid becoming one of the “bad teachers that can’t play.” By expressing her preference for using strategies such as “running through the music and seeing what needs to be fixed,” Anne implies that her teacher identity at this stage of her development is based on years of successful violin lessons, practice, and rehearsals. The positive teacher models Anne describes are private violin teachers and performing musicians, not school music teachers. Unlike Anne, Josh recalls positive school music teacher models and particularly respects his high-school teacher/youth orchestra director, which may strengthen his current willingness to embrace ideas from his music education professors. He also shows readiness to revise his opinions about techniques such as lesson planning in his admission, “I could have done better if I had worked something out, whereas before I think a lot of the times I felt that I did just a fine job when I didn’t plan at all.”

Music education students such as Josh and Anne often begin their teacher education programmes with strong self-views constructed from years of musical experiences and many relationships with music teachers and mentors. Due to the performance emphasis of school programmes and private lessons, undergraduate music education students may find that adopting the teacher role identity requires time, effort, and practice (Froehlich & L’Roy, 1985; Paul, 1998; Wolfgang, 1990; Woodford, 2002). Woodford encourages teacher educators to avoid discouragement when encountering the lengthy process of teacher identity development reflected in stories such as Josh’s and Anne’s because “it entails a process of personal growth and maturity that cannot be fully realized in any one degree program,” (p. 690). Based on Anne’s and Josh’s responses to their teachers, however, it seems that music teacher educators might play a role in the continuing development process of students by helping them to clear the way for new visions of themselves as musicians.
and music teachers. In the next section, I offer suggestions for possible ways to support preservice teachers as they confront and revise self-views.

**Clearing the Way for Alternative Self-Views: A Role for Music Teacher Educators**

Josh’s and Anne’s stories support the observations of researchers who suggest that preservice teachers’ existing views often overshadow new information encountered during teacher education programmes (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Schmidt, 1998; Snyder, 1997; Stegman, 2001; Wideen et al., 1998). Scholars who have reviewed research literature and teacher education models suggest that acknowledging and considering strong pre-existing views is important in developing successful programmes (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Wideen et al., 1998). Schmidt (1998) notes that the most effective cooperating teachers in her study “listened actively to [student teachers’] expressed intentions and concerns, addressed those concerns and honored their intentions, and only then led the student teacher to consider alternatives” (pp. 39–40). We might aid preservice music teachers’ development by seeking our own understanding of their self-views, facilitating their self-awareness, and then working together with them to develop personalised visions of music teaching that are compatible with their individual self-views.

**Understanding Individual Self-Views**

Understanding preservice teachers’ self-views may be fostered within trusting relationships with teacher educators, but building trust in a relationship of unequal power often presents a formidable hurdle. Especially during the initial stages of such a relationship, being alert to the underlying messages a student sends to us can be important. Josh speculated that he might have been better able to handle critical feedback from Mr. Matthews if he had asked, “how my life was going, seriously, instead of just in passing,” implying that Josh felt that his answers to such questions were not fully heard. Anne reacted positively to a brief comment from Dr. Hall because she perceived it as an indication of her teacher “paying attention” to her as an individual. Both of these responses suggest that “deep listening,” (O’Reilley, 1998, p. 19) to students, in which teachers attend to underlying messages and concerns, can be especially important in academic environments where listening may often occur at a more surface level.

Teacher educators may nurture trusting relationships in the classroom by fostering caring learning communities that will support honest discussions (hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire, 1987). Although Anne laughed and said she did not understand why she and her classmates were afraid to bring up dissenting views in the music education course, her perception of her teachers as “scary” was strong enough to stifle her voice. Effectively moderated class discussions, presentations of different points
of view, and active encouragement for students to disagree may lend confidence to student voices as yet unheard. As students become comfortable sharing stories, ideas, and opinions, they may be more likely to examine self-views that influence their thoughts and behaviours.

In addition to listening deeply and encouraging honest dialogue, examining our own self-views might also help teacher educators facilitate our students’ development. By studying our own past experiences and analysing the ways in which they shape our teaching, teacher educators gain important knowledge about this process (Samaras, 2002). To understand and guide preservice teachers effectively, it may help to “extend the focus to include all the traveling companions, because . . . teacher educators, no less than the students they teach, also are engaged in a process of becoming” (McClean, 1999, p. 86). By exploring personal lenses, teacher educators could “multiply the perspectives through which they look upon the realities of teaching” (Greene, 1978, p. 33), resulting in heightened ability to create atmospheres in which preservice teachers can express and clarify their own views. As our own stories evolve, it may be helpful to maintain awareness of perceptions that influence the way we hear and respond to the stories of our students.

**Facilitating Self-Awareness**

Along with increasing our understanding of preservice teachers’ self-views, teacher educators might support growth by facilitating self-awareness, an important component in both personal and professional development. “One of the first steps in any reflective or critical model of music teacher education,” suggests Woodford (2002), “is to make students’ beliefs explicit” (p. 690). Becoming more aware of their own self-views and motivations can help preservice teachers improve skills in explaining and predicting the behaviour of others, skills that are key to achieving teaching success (Robins et al., 1999, p. 465). Because preservice teachers may display varying degrees of self-awareness, personalised attention from music education faculty and other mentors can be an important part of the clarification process. Music teacher educators with large classes may find it difficult to arrange individual student conferences, but such meetings may be valuable time investments in building personalised learning partnerships that foster preservice teachers’ self-awareness.

Because of the strength of the performer/musician self-view, music teacher educators might also encourage self-awareness by trying to “challenge students’ beliefs with respect to performance being the primary determinant of their social status and professional identity” (Woodford, 2002, p. 690). Josh expressed his commitment to teaching, but also an “ultimate goal” of being the best violin performer he could be, suggesting a struggle to balance his identity as music teacher and performer. As preservice teachers develop more awareness of their beliefs and begin to articulate them, as Josh did, music teacher educators might provide access to a variety of mentors and role models who display the continuum of career possibilities between teaching and performance. Preservice teachers could then examine these models
in terms of their own self-views and begin constructing personalised professional identities.

**Fostering Alternative Self-Views**

Even if we can help preservice teachers (and ourselves) understand self-views and increase self-awareness, the path towards developing alternatives may not be clear. Anne’s rejection of teaching strategies presented in her methods class implies that teacher educators cannot assume that preservice teachers will change thinking or behaviours simply because they are exposed to new information. As Bruner suggests, “the Self as narrator not only recounts but justifies” (1990, p. 121). If preservice teachers have “habits that possess them” (Agnew, 2003, p. 107), such as Anne’s views about effective teaching strategies (and the sources of those strategies), then their abilities to envision alternatives may be limited.

Teacher educators might also find that efforts to build trusting relationships with students and to understand individual students’ self-views are helpful in encouraging students like Anne to “take risks with a safety net” (Barth, 2001, p. 51). Supporting such risk-taking might be achieved by incorporating some unfamiliar teaching strategies within preservice teachers’ practices. Cooperating teachers could provide safety nets in their classrooms by offering low-risk alternatives – such as peer teaching without evaluation throughout initial practice – during activities that are considered high risk by individual student teachers. Working together with students to define individualised “safe” learning environments based on self-views may serve a dual purpose of increasing students’ self-awareness and providing supportive learning activities for each student.

**Final Thoughts**

Information from this study supports other music education research emphasising the strength and personalised nature of the self-views that preservice teachers bring to their music education programmes. By fostering recognition, clarification, and revision of these self-views, music teacher educators might facilitate a process in which preservice teachers “discover and articulate their own perspectives and voices and develop the skills and confidence to forge their own particular approaches” (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 126).

The narratives from the experiences of these two preservice music teachers suggest personalised themes in Anne’s and Josh’s learning-to-teach stories. Their stories will continue to reflect their evolving self-views, including their developing music teacher identities. It is important that we help preservice music teachers find ways to emerge from programmes as “proud teachers of music and not as failed performers,” because “it is critical that both identities remain alive and fully socially supported for the best kind of music teacher to emerge” (Roberts, 2000, p. 73).
Embracing a “deep listener” role may lead teacher educators to discover preservice teachers’ self-views that may highlight important developmental needs, enabling us to formulate strategies to help each one build an individualised professional identity.

Anne and Josh are each constructing “an internalized story of the self that binds together the reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future” (McAdams, 1999, p. 485). As learning partners, teacher educators might play important supporting roles in the stories of students like Josh and Anne by encouraging effective professional growth that is consistent with personalised meanings.

References


Chapter 8
Layering Analytic Lenses: Considerations for Assessing the Narrative Text in Music Education – A Commentary

Marie McCarthy

Kaye Ferguson uses narrative inquiry to present the stories of two preservice music teachers. Her specific interest is in exploring how participants’ self-views and beliefs filtered their teaching and learning experiences and influenced action. According to Connelly & Clandinin (2006), story is the portal by which one’s experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful (p. 477). Experience can be explored and presented as/in story, and, in that process, one gains perspective on the meanings of an individual’s lived experiences. Ferguson’s focus on accessing self-views encompasses “all beliefs and feelings a person holds about herself, including identity, the part of self that tends to be defined by society” (p. 2). Identity work, according to Chase (2005), is one of the five major approaches in contemporary narrative inquiry. This work is what people engage in “as they construct selves within specific institutional, organizational, discursive, and local cultural contexts” (p. 658).

Unlike other modes of inquiry in music education, in which criteria for assessing studies are well established, the criteria for assessing narrative research are still being developed (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 478). In this context, I situate my commentary within approaches provided by scholars specialising in narrative research in education. I integrate five analytic lenses identified by Chase (2005) with five criteria for examining narrative texts outlined by Connelly & Clandinin (2006) and apply them to the present study. The combined interrelated aspects of narrative study that I focus on are as follows: narrative and temporality, narrative as verbal action, narrative and sociality, narrative as socially situated interactive performances, and the narrative researcher as narrator.

Narrative and temporality. Narrative is a distinct form of discourse that is a form of “retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience” (Chase, 2005, p. 656). Drawing on numerous authors, such as Bruner and...
Polkinghorne, Chase describes narrative as “a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (p. 656). This is closely aligned to Connelly and Clandinin’s viewpoint that the narrative researcher needs to craft the text with careful attention to “the temporal unfolding of people, places and things” (p. 485), where a particular person is described as having “a certain kind of history, associated with particular present behaviors or actions that might seem to be projecting in particular ways into the future” (p. 479).

How does Ferguson order past experience and respond to the temporal nature of narrative inquiry?

In her theoretical foundations, Ferguson acknowledges that previous experiences play an important role in the process of learning how to teach, that preservice teachers’ entering self-views and beliefs about teaching and learning are resistant to change, and that views constructed in the past shape present learning. Her research questions reflect a strong focus on reconstructing past experiences in light of, and integral to, present beliefs and actions. During conversations and observations over an entire academic year, Ferguson journeyed with the narrators as they made sense of their individual stories, projecting from the present into the past and back again, as they moved between a constructed past and meaning-making in the present.

Ferguson launches the reader into each theme (or tension) with a vignette from a particular observation of the narrators as students and/or teachers. In temporal terms, there is no uniform order in which the stories follow, since the researcher “followed the participants’ conversational leads” (p. 108). Anne reconstructs her self-views around certain recurring themes – the influence of musicians, particularly her mother, her former school string teachers, and her current violin teacher; beliefs about performers and teachers in relation to her own self-views as musician and teacher; and reactions to her experiences in music teacher education classes. Ferguson reports Josh’s self-views in a similar order, distinguishing between those related to being a musician and becoming a teacher. The temporal nature and outcome of each narrator’s story is unique. In this way, Ferguson, as narrator, highlights the unique role of biography and accumulated past experiences in the framing of present self-views as musician and teacher. However, the stories are not limited to the past impacting on present self-views. Ferguson’s final section on “Clearing the Way for Alternative Self-views” broadens the canvas of the narrative from present narrators to what might be in the future for others like Anne and Josh. It is reasonable to argue, also, that the very act of telling their story was a form of “clearing the way for alternative self-views” for Anne and Josh.

_Narrative as verbal action._ Different voices come together to form this text – those of the narrators/preservice teachers, the author/narrative researcher, and the reader. The polyphonic nature of this interaction highlights the complexities of in-laying lived experiences, voiced in story, within a research frame that is filtered through the researcher’s voice and experience and then merged with a reader’s life-world.

There are varying levels of textual representation of narrators’ self-views throughout the chapter. Ferguson prepares the reader for engagement with the narrators’
stories through a review of theoretical perspectives that serve to frame the dominance of self-views in the development of musical and teacher identity. We meet Anne and Josh when the researcher describes the research methods, and we learn that the researcher had an established relationship with them at the time of the study.

Then, the narrators – Anne and Josh – are brought into the foreground in the section on “participants.” They come alive as their identities are revealed – where they come from, aspects of their upbringing pertinent to the study, and their activities as students at the university. It is the researcher’s voice that animates these individuals and prepares us to meet them in the “narrative report.” Ferguson begins each section of the narrative by isolating a moment in the lives of Anne and Josh, one that enlivens both their musical selves and their teacher selves. Not only is the text set apart, but it is also presented in a different font. Such a strategy is useful and brings the reader closer to the narrators. How would direct quotations from these young teachers have impacted the reader’s meeting with Anne and Josh? Is one strategy more effective than another? The answer likely lies in the context of particular studies. In this study, Ferguson states that self-views seem to be influenced both by interactions with others and by personal reflections (p. 109), so presenting the narrators in interaction with others – musicians and students – at the outset seems appropriate for this study. Anne’s and Josh’s own words are present too, interspersed throughout the text of the narrative report, something that brings their language to the mind’s eye of the reader.

Ferguson’s interpretations combine several kinds of voices – those of the narrators, the researcher, other researchers, and theorists. And finally Ferguson turns to an audience of music teacher educators, as she identifies the implications of her narrative study. Based on the text, Ferguson did not intend the study in its entirety to be regarded as narrative; rather she refers to narrative in the context of reporting the stories she witnessed, putting narrative to use in one of its generally accepted forms and functions within a study.

Narrative and sociality. The role of sociality, as Connelly & Clandinin (2006) call it, is central to the making of narrative. Stories are both enabled and constrained by social resources and circumstances, which shape the range of possibilities for self and result in the variability of individuals’ self-views and constructions of reality (Chase, 2005, p. 657). This aspect of narrative was clear in Anne’s and Josh’s stories. The social and cultural circumstances of family, upbringing, early musical experiences and education, and the values embedded in the various social groups in which they lived shaped their self-views as musicians and teachers. The influence of personal and social circumstances is not limited to experiences during childhood and youth; it is carried into the experiences these preservice teachers encountered during the course of their study, including methods classes and studio instruction. It is from these reflections that the researcher (and by extension the reader) is able to attend to similarities and differences across narratives. Ferguson found patterns in the narratives that served as places of resonance for music teacher educators and that allowed her to project away from these two stories to the stories of other preservice music teachers.
Narrative as socially situated interactive performances. This analytic lens treats narrative as “produced in this particular setting, for this particular audience, for these particular purposes” (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Connelly and Clandinin also emphasise the crucial role of place, “the specificity of location,” since “all events take place some place” (2006, p. 481). Thus, the narratives are framed within unique institutional contexts that contribute to the narrators’ self-views at that point in time. These narrators are studying at a university in the southwest USA, learning in particular studios and methods classes, teaching students in a String Project and in area public schools, and telling their stories to an individual for the purposes of a dissertation study. Ferguson provides much information about these contexts so that the reader can imagine the daily interactions of the narrators as they prepare to be music teachers. The assumption is that if the two narrators were in programmes at another university, interacting with a different researcher and instructors, their narratives would take different form and substance.

Narrative researchers as narrators. The view of the researcher as narrator opens up “a range of complex issues about voice, representation, and interpretive authority” (Chase, 2005, pp. 657–658). Ferguson states clearly her approach to listening to the narrators’ stories: “I asked open-ended questions and followed the participants’ conversational leads . . . I encouraged the participants to tell their stories first” (p. 110). This approach is consonant with Chase’s belief that interviewees are not narrators who answer researchers’ questions but more “narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own” (2005, p. 660). Ferguson allowed for participants’ voices to carry the stories, and, consequently, she gained considerable “information” for her narrative report. She explored statements such as Anne’s “I hate performing,” bringing to the surface layers of meaning beneath this stark declaration. Her success in accessing tensions in the narrators’ lives was likely influenced by her existing (and presumably trusting) relationships with these preservice teachers, having worked with them in an earlier project.

Ferguson is also explicit about her role in the narrative act of writing the stories. By beginning each section of the narrative report with a direct portrait of the narrators in action as musicians and teachers, she extends her direct work with Anne and Josh into the interpretive process. While she acknowledges that her own lenses of teacher, counsellor, and musician influenced her choices in re-telling Anne’s and Josh’s stories, she qualifies her decisions by stating that “my purpose was to highlight and contextualize tensions rather than to resolve them with an authoritative voice” (p. 110). Chase (2005) identifies three voices that a narrative researcher can deploy to interpret and represent the narrator’s voice – authoritative, supportive, and interactive (p. 664). Ferguson’s narrative report supports the telling of the stories and organises the material to bring order to the narrators’ experiences. In the “Interpretations” section, Ferguson brings her authoritative voice into the foreground while continuing to draw on Anne’s and Josh’s words. She achieves a balance in her use of authoritative and supportive voices, and her efforts to find commonalities in the stories are trustworthy; she spent more time with the narrators than is possible to represent in this brief chapter, and she corroborates her observations with findings from previous studies on related topics.
The interactive voice is used when the researcher examines her own voice “through the refracted medium of narrators’ voices” (Chase, 2005, p. 666). Ferguson maintains a personal distance from the narrators’ stories and from the reader. We learn that she is aware of how her background as a musician, counsellor, and teacher is integral to each phase of the interpretation and that she had existing relationships with the narrators at the time of the study. At one level, the interactive voice is missing; however, one can argue that in the final section, “Clearing the Way for Alternative Self-Views,” Ferguson advocates that teacher educators invest in extensive personal reflection in order to create environments in which preservice teachers can express and clarify their own views” (p. 111). This reflection would include “examining our own self-views . . . studying our own past experiences and analyzing the ways in which they shape our teaching” (p. 111). Thus, she highlights the need for teacher educators to understand themselves if they are to facilitate students’ growth.

In conclusion, I draw attention to three aspects of Ferguson’s chapter that prompted further commentary – the notion of stories within stories in narrative research, the question of ethics, and the use of narrative inquiry in gaining a vantage point for looking into the kaleidoscope of self-views that is ever shifting and changing focus. As I read and digested the stories of Anne and Josh, I was acutely aware of the many other stories that intersected with theirs – from the stories of their parents, teachers, and peers to the researcher’s experiences and self-views, as well as my own stories and those of my students’ past and present. A narrative is created within a particular relationship (narrator and narrative researcher), is retold by the researcher, who unfolds it to a reader, who in turn locates it within her own lifeworld.

I was struck by questions about ethics that surfaced as I read and re-read the narrative text, specifically in relation to characters whose actions were integral to the narratives but whose voices go unheard; for example, the studio teachers and methods instructors. Connelly & Clandinin (2006) stress that “ethical considerations permeate narrative inquiries from start to finish: at the outset as ends-in-view are imagined, as inquirer-participant relationships unfold, and as participants are represented in research texts” (p. 483). In this view, ethical issues that may be related to narrators are not considered. One might argue that in this study, the researcher’s goal was to access the narrators’ self-views and how they influence beliefs and actions. The narrators’ perceptions constitute their reality, and their reality is reflected in their self-views. And the issue of ethical responsibility in story-telling leads to the aftermath of stories – what happens after stories are told and narratives are created? What impact does the telling and the writing of narratives have on narrators, the researcher, and those whose lives are implicated in the telling and public sharing of stories?

Finally, this journey of narrators, researcher, and reader through the landscape of music teacher identity is insightful from several vantage points. It reveals the complex nature of the terrain, the many sources of influence in shaping novice teachers’ self-views as musician and teacher, and the centrality of relationship in the development of those self-views. The narrative also highlights how the same phenomenon
can be manifested quite differently in individual lives. Anne’s family background placed certain kinds of limitation on her engagement with music and her motivation to be a teacher; Josh seemed to rely heavily on his teachers’ encouragement to grow as a musician and teacher. The role of biography and personal agency in teacher education is evident in the reported self-views and deserves increased attention in the process of music teacher education. As a mode of inquiry, narrative can assist researchers to access the inner landscape of the preservice teacher and to shed light on the life stories underlying interactions with each novice teacher. This narrative provides a compelling reminder of the deep humanity embedded in the process of educating future teachers.

References


Chapter 9
Learning from the Learners: A Cooperating Teacher’s Story

Jeffrey Davis

Abstract This study sought to investigate the impact student teachers have on their mentor teachers and the relationships developed in the process. Nora, a veteran music teacher, was observed weekly during the fall semester and monthly during the spring semester of one academic year. The observations included classroom teaching, concert preparation, and performances. These were recorded through field notes. Primary interviews were conducted twice each semester, supplemented by several less-formal encounters and continual electronic correspondence. An additional interview was conducted at the conclusion of the school year. Nora was selected to participate in this study because of her openness as a person, her several experiences as a mentor teacher, and recommendations from district administrators and teacher educators. The interviews focused on Nora’s experiences with four student teachers and the contributions those students made to her understanding of teaching. The resulting field notes of observations and the transcripts of interviews were analysed for themes. Throughout the writing of the report, Nora was given the opportunity to review drafts for accuracy of both data and interpretation. The themes that emerged demonstrate that relationships, not just a transfer of knowledge and expertise, are essential to the success of a student teaching experience.

Introduction
In any classroom, there is an expectation that learning will occur. Although the students are the chief targets of instruction, they are not the only ones who are in a position to learn. When the classroom becomes a site for training the next generation of teachers, other recipients of instruction are present. Some we call “student
teachers”\footnote{The literature refers to student teachers, mentee teachers, preservice teachers, novice teachers, and interns. For the sake of clarity and consistency, the author’s text will refer to student teachers throughout, except where participants are specifically identified as interns.} because we recognise that they do not yet possess all the knowledge and skills necessary to function as professional teachers. Traditionally, these individuals are thrust into the crucible of the classroom with the intention that they be refined into pure teacher material through guided, careful mentoring. This experience is more than a mere transference of information, however; it is a negotiation of relationships. The mentor must understand the delicate balance between relinquishing complete control of his or her classroom to the student teacher and providing an artificially safe environment where the student teacher can develop. Likewise, the student teacher must understand it is a precipitous leap from university methods classes to student teaching and be willing to accept the expertise and example offered by the mentor. In the process, both mentor and student teacher can be learners.

Becoming a teacher is a holistic process “based on the education and development of the whole person who is becoming a teacher” (Beattie, 2000, p. 4). Kerchner (2002) comments that music student teachers benefit from active collaborations and partnerships during preservice field experiences that include, negotiating, compromising, stating opinions, taking responsibility for an effective music-learning environment, creative group problem-solving, and brainstorming. In addition to helping students develop musical and pedagogical skills, an authentic field experience gives students the opportunity to exercise interpersonal skills that are necessary to becoming effective colleagues (p. 16).

Similarly, Schmidt (1994) found that a collaborative environment enhanced communication between student teacher and mentor teacher, stating that “when this quality was perceived to be present, the cooperating teacher’s model and verbal advice became more potent positive influences” (p. 25).

As a university supervisor, I became aware of the need for student teachers in field experiences to do more than merely apply the knowledge gained in methods classes. It was not uncommon for even the most promising of student teachers to enter a field experience classroom with superior lesson plans, only to struggle in their teaching because they remained aloof from the children, their mentors, and the school milieu. Conversely, those students who were most willing and able to enter into relationship with children, mentors, and the school context were often more successful, despite an apparent lack of preparation. While the latter occurrence is far from ideal, it does illustrate the contention that learning is a social process that provides to learners the cognitive abilities needed to make sense of experiences (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Crucially, “learning is as much a matter of enculturation into a community’s ways of thinking and dispositions as it is a result of explicit instruction in specific concepts, skills and procedures” (p. 5). This understanding – that learning is also a matter of enculturation – illuminates the importance of situating teacher knowledge in the classroom (Carter, 1994; Doyle, 1990). As Carter notes, the knowledge student teachers gain “must eventually be grounded in
classroom events if novices are to navigate in complex classroom cultures, manage groups of students over time, and transform content knowledge into classroom tasks from which students can learn” (p. 235). Similarly, teacher knowledge is contextual rather than abstract; it can only be understood by “the way [teachers] interact within a particular context, for a particular class, for a particular age level, socio-economic status, or environment” (Bresler, 1995, p. 27). In other words, experienced teachers (including those who mentor student teachers) as well as novices understand their practices and learn in context and in relationship.

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) have examined how teacher knowledge develops within complex professional landscapes “composed of relationships among people, places and things” (p. 4). For Clandinin and Connelly, “teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relive the changed stories” (p. 12). This involves more than merely narrating events and describing students; rather, for teachers, their “way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author” (p. 12). This understanding of teachers and teacher knowledge provides a basis for “human connections . . . between the teller and responder. There is a reciprocity in telling and responding that is relational” (p. 155). The need for this kind of reciprocity is apparent in the relationships forged by the student teacher and his or her mentor teacher.

At its best, the relationship between student teacher and mentor is symbiotic. Mentoring is by its nature an act of nurturing (Smith, 2003). The information that needs to be transmitted and the guidance that needs to be given must take place “in the context of a caring relationship” (p. 109). While Clement (1996) notes that general benefits exist for teachers who accept the role of mentor for student teachers, others have sought to enumerate the specific advantages of the relationship. Clinard and Ariav (1997) found that in-service teachers who took on a mentoring role gained a number of benefits from their student teachers, including opportunities for collaboration, access to innovative teaching strategies, and a renewed enthusiasm for teaching. They also found that teachers gained from student teachers’ insights into individual students in their classes.

Particularly germane to this study is the suggestion of Elbaz (1991) that “the novice teacher’s view of her cooperating teacher’s classroom might enlighten the latter” (p. 8). The student teacher may be an important source of understanding for mentors and teacher educators. In fact, the classroom environment should allow for learning to take place for everyone; students, student teacher, and mentoring teacher.

While there is little in general education literature exploring what mentor teachers learn from their student teachers, there is even less research that examines what music mentor teachers learn from their student teachers. This study explores the possible impact of student teachers on the continuing professional development of in-service teachers through the story of Nora, a capable and experienced elementary

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2 For the purposes of this study, the participating teacher and her student teachers have been assigned pseudonyms.
school general music teacher. Nora has hosted four student teachers and has found that each internship has provided opportunities for her own personal and professional growth.

Methodology

This study was conducted over the course of a calendar year, from one fall semester through the next. I chose to examine Nora and her story because of her availability, her openness to accepting university students in a variety of student placements, and her ability to reflect on her own learning. Nora was also recommended by other university supervisors for the depth of insight she brings to her observations and the general hospitality of her music classroom. She is an experienced music teacher with an exemplary reputation in her local school district.

I collected data through observations of Nora’s classroom teaching, rehearsals, and performances of her winter and spring performances. I also collected her own narratives of her work with four university student teachers in the final intern phase of their school experience: Dalia, Melissa, Nick, and Nate. Nora was a willing and candid participant in the study.

In preparing this report, I adapted techniques suggested by Emden (as cited in Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002) in an effort to detect the “core story” in Nora’s words. Emden’s procedure involved the following: (a) reading interview transcripts several times; (b) deleting any words that detract from the interviewee’s main thoughts (including interviewer questions and comments); and (c) reading the remaining text for themes. A final step involves combining themes into a coherent story. I applied this process to digital formats of analog audio recordings of conversations with Nora. This allowed me to listen to the interviews repeatedly, delete extraneous comments and words, and analyse the results for themes. By maintaining the interviews in an aural form, I was able to listen to inflections preserved in the recordings, which would be absent from written transcripts, to better determine the meaning Nora intended to convey. I also returned to conversations with Nora to clarify, confirm, or correct details of incident, theme, and meaning as the report unfolded.

What emerges from the process is the story of a teacher who is also a learner. Nora is restless in her experience as a teacher; she tends to be discontented with her current state of knowledge and skill in the profession of teaching and occasionally displays inconsistencies in her views and practices. Rather than appearing as a weakness in her teaching, however, these inconsistencies merely corroborate Nora’s own view that she has not finished learning to be a teacher.

Nora as Teacher

Nora sets the mood before her students enter the classroom. She meets her classes with a cheerful greeting as they assemble on the ramp to the door of the portable classroom in which music classes are held. Despite her lack of imposing physical
stature, the students clearly respond to the strength of her presence. They know to take their places on the choral risers and wait for their instructions. Once in place, Nora leads them in stretching exercises and vocalisations while moving among the students to encourage and direct them.

During one late October lesson with a group of fourth-grade students, Nora handed out song sheets of Halloween carols, printed with a picture of the Frankenstein monster on the front. The mood of the class grew increasingly relaxed as the students sang such selections as Deck the Halls with Poison Ivy. Nora solicited the students for requests and seemed to enjoy a relaxation of her authoritative demeanor. As the class ended, though, Nora was back in control. She told them to place their song sheets on a chair, “Frankenstein up,” as they left the risers, and dismissed them with a hearty “Adios!”

On a subsequent visit to the same class the day after Halloween, Nora’s willingness to assume a democratic posture with her students was again in evidence. After warm-ups of stretching and solfege, Nora asked her students to share their interesting trick-or-treating stories. One child explained, “We went to one house and the guy ran out of candy so he gave us a pop-tart.” Nora, in playful one-upmanship, told the story of a child in a previous class who had received a frozen turkey-and-vegetable potpie.

Nora is an active teacher and appears capable of changing gears quickly. The success of her classroom management stems at least in part from the steady, if not breathless, pacing of her lessons. On any given morning, Nora will move the students through their vocal lesson, to Music Symbol Bingo, to choreography for an upcoming performance. She is clearly at ease being in proximity to her students, often walking among them on the risers or joining them as they sit on the floor to sing or engage in other music activities.

As the school year began, Nora was recuperating from cancer treatments. She was only able to work 2 days a week and relied on a long-term substitute and a student teacher to maintain the flow of instruction in her classroom and give her much-needed time off for recovery. Despite some “fogginess” in her memories of the first days of school after a summer of radiation and chemotherapy, Nora recalls that “the first 6 weeks of school I worked harder than I had . . . in many years!” Not only did she have the responsibilities of mentoring her student teacher, Nate, but she also mentored Carrie, who served as both partner teacher and long-term substitute. Although Carrie was an experienced substitute music teacher, at the time of this study she was still in the process of becoming certified. Nora lamented that, as a result of the time spent in mentoring Nate and Carrie, “the kids weren’t really my focus.”

Since she was with her students only twice a week, Nora’s style of leadership – a combination of control and camaraderie – served her well. This was made clear by her willingness to submit to her students when Nora asked them to teach her a song they had learned from Carrie. While Nora’s strategy could be construed as a clever teacher trick, she evinced utter sincerity as she listened to the children model the song. This they did with great eagerness – so much so that Nora had to ask them to slow down, reminding them that she was too old to learn that quickly.
Nora’s approach to classroom management allows for subtly changing roles as she works to foster mutual respect while providing a safe place for student learning. “We are wired for safety,” she says, adding, “We are not going to learn in any kind of a situation where we’re not feeling safe.” Not only do her students benefit from this atmosphere, Nora’s student teachers do as well. “That’s the first thing I teach student teachers . . . this room is a safe place,” she explains. “We don’t laugh at each other, we don’t say mean things to each other, we don’t hit each other . . . we have respect for each other.” Nora believes that once this environment is created, music can be taught and learned, and music teaching can be learned as well.

A true test of Nora’s approach, and of the relationships she forged with her elementary students, occurred in early November at a mass rehearsal for the winter “Snow Day” concert. After overseeing the placement of decorations in the school’s gymnasium — including several Christmas trees, numerous strings of white lights, and large wall hangings depicting outdoor snow scenes — Nora welcomed her students to the performance space. Rather than two dozen students on risers in the small portable classroom, well over 200 first-, second-, and third-grade students assembled on risers that stretched from backboard to backboard along one side of the gymnasium. The carpeting and acoustical ceiling tiles of the music classroom were replaced by the hardwood floor and concrete block walls of the gym. Each titter, whispered conversation, or inadvertent movement of the students was amplified by the reflective surfaces, causing Nora to exert more control than normal. After she succeeded in getting all the students to remain still and silent for an entire minute as “an experiment,” she declared, “Very good! That’s what I want you to do.”

The span of the ensemble created some synchronicity problems with student performers, pianist, and pre-recorded accompaniment. Nora was able to hold the music together, though, while displaying a fair amount of physicality in her conducting as she attempted to engage the large ensemble. Her animated gestures were most evident during the students’ performance of a song that required her to cue each extreme end of the ensemble gathered on the risers while they sang in echo of each other. Her classroom management skills were also on display as she was able to maintain order among the hundreds of students, even though not all of them sang every song.

At the first of two performances, the audience consisted of the school’s other students, their teachers, and many parents who came to support their children. Nora was easily as energetic during the performance as she was during the rehearsal and was clearly emotionally moved as the final song was sung. As the applause died down and the students were led back to their classrooms, Nora found herself in the embrace of several adult friends who knew of her recent medical history and had come to celebrate her return to the classroom. Nora explained that she was able to conduct the performance with relative ease because she sees herself as “a facilitator. The kids create the shows. As we learn the songs and talk about how to enhance them, the kids come up with ideas. When the music starts, I don’t have to direct them.”
Nora as Learner

Nora intended to become an elementary classroom teacher. She trained for that career and was certified to teach students from grades K-8 in general education. If she had had an inclination towards specialisation, it was in science as she once dreamed of becoming a junior high science lab instructor. She was so eager to pursue this field that during the semester before her student teaching, she volunteered to help in a fourth- and fifth-grade combination class. The classroom teacher, Teresa, allowed her to prepare and present the science lessons for both grades during that semester. “What I ended up doing,” Nora recalled, “was making all these hands-on projects that the kids could do science-wise.” Nora’s goal was to teach concepts through laboratory experiences rather than through lecturing, which was Teresa’s preferred method of instruction.

It was through this experience that Nora encountered her first indication that interns can affect mentor teacher knowledge. As she saw her mentor teacher’s amazement at the innovations she made in science lessons, Nora realised, “Oh my gosh, she’s getting something from me here!” The admiration that Teresa felt for Nora’s early success led Teresa to ask the university to place Nora in her classroom as a student teacher. As a result, Nora spent an entire year in Teresa’s classroom when the expectation at the time was a mere 6 weeks of student teaching.

Nora’s first job after graduation was operating and developing curriculum for a school computer lab. Her positive experiences in this role led her to question her goal of teaching in a regular classroom. She feared that she “might get bored with the same kids day in and day out.”

After relocating to another state, Nora made herself available to the local public school district for a similar job. Her suggestion was “laughed at,” so, she says, she “stood up in the middle of the interview and said, ‘Well, screw you!’ and was out the door.” She “pounded the pavement” looking for work as a teacher and eventually found herself at a parochial school that had an opening for a music teacher. At first, Nora told them, “No, I don’t want the job. I don’t know how to teach music.” And they said, “Well, just try it!” She thought, “Well, I didn’t know how to teach computers either.” The school’s lack of a curriculum, coupled with Nora’s interest in curriculum writing, led her to accept the position.

Relying on a musical upbringing, years of piano and voice lessons, and a willingness to learn on the job, Nora embraced her new position. She recalls, “I was one step ahead of the kids the whole way. I love that kind of teaching where I’m constantly coming up with ideas, taking classes, reading, reading, reading, listening, listening, listening.” Through her studies and practical experience, Nora became well versed in developmental issues related to music teaching and learning.

After 5 years at the private school, Nora once again sought employment in the public school system. She retained her hope for a classroom job, but the district wanted her to teach elementary music. She made an arrangement with the administration that she would teach music for 1 year with the understanding that she would transfer to a classroom teacher position the following year. Despite her ambitions,
however, Nora had inadvertently found her niche, and 10 years later, she was still teaching music at the same school.

In addition to learning on the job how to teach music, Nora learned something else during that time. She says,

I’ve been grateful for my background in classroom teaching because I’ve learned it’s the art of teaching … the subject matter comes, you can learn that. You can teach any subject; it’s the teacher in you that makes the quality of what you do.

Nora’s hunger for knowledge has contributed to her willingness, if not eagerness, to share her classroom with teachers in training. “I learn a ton from watching new teachers teach,” she says. She has found them to possess a wealth of information as they come into her classroom with “the new stuff” – fresh ideas and the latest in pedagogical training. Nora never comes across as someone who considers herself an expert, although watching her teach, one is struck by her obvious expertise. Rather, she says, “As a teacher, you are beholden to the craft of teaching, and in that you are also always a student.”

**Nora as Mentor**

In her career as a public school teacher, Nora has had four student teachers. She has found that, among her peers, her willingness to repeatedly take on a mentoring role makes her a rarity. Although she knows many other teachers who have never taken on such a role, Nora has found the experience to be both gratifying and educational. She says, “Just like any other thing that you do in your life, the more you do it the better you get.” One of the chief values she holds as a mentor teacher is helping her student teachers become independent of her. “I don’t want them to copy me,” she says. “And that’s what they want to do when they come in,” she believes. Nora is not interested in replicating herself. “I want them to come in and use my classroom and become a teacher.”

**Dalia**

Nora considered that her first student teacher was “really fabulous.” According to Nora, Dalia was a capable musician and an instinctively good teacher. Nora recalled that as Dalia was preparing to teach a class of kindergarten students a song in Spanish, she noticed a new boy who was clearly ill at ease. She learned that he was new to the school and spoke only Spanish. As she began the lesson, the boy began to cry. Dalia stopped the lesson and spoke to him in Spanish, calming him down. She invited him to sit with her, which he did, and she proceeded to teach the song to the rest of the class. Nora says, “He was locked in after that.” She commented about Dalia’s actions, “That was just good instinct. You can’t teach instinct like that.”

In addition to her natural instincts as a teacher, Dalia was a flute player with a strong background in performance. As such, Nora says Dalia taught her “a lot of things about performing, because that was really kind of her thrust.” Specifically,
Nora claims that Dalia taught her about “setting up groups and accompaniments and directing,” skills that Nora acknowledges were gaps in her own education.

Nora quickly admits that she was not immediately successful as a mentor. She thinks that she was “too direct with the lesson plans” she gave Dalia. “I think I gave her too much [direction],” Nora recalls. As a result, “[Dalia] ended up at the end teaching just like me.” This led Nora to take a more “hands-off” approach with subsequent student teachers, though she admits that, for some student teachers, a high degree of freedom “freaks them out.” She also says that the experience of mentoring has made her reflect on the climate of her own classroom and teaching style. She asks herself, “Am I completely controlling the environment with the kids or is it an open kind of learning classroom?”

Reflecting on the successes and failures of her student teachers has also led Nora to conclude that much of her own success as a teacher stems from the long-term relationships she can build with her elementary school students over the 6 or 7 years she has them in music classes. Because the school in which she teaches is in a lower-income neighbourhood, there is a high rate of student turnover. Nora estimates, though, that about one-third of her students remain in the school from kindergarten through to sixth grade, providing continuity and forming a core of returning students with whom she can develop long-term relationships.

Nora observes, however, that “a student teacher doesn’t have that luxury. They come in for 8 weeks and they don’t really have a relationship with the kids. And so they have to use my relationship with the kids.” This understanding has led her to resist the concept of student-teacher-as-substitute-teacher in which the student teacher can be completely autonomous. She does not accept a sink-or-swim approach to mentorship, and she tries not to leave the student teacher on his or her own in the classroom. She says,

In order for there to be a flow – a back-and-forth – between us, I have to stay [in the classroom] . . . . If I leave, I don’t know how much learning is going on in any situation. I’m not learning anything from the student teacher, the student teacher’s not learning anything from me, and I don’t know if the kids are learning anything from the student teacher.

By remaining in the classroom, she says, a relationship is allowed “to exist for the student teacher and the students, even though it’s based on me. Also, what it creates is this place where the student teacher and I could flow back and forth with . . . ideas and learning.

Melissa and Nick

Nora’s second student teacher, Melissa, was seeking post-graduate teacher certification. Still, Nora commented that Melissa “wasn’t particularly ready to be a teacher.” In fact, Nora found herself as much therapist as mentor with Melissa. “Going to work was more like spending a lot of time with her on the couch,” she said, adding that spending 8 or 9 weeks with a person in a relationship that feels like a therapeutic one is a burden. Nora continues to question her own ability to help prepare Melissa
to be a teacher and reluctantly admits that “there wasn’t really a lot of give and take with Melissa. Melissa was more of a relief when she left.”

According to Nora, Melissa struggled in the classroom, displaying tendencies towards rigidity and aloofness. Melissa was often easily frustrated when the students failed to progress musically to her satisfaction. As Nora reflected on the reasons Melissa struggled so much to make connections with the students, she concluded that Melissa’s constant references to her graduate degree from a prestigious music institute in the eastern US were intimidating to the students. “That’s the first thing that comes out of her mouth,” Nora said. Melissa’s references to her degrees seemed off-putting to Nora, too. When Melissa would declare, “I’ve got a degree from______,” Nora would respond, “Great! What are you going to do with the kids today?” In Nora’s opinion, “Kids don’t care where you got your music degree. Kids just care about being able to please you.”

As a teacher, Melissa was unable to respond to the unpredictability of the elementary music classroom. Nora observed that when Melissa’s lessons did not go as planned, “she just couldn’t come up with solutions.” Melissa also had difficulty accepting Nora’s remedies “because they weren’t part of her box.”

So strong were her reservations about Melissa’s fitness for the profession that, when Melissa applied for a teaching job in the school district, Nora voiced her concerns to district personnel – something she had never done before. The district hired Melissa anyway, giving Nora the opportunity to view her at work as a teacher in another elementary school in the same district. Her subsequent observations of Melissa as a teacher confirmed Nora’s initial reservations, leaving her with one of the hardest lessons she’s learned from her mentoring relationships. Nora says that since her time with Melissa, she recognises that the student teaching process holds no guarantees for growth and that she is now a better judge of the prospects for a student teacher’s success. Nora comments that she has “gained the ability to look at a potential student teacher and say, ‘I’ll pass on that one.’”

Nick, Nora’s third student teacher, was equally unprepared to teach when he first arrived for his student teaching experience. He was, however, more responsive to Nora’s ministrations than Melissa had been. Nick was “painfully shy” when he began his internship with her. Nora recalls, however, that, by the end of his elementary experience, “he was pretty gregarious and the kids loved him . . . he would be silly with them and he would light up” when the children responded to his teaching. In fact, Nora says, “One of the things I learned from watching that process was how important it was to let yourself be goofy.”

Nora expressed her disappointment, though, that Nick wanted to be a performer, not a teacher. She laments, wondering about the value of the time invested,

It’s hard . . . as a mentor teacher [when] you spend 8 or 9 weeks of your life pretty much “on” all the time. I never get a break: you eat lunch with someone all the time; everything you do, there’s someone there, and they’re always asking questions and you’re always explaining . . . or I’m asking questions.

Considering the commitment required to become a successful mentor teacher, Nora notes, “It’s really disappointing when someone like Nick who has great
potential, especially as an elementary music teacher, doesn’t want to do it.” Yet, Nick’s rejection of teaching as a career confirmed yet another life lesson for Nora. “You don’t want to commit your life to something that makes you miserable,” she said.

Even in the cases of students like Nick and Melissa, where the outcomes of the mentoring role weren’t to her satisfaction, Nora understands her role as a mentor still includes building relationships. “I spend an enormous amount of time with them,” she explains. “As a result you can’t *not* have some sort of interpersonal relationship and you can’t *not* be affected by that.” She goes on to note, “When a person is coming to you and is asking for help with their future, with their career... I take it seriously.”

Nora has found that part of her job as a mentor of student teachers includes revealing to them the “big world” of education. She tries to expose them to as many facets of the teaching profession as she can, including the intricacies of classroom management and organisation, and the vicissitudes of school politics. She perceives benefits for herself in the process of reflecting and sharing. “All of that gives me a perspective on my own job,” she says. “I am a big picture person,” she confesses. “In fact, I have a hard time looking at just a piece at a time. I’m always looking at how things fit together. Having a student teacher is a benefit to me because it opens up that big picture for me again.”

**Nate**

As the fall semester began, I found Nora entering her fourth student teacher mentoring experience with reservations. At the time, she was recovering from cancer treatments and lacked the stamina needed for full-time work. She had arranged for a part-time teaching schedule that required her to work only Tuesdays and Thursdays. The placement of a student teacher in this situation speaks to the faith placed in Nora by both district and university personnel. Nora herself admits that the arrangement of having a long-term substitute (Carrie) and a student teacher (Nate) while working twice a week was “complicated” and required “a little finesse.” However, she believed that “it was really a great environment for a student teacher.” The reason for this, she explains, was that

When I was there, [Nate] felt like he really had to be “spot on” and that he really had to be careful. And yet when the substitute was there, he felt like he could really try some stuff out. Then when I was there, he could *show* me.

Nora believed that this arrangement gave Nate the freedom to try out his lesson plans without the fear of failing in front of her.

Although some of Nora’s work with Nate focused on content, she also felt it was necessary to help him use his natural “goofiness” to his advantage. Like other student teachers with whom Nora has worked, Nate came into her classroom acting like an authoritarian teacher. “There’s a time and a place for that,” Nora agrees, “but most of the time you’re who you are.” She had to remind Nate that even though he is “on the other side of the desk,” he needed to “not forget to have fun and let go.”
For Nora, whose focus is relationships, it is in enjoying the students and relaxing in the role of teacher that “those connections get made with the kids.”

The idea that student teachers like Nate are afraid to fail was something Nora had never really considered. The reason for that, she says, is that “I don’t ever think of [a lesson going poorly] as failing. When I teach . . . if the lesson goes bad [I just say], ‘OK, let’s try something else!’ and I don’t ever give it another thought . . . you just keep going.” That Nora was not teaching full time and therefore not always in the classroom during Nate’s student teaching experience “gave Nate a really good opportunity to learn from himself as opposed to learning from me specifically.” As a result, Nora says, “I can probably say with Nate, he didn’t walk out the door teaching like me; he’s teaching like Nate.”

The complicated arrangement in her classroom during Nate’s student teaching put Nora’s theories of relationship to the test. Since she was only there twice a week, she was forced to presume upon the long-term relationships she had with her elementary students for connection for Nate and for herself. She discovered, much to her delight, that the children were glad when she was in the classroom because they truly wanted to learn from her. She also became convinced that her relationship with the children, even in her absence, was the key to Nate’s success. She also expressed gratitude for his presence during her recovery. She says, “Nate was the continuity of it all for the kids.”

Nate also provided practical learning opportunities for Nora as well. “I learned a lot . . . from [his teaching],” Nora commented, “because college has changed . . . since I’ve been there.” From Nate she learned choral techniques, and she gained from watching him conduct vocal warm-ups with the students. In general, Nora says, “I get a lot of new material from student teachers – from anyone I mentor. We share lots of ideas. That is so invaluable to me.”

This desire to learn from other teachers began early in Nora’s career. She recalls her first experiences teaching music in the parochial school as she went from classroom to classroom to deliver her music lessons:

The 5 or 6 minutes that it took the classroom teachers to transition the kids so that I could take over and teach music . . . what a valuable thing for me to watch from first through eighth-grade. For 5 years I got to watch these teachers with all these different techniques.

She particularly enjoys learning from young teachers, though, because “they’ll reach for anything!” In the case of Nate,

He would try anything. Because he could self-evaluate so well, he’d say, “Well, that didn’t work very well. What are some other things I could try?” So we’d come up with three or four things. He would try ‘em all in 30 minutes! It was great.

**The Future**

At the end of the school year, Nora confided in me her readiness for a change. She wanted to become an itinerant teacher. “Want to?” I asked. “Want to,” she replied. “I’m actually pretty good at it,” she says. “What I want is no ‘home’ school. I want
to just travel. So I would pick up sixth-grade here, kindergarten there – and I would just travel school to school. I want a break from performing for a year or two . . . I’ll help [someone else] put on a show.” Nora admits that the last performance at her full-time school contributed to her desire for a respite from large-scale productions. At the time, she was still feeling the effects of chemotherapy – primarily fatigue – and felt that she lacked “a sense of humor.” Additionally, she was affected by “an unsupportive principal” who had restricted the amount of rehearsal time she could have with the students and the growing sense that the annual round of expected performances was becoming an end in itself. She also confesses that the demand of the “shows” was one of the reasons she was eager for “a change of scenery.”

Nora admits that cancer and cancer treatment have changed her. Her awareness that “life’s short” has made the perpetual round of performances in one school seem tedious. She was thrilled when the school district arts supervisor granted her request for reassignment, as she was ready to move to new schools and establish new relationships with new students. She says,

“I’ve asked a couple of other teachers what they thought [of my plan] and they just look at me like, “Are you nuts?” Then I think to myself, then I know I’m going in the right direction.

Some things remain the same, however. Even in her new work teaching music classes in different schools, Nora remains convinced that “it’s all about connecting. If I don’t have connections [with the students], nothing’s happening in the classroom.” This connecting has become more challenging as she spends less time with a much more diverse group of students.

Though her new assignment is not conducive to mentoring student teachers, Nora is continuing her role as a mentor in the lives of in-service teachers in the school district. Nora has been strategically placed in schools where the music teachers are struggling, including the one at which Melissa teaches. Nora sees this as an unofficial opportunity to continue the mentoring process. Though Melissa has had several years of experience since her student teaching days, Nora laments that Melissa “still hasn’t gotten the big picture. She can’t figure out how to organize a half hour. I give her lesson plans and everything. Her heart’s not in it. There’s no relationship [with the children].”

Nora has found a greater degree of freedom in these relationships with the in-service teachers she mentors than she did with student teachers. “There are clearer boundaries now,” she says. “They have their own classrooms so I can observe, give feedback – even suggest things they can practise.” With student teachers, she often found less freedom because “they were more autonomous. The program pretty much ran itself.”

Lessons Learned and Yet to be Learned

While Nora admits that she eagerly learns from her student teachers, she is quick to point out that they are not the only students who have been her teachers. She has also gained much from her younger charges. “Kids teach me a lot,” she says,
Kids keep me honest. They have taught me to remain curious. They have taught me to ask questions and wonder. They’ve taught me that it’s OK to not know something. They’ve taught me that it’s OK to make a mistake in front of a bunch of people. They’ve taught me that if I goof up or sing the wrong pitch or, you know, hit the wrong note, “OK, let’s try it again!” They’ve taught me to laugh at myself. They’ve taught me not to laugh at other people.

Nora also confesses that there is much room for improvement in her teaching. Since she became a music teacher “by accident,” she was never required to develop the proficiencies in musical performance typically expected of new music teachers. She also admits that “if a kid brings their trumpet or their flute to me, as they often do, I can’t help them.” Nora is quick to express confidence in her skills as an elementary general music teacher, but shudders at the thought of ever having to programme music at the secondary level. “I’d never do a high school program,” she insists. “I don’t have the skills for it because it would involve more performing than I’m capable of doing.”

It is this kind of reflection on and assessment of her own abilities that makes Nora open to learning from her student teachers. Whether the lesson learned is a new warm-up, a strategy for organisation, or a new song, Nora readily incorporates them into her own repertoire. This sharing works particularly well when the mentor-student teacher relationship is good, as in the case of Dalia and Nate, but is less successful when the relationship is strained. For example, Melissa’s musical expertise was never in question, but Nora was not free to learn as much from her because Melissa’s needs and her reticence to accept suggestions from Nora impeded any mutuality in the relationship.

Nora’s emphasis on relationships can be seen in her work both with her elementary school students and with those she mentors. Nora wants her student teachers to develop good relationships with the children because she believes strongly that relationships are the cornerstone of practice. As illustrated in her work with Nate, Nora sees herself as a conduit for the teacher-child relationship and, as such, is as much a part of the flow of the classroom experience as possible when student teachers are present, while still giving them as much independence and autonomy as possible. On any given day, her role with her student teachers may fluctuate between freedom and control, and yet through it all she remains an integral part of the relational triad. In turn, Nora observes the interactions between the children and those she mentors, and she reflects on her own relationships with both children and student teachers. Nora has found that such reflexivity leads to personal and professional growth.

Another lesson Nora has learned is that the mentor-student teacher relationship is often demanding. Done properly, from Nora’s perspective, taking on a student teacher requires time and can never be viewed as an opportunity for the classroom teacher to relax or abdicate responsibility. In Nora’s experience, mentoring can be both rewarding and discouraging since the ultimate success of the student teacher is not something she can control. She is also aware that the role of mentor is not always about teaching. Nora understands the cost involved in the mentoring relationship and
the price she must be willing to pay when the student teacher requires more than he or she gives.

In apparent opposition to her goals of building relationships, Nora also confesses, “I’m not the best team player. That’s one of the reasons why music works for me is that I’m running my own ship.” As she prepared for her new assignment as an itinerant music teacher in the district, Nora expressed the belief that her temperament as a “loner” is a “gift” because it “makes it possible for me to just roll into a school, plug in, do my thing, unplug, and go to the next school.” Her independence may also explain some of the expectations she has for her student teachers, particularly her belief that they need to develop their personal teaching style and not just imitate hers. Nora’s self-sufficiency, she believes, is also a quality she inadvertently developed or strengthened during her treatment for and recovery from cancer. She explained that as part of her therapeutic stratagem, “I spent a lot of time alone taking care of me instead of doing things for people that probably I normally would have done. I said ‘No’ a lot. I got pretty good at it.”

Nora believes that her independence and willingness to work alone can be misinterpreted by colleagues. She says that she has often felt that music and physical education are considered on “the periphery” of school life, leaving her out of collegial relationships with her peers. She recounts as an example that, during “a bad year,” one of her fellow teachers tried (unsuccessfully) to get her fired. “He picked on teachers,” she recalls, “and he picked on me that year.” Another teacher alerted her to the problem.

Despite this incident, Nora feels her personality generally allows her to have healthy relationships with most of her peers and her students. What appears to be aloofness is, according to Nora, the manifestation of the fact that “I’m not needy.” Nora believes there is a danger in expecting more of teacher-to-student or teacher-to-teacher relationships than appropriate. “I just don’t need to count on them [as] my emergency number,” she says. Nora gained some of these insights by watching Melissa’s relationships with others during her student teaching experience. She observes that “Melissa’s the type that needs to have deep, penetrating relationships. I don’t think that’s helpful to teaching.”

Nora is comfortable describing herself as a “work in progress.” She has found that no matter how hard one works, there is always more to do. The work of teaching is “never done,” she says. “There’s always room for improvement.”

**Implications**

Nora’s narrative resonates with notions that “the act of teaching, teachers’ experiences and the choices they make, and the process of learning to teach are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to one’s identity and, thus, one’s life story” (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120). What emerges from Nora’s narrative of herself and her work with both the children and student teachers is the story of a teacher who is also a learner. Nora is often seen, in her own story, as clearly restless in
her experience as a teacher. “Complacency is the enemy,” she says. “I could have stayed in my cushy job and done the same things day in and day out, never write a new lesson plan – just biding my time for 16 more years till I retire.” She tends to be discontented with her current state of knowledge and skill in the profession of teaching; she occasionally displays inconsistencies in her views and practices. Rather than appearing as weaknesses, these inconsistencies corroborate Nora’s own view that she is not finished learning to be a teacher yet.

Nora has become a successful teacher and mentor in part because she has been open to new information and new techniques and in part because she is “a teacher who is passionate, vulnerable, curious and respectful” (Kerchner, 2002, p. 26). Nora exemplifies these qualities when she describes herself as a “work in progress.” As she says, the work of teaching, whether in interactions with children or student teachers, is “never done; there’s always room for improvement.” Her passion for teaching is evident in the pacing and variety of her lessons, and her curiosity can be seen in her desire for new adventures in teaching. And yet for Nora, teaching is more than technique and passion.

Nora has moved on from the “sacred theory-practice story” inherited from traditional understandings of being a teacher to “the creation of new relational stories of theory and practice” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 163). She understands her roles as teacher and mentor as firmly grounded in relationships between herself, her students, and her student teachers. She views her own relationships with children as crucial to the success of her teaching and as a conduit and means of facilitating the work and development of student teachers. She also feels herself nurtured by both kinds of relationships and responsible for her part in them. Although she willingly admits that some relationships are smoother than others and that her own tendency to be a “loner” can be counterproductive, Nora demonstrates respect for her relationships with students and student teachers by challenging herself to grow as a person and by displaying a vulnerability and willingness to learn from them.

Nora’s experiences as a mentor teacher offer valuable insights for those who work in music teacher education. Certainly we give student teachers a useful gift when we cultivate their desire for continued personal and professional growth. Conversely, we do student teachers a disservice when we convey to them that upon employment they have arrived in some sense. Nora is a model for the teacher-as-student: always learning and continually embracing opportunities to improve her skills. Our focus, in teacher education, is frequently (and with good reason) on the preservice and novice teacher. What do we do to support the Nora’s with whom novice teachers interact, whether in student teaching or in the early years of their careers?

In reflecting on Nora’s story, we – music teacher educators – might also ask ourselves what, if anything, we are learning from our students. Are we effective exemplars of life-long learning? Do we possess a winsome quality of wonder in our own lives? Are we willing to reveal vulnerability and openness to learn from those whom we are called to teach? Do their questions incite us to true inquiry, or are their questions merely opportunities for us to demonstrate our expertise? Are we free to be inventive in our instruction, or does our fear of failure hold us back from risking innovation?
Perhaps the most valuable insight we can learn from Nora is that relationship is a critical and essential element of effective teaching. As Beattie (2000) reminds us:

The idea that learning takes place in relationships, and that the self is formed, given meaning and understood in the context of its relations with others, is central to the process of becoming a teacher and of learning to teach. Through respectful dialogue and conversations with multiple others, individuals come to know themselves and others, to know what they know and to construct professional identities (p. 4).

Nora’s relationship with her students enables her to meet them at their level of skill and understanding and allows them access to her developing expertise as teacher and musician. The forging of long-term relationships has made it possible for Nora to maintain a “big picture” view of music education since she knows that she can build on earlier instruction to accomplish her pedagogical goals. These relationships, in turn, make it possible for student teachers to make connections with the children, providing them, perhaps, with a more authentic experience of their role as music educators. Through these relationships, both healthy and dysfunctional, students, student teachers, and professional teachers may find opportunities for growth and learning in music and in life.

References


Chapter 10
Nora’s Story and the Mirror of Music Teacher Excellence – A Commentary

Magne Espeland

When reading stories from narrative research about music teachers and teaching which describe phenomena in great detail and complex contexts, I often say to myself, “Yes! This is what a music teacher’s life is like! This is the truth!” However, it does not take long before I return to my academic reality, realising that what I have just been reading is only one story, existing alongside a number of different stories, and that I would be in great academic trouble arguing that – on the basis of this story – “I have seen the light” with regard to what music teaching really is like.

When reading Jeffrey Davis’s story about Nora, I had a similar reaction, nodding to myself as I read, “Yes, this is what a good music teacher is like.” The temptation to bring my newly acquired experience – from reading Nora’s story – into a normative discussion about music teacher quality in general, and music teacher education in particular, surfaced. Even so, I prepared myself for placing Davis’s chapter on my shelf alongside other convincing, but different and not generalisable, individual stories about music teachers’ lives. Because I know, of course, that narrative research does not seek to generalise. Other researchers preferring other research paradigms, and even narrative researchers themselves, would probably play down my temptation, arguing that narrative research recognises only polyphonies of voices in constructs of sociocultural processes (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994, p. 258). However, I think narrative researchers to a greater extent need to address this issue in a way that can show other researchers that narrative research is more than just producing communicative individual stories.

As I write I also wonder if the narrative research community should not rethink the generalisation issue regarding music teacher quality once again. Thinking about standards in teaching is what Nora does, is it not? Indeed, “so strong were her reservations about Melissa’s fitness for the profession that, when Melissa applied for a teaching job in the school district, Nora voiced her concerns to district personnel – something she had never done before” (this volume, p. 122).

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Even if Nora assesses an *individual* teacher student, Melissa, she does this seemingly within the framework of a common norm and required standard. And this tempts me to ask the following question: How, if it all, is it possible to “test” (and I am sorry if I offend readers using this word) individual stories, such as Nora’s, against viewpoints and findings based on more numerous samples than is usually the case with narrative research? It is this constant challenge we are living with, those of us who watch – most of the time silently – how researchers, politicians, journalists, and organisations seem to mould complex issues into simplified results and so-called truths about quality in music teaching and education.

So let us have a go at it!

Among the numerous research reviews available concerning teacher quality, I have chosen to take a quick glance at a study by Auckland-based John Hattie (2003). The following is his message to the educational world complaining about low achievement in classrooms is: “It is not the schools, it is the teachers!” He more than suggests that

The answer lies elsewhere – it lies in the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act – the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies, and who is alone with students during their 15,000 hours of schooling

(Hattie, 2003, pp. 2–3).

Hattie bases his findings on a synthesis of more than 500,000 studies over a period of 7 years during the 1990s (Hattie, 1992, 1993a,b, 1996) and argues that the quality of the teachers accounts for approximately 30% of the variance in student achievement (2003). He compares this figure to the approximately 50% of the total that the students themselves “bring to the table” – as he puts it – and to categories such as peers, home, schools, and principals, each of which accounts for between 5 and 10% of the achievement variance. Taking a closer look at Nora the teacher, as she is portrayed in Davis’s article, there is little doubt in my mind that she must have a strong impact on these students, at least at a level of 30%, with regard to what students may achieve:

Nora sets the mood before her students enter the classroom. She meets her classes with a cheerful greeting as they assemble on the ramp to the door of the portable classroom in which music classes are held. Despite her lack of imposing physical stature, the students clearly respond to the strength of her presence. They know to take their places on the choral risers and wait for their instructions. Once in place, Nora leads them in stretching exercises and vocalizations while moving among the students to encourage and direct them (this volume, p. 132).

Nora is in complete control here, is she not? She sets the mood, is cheerful, has a strong presence, and leads and directs the students, seemingly, beautifully. How can she not have an impact? This means that I think Hattie’s finding about the importance of the teacher per se is an important one. What is disturbing about it, though, is that this finding also would be true if *Melissa* was the teacher in question, and then what?
Hattie’s concern, however, is teacher excellence. In his impressive review study, he has identified five major dimensions of excellent teachers. Expert teachers, he says,

- can identify essential representations of their subject;
- can guide learning through classroom interactions;
- can monitor learning and provide feedback;
- can attend to affective attributes; and
- can influence student outcomes (2003, p. 5).

Now, how does Nora, the cooperating teacher in Davis’s chapter, compare to such a set of teacher excellence criteria? She would probably not have a high score on the first criterion – identification of essentials in the subject. Coming from science education and relying mainly on her musical home upbringing does not sound very reassuring with regard to excellence in terms of being able to identify essential representation of music as a subject. However, her indirect, and in our context, defensive argument looks quite relevant:

“I’ve been grateful for my background in classroom teaching because I’ve learned it’s the art of teaching . . . the subject matter comes, you can learn that. You can teach any subject; it’s the teacher in you that makes the quality of what you do (this volume, p. 133).

Uhmmm, I wonder whether Hattie would buy that one.

Even so, Nora seems to appear quite strong with regard to Hattie’s other criteria. A careful reading of the story about Nora suggests that she seems quite able in her ability to guide learning through classroom interaction and to provide feedback. She seems especially strong in her attendance to affective attributes. “It’s all about connecting,” she explains to Davis. “If I don’t have connections [with the students], nothing’s happening in the classroom” (this volume, p. 125). And the way she is described with regard to influencing student outcomes is convincing, with regard to elementary students as well as for student teachers.

However, it now seems that I have come to the point of asking myself the following questions: Is my rather superficial analysis of Nora’s excellence score quite convincing? Is there not something very important missing here? I think there is.

First, let us go back to Hattie’s criteria. Have you noticed the verbs he is using in his description? Identify, guide, monitor, provide, attend to, and influence, all of them focusing on the direct relationship between the pupil and the teacher and all of them “classics” in the rhetoric on teaching and learning efficiency. There is nothing there suggesting that to be a learner, to be a collaborator, to be open-minded, to be able to carry on in spite of severe personal problems, and to be honest may be relevant, even basic elements in a set of criteria describing teacher excellence. To me the strongest indication of Nora’s excellence as a music teacher lies in the following statement about her openness, curiosity, tolerance, and honesty:

Kids keep me honest. They have taught me to remain curious. They have taught me to ask questions and wonder. They’ve taught me that it’s OK to not know something. They’ve taught me that it’s OK to make a mistake in front of a bunch of people. They’ve taught me that if I goof up or sing the wrong pitch or, you know, hit the wrong note, “OK, let’s try
it again!” They’ve taught me to laugh at myself. They’ve taught me not to laugh at other people (this volume, p. 134).

Now what? Where did this analysis end up?

I think it ended up at a point of constant wondering – and sometimes that can be enough – how statistics, even from 500,000 studies, can appear so distorted – and I suddenly realise this statement might be a bit unfair to John Hattie – in a mirror reflecting teacher excellence; of wondering how statistics can miss something so obvious as some of the essentials in Jeffrey Davis’s convincing story about Nora. And I think it also ended up in a reassured conviction – at least for me – that narrative research has important stories to tell. The basic challenge, however, remains the same: How are we going to make the decision-makers listen and understand? Maybe by using mirrors, lots of mirrors, in different settings and different contexts which can reflect the qualities of teachers as real people, such as Nora, and not general teacher abilities directed and framed by the rhetoric of teacher efficiency. I think writing stories about real people is what the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen did in his story about another Nora in his famous A Doll’s House (1879) a long time ago. And he made an impact in the end, did he not?

References


Chapter 11
“Everybody Should Be Heard; Everybody Has Got a Story to Tell, or a Song to Sing”

Catherine Kroon

Abstract  This chapter records the findings of a research project that sought to understand the nature of the work of a specialist music teacher implementing music as a therapeutic device. Its aims were to identify the teaching and learning strategies employed in a classroom in which music is utilised as a therapeutic device and the perceptions of parents, senior staff, and staff colleagues of the nature of this work. The findings of the study identified five emergent themes: those of communication, the development of social skills, music for “fun,” addressing the needs of all, and music education. Through these themes the nature and complexity of the principal participant’s work were revealed. The data were analysed and re-worked to create a literary portrayal of the teacher’s work, employing portraiture as a method of analysis. This study demonstrated that music is a powerful medium for learning in these settings and suggests that music as a form of learning in other settings may enhance a variety of social, physical, and cognitive outcomes.

Prologue

I have been exposed to the powerful effects of music in a variety of ways through people and situations I have encountered in my life. Whilst studying at senior secondary college,1 a practicing music therapist visited my music class, sharing with us something of the nature of her work. I was inspired by what I heard, encouraged to hear my own beliefs about the potential of music confirmed. I began to look more deliberately for the ways in which music affected people’s emotional, intellectual, and physical state.

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1 This refers to Years 11 and 12 of schooling.
One such example involved a member of my extended family. Severely affected by a stroke, he was wheelchair bound, virtually unable to speak and brain damaged. Once a professional and highly sociable man, he was clearly depressed by his physical state and frustrated at his inability to communicate. Through listening to music, however, his emotional state would change. Sitting at the piano, I would play him tunes from his past, and the reaction this produced was very telling and the smiles and tears an indication of the impact of music in his life. It was clearly one of the most effective ways to reach him.

In less obvious, yet equally important, ways my experiences as a pre-service classroom teacher, private piano teacher, and performer allowed me to experience and witness the sense of fulfillment born through the creation of music. In both ensemble and solo situations, the production of well-rehearsed music is incredibly satisfying, something of a privilege. I have heard many performers comment on the wholeness they sense in the midst of a powerful performance. In a one-on-one teaching situation, I have often observed students who would spontaneously create simple themes and improvise upon these for a considerable length of time, creating their own space, as if alone with the music. These instances suggest a strong therapeutic potential within musical activity, be it in the form of creation, performance, or listening.

It was these experiences that provoked my interest in the therapeutic benefits of music. Additionally, with my professional interest as an educator, I was particularly intrigued with the ways music therapy and music as therapy – a term I use to describe an informal method through which the therapeutic benefits of music are recognised and employed – might be implemented within school settings. I was interested to know how this might or might not be a reality within Australian and, more specifically, Tasmanian schools. When I encountered an opportunity to conduct a research project, this formed my primary research interest. The study More Than Melody: A Portrait of the Work of a School Music Program Co-ordinator Utilising Music as Therapy (Piper, 2006) focused on the work of a music educator working within a special school setting, employing music as a therapeutic device within her classroom and in individual music sessions. This is a seemingly rare instance, as evidence relating to the implementation of music as a therapeutic device, especially within the Australian education sector, is scarce (McPherson, 2006). The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the work of a specialist music teacher implementing music as therapy?
2. What are the teaching and learning strategies employed within a classroom in which music is utilised as a therapeutic device?
3. What are the perceptions of parents and staff colleagues of the work of a specialist music teacher implementing music as therapy?

The project was an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), in which the nature of the work of this music specialist teacher was the case itself.

Existing research in the field of music and medicine suggests that music therapy and music as therapy are used extensively within areas of the health sector
for a variety of purposes and outcomes (Ansdell & Pavlicevic, 2005; Bunt, 1994; Magee, 2002). In particular, there is considerable documentation on the way in which music therapy is used in health-care settings (Boxhill, 1985; Bunt, 1994; Magee, 2002), while some literature documents the utilisation of music therapies in educational settings (Welch, Ockelford, & Zimmermann, 2001). In addition, considerable research has examined the nature of teachers’ work, including secondary (Churchill & Williamson, 2004; Lieberman & Miller, 1984), primary, and early childhood education (Howe, 2005; Kelly & Berthelsen, 1997). Although limited, there is some research in the area of the nature of the work of the specialist music teacher (Leglar & Collay, 2002; Roulston, 2004). There is, however, little evidence of research that has sought to understand the nature of the work of the music therapist or teachers who use music as therapy in educational settings. Similarly, there is little documented evidence relating to the nature of music education and teacher’s work within special school settings. This presented a considerable gap in the literature, and this study aimed to address this gap in its investigation of this seemingly rare phenomenon.

The school in which the research project took place enrolls students aged between 6 and 18 years. Whilst students are grouped into five different classes, these are not representative of their year level. There is, however, one identifiable junior class and two identifiable senior classes. Each class contains between seven and eight students. In addition to the classroom teacher, a number of teacher’s aides are employed to work within each class. In addition to the principal, there is one senior staff member working at this school.

The primary participant, Anne, is employed by the Department of Education, Tasmania, as a specialist music teacher, or Special Programs Through Music Coordinator, to provide music programmes within special schools. While she does move between educational settings, this study relates only to her work within the special school described above.

Each week, the specialist music teacher conducts music sessions with each of the five class groups at the school, as well as with a small number of students on an individual basis. The student body includes students with Downs Syndrome and autism, as well as those with other special physical and intellectual needs. Each session lasts for approximately one hour and consists of activities in improvisation, performance, listening, and physical activity related to music. Two to three teacher’s aides are in attendance at each music session, assisting with the physical and communication needs of the students.

Data generation for this research project occurred through the use of both interview and observation. The purpose of including both of these forms of data generation was to ensure that the information acquired was both comprehensive and credible. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the participants involved in the study – the specialist music teacher (the primary participant), one classroom teacher, two members of senior staff including the principal, and two parents – at the school in which the research took place. The purpose of including interview as a data generation instrument within this research project was to enable me to understand the perceptions of the nature of the work of the primary participant
from a variety of perspectives. The primary participant interviews were designed according to the Seidman (1998) three-interview technique. In this technique, the past and present contexts surrounding the phenomenon, and the meaning the participant makes of the experience, are interrogated through a series of three semi-structured interviews. The first primary participant interview took place prior to the observations, the second approximately half-way through, and the third after the observations had concluded. The last two interviews were scheduled so that reflections and queries relating to observations could be addressed. The classroom teacher, senior staff, and parent interviews were conducted at various stages throughout the observation phase.

Eight music sessions, conducted by the “Special Programs Through Music Coordinator,” were observed within this special school for the purpose of this research. Through this data generation method, a variety of examples of the classroom work of the primary participant were encountered. This phase of the study involved observation of whole-class settings across a variety of age and year levels, as well as one individual session with a male student who is recognised within the school as frequently demonstrating aggressive behavioural tendencies. This form of data generation ensured insight into a variety of teaching and learning strategies employed by the primary participant and the ways in which music is implemented as a therapeutic device within this school setting. Similarly, it allowed clarification and greater understanding of data generated within the interview process.

Throughout the interview and observation phases of this research project, considerable amounts of data were generated. The initial stage of data analysis was to explore all raw data in order to discover emergent themes in relation to the research aims. During this process, five emergent themes were identified: communication, the development of social skills, music for fun, addressing the needs of all, and education.

The data were then shaped into a form of narrative inquiry, a literary portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997) depicting the nature of the work of the primary participant. The creation of the portrait was guided by the above-mentioned emergent themes. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis (1997),

Not only is the portraitist interested in developing a narrative that is both convincing and authentic, she is also interested in recording the subtle details of human experience. She wants to capture the specifics, the nuance, the detailed description of a thing, a gesture, a voice, an attitude as a way of illuminating more universal patterns. (p. 14)

This form of reporting is a method through which the whole experience of the phenomenon can be captured, as points of narrative interest important to the experience can be incorporated in the presentation of research findings. In this way, a detailed and authentic representation can be created. The authors continue, suggesting that “the portraitist is very interested in the single case because she believes that embedded in it the reader will discover resonant universal themes. The more specific, the more subtle the description, the more likely it is to evoke identification” (p. 14). While this research does not necessarily investigate phenomena beyond the
case itself, the use of portraiture as a method of reporting does have the potential to highlight a wide range of aspects within the case. Indeed, such aspects may have more transferability to other contexts and settings than other methods of reporting, perhaps due to the highly narrative characteristics of such studies; stories tend to stimulate connections with other stories.

**Portraits**

Anne turns to a teacher’s aide who is sitting nearby and exclaims with delight, “She’s singing. Never heard that before.” She is referring to a female student, no more than 9 years of age, who is rocking from side to side in response to the music that is playing. With her mouth open, she produces soft, elongated sounds. I see and hear that Anne is right – she is singing, not in tune or in time, but along with the CD all the same.

While the student’s face is otherwise expressionless, there is the hint of a smile emanating from her eyes. Anne moves closer and begins to copy the sounds the little girl makes. The vocalisations become more frequent and varied with time. A moment has evolved through which the two are communicating, perhaps in a language that neither understands, but taking turns – first the girl, then Anne. From the sounds they make, it seems as though there is something being said. The music continues, as does the singing, as if there were no-one else in the room. It is clear that Anne is trying to make space for the student to communicate through this musical conversation.

Stepping back, Anne turns to me, whispering that she doesn’t want to take away this little girl’s moment. Evidently hoping not to close any doors, she moves the class to a separate space, towards the back of the room. While they begin a new activity together, the girl remains, still enjoying her singing, for a brief moment. Even when the CD changes and she eventually moves to join the rest of the group, her side-to-side motion continues, as she pursues her moment with the music. Today, I understand that, through this musical activity, she has achieved something new.

When Anne was young, she also found that music could open pathways to expression. “I was abused as an adolescent through my High School years,” she said. At that time, the only emotional outlet she felt was available to her was the music she played. Repetitively, she worked through scales – an experience that was not only hers – as her family also travelled on the roller coaster of expression that they conveyed:

I lost my credibility through being musical. I was highly imaginative and because of the accusations I’d made . . . I wasn’t allowed to cry and I wasn’t allowed to scream because I was only making it all up anyway. And I had some little cards, I remember, of my scales – contrary motion, in octaves, melodic, harmonic, major, arpeggios, you know, all the different ones and there were 103 cards all together that I was practicing at this particular time.
And when I couldn’t express anger, I’d get up early in the morning and I’d play these scales, up and down, up and down as loud as I could. And my parents would beg me to stop. And I’d say, “I have to do them, these are for my exam, I’ve got to do all these cards!” And I would make them all suffer by doing all of these scales. And I think it was my way of screaming at them, my way of making them listen to me.

There were particular pieces of music that Anne played that helped her to express her deep feelings of anger and frustration, and, in turn, she was able to use these feelings to motivate her in her practice.

In a different place and different time, Anne looked to me and shared a thought that expressed what she believed is at the core of her working life – something that has been building throughout her life experiences:

Everybody should be heard. Everybody has got a story to tell, or a song to sing . . . . And I think in my teenage years nobody would listen to my song, they told me I didn’t have a song or that my song wasn’t valid and I think of the kids who I work with and they can’t sing or they can’t speak and I think they’ve got a message to tell and it’s our responsibility . . . to find a way for them to express their message.

**Communication**

When asked about the perceived aims of Anne’s work, parents and staff members mention communication in one way or another. There is a sense that other aspects of her work, including its provision of both engagement and enjoyment for the students involved, are enhanced through students’ increased ability to communicate within music sessions. The school principal believes that, above all else, Anne’s priority in her work is to be able to “communicate with children.” I asked the question, “Do you think it’s effective to use music as a communication tool?” to which the principal’s response was immediate. “Yeah, it’s very effective.” Taking this concept one step further, a parent said with the same certainty that her child’s ability to communicate with others is enhanced through participation in Anne’s music sessions. “A lot of the students have difficulties with communication and so they can learn to express how they’re feeling at the time.” Referring to her own child, she continued,

sometimes she [Anne] will get him to beat on a drum if he’s, you know, like she’ll talk about if you’re feeling quiet, you know, bang in a quiet way, if you’re feeling loud, bang loud. So she does things like that . . . because he has a severe communication impairment, she gets him to express how he feels.

To the tune of the song the class had just been singing together, Anne sings her instructions to move back to the main teaching space. Students, some with the assistance of aides, find spaces to sit along one of two timber benches that form a “V” shape around Anne’s chair. She produces a large drum that, while being quite narrow, sits at the height of most students’ hands when placed on the floor in front of them. As is a common procedure, Anne moves her rolling desk chair to the space immediately in front of the student to whom the drum has been given first. With guitar in hand, she begins to strum a simple chord progression over a crotchet pulse. The student begins to experiment with the drum, striking it tentatively to the edge
of the skin, and then, with Anne’s encouragement, more confidently until an even crotchet beat is produced. While this beat is irregular in relation to the steady pulse of Anne’s accompaniment, this is seemingly irrelevant, as a certain ownership is expressed through such individuality. This student, along with the next two or three along the row, elects to have a brief turn today. With a gentle push, or by ceasing improvisation, students indicate that they do not wish to have the drum in front of them any more. They convey the message that the drum may be passed to the next person.

One student, further down the row, demonstrates particular enjoyment in this activity today. After the initial stages of gaining familiarity with the drum, he begins to experiment with time and dynamics. As Anne evaluates this situation, she evidently feels that this student is gaining value from the experience today, so allows him to have an extended turn. When she feels that the improvisation has run its course and reaches a natural end, she moves the drum along to the next student in the row.

I see another instance of Anne’s endeavours to assist students in their communication when she engages the students in an activity during which scarves are used as a means of eliciting and conveying expression. Anne distributes a selection of brightly coloured scarves to the group, so that each student eventually holds his or her own. As soon as she has said the words, “We are going to spin!”, she presses PLAY on the CD player, so that a gentle, flowing piece of music begins. The students stand and begin to experiment with their handkerchief-sized scarves. Some wave them gently above their heads; others are happy to watch the colours as they sway their scarves to and fro at eye level. As Anne prompts, when the chorus of the music is reached, the whole class begins to spin. The majority of scarves are now in the air; however, there is a sense of freedom at this time, as each student “owns” his or her own scarf. How each scarf is used in response to the music is left to the discretion of the child holding it. I see one or two students who choose to lie beneath Anne’s scarf, electing to watch its colour and movement. I am reminded of an earlier conversation with Anne, in which she mentioned the fascination one student in this group has with scarves. While, in this scenario, students are not necessarily creating music as a means for expression, it is music that is the medium through which students can begin to experiment with their own social and physical strengths and limitations. This is communication, because it is an interaction with students’ social and physical surroundings.

After some time, Anne begins to create some vocal improvisations. As she sings a simple “Ooooh” sound, I can see and hear that she is trying to foster a greater atmosphere of freedom in the music. Ultimately, within the space provided through their engagement with this music, students are able to express themselves without words or sound.
I asked Anne the question, “If you could narrow your aims down to one priority, what would that be?” She replied:

Probably communication. Yep, I’m sort of wavering between, is it about them feeling valuable and important, or is it about them getting their message across, about them being heard. But I think that . . . that boils down into one thing anyway, if they are heard, then they will feel important and valid.

The Development of Social Skills

Another theme, which emerged from the study of the nature of Anne’s work, is that of the development of social skills. Turn taking, leadership, decision-making, social awareness, and detection of social cues all play a role within music sessions. Anne and other members of the school community mentioned to me a number of times that the children with whom Anne works are often limited in their awareness of other people in their immediate environment. Interestingly, in addition to other social benefits attributed to Anne’s classroom work, the principal of the school commented that

They get the message that she [Anne] likes them, she likes working with them and I think those personal relationships are so hugely important, and so you add that and music together and you’ve got a pretty powerful combination, haven’t you?

Evidently, the students find it easy to make a social connection with Anne, and it could be assumed that this is through the context of musical activity. Anne told a story in relation to this idea:

I walked up the corridor earlier this week and there was a class lined up, they’d just come in from recess . . . and as I walked they all started clapping and it was a bit like getting a standing ovation just for being there in the school.

For students who may experience difficulty knowing that there are others in the room, this is a remarkable incident. Social connection with Anne could be considered the first step in the acquisition of social connection and the development of social skills with others.

At the beginning of every session, the whole group always sings the same song together. The lyrics begin with “Hello, everyone, it’s good to see you” and end with “I hope you have a nice time.” Through repetition, each student’s name is included in the song. Everyone here, whether staff member or student, is welcomed by Anne in this way and consequently by the whole group. Similarly, at the end of each session, a good-bye song is sung that incorporates highly personalised encouragement from Anne, such as “good singing today.” Through this song, Anne also provides some insight into what the students will do after they leave the music room. Students are evidently aware that the music session is only over when this song is complete.
“The songs are really the parentheses around the session,” Anne said, with regard to the “hello” and “good-bye” songs.

That song has embedded in it all my expectations ... I’d only have to sing that song and they’re there ... I’ve built into it a lot of other things, like name validation, awareness of who’s in the group, eye contact, waving, social greetings and that, but the main thing is [that those songs are] the parentheses of the group.

Even within this simple exercise, valuable goals are embedded.

Another series of activities, this time based on the concept of conducting, regularly feature within Anne’s music sessions. These activities were also recognised for their potential in assisting the development of students’ social skills.

Anne begins a track on the CD player that is bright and rhythmic in nature. The students are evidently excited to hear music and wait in anticipation for Anne to begin the activity. Anne begins to click her fingers, “How many counts do we do for clicks?”

“Eight!” the class responds. Anne directs the class to the open space at the back of the room. Here they are free to move, yet remain as a group. “Who can count to eight? Let me hear you!” In unison, the majority of the group counts to eight. Anne nominates a student as the “leader,” and, knowing the routine, the student begins to punch the air repetitively, yet lightly. As I watch the rest of the class, they are quick to follow. The leader stops after the eighth punch, applause and brief encouragement are initiated by Anne, and another student is chosen to become the leader. As I watch, Anne and the two aides in the room assist students for whom these actions are a physical challenge. One student, who is obviously incapable of standing alone, is given a chair. This way, she is still with her peers and able to participate according to her own capabilities. Each member of the class, including this student, is given a turn to be the leader. Each conducts the class with his or her own “made-up” action.

When asked about this activity, Anne says,

I’m trying to teach them to look to their peers to get cues ... if you’ve got some sort of a disability, you often don’t know where to look to get the information that you need ... so I’m teaching, this is the leader’s chair, this is where you look for the cues.

In addition to the acquisition of the recognition of social cues, Anne mentioned the benefits of being the leader.

A lot of these kids find it really difficult to initiate ideas ... if someone shows they can initiate an idea, it’s a process that’s going the next step up in their thinking ... by being the leader, they’re having to initiate ... that’s a good thing for them to think about and come up with.

A number of variations on this activity are included within the music sessions. The leader is often referred to as a conductor. On one occasion, a “follow the leader” exercise was labelled “Teddy Dancing” by Anne. Each student was given a teddy bear, each a bright colour and big enough to grasp in their hand. When music was
playing, the teddy bears became conducting batons as they soared through the air in different directions. Again, whatever the leader, sitting in the chair at the front of the room, chose to do, the group followed.

One classroom teacher reflected on this activity and suggested that

The students that we’re probably dealing with here, often they are not seen as leaders amongst their peers in the wider community, so this type of thing allows the students to feel that, you know, I am in control and I am important . . . and other people can watch what I do and, you know, what I’m doing is making an impact. And that makes them feel good about themselves and about being with others as well. Very positive experience for them.

Addressing the Needs of All

In providing a musical experience that is of value to all students who participate in Anne’s music programme, there is a sense that she must be aware of and adaptable to the various social, physical, intellectual, and learning needs of students present during each music session. This is highlighted during my experiences while observing Anne’s work. “I think she tries to find activities that . . . so that all the children, or all the participants can enjoy the music in their own way,” suggested one parent of a child at the school. This is an indication of a highly personalised programme that is designed so that all students may be involved.

In order to cater to these needs, Anne attends a variety of professional learning events.

I’ve done heaps of professional learning on behaviour management . . . I’ve done heaps, I mean heaps, of professional development on autism. And on Downs Syndrome, Fragile X, signing, communication skills . . . I did a few days on student welfare, I’ve done professional learning on computing . . . . I also did one on the index of inclusion.

In relation to the impact of professional learning opportunities on her work, she suggested that

It always gives me [a] great reminder and always gives me new insights. And I think it develops greater insights into the children. Makes me a lot more patient, a lot more tolerant, a lot more sympathetic and, in fact, sometimes I come away thinking, I must applaud that person for what they’ve done, that must’ve been so difficult. And then it helps me develop programs that are even more relevant to what their needs are.

The CD begins. Its soft, flowing music is accompanied by the sound of waves breaking. All of the students are now lying on the carpet, most facing upwards in anticipation of what is to come. Anne and the aides open a large piece of fabric shaded in blues and greens, which appears to be quite appropriate to the sea theme currently filling the room. Standing in strategic positions, they spread the fabric so that it is above most students in the room. Gently, they lower it so that it comes close to the students’ faces. Some extend their arms to touch it. Next time, the fabric is allowed to loosely brush over the top of the students. Anne lowers it over some students specifically so that they may encounter this unique tactile experience. Up, down, up, down – the motion is continued until the music draws to a close.
“In a lot of the sessions I’m pushing the boundaries of the children,” suggested Anne in relation to this activity.

So there’s often a lot of stress on them during the music session . . . . The relaxation is really about the time out . . . . the fabric gives a visual cue as to the sort of breathing speed . . . . So it’s really just another avenue for them to key into, a lot of kids with autism and Downs Syndrome are visual learners, so I think it’s giving them that visual cue.

Within Anne’s music programme, I consistently see this reinforcement of visual learning. Within every music session that I witness, visual learning is an essential element.

The “Good Morning” song finishes, everybody has been acknowledged, and all are made welcome. What is of equal importance is that everybody knows that this is music time. Anne sits a framed board on her lap. Its surface is covered in felt, and a number of laminated pictures have been stuck to it. “What are we going to do now?” Asking one student to step closer to this board, she points to the first picture. “What are we going to do?,” she asks the student. “We are going to do some singing!” I see now that these pictures form the schedule for the whole music session. The group sings together, and when the song is over, Anne asks the group, “Who would like to take singing off the board?” A student is chosen, and Anne allows him to remove the “singing” picture from the schedule board. Again, she says, “What are we going to do now?” Looking at the picture now remaining at the top of the board, the whole group is alerted to the next activity. Despite difficulties students may encounter in hearing, or even reading, this is another visual cue. Everybody knows what to expect.

In discussing Anne’s work with the senior staff member at the school, he described her adaptability to the varying needs of students. As he described his own experiences of Anne’s music sessions, I was aware that, to him, meeting the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of students is clearly an advantage of Anne’s work:

It’s been tremendous for the children, I’ve seen . . . . a variety of approaches to the teaching of music and using music as . . . . a vehicle for a whole range of outcomes . . . . meeting the needs of our particular children, I possibly believe that this is one of the most . . . . rewarding approaches I’ve seen, certainly piles of engagement.

Clearly Anne’s work not only is rare, but also addresses the particular needs of the variety of students who experience her music programme. Interestingly, a comment provided by Anne was closely linked with this idea.

I’d say that the primary goal of it is to engage the children. There are so many children at this school who aren’t engaged, whose attention is like that [clicks her fingers] and I would’ve found that hard to believe some years ago that somebody’s attention could be so tiny, but for some of them it is. Or the autistic kids who don’t really engage with the school life and society at all, so my role really is to engage them and once I’ve engaged them it’s, like, “Okay, what will we do?”
In conversation with a classroom teacher at the school, this aspect of Anne’s work was again addressed. On this occasion, she was queried as to her perception of the implementation of music as a therapeutic device.

Oh, I think it’s vitally important . . . Not only for a special education setting, but I think music for all children and adults and babies, you know, right from a very young age it’s a great way to engage and then through help . . . support lots of areas of learning.

Evidently, music, as it is used within Anne’s work, is a valuable tool in achieving diverse outcomes.

Another activity that Anne uses within her music sessions is called “The Fireman’s Barbeque.” Again, the CD player is used for this activity; however, this time the music is merely an accompaniment to a spoken narrative, a story. Throughout the story, there are spaces between words in which sound effects, such as “Squeak, squeak,” are vocalised. In these sections, Anne, the aides, and a large number of students join the narrator in making the sounds. They accompany these sounds with simple hand and arm movements, ensuring that the activity is active and exciting, both physically and visually for those who may struggle to perform the actions alone.

“Children with autism, in particular, love made-up words and they love repetition,” explained Anne in relation to this activity.

And that sort of activity is really, sort of, grounding for them. They get real enjoyment out of it . . . I’ve got more of those stories that we do that have nonsense words. And they . . . learn all the nonsense words so easily, it’s a real, just one of those places that they love to go.

In describing Anne’s work, the school principal suggests,

She works with small groups of children, or big groups of children equally well, she includes all the children to really participate, no matter the level of their disability, she is able to find a way in which they can be included and she varies her activities with sizes of the group, I guess, really effectively to be able to, you know, to ensure that there aren’t any people that are just sort of there, but not really participating.

The “ring” is a commonly used activity within Anne’s music sessions, during which the whole class, including the teacher and aides, stands in circular formation gripping their own section of a large piece of elastic covered in colourful fabric. To a bright, energetic piece of music, Anne directs a range of actions that respond to the recording. When the lyrics are focused around “high and low,” the “ring” is lifted and lowered in time. Sometimes the students move their bodies to the beat. Through the “ring” activity, there is a sense of unity, as all members of the class are able to participate according to their own physical ability. Where a student may be unable to stand, they are assisted by a teacher’s aide. Their grip on the “ring” assures that they belong to the rest of the group.
A lot of what I’m doing with the ‘ring’ is about giving a visual sense of being together ... a proportion of each class has autism ... It’s hard for them to work and feel as a team. And if everybody is holding onto the ‘ring’ together and it’s moving with them, then it is promoting that visually, as well as in reality. Sometimes somebody doesn’t want to hold on, they may be tactile defensive, but they’ll stand in the middle ... so again it’s still incorporating them ... when we’re doing an activity that involves, like a beat, or a physical thing ... if some haven’t got the muscle power to actually do the action that we’re doing, just by holding on the ‘ring,’ the others are going to lift them up.

Without such an understanding of the needs of children with special needs, the effect of participation in music sessions would not be so positive for these students.

**Music for “Fun”**

In discussing the purposes of Anne’s work with Anne and other members of the school community, the term “fun” was mentioned frequently. There was general consensus that music provides an opportunity for enjoyment for the children concerned where this opportunity might otherwise be very limited. Anne discussed the concept of fun by stating that “one of the primary things I see is ... having fun and having fun with other people so that nobody is an island or feeling ... excluded, or not part of it.” Here a direct link can be perceived between the development of social skills and this concept of fun. Perhaps this is not fun for the sake of fun, but to provide assistance in the development of community and social interaction with others in the immediate environment.

Anne commented on the reasoning behind the inclusion of fun as a goal and priority within her music sessions:

There is a great speaker ... from America. And he talks about kids with disabilities, and how much fun is valuable to them. And he gave us a check-list and it was, like ... how many of the following do you have in your life? And he’d say things like, a close relationship with a family member, a close relationship with a special person, like a romantic relationship, a pet, an overseas holiday to look forward to, a holiday to look forward to ... and there was a whole screen of things and we had to mark off in our mind how many and I think I got something like seven out of eight. And then he said, “Now I want you just to choose the first child that comes into your mind who has a disability and do the same for them.” And the child had about two out of eight. And lots of children would be lucky to have one in this school and he talked about how these kids suffer depression, there’s nothing in their life to look forward to.

Despite the regularity with which this concept of fun was mentioned, however, I still felt unsure as to what was truly meant by this term. “I mean enjoyment,” explained Anne.

I guess I’m thinking a bit as well here, where the psychologist would do an index of enjoyment in your life ... if on the questionnaire it said, have you got an activity that you enjoy doing? That all the students involved in music, whatever stage they’re at, that they’d be able to say, oh yes, there’s music. So, yeah, something that gives them positive feelings about themselves.
In exploring this idea further, I recall a discussion with the principal of the school, in which fun and enjoyment were a focus. This is a reflection, perhaps, of one of her primary perceptions of Anne’s work:

It’s also, I think, an opportunity for the children to just have fun and enjoyment. And so without necessarily putting a whole lot of other curriculum benefits as such, I think having fun is hugely important for these children, because they don’t have as many avenues for having fun as perhaps regular children without disability have.

At a later point, she reinforced this point, saying, “the kids just love it. Isn’t that the … I mean, to me that’s the measure of what we’re trying to achieve.” Again, reinforcing this powerful viewpoint of the principal, the senior staff member at the school said when considering his perception of Anne’s priority in her work,

Oh, it’s very strong and I see it through the program of … just fun, enjoyment. And then from there … you get a whole range of outcomes … and that supports my own thinking, that when a kid’s happy … allowing kids to be safe and happy and safe and wanting to be with you and … within a certain environment, then allows you to go on and … strive for other outcomes.

He finished with a statement that, clearly, to him was something of a summary of Anne’s work. “But I’m quite convinced that that’s Anne’s initial focus … let’s have a lot of fun, let’s enjoy, and let’s be safe and happy and move on from there.” Here it is implied that fun, or enjoyment, as an outcome of Anne’s work can be a starting point for other benefits and outcomes.

I was interested when a parent mentioned the fun and enjoyment demonstrated by her son when experiencing music. She explained to me that he sings the songs taught to him by Anne at home and loves to play the guitar. With regard to his use of musical activity outside Anne’s classroom, she provided a brief yet meaningful explanation of her own interpretations.

Enjoyment … is a big thing for kids with special needs, trying to find enjoyment out of something … that’s self-initiated, you know, music is something he’s learning to entertain himself, he can go off with the guitar and make noises with it … and he can entertain himself. He likes to do it, it’s not something someone else is saying, I want you to do this, he’s choosing to do it.

The impression I have is that this is quite remarkable in the life of her son. There is a strong implication that, for her son to use music outside of school, as a self-initiated activity, he must relate musical experience to enjoyment.

After the “hello” song one morning, Anne queries the class, “Who can sing with Anne?” She quickly begins the track that is ready to play in the CD player. The words begin with, “Have you brought your singing voice?” This is a bright song, and most students demonstrate pleasure in listening and participating where able. While the lyrics of the songs are oriented around simple concepts and actions, there is a general sense of movement and excitement in the room. Anne and the aides sing along, and most children sing lines, or even single words, that they know.
Throughout the piece, the CD prompts actions such as stamping or clapping, and, whether singing or not, most are able to participate in this way. The song ends, and a number of students are still smiling. Anne gives encouragement to a student for the way in which he participated. To reward him, she produces a small container full of bubble mixture and blows several bubbles into his space. He smiles and plays with these bubbles, touching them so that they pop, until they are all gone.

Despite the communication barriers faced by a number of children with whom Anne works, there are a few instances through which students’ feelings in relation to the experience of music are expressed verbally. A moving story, as described by Anne, highlights the fulfillment and pleasure experienced by another of her students through the music programme, a student who was able to speak of the experience.

One of my students died two years ago, who I was working with in a small group . . . he had autism and . . . life was pretty hard for him and at his funeral it was said that his favourite day of the week was Thursday and that was ‘cos that was the day he was going to his music club to see teacher Anne and he always knew when it was Thursday. And I guess that’s the sort of thing I’m trying to develop in the children, that there’s something that is worth having and that there are good places to be and good things to do. I think kids with special needs really are up against it often, if they’re aware that they’re different.

**Music Education**

Throughout my encounters with Anne and the other members of the school community, I have been inundated with conversation regarding the topics of “communication,” “social skills,” “fun,” and the ways in which “the needs of all” are addressed. Evidently, these aspects of Anne’s work dominate the perceptions of all. Although this is clearly the type of experience recognised as crucial to the nature of Anne’s work within the school, there is little mention of music educational aims within these sessions.

When asked about any educational outcomes that might be embedded within her work, Anne provides a response that, while informing me, clearly develops a new understanding for her also.

I think in a formal way, as in formal music education, I’m not trying to teach note values or form, oh . . . I maybe do a bit of form, that this pattern comes back again . . . I may even do a bit of phrasing, which is very subliminal. I don’t sort of say, “Well this is a phrase and then we turn around and . . . ” but we do change action at the end of the phrase or we change direction. So . . . that comes into it . . . Improvisation we do a fair bit of and we call it improvisation . . . and the names . . . recognition of names of different instruments we do . . . Oh, you’re amazing me! No, I’m amazing myself. And conducting as well! . . . so there was a few there . . . And the concept of pitch as high and low and sort of trying to move the voice around a bit. So yeah, there’s a few.

The senior class is rehearsing for a performance at a local nursing home. They stand in a row with the teacher’s aides, facing Anne and another class of students.
their age. They are playing the role of audience in this mock concert. After distribut-
ing instruments and assigning “solo” parts, Anne reminds students of the “silly”
words they used in previous lessons. She begins the CD, and the song that it plays is
based on call-and-response patterns. The vocalists on the CD sing a phrase, and, as
directed by Anne’s large arm gestures, the students and aides copy. The song reaches
a section through which experimentation with dynamics takes place. Again, where a
phrase is performed with increased volume on the CD, the students and aides repeat
it loudly and with vigor. If the vocalists on the CD sing softly, the class sings in the
same fashion, as cued by Anne cupping a hand over her ear.

The time comes for one male student to perform his solo. He begins to play the
drum when Anne points with her whole arm in his direction. As she reinforces the
pulse of the piece visually, using arm movements, he watches and follows the beat
as closely as possible. Generally, he plays a simple crotchet pattern on the first three
beats of each bar. As the music continues, Anne distributes a handful of brightly
coloured “shakers.” She holds her hand up, palms facing the class to signify “wait.”
They hold their shakers in anticipation, and, when Anne lowers her hands, they
wave theirs vigorously, so that the room is filled with the sound of shakers. “Can
the audience give them a clap?,” Anne queries. The “audience” applauds, and the
performers are delighted at their accomplishment. This is the culmination of their
musical learning so far.

It is recess, and, following Anne’s footsteps, I wander into a court filled with
trampolines and assorted play equipment. This is her yard duty. The small play-
ground is filled with pop music from the early 1990s, and I look to the corner from
which it is coming. A small handful of children are moving from side to side, danc-
ing. Another spins on the spot, allowing the music to fill his entire being. His eyes
do not focus on the people or surroundings in the yard, and I believe that, for him,
this is “time out” from school routine.

By the time Anne is at the centre of the courtyard, up to six children are surround-
ing her, telling her about the events of their day so far, asking what they will be doing
in the afternoon music session. “Can you sing a song, Anne?,” a male student asks
her. “Wear a smile upon your face,” she sings. The children surrounding her sing
with her. Most attempt those lyrics they remember or those that are most important
to them. For all of them, this is bringing pleasure. As they share this happy moment
with Anne and their peers, a smile is worn upon each face.

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Chapter 12
Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Empowerment Through Music – A Commentary

Kathryn Marsh

The interlocking narratives that comprise this chapter immediately enable the reader to enter the complex world of a gifted teacher, whose own, sometimes painful, experiences have enriched her approach to teaching in a specialised learning environment. Clandinin (2006) sees narrative inquiry as having three dimensions: “the personal and social (interaction) along one dimension; past, present and future (continuity) along a second dimension; place (situation) along a third dimension” (p. 47). Kroon describes the teacher and her interactions with the students in some detail, and we hear the voices of the teacher, the principal, and, to a lesser extent, the students and their parents emerge in this account. Importantly, the delineation of the educational setting, and the place of the music experiences for children within this setting, provide a context for the teacher’s endeavours. The development of support for this programme from principal and staff is also a significant contextual aspect of this report, as such support and the availability of appropriate school structures are necessary for innovative programmes to flourish.

Central to this narrative account are the words of the teacher, “Everybody should be heard. Everybody has got a story to tell, or a song to sing . . . and I think of the kids who I work with . . . and I think they’ve got a message to tell and it’s our responsibility . . . to find a way for them to express their message” (this volume, p. 140). In this case, some of the children, with a variety of disabilities, are literally unable to sing or to communicate verbally. Kroon charts the many ways in which the teacher, Anne, searches for different strategies to allow the children to communicate meaningfully. The denial of her own voice during a troubled childhood and adolescence is a key factor in motivating this ongoing quest.

Giving voice to the voiceless, or empowerment of children through music, has most obviously been the province of music educators working with children in special education environments. In particular, the moving and important work of Phil Ellis (1995) comes to mind. By utilising sound technologies (specifically Soundbeam, a device through which movement within an electronic beam produces
synthesised sounds), Ellis made it possible for severely disabled children to control their auditory environment in a manner that provided both self-expression and pleasure and allowed them to exert some form of control over lives that had been essentially powerless.

While both Ellis’s study and the research reported in this chapter were conducted over a period of time, they differ in the emphasis placed on time. Ellis’s study is longitudinal, with a strongly time-focused delineation of behavioural change in individual child cases. In contrast, this study seeks to create links between the earlier experiences of the teacher (who forms the single case) and her current practices and rationale for these. Through the combined narratives, the intersection of these is unveiled in tantalising glimpses, so that a coherent picture is built up by a series of layered accounts. This approach to reporting research is thus structurally different from more traditional research accounts, such as those of Ellis, in which there is typically a sustained unfolding of a rationale, a description of the intervention processes and forms of data collection and analysis, and resultant changes in behaviour. It is important to acknowledge that both of these accounts, though entirely dissimilar in form, are effective and evocative ways of communicating research. In both cases, the nature of the teacher’s work, which differs in both action and purpose from that of the music teacher in mainstream classes, is a focus of attention.

The transition of the central figure, Anne, from a disempowered and abused adolescent to a teacher determined to find a way of empowering all of her students, is compelling in its effect, although there are only glimpses of how this has occurred. It is apparent that in making the choices to use music as therapy, Anne has, in a sense, taken a significant role in healing herself, and the image of her strength of purpose permeates the entire account. Echoes of disempowerment and the return of empowerment are found in the reports of other researchers within the fields of music education and ethnomusicology working with participants who have experienced trauma and neglect, such as refugees. Skyllstad (1997) outlines a number of music-as-therapy projects that aim to provide forms of self-expression and enhance self-esteem among children who are the victims of war. He describes programmes in both postwar Cambodia and Sarajevo that “are helping children to communicate and to create unity and tolerance, to rid themselves of repressive memories and to focus and divert violence and anger into physical activities and self-expression without words, which is the true value of music” (Skyllstad, 1997, p. 76).

This resonates with Kroon’s observation that, for the children working with Anne, the music experiences provide a unique communicative space: “within the space provided through their engagement with this music, students are able to express themselves without words or sound” (p. 141). In turn, the recognition by Anne of children’s capacity for communication leads to an endorsement of their identity and of self-worth, as stated by Kroon: “if they are heard, then they will feel important and valid” (p. 142).

However, it is important to consider that giving a voice to students should go beyond those who have special needs or are in crisis. In a culture of teaching that too rarely emphasises the voices of children over that of the teacher, it is imperative that such messages reach all classroom environments. There is a need for teachers
to notice or find the song or musical experience that enables individual students to communicate in their own way. Kroon also draws our attention to the importance of choice for children within formal educational environments. For the children within this study, the choice may be as simple as whether to participate in a musical activity or not, a choice that is often not readily available in other facets of their lives. Anne is sensitive to this and to the level of enjoyment exhibited by different children. She almost intuitively judges when to facilitate a child’s extended participation and when to step back and allow children to make their own decisions. Teachers in a mainstream educational environment could exercise the same sensitivity and adaptability in order to enable students to communicate their own needs more effectively, to develop their own ideas to the full. Such understandings are critical to much recent research on children’s musical creativity and student–teacher interaction (e.g., Burnard, 2002; Glover, 2000; Wiggins, 2003, Wiggins & Bodoin, 1998).

Anne, the teacher in this narrative, also recognises aspects of children’s learning and expression that some may see as less important. For many of the children in the study, the provision of enjoyable music learning experiences again fills a void in their lives, where disability may have prevented them from benefiting from positive play interactions with their peers. Although enjoyment is a generally acknowledged element of many school music education methodologies in the developed world, this aspect, described by Kroon under the theme “Music for Fun” (p. 147), could be explored to the full by other teachers. The humour and joy implicit in the absurd, as exemplified by nonsense words in Anne’s songs, is very much a feature of children’s musical play, again providing an avenue through which children can achieve self-expression (Marsh & Young, 2006).

In creating a playful community within her classroom, Anne is also engendering social interactions and skills that are an important part of children’s development. Such skills include the ability to take social cues from others and to initiate social cues. A starting point for development of these skills is the direct and empathic relationship that Anne has established with the children: “Social connection with Anne could be considered the first step in the acquisition of social connection and the development of social skills with others” (p. 142). However, Anne develops this interconnectedness through physical music experience, a most direct example being the ring activities, where children take their place around a fabric-covered elastic band, a symbolic representation and actualisation of social belonging:

Through the “ring” activity, there is a sense of unity, as all members of the class are able to participate according to their physical ability. . . . Their grip on the “ring” assures that they belong to the rest of the group. (p. 146)

In fact, Anne’s classroom could constitute what Barrett (2005, drawing on the work of Lave & Wenger, 1991) describes as a community of musical practice, in which children in music learning situations achieve not only communality and communication but also agency. Indeed “Community” could perhaps have been another theme developed by Kroon, as she describes the inclusiveness of the music programme and its intention to meet the needs of all. There is a sense conveyed in the
account that a community of hitherto isolated individuals has been created within the social space of this music classroom.

The undeniable social benefits of this music programme are complemented by musical learning that occurs almost as an aside. Music education aims of Anne’s teaching are implicit, and musical learning arises organically. The development of musical knowledge and skills is no less valuable for being incidental. Perhaps the main lesson to be learnt from this account is that, in focussing on the development of musical knowledge and skills, teachers can sometimes lose sight of the child who is central to their mission as educators. In Kroon’s vivid account, children and their individual needs emerge as central to music in education. Although the teacher is foregrounded, it is the needs of children that constitute the ultimate focus of her admirable endeavours.

References


Chapter 13
“G”

Andrew Goodrich

Abstract The role of the director of a successful high-school jazz band was explored using ethnographic techniques during one academic year of instruction. Participants in this study include primary informants (director, assistant director, student jazz band members, adult mentors) and secondary informants (guidance counsellor, principal, parents, non-jazz band member students). The following questions guided this study: How did this director become a successful high-school jazz band director? What role does the director have in the success of this jazz band? Data analysis revealed several themes as indicators of the success of this jazz band including the following: establishing a strong link to the jazz band’s sole feeder programme, the director’s philosophy, choosing music, rehearsal techniques, perceptions and attitudes of the students, and the director’s drive for success. Results of this study found that the director’s years of teaching and drive for learning jazz pedagogical methods contributed to his knowledge and success with directing a jazz band.

The temperature is 108 degrees Fahrenheit, a typical hot, September evening in the desert southwest as I drive to Ocotillo High School. Ocotillo is a real “campus,” with numerous buildings of corrugated steel walls painted white with blue roofs. I last visited 3 years ago to do a clinic with the Ocotillo Jazz Band I, and my memory of which building houses the band room is sketchy. I am in luck, however; several students with instrument cases walk towards one of the buildings. I follow them.

When they open the door, all kinds of sound emanate from within. Several students warm up on their instruments in preparation for the 7:00 p.m. rehearsal. A tenor saxophonist walks around, playing very advanced jazz licks over the chord changes to John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps.” A couple of trumpet players sitting in chairs play through lip slurs from the Schlossberg Method. Two saxophone players, one holding an alto and the other a tenor, argue about the key of G major. The alto player proclaims G major a “tough” key signature. “That’s not a tough key

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signature,” the tenor player replies. “It is when you’re playing Charlie Parker licks!” Other students walk around; the scene is somewhat chaotic just a few weeks into the school year. An alto saxophonist whom I later discover to be Kathryn, president of the band council, yells, “It’s 7:00 o’clock! Dangit! Where’s the rest of the band?”

The director, Vince Grayson, walks in from his office and is immediately surrounded by students asking questions. Grayson has a tuner in his hand, which he is trying to calibrate to the piano. Kathryn yells, “Let’s go! Let’s go!” Grayson adds, “Let’s go! Get in your places! We need to start rehearsal!” He tells the jazz band to get out “The Blues,” a “head” arrangement over B-flat blues. Grayson counts off the band, snapping his fingers on beats two and four, “One (snap), two (snap), ah one two three four,” and another year is underway for the Ocotillo High School Jazz Band I.

Upon first meeting Vince Grayson, one is greeted with a firm handshake and a “How ya’ doin?” Grayson maintains a no-nonsense attitude and has been described as “salty” by another local jazz educator. Beneath the salty exterior, however, lies a master teacher and a man with a strong passion and love for his students and his work.

Grayson completed an undergraduate degree in music education in 1969 and holds enough credits for a master’s degree in music education but never finished the degree. He has two explanations. First, family and job commitments took priority over coursework, and second, Grayson is “convinced that there isn’t a prof. anywhere that’s been in the classroom in recent enough years to make a difference in my learning.”

Originally from the southwest United States, Grayson taught in a local elementary school district after finishing his bachelor’s degree but quit after 4 years to pursue other interests. He eventually returned to the same district and taught for a couple more years before taking a job as an assistant band director at a local high school. He remained in that position for 3 years, and then moved to Ocotillo High School in 1980.

Although Ocotillo High School had a jazz band when he arrived, Grayson developed and expanded the programme. Twenty-three years later, “G,” as the students call him, is a leader in the state jazz community, and he is aware of his unofficial position. For example, when the Ocotillo Jazz Band performs at music conferences, Grayson makes a particular effort to listen to all of the other jazz bands in the state that also perform. He explained, “If I don’t show up, then [the other directors] will think, ‘Vince is pissed at them’... and all kinds of turmoil would [be] created.”

Grayson played the trumpet in the stage band during his college years and freely admits to having little jazz experience. To overcome his own perceived ignorance, Grayson attended jazz camps at Fullerton College, California, and he claims to have acquired the necessary skills for directing a jazz band from these experiences. The camps included sessions on directing jazz combos and jazz big bands. Respected jazz educators and performers comprised the camp faculty; Grayson learned from Jeff Landry and Lance McCormick, jazz players from the Los Angeles area, and from Dr. William Barnes, now one of the community members whom Grayson hires to clinic the Ocotillo Jazz Band.
Grayson has established and maintained a high-quality programme evident through the many public successes and accolades the band has received. Yet not everyone agrees that Grayson is a high-caliber jazz educator. A local jazz musician and educator described the Ocotillo band as a “real good band considering the guy up front is not the reason, and it’s obvious.”

What is Grayson’s teaching story, and how did he build the Ocotillo jazz programme?

The Pipeline

The Ocotillo Jazz Band finishes their performance at the local College Invitational Music Festival. G steps to the side, and Frank Floer, one of the festival clinicians, immediately addresses the students:

Wow! What a band! What a band! What a sax section! I’ve heard a lot of the best high school jazz bands in the country, and what separates the top bands from the others is the level of improv. You have it! I don’t have anything to say to you, so I’ll treat you like my college band. I’ll nitpick you to death. You sound great! I don’t know what you’re eating, drinking, or smoking (G puts his scores on his head and covers his face) but you sound great! You’re very sophisticated players!

For nearly 20 years, Vince Grayson and Roland Creswell, the band director at Twin Eagle Junior High School, have worked together to build a pipeline that provides students for the Ocotillo band programme. Creswell began teaching at Twin Eagle, the only direct feeder school for Ocotillo, in 1984, and in 1997 he began directing the second jazz band at Ocotillo High School as well. Together, Grayson and Creswell have created a system in which the students can begin playing in a jazz band in the seventh grade at Twin Eagle Junior High, continue in the eighth grade, and then go on to play in either Jazz Band I, Jazz Band II, or both, at Ocotillo. “There is a very strong feeder program with Roland Creswell,” notes jazz pianist Alicia Carpenter, a local jazz musician whom Grayson hires to coach jazz combos at Ocotillo. Other jazz musicians in the community have noticed that, as students progress through the pipeline, more jazz performance opportunities become available to students from the jazz band both at school and in the community.

The Twin Eagle–Ocotillo pipeline works, in part, because Grayson and Creswell communicate on a regular basis about the students and their respective ensembles. They frequently visit in Grayson’s office after jazz band rehearsals in the morning. Observing each other’s groups is difficult; both Ocotillo jazz bands rehearse during the same class hour, and the Twin Eagle bands (concert and jazz) rehearse when other Ocotillo bands rehearse. Creswell often ends Jazz Band II rehearsals a couple of minutes before Grayson concludes rehearsals with Jazz Band I, which allows opportunities for Creswell and the Jazz Band II students to listen to the Jazz Band I.

Grayson, however, finds it difficult to observe and listen to Jazz II and the Twin Eagle Jazz bands. To compensate, Grayson and Creswell create other opportunities
to communicate. For example, Grayson chaperoned the Twin Eagle Junior High band on a trip to Disneyland. He explained,

Roland and I talk. We’ll be stuck in a car Friday all the way to California, so I’ll know who’s strong coming out of the junior high, and then I’ll get to hear them perform. He’s going to California, and I’ll chaperone.

Creswell attributes the success of the pipeline to the longevity of teachers and programmes that feed the Ocotillo ensembles:

I think that one of our successes in this area is that all of us have been here, and there has not been any changeover, so we’re not, you know, losing band programs all of the time. From Lone Peak [Elementary School] with Veronica Smith, to me at the junior high, and then over here at the high school, we’ve all been together for 18 years. In any band program, once you lose somebody it takes 5 years probably to get it back.

In addition to the internal feeder programme, an unofficial external feeder programme exists as well. As a result of the outstanding reputation of the Ocotillo jazz ensembles, four students in the 18-member Jazz Band I transferred to Ocotillo from outside of the school district boundaries, during the year of this study. Other music educators in the area recognise the quality of the Ocotillo Jazz Band and guide interested students towards the programme. Bassist Justin explained,

My teacher in eighth grade, who’s awesome and caring, told me and Manuel that she didn’t want us going to Crestwood [High School] ‘cause she knew we could do better, and so she informed us about Ocotillo. Things led to other things. It was a good move.

While a programme with an outstanding reputation over a long period of time has its advantages, Creswell estimated that downsides also exist. Parents and students take the programme for granted. Creswell commented,

I think we’ve had such a well-established program for so long that this is just kind of status quo. They don’t really realize what they’ve got in this neighborhood. You tell them, and even the kids themselves don’t. When Vince was gonna take Jazz I to play for [a regional jazz] conference, you know, it wasn’t a big deal to them. We’re this good, we’re this well recognized to be able to play for something like that. They don’t understand that’s been going on for 18 years, and it’s just status quo... We’re also in a community that really supports the arts and that’s nice. The parents do support it. That’s important.

Creswell also felt that the school administration takes the programme for granted. He explained, “The administration I guess has been fairly decent, but there’s been some questions in the last few years. Occasionally, I don’t think they understand what they’ve got either.” While downsides may exist, during the year of this study, the pipeline appeared to be working and the programme was strong and supported.

G’s Philosophy

After the jazz band finishes a piece during a March rehearsal, Manuel, sophomore on tenor saxophone, shouts, “Spring break!” This is the last day before spring break begins for the students. G does not acknowledge the remark and continues with
rehearsal. He reminds the band of their concert on March 27, which is the night before they leave for their performance at the Regional Jazz Conference of the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE). G discusses loading the bus at 5:00 a.m. on the morning of 28 March and leaving by 5:30 a.m. The rehearsal continues with the band playing “Samba del Gringo,” and Daryl, lead alto sax, remarks, “The trumpets dragged in measure thirty-two.” G rehearses the band at measure 32. The band finishes the piece, but the rehearsal is not over yet. G feels the students need to listen more to professional jazz players, so he puts a CD of the Basie band in the sound system and says, “I want you to hear what dynamics sound like.” Since the jazz band will go into the recording studio in May, G wants the students to hear live jazz performances. He adds, “This is a live recording session, and you can’t run it over again [in a live session]. I also want you to listen to the balance.” The song that G plays is the jazz standard “All of Me” arranged by Billy Byers. The Ocotillo band is working on a similar song, “Where or When,” also arranged for the Count Basie Orchestra. The students listen intently, and G says before dismissing them, “Maybe when we come back from break I’ll play the Harry Connick, Jr. version from the movie When Harry Met Sally. Have a nice break and don’t forget to practice!”

While the pipeline Grayson and Creswell established contributes to the success of the programme, Grayson remains its figurehead, and it is his philosophy that guides the Ocotillo programme. His thinking has its roots in financial practicality. Grayson explained,

I felt like [jazz music] was something that the kids could use after high school. I didn’t figure marching band would take them too far, and there aren’t many concert bands for them to play in. If they learn enough about jazz they could play in college and earn money fairly efficiently. In a couple nights a week they could earn enough money to live for the rest of the week. So, I just got interested and pursued it and learned how to do it.

While Grayson learned on his own, he sends his students to camps, clinics, festivals, and lessons, which has helped to raise the level of his expectations for the jazz band. William Barnes, one of G’s early teachers, noted,

That’s the tone that is set to begin with. I think Vince’s insistence on taking the kids to the music camps and seeing the way people operate sets the tone. Vince’s leadership has been very good. He’s been very interested in providing those opportunities to the kids.

The students in the Ocotillo Jazz Bands who attend jazz camps, concerts, clinics, and festivals pass on information they learn to their peers. Barnes attributed the growth of the Ocotillo programme, in part, to this spread of knowledge, and combo coach Alicia Carpenter agreed that “once you have good players, it breeds more good players in the jazz band. Sort of like a living organism.”

According to Grayson, the jazz band has an excellent reputation because he maintains high expectations. Students in Jazz Band I are well aware of these. Freshman drummer Chris said, “G is very demanding. Well, I don’t want to say demanding. He tells you how it is, though, and what you need to do to play right.” Principal Jeff Smithers drew parallels between Grayson and a successful football coach who has established a history of winning and built upon that success, noting, “We’re
obviously a top band in the state, and I would guess in the region based upon the awards Vince has tended to garner with those groups. ... There’s a quality that surpasses anything I’ve heard at other schools.”

G’s philosophy is built on more than expectations, however. During this study, Grayson approached each piece in the jazz band repertoire as an opportunity to teach the fundamentals of big band jazz playing, including articulations, style, balance, blend, intonation, and reading rhythms. As a result, he intentionally spent more time working on fewer songs throughout the school year so that the students would transfer skills they learned to any song they might play. G frequently described his approach as “teaching skills, not songs.”

The “skills not songs” approach paid off when the students had two rehearsals in which to learn the music for an end-of-the-year performance with professional jazz vocalist David Rehberg – another opportunity G arranged to enable the students to interface with the greater jazz community. Grayson elaborated on performing with only two rehearsals:

That’s something that couldn’t have been done earlier on in the year. We had trouble. You heard the music being put together. But when you try and teach skills, not songs, it has a positive result. If I taught songs, then there wouldn’t have been any carry over, and we wouldn’t have been able to do a concert in two rehearsals. There were three tunes right out of the Basie book. That’s not bad for a high school jazz band! (He laughs).

Another aspect of Grayson’s practical teaching philosophy revolves around leadership development for students, not only those in the jazz band, but also those in the entire band programme. This approach to leadership, he feels, develops the whole student. G explains,

There’s a whole program and philosophy out there – a guy named Tim Lautzenheiser. He’s got a whole thing out for kids and leadership and what to cultivate by having leadership responsibilities within the band. It’s always been a philosophy to where you help everybody succeed. It’s just been something I’ve attempted to work hard on developing. It’s a whole person that you’re trying to get to leave high school.

To develop student leadership qualities, Grayson sends the band council, section heads, and marching band drum majors to leadership camps in the summer. Grayson discussed developing leadership in students:

You can’t make kids be leaders. With the Dr. Tim workshops, the kids don’t realize the impact of that for several years. Then all of a sudden they’ve got all this stuff, they look back and they go, “That’s where it came from.” We’re gonna do a summer camp with one of the high schools on the east side. There’ll be some drum corps people there. That’s a lot of camaraderie, that’s a lot of leadership, that’s a lot of working together, and they’ll get a lot there.

Daryl, a senior on lead alto, reflected on the leadership skills he has learned from Grayson:

I just wrote him [Grayson]. He was going through some tough family health things, and I wrote him a card saying all the stuff that he gave me. A lot of it was the leadership, I think. We had a hell of a time some years. Sophomore year I think was a bad year, and last year we were not on the best of terms. After this year and really thinking about it, he really knows
his leadership stuff, and I took a lot of that from him. When I first came here I learned a lot because he gave us more of the things to do rather than just doing it all for us. It caused me to pick up a lot of stuff, and I think he's really given me a lot of the leadership skills that I have from going to Dr. Tim things and other leadership camps.

Choosing Music

During an early morning rehearsal, G is trying to get a group of worn-out students to perform at a higher level than they have achieved to date. G is clearly not happy with how the jazz band sounds. He counts the band off again, and they play again at letter B in the jazz chart “Back in the Sack.” Although the band sounds better this time, I sense that a few of the students are angry and are funnelling their emotions into the music. When the band finishes “Back in the Sack,” people begin talking immediately. Erica, on bari sax, yells, “Shut up!” G tells the band to start at letter J and finish the song, saying, “Our ending was weak. You need to focus for the entire song. No excuses. Concentrate.”

The band plays out the rest of the chart, and then G tells them to get out the song “Party Hearty.” It is 7:36 a.m. The band plays the song without stopping since there is not much time left until rehearsal is over at 7:45 a.m. Afterwards, Kathryn, a senior on second alto, says, “I like that song. Can we run it straight down?” G responds, “No. We don’t have the time. So you guys like ‘Party Hearty?’” The band answers with an emphatic “Yes!” G replies, “So you don’t like ‘Back in the Sack?’” “No!” responds the band. “Alright,” says G, “Get out ‘Samba del Gringo.’ We have just enough time to run it down straight through.” As the band plays the song, students from Jazz II walk into the band room from their rehearsal next door and watch the remainder of the Jazz I rehearsal.

The Ocotillo Jazz Band I performs professional-level charts and has a mature sound considering the age of the members. Grayson explained that he strives for the “California Big Band Sound,” which he describes as “a different concept than what goes on in the area. Ya know, they [Californian jazz bands] play more open charts and more of the advanced high school things. It’s a totally different sound.” When asked to define “open sound,” Grayson stated that it adds “more space for soloing” and described the improvisational skills of players in high-school and junior college bands in California. Noted jazz educator David Baker (1974) cites poor improvisation as one of the biggest problems with school jazz ensembles. Grayson addresses this problem in part by selecting music that showcases the talents of the individual members of the jazz band as well as the whole ensemble.

Grayson uses several criteria for selecting music for the jazz band. He described his selection process for the five songs the band performed in the spring – “Samba del Gringo,” “Randi,” “Elvin, John and the Boys,” “Where or When,” and “Mohave Breakdown.” G’s first criterion in the music selection process was whether the students liked the music. G noted,
I pick a couple tunes that I think the kids’ll like, kind of like a bait, and reel them in on a tune to get them to practice. Ya know, the kids loved doing the samba [Samba del Gringo]; they liked doing that. If I like it and the kids like it, it’s, like, “Okay! It works!” A lot of the music I call, I try to find music that’s fun to play. If it’s fun to play, the kids will practice. They’ll learn their parts.

Still, Grayson has realistic expectations related to music and the skill level of the students:

The music’s gotta be reachable. With jazz music, and ya know – I hope you print this – it’s not a field of dreams. Ya know, if you buy a jazz chart with a double high C [for the lead trumpet], chances are it ain’t gonna happen. It’s not, “If you build it, they will come.” That’s not the way it works. And you gotta be real careful with ranges, and, ya know, things you’re asking kids to do that they can do without hurting themselves at a very young age.

When selecting music, Grayson is also conscious of where he lives and who will be listening to the performance. “We did ‘Mohave Breakdown’ because the state Jazz Educators commissioned that chart for the 2003 All-State Jazz Band,” G explained. “So when we were going out of state, I also wanted to represent this state.” Grayson also asks professional colleagues for advice when choosing music. He elaborates,

I ask my friends. I tell them what kind of a band I got. Ya know, Dr. Barnes came up with “Randi” this year. He said that’d be a great thing for the band, that it would just fit the band. And I called Lou [Jones] and said, “We’ve been asked to do IAJE, so what Lou Jones chart do you want us to play?” “Elvin, John, and the Boys” was the answer, so that’s how two of them came about.

Grayson’s selection of music contributes to the high level of performance of the Jazz Band I and sets it apart from other high-school jazz bands. Alumni Rob McCutcheon, bass, recalled that the “Ocotillo band plays more difficult literature, but Vince rehearsed it to cover the basics,” and “he just pushed those basics to a higher level so [the Ocotillo band] would sound just as good as a band playing easier music.”

G in Rehearsal

As usual, the band begins an early morning rehearsal with “The Blues.” Manuel plays the first solo, and I hear some of the Michael Brecker licks as he plays. “The Blues” routine is rather short today, as G wants to get busy with other pieces. The IAJE Western Regional Conference is approaching, and G is turning up the heat in rehearsal.

G asks the band to pull up “Samba del Gringo.” The jazz band begins, but G does not like how the melody sounds. The opening melody is scored for third and fourth trumpets with harmonic mute, soprano sax, and flute. Daryl, lead alto, doubles on the soprano sax, and Dusty, second tenor, doubles on the flute. G has Daryl and Dusty move in front of the third and fourth trumpets and stand facing them.
They play the melody again, but it still does not sound right. G has the students play in different combinations: third trumpet and soprano saxophone, fourth trumpet and soprano saxophone, third trumpet and flute, and so on. After about 5 minutes, G says to them, “We need to make one giant sound. Put all of your sounds into a giant blender and make one giant sound of it.”

The four students play the melody again, and G is still not satisfied. He tells the lead trumpet player, “David, you need to tune your section.” David leads the trumpet section into one of the practice rooms, and I can hear them tuning while the rest of the band continues rehearsing. When the trumpets return, G has the entire band rehearse the problem section with the melody. He stops the band again and reminds them, “Now, no one play louder than the melody. Everybody, start at the top.” The band sounds much better, and they play the entire song.

Rehearsals I observed during the year of this study typically started with “The Blues,” a chart written by local jazz educator Charles Thompson. The students usually directed “The Blues” by themselves with little guidance from Grayson, who got the students in their seats, let them start, and then distributed music or offered comments now and then. After several of the students improvised on “The Blues,” Grayson moved on to the literature, typically rehearsing one or two pieces per session.

Intensity of rehearsals and rehearsal strategies varied depending on how well the jazz band was playing or how close they were to a performance or recording session. I never observed Grayson demonstrate the sound or style he wanted by playing his instrument. He did, however, model by clapping and singing rhythms, articulations, dynamics, and the melody when he felt that this was appropriate. He also frequently used analogies and other descriptive language during rehearsals I observed, especially when trying to obtain a particular sound or concept with the jazz band, and these proved to be an effective teaching tool. For example, G told the band to be “clones of each other” when working with the entire band or to “Make your colors blend. Become one color, not three,” when working with three trumpet players, and blend improved.

Grayson also used stories and other imagery during rehearsals. For example, to encourage students to improve rhythm, Grayson told them,

A friend of mine came in a number of years ago and worked with the band. He said to use both feet to keep the time. Don’t be that loud. We don’t want anyone trying to get a career as a grape crusher with Ernest and Julio Gallo. We need to externalize the time. Don’t wait for the guy next to you to keep time – you’ll never make it.
Grayson also referenced current events as vehicles for imagery. For example, after the local professional baseball team lost a game 10-2 the night before, he told the band, “You sound like the baseball team played last night.”

Although the use of analogies and imagery can be helpful, some students felt that Grayson talked too much in rehearsals. Erica, a junior on bari sax, felt that Grayson’s talking sacrificed playing time:

Grayson likes to go off on tangents and talk about stuff that doesn’t really matter. He brings up things when we could be playing. He’ll talk for a long time and we’ll be like, “Okay, let’s play.” Sometimes it’s just frustrating because we want to play, but we’ve wasted whole hours talking. It’s bad because we don’t want to talk about it, we want to play. That’s why we got up [so early]. That’s why we showed up here, and he just keeps talking to us.

During rehearsals I observed, I never felt that Grayson talked too much. On the contrary, I felt that he was generally concise and to the point. It is possible, however, that Grayson spoke less on the days that I was observing or that his talking only bothered a few students.

Another one of Grayson’s verbal rehearsal behaviours – sarcasm – generally had a negative effect on the students in the jazz band. For example, during one rehearsal I observed, Grayson wanted the band to tape pages of their music together for an upcoming outdoor performance, and the band assured him that they would tape the pages on their own time. Grayson replied, “You sure? We can waste time and have a tape party.” During another rehearsal, Bill, who played lead trumpet at the beginning of the school year, had a difficult time playing a high B natural in one chart. Grayson was relentless as he tried to get Bill to play the correct pitch and said to the band, “Bill’s been looking for a B natural in his lunch bag all week, and he still hasn’t found it.” After Grayson got on someone’s case, he would continue to reference the problem when he talked to other members of the band. When Grayson addressed the drummer in the same rehearsal, he said, “Is this tight? Are you listening? You need to practice this fill. Sort of like our lead trumpet who can’t find a B natural.” Grayson continued to have it in for Bill for the remainder of the year. Eight months later G remarked to Bill,

Now let’s try it with the rhythm section. Rhythm section stay out of the way. This is not your time. When this CD comes out we want all of our ducks in a row. Now let’s hear the winds. We’ll explain it to Bill later.

When Grayson wanted the trombone players to use their air efficiently, he told them, “Now exhale instead of inhale.” He said the same thing to Bill in a different rehearsal, but with a twist, “This time exhale. It means blow some air through your trumpet.”

Although Grayson consistently used sarcasm, he usually ended the rehearsal by thanking or complimenting the band, such as “Thank you. I had a lot of fun tonight. Please practice your parts after you do your homework.” Still, the use of sarcasm created tension among members of the ensemble. Daryl admitted, “Grayson has a history of being sarcastic, and it pisses people off.”
Personalities, Perceptions, and Attitudes

The jazz band has been so busy performing throughout the spring semester that G cancels a couple of rehearsals in early April to give everyone a little rest and a chance to catch up on homework. A week passes before I venture to Ocotillo High School again. When I arrive at G’s office, he asks me to listen to a CD of the jazz band concert recorded on 27 March and select what I believe to be the three best songs. He wants to use these as an audition CD for the IAJE national conference in New York City. I listen to the CD in his office as the band begins to rehearse and choose the three songs that I feel are the best and that highlight the strengths of the ensemble. When I hand my list to G after the rehearsal, he tells me that those are the same three songs he picked. He burns the three songs onto a CD, puts the CD into an envelope with an application, and tells a student to go drop it in the mail. G tells me that IAJE expects a high-quality, professional-level recording and that the CD he is sending is a live unedited performance. G feels that may hinder the band’s chances, but, he adds, “There just aren’t enough hours in the day right now. We don’t have the time to go into the studio right now. This is what IAJE will get from us, and it will have to be good enough.”

As we are talking, David, a sophomore on lead trumpet, comes into G’s office and inquires about the possibility of the jazz band going to IAJE in New York next year. G replies, “We’ll have to wait and see.” David mentions that he is considering quitting the varsity football team so that he can have an additional 3–4 hours a day of practicing next fall and more time for jazz band rehearsals, if the band gets accepted. G tells him, “Sit tight, we’ll just have to wait to see what happens.”

After David leaves the room, G turns to me and says, “See? No pressure. You are my witness! I didn’t tell David to do anything or not do anything. He mentioned quitting football on his own accord. You’re my witness!” I comment to G that I consider it amazing that David sounds like a lead trumpet player who should be making his living in Las Vegas right now, and he is also a varsity football player. G replies, “Yes, you are absolutely correct. David went to Crestwood High School last year. There, he didn’t do anything. Here, he plays varsity football, makes All-State Jazz, All-State Orchestra, and gets all of this great experience.” As I leave for the day, I hear David in the band room playing the jazz standard “Autumn Leaves” on his trumpet.

Grayson puts on a tough exterior while teaching but also shows a sensitive side to his personality. He had to deal with some low points throughout the school year, including the death of a non-band student at Ocotillo. He confided,

“It’s been hard handling some of the things that have gone on at school this year. I’m trying to react with the kids over the death of their classmate. We’ve actually lost two. We lost a current class school member and a faculty member’s daughter, and a faculty member. Those have been pretty low. There’s a lot to the job that doesn’t involve being in front of kids. Not just music.

Although Grayson has a sensitive side, his tough exterior and high expectations – and the way he communicates them – can lead to problems in the ensemble.
Alumnus Jerry Engebretsen, piano, recalled that Grayson “doesn’t really have a very good reputation with his students because he’s kind of hard to get along with.” Manuel, sophomore on saxophone, described Grayson’s personality as a “detriment to the program” and noted that “the respect from the students isn’t completely there.” Dusty, a senior, described his sophomore year as “a real bad year between G and I. We were fighting like crazy at the time. Then the next day it would be all right, and then we’d actually start screaming at each other.” As he had matured, however, Daryl had realised that he should not be fighting with Grayson, and his parents had told him to consider all the things Grayson had done for him and for the jazz programme at Ocotillo. As a senior, Daryl had begun to reflect on and appreciate his Ocotillo experience:

I’ve come to realize that I’m gonna be gone next year, and I’m not gonna be doing music next year. Maybe I will be, maybe I won’t. I don’t know. I’m definitely not gonna have what I’ve got this year, and I’m not gonna be having as much fun as lead alto my freshman year in college.

Although I did not observe bad attitudes during rehearsals or hear any yelling or fighting between students and Grayson, it could be that everyone was on good behaviour while I was present. When I interviewed students, however, I did hear about negative attitudes. Senior Kathryn offered her observations:

Well, there’s been lots of fighting this year. A lot of hissy fits from people in the band or Mr. Grayson. We’ve had problems with people not showing up for jazz. Sometimes people’s attitudes have created unnecessary problems. … It’s really hard when you’re in a band that’s spewing negative attitudes to be productive. Sometimes this year we wasted a week when we could’ve done so much, but in that week – just arguments over everything.

Daryl reflected on poor attitudes in the current and past bands:

I mean, the ideal jazz band would be a group of kids that want to be there every time. I mean, I have problems, I don’t want to go every Wednesday morning or every Tuesday night. I think that everyone’s bad attitudes contribute to me or mine contributes to theirs… people don’t want to be there and people have problems with G and don’t respect him… and I think it’s been a problem for a long time. I remember my freshman year it was one of the bad years with attitudes, and this [year] is one of the best. I remember having talks on how to make jazz fun again, and we’d spend days just trying to do that. It was a real problem then. We had a recording at the end of my freshman year…. There were people that stayed up all night before and played like crap during the recording. One girl got pissed off, and she left the second day and didn’t come back. We had to have Dr. Barnes play the baritone part. All these problems with people that don’t give a damn about it really detracts from everyone else.

Not all of the bad attitudes are a result of personality or commitment conflicts among or between students. Kathryn noted that negative attitudes come from everyone in the band. Sometimes, a couple of the new kids in jazz this year whine a lot, and that really bothers us who’ve been in the band for a few years. Or the people who really need to go home and learn their parts and they never do creates arguments. And people’s work schedules with the clinics. I had to miss part of a clinic, D.J. missed a few clinics, and we had a lot of fights about which is your priority? Jazz or work? Some times our best players are the ones with the negative attitude. While they’re very good musicians, they take it too far, just put down everyone else.
Drive, Expertise, Legacy

One day late in June I receive a phone call from G. He says, “You remember that concert I had you listen to, to pick out some songs to send to IAJE in New York?” “Yeah,” I reply. “Well, it worked! We’re going to New York!” “Congratulations! That’s quite an honor!” “Yes,” says G, “I’ve been blessed. This will be our second time going. Not too many bands can say they’ve had the opportunity to do that.” As I agree, G continues, “Course, now we have to fund this thing, but I wanted to let you know we made it. It can be a nice addition to your study.” “Yes, it most certainly will be.” The tradition continues.

Grayson works very hard at his job and often maintains a 6 or 7-day work week, which takes its toll. After the usual pleasantries of “good morning,” Grayson gives a response comprised of part truth and part sarcasm, an indication of his tired condition. Whenever I asked, “How are you doing today, Vince?,” his usual response was a version of “I am here. I don’t know why, but I am” or “I can’t wait to get out of the groove.” On other occasions, Grayson would remark, “Is it summer yet?” or “I’m here. I’m hoping for a power failure, but I’m here.” It is a major event when Grayson sleeps in on a Saturday morning, and if he had had the opportunity to spend time with his wife on Sunday, I would hear about it on Monday morning.

Despite Grayson’s busy schedule and his sarcastic remarks, he admits,

I have a love of music. It’s been in my life, it’s a part of my life, and to be honest and blunt, that’s all that I try to pass on to anybody. If they can play well tonight, get high on stage with the concert and learn about natural highs, I think that’s wonderful. I kind of think that’s what it’s all about. You’re on stage and it all clicks. You don’t look at anybody, there’s just too many roads to take when they leave high school.

Grayson is driven personally and professionally, noting that “you don’t stop learning until you die. There’s something to learn every day,” and he believes that the Ocotillo bands have improved as he has improved as a teacher. G claims to try to “realistically outdo [himself]” every year, and he described his yearly goal as “to get the jazz band to play the best that they possibly can and to see what happens by the end of the school year.”

Creswell believes that Grayson’s driven personality contributes to the success of the programme. The students, however, have mixed reactions, both to Grayson and to what they have learned in the jazz band. Senior Mark, on piano, elaborated,

From Grayson it’s more of a group thing. He likes to work people as a group. I think that’s more of our strength as a band, to just sound as a blended and balanced band overall. Not to say that we don’t have good improv players, but I mean his main thing he’s taught me is to work as a group. Ya know, just listening to every section that’s around you.

Some of the students do not feel that they benefit much from Grayson’s expertise, including alumnus Jerry Engebretsen:

I learned a lot actually from my choir director at Ocotillo – a lot more that I’ve taken and actually used in college. … I think the best thing at Ocotillo is… the orchestra and choir director. I did music theory with him, and he knows a lot of stuff. I mean he’s really knowledgeable in everything about music. He gave me chances to play in the musicals, and
he really gave me a lot of chances which I’m really grateful for. And he finds me gigs and stuff all the time.

Similarly, Justin, a sophomore on bass, says that he does not learn much from Grayson, except for just “being in the band,” though he admitted that Grayson helps him to improve his playing by working on music reading and keeping time and had taught him how to listen in the ensemble.

Alumnus Jerry Engebretsen recalled Grayson talking about syncopation, which he considers one of Grayson’s “Grayisms.” Junior Dusty also noted that “the answer to every one of his [Grayson’s] questions my freshman year was ‘syncopation.’ I’ve learned about syncopation.” Senior Kathryn, on second alto, shared,

Always accent and syncopation. (She laughs.) I learned a lot from Mr. Grayson. Everything from releases to dynamics and some stuff with rhythms. This sounds really simplistic, but it’s a big deal, and I never knew “you’re supposed to release on three here.” I’ve learned how to play more musically, which is really important, and how to play for the chart, like, you employ the right style. If you’re playing a swing you play this way, or if you’re playing a samba you play more this way.

Alumnus Rob McCutcheon, bass, reminisced,

He taught me about driving the band, because the bass player had to really drive the band. He would have me set up in between the hi-hat and the trumpets, which is not the most musical thing because you need to be next to the piano player. But, he taught me how to feel the two and four and emphasize two and four so the trumpet players can feel it. The band would work on it, and he basically emphasized the point that the bass player was the foundation for all that. That was really good.

Some students recognise that it is not Grayson’s expertise, but rather his connections to and use of the jazz community, that make the programme strong. Dusty, a junior on tenor sax, described the opportunities Grayson arranged for his students to be exposed to clinicians as one of Grayson’s strengths as an educator:

Basically what Grayson does is bring in other people. The people that he brings in are the most helpful, like Lou Jones, Jeff Landry, and a whole bunch of other people who teach us things like style. I think most of the band mostly has things like pitch and rhythm, we’ll get that on our own, ya know.

Although Grayson was aware that the focus of this study was the Ocotillo Jazz Band, he made it a point to tell me that all of the Ocotillo instrumental ensembles have done well at the state music festivals. Ocotillo, he adds, is “one of the few, if not the only school, to receive superior ratings in the same year for marching band, concert band, and jazz band.” Grayson is very proud of this accomplishment, and he seemed somewhat disappointed that Ocotillo is recognised only for its jazz programme.

Principal Smithers views the band programme as having considerable depth, noting, “When it’s marching band time, Vince’s all marching band. When it’s concert band time, Vince’s all concert band. When it’s jazz band time, he’s all jazz band. I think that those bands at this school are probably emphasized about equally.” Smithers added that Grayson works well with the staff and that he increased the visibility of the jazz programme at Ocotillo High School with performances during
lunch, at school assemblies, and after school. Roland Creswell, the assistant band
director at Ocotillo High School, commented that it would be hard to find someone
who can maintain the caliber of the jazz programme when Grayson retires, some-
thing that was on Grayson’s mind during the year. When asked how he wanted to be
remembered, Grayson said,

Somebody who loved working with kids and worked hard in all three areas [concert bands,
marching band, jazz band] of music education in the high school. I tried to do it all, and I
tried to do it well. In the fall it’s all marching band. And in the spring we try to do concert
band and jazz.

Whatever others may think of the Ocotillo programme and even of Grayson, his
thoughts, as he neared the end of his teaching career, were often of the students, what
he might have contributed, and how impossible it was to predict what his students
would do with their careers and their lives. Regardless of what careers the students
pursued after Ocotillo, Grayson was happy to have played a role in their education.
He reflected,

Kids you think will go and play don’t, and then they come back to it. I have graduates
that played really well in high school, and they now have their master’s in psychology and
pronounce words this long and know what the heck they mean, are published in medical
journals, are on faculty at prestigious universities, and decide they’re not happy and go back
and do music. I’ve had seniors in business with honor grade point averages change their
majors and go back to music. It’s just really hard to anticipate what’s going to happen. I
had a young man show up yesterday with his wife who was in town visiting his mom, dad,
and sister, and he wanted to come by and say hi and introduce me to his wife. He’s got one
of the best country western bands in... I think it’s Idaho, and plays several nights a week.
Makes a living doing it. Plays sax, plays guitar, and says, “G, you oughta hear me sing.”
Here, he played sax in the jazz band and tuba in the concert band, and I haven’t seen him
for 10, 12 years. So it’s hard to say what they’ll do. There’s kids playing music all the way
from the Northwest to New York City to Florida to Texas, just literally across the United
States. It’s nice to look back and reflect and wonder if you had any thing to do with it. But
as far as looking at somebody and saying, “You’re the next Charlie Parker,” or “You’re the
next Maynard Ferguson,” nah, I haven’t done that.

Grayson’s multifaceted story contains numerous paradoxes adding to the com-
plexities of how he is perceived as both a teacher and a person by his students, col-
leagues, and professional jazz musicians from the surrounding community. Grayson
has created a jazz persona despite the absence of a strong background in jazz perfor-
ance. He has an impressive record of superior ratings at jazz festivals and contests,
his students are involved in jazz performance at a high level, and he is recognised as
a fixture in the local jazz community.

Grayson overcame his inadequate knowledge of jazz teaching skills by self-
selecting jazz experiences that were both intrinsic (clinicians working with the
Ocotillo jazz band in the band room) and extrinsic (summer jazz camps for band
directors) opportunities. From my observations it was apparent that the jazz experi-
ences sought by Grayson indicated one of his main strengths: an ability to not allow
his ego or pride to intrude upon the learning of jazz by his students.

Inside the walls of the band room, a jazz community is both created and con-
ected to the surrounding music community. Grayson acts as a catalyst in the
formation of this jazz community at Ocotillo, which includes regular coaches, occasional clinicians, and guest artists. The community and professional jazz scene come to Ocotillo as these musicians bring elements of the jazz world to the students in the form of mentoring, recordings, and current events in jazz music. They also impart skills to the students that Grayson himself does not possess, as well as providing repertoire suggestions for the band. Grayson has gone beyond the walls of the school and connected the students and the programme to the jazz community at large.

The “no walls” environment created by Grayson in the Ocotillo jazz programme results in connections between the school and professional jazz worlds that further benefit the Ocotillo students. With Grayson’s guidance and encouragement, the Ocotillo students go outside of the school to study with private teachers, record jazz music, attend jazz concerts, patronise jazz festivals, play gigs, perform in community and all-state groups, and attend summer jazz camps. The students, in turn, bring knowledge they gain from these experiences back to the Jazz Band I and share them with their peers. A reciprocal learning relationship forms as the students in Jazz Band I go out into the community, where the Ocotillo students are known and welcomed.

Why does Grayson solicit outside help and, in effect, take the walls down? He realises that he cannot teach these students about jazz music by himself and that it takes the jazz community to educate the Ocotillo jazz students. This non-insular approach by Grayson benefits the students. Regular saxophone section coach, Dr. Barnes, observed, “Once directors have shut down and view their band program as their little turf, they’re doing themselves and the students a disservice. Vince is very open and lets people in to work with the program. He’s great about that.”

First, Grayson does not view the Ocotillo High School instrumental music programme as a “jazz program” even though it is the jazz band for which Ocotillo is known. Grayson believes that he places equal emphasis on the concert, marching, and Jazz Band I, and the principal of the school acknowledged this as well. That said, during the year of this study, I never observed or heard mention of any clinicians, guest artists, or trips to festivals for the concert band. While I observed the concert band only once during this study, I found the performance level inferior to that of Jazz Band I. Similarly, when I observed Jazz Band I, students rarely, if ever, looked in my direction and were generally well-focused; concentrated on the task at hand. In the concert band, however, many students looked at me or elsewhere, and the focus and intensity was not the same as that which I observed in Jazz Band I. From my perspective, Grayson was more passionate about jazz and Jazz Band I, and he clearly placed emphasis on the jazz programme. Others recognised and responded to his passion; students commuted to Ocotillo, and parents moved their families and purchased homes in the Ocotillo school district specifically with the intention that their children could participate in the jazz band, not the concert band or marching band. The reputation of Jazz Band I has been their motivation.

Second, Grayson views jazz as an opportunity for his students to gain knowledge and skills about a form of music that they can continue to perform in college and that can help to supplement their income as students. Despite his claims of no background, Grayson feels comfortable within the jazz idiom. Grayson considers jazz
educators open and willing to work with Jazz Band I, which contributes to his higher level of comfort with this music. Although alumni from the Ocotillo programme continue to perform after high school and some perform in the professional world, this is not Grayson’s goal. Rather, Grayson says that he is interested in teaching the “whole student,” and he feels successful doing this in the context of the jazz band.

Still, Grayson does not have the best reputation among some current and former students and jazz professionals in the area. This is due in part to his “salty” personality and his use of sarcasm, which alienates some of the students. At times Grayson was “hard” on these students. I observed him raising his voice and slowing down his speech to emphasise his choice of words to make a clear point to the students if he felt they were not practicing their parts or losing focus in the rehearsal. Despite the borderline yelling, “salty” personality, and use of sarcasm, Grayson usually ended rehearsals by complimenting the students for their effort and often thanked them, telling them that he enjoyed the rehearsal or that he had fun.

Grayson has high expectations, and with these expectations conflicts arise. Nearly all students, past and present, described various tensions with Grayson or in the band, but I never witnessed conflicts more serious than disagreements about talking in rehearsal and scheduling of extra rehearsals or clinics. As an outsider, however, it is possible that I may have been shielded from conflicts by the participants, both students and adults.

As the director, Grayson created an environment saturated in jazz music at Ocotillo High School through his enthusiasm for the idiom, his connections to the community of jazz, his willingness to keep learning himself, his recognition of his own limitations, and his delegation of teaching to other experts in jazz. His longevity at Ocotillo and his commitment to developing leadership as well as musicianship in the students also contribute to his success and the success of the Ocotillo Jazz Band I.

Methodological Considerations

The purpose of this study was to examine a successful high-school jazz band in relationship to current jazz culture and to explore the perspectives of the students who are involved in jazz band and the adults who guide them. Qualitative methodology provided the framework for this study to help portray a reality that is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing, in addition to the investigation of a social reality as it exists for the participants in the study.

I established a set of criteria for selecting a high-school jazz band which included reputation of the director and jazz band, number of awards earned at the state and national level, and a high level of performance and commitment from the student members. Primary participants in this study included the director, assistant director, and students in the jazz band. Secondary participants included the principal, guidance counsellor, student performers not in the jazz band, a parent, outside specialists contracted to teach jazz band sectionals, alumni, and guest artists and clinicians.
Pseudonyms were used for all names and identity of locales suppressed to insure anonymity.

Data collection for this study involved ethnographic techniques, including rehearsal, sectional, and concert observations, field notes, audio and video recordings, formal interviews, informal conversations, and collection of artefacts. Field notes from observations and interviews included three types of information: descriptions of the site and participants; rehearsal activities and materials used; and interactions among the director, outside specialists and clinicians, and student participants. Field notes and interviews were transcribed as close to the observation time as possible and then analysed based on a system of coding. Concepts grounded in the data emerged from the data analysis, and I developed these concepts in the writing process.

I utilised several techniques to establish trustworthiness in the final report including multiple observations, interviews, memo checks, and background research to provide a rich data set allowing for thick description. I reported my biases to counter the threat imposed upon my perspectives and beliefs. In addition, peer review aided in establishing the trustworthiness of the description and interpretation, and I invited two qualitative researchers to review my work and conduct audit checks to ensure that assumptions and findings were valid.
The type of research reporting that has become known as narrative inquiry represents one aspect of a three-sided field that recently evolved across a range of disciplines – writing about research in a subjective manner. The first of these three aspects is writing about research in which a researcher, while primarily writing about the findings of research into her/his chosen topic, analyses both her/his position in the field and the influences of her/his backgrounds on the conduct and outcomes of research. Here a researcher will be expected to admit to misconceptions, personal roles in shaping research methods, how and why these were challenged and altered, and whether this involved personal anguish alongside the development of knowledge and understanding. Kisliuk’s explanation of her role as a researcher with the BaKa people in the Central African Republic (Kisliuk, 1997) is a good example of this style of writing. A second type of subjective research writing is autoethnography, where the researcher is also the object of research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Writing about autoethnography requires movement in and out of focus as the researcher reflects on her/his multiple identities (as cultural insider/outsider, as learner/teacher, as researcher/researched) and how they affect research in the field and decisions to be made in the writing of research reports. My own work on learning to perform Balinese gamelan music in Bali falls into this type of research (Dunbar-Hall, 2003). Narrative inquiry, represented here by Vince Grayson’s telling of the stories of his jazz programme and the comments of his students and colleagues, is the third type of subjective writing about research. Here, rather than that of the researcher in various guises, the primary voice is that of the object of research; the researcher’s position is one of elicitor of information and provider of the academic framework of the research and its reporting and of some interpretation. High levels of researcher subjectivity are not a characteristic of this form of research reporting, allowing the voice of the researched to be foregrounded.

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In total, these three forms of subjectively grounded writing about research help draw attention to the presence of people in research and the contribution they make to our understanding of a field. In many cases, narrative inquiry reveals sides to research contexts that textbooks ignore or avoid. While a broad research field will be present, in this case, learning, teaching, and performing music in a school jazz band situation, it is the analysis of the motives, actions, feelings, and responses of personnel in relation to the broad field that is of interest and that forms the substantive component of discussion. Thus, the objective of narrative inquiry in music education shifts investigation away from music or music pedagogy per se towards the figures working with them. As education and forms of music transmission rely on interactions between learners and teachers as much as they rely on repertoire and teaching strategies, narrative inquiry has real potential to provide a means for understanding not only how music is learnt and taught, but what guides the purposes of the undertaking, what influences its delivery, how decisions are made and problems solved, the contexts of the activity, and responses to outcomes. In this way, narrative inquiry provides music education with an alternative direction to understanding music learning and teaching. Coincidentally, by raising issues directly relating to how and why teachers work in certain ways, it has a function in providing materials for use in the preparation of music educators.

Vince’s Story

How does this theory of narrative inquiry work itself out in Vince Grayson’s story? The voices presented are those of Vince, his students, and colleagues. The writer takes a secondary position, as the organiser of the material and indicator of possible interpretations. Despite his small amount of training and performance experience in the jazz scene, Vince admits to levels of power deriving from his 23 years as a jazz educator, but also recognises that his position is “unofficial.” This seems to provide a window into elements of professional jealousy and perhaps indicates how jazz musicians deleteriously consider those who develop careers as educators (instead of becoming and remaining practitioners). It certainly is at odds with Berliner’s description of the learning (and teaching) of jazz through membership of and taking opportunities in the professional jazz scene in New York, so Grayson’s narrative provides an alternative route to jazz proficiency from that exemplified in Berliner’s text and indicates debates over the efficacy of forms of training and consequent perceptions of jazz credibility (Berliner, 1994).

Already an opening gambit, in the form of reference to Vince’s jazz background and “credentials,” initiates debate over acceptable ways to be a jazz musician. Following this, what emerges as Vince’s story unfolds is his explanation of teaching methods and of his thinking about overall planning to ensure continuity of his jazz programme and his devising of ways for encouraging students to stay focussed, interested, and motivated. All of these are essential aspects of music education and are especially relevant in the preparation of music educators. In this way, I read Vince’s
story as a reflection on pedagogy – a series of cognitive and practical exemplars of what for some trainee music educators remain elusive practices. That performance remains the focus of activity throughout Grayson’s narrative makes a valuable underlying point for all music educators.

Advantages of Narrative Inquiry

One of the advantages of narrative inquiry is that, if treated honestly, conflicting positions can be put. Here, Vince, after explaining the model of what he calls a “pipeline” (by which student from junior high-school level are trained into subsequent higher levels of jazz band membership), makes the admission that the pipeline has disadvantages – in this case, it is taken for granted by students, parents, and school administration. Other implicit disadvantages begin to become apparent as Vince’s story continues. For example, that much of the programme relies on his leadership and, in fact, control. His attempts to contravene this control are indicated through his use of external teaching situations (jazz camps, concerts, clinics, and festivals). By following through a line of thought as a narrative (his control – realisation of its effects – attempts at disempowerment), a logicality to human emotional response to a personal dilemma can be suggested through the stages of a narrative.

On a more pedagogic level, through this narrative, Vince explains how he uses individual pieces of music as learning sites for teaching jazz performance. He goes on to show how this has become a process-oriented teaching strategy through which students would be able to apply the skills and knowledge acquired from pieces of music used to teach specific aspects of jazz performance practice to other pieces of music as these new pieces were encountered. Indicating this aspect of his teaching style by naming it (thus, clearly demonstrating an ideological position), he refers to this as a “skills not songs” approach – something many instrumental ensemble directors could think about. As an example of a music education ideology, this component of his narrative demonstrates how an instrumental ensemble functions not purely as a performance outlet, but is its own form of classroom. Again, numerous debates in music education, especially those surrounding the position and value of performance ensembles as either extra-curricular, co-curricular, or curricular, lie beneath this understated description.

Other issues concerning the running of the band and his teaching methods arise from his story – his way of developing students as leaders, selection of music (in which student likes and dislikes figure strongly), and specifics of instrumental combination and placement in band seating arrangement. Again, in the spirit of honest narrative inquiry, Vince’s personal interactions with members of the band are not always perfect, and criticism of his sarcastic manner and aloofness and their deleterious effect on band morale figure here; it proves that even the best teachers are not perfect. It is not clear whether the act of discussing his shortcomings had resulted in their alleviation – something that leaves room for a subsequent narrative inquiry with the people in this case study.
Narrative Inquiry for Music Education

What does narrative inquiry have to offer music education? First, it prioritises what Van Manen (1990) calls “lived experience” as a field of research and shows how lived experience can be transformed “into a textual expression of its essence” (Van Manen, 1990, 36). This brings with it both good and bad points: as Vince’s story demonstrates, reality and groundedness, on the one hand, and potential criticisms of personalities and their actions and intentions, on the other. Differently from texts on music education that present how music could be taught and learnt in perfect settings, this example of narrative inquiry exposes productive events alongside unproductive ones. That it requires contextualisation for its personnel and events to be understood suggests a move in music education research to strengthening of ethnomusicological thinking about music learning and teaching – that is, thinking about music education as a site of socioculturally contextualised learning and teaching. In this case, the cultures of school, of student jazz bands, and even of jazz are contexts that influence Vince and his teaching.

In effect, Vince’s narrative and the interspersed comments of students and colleagues present a discourse of how and why a school jazz programme works. The differing viewpoints of this discourse coalesce, through the writer’s involvement, into a series of points, each of which opens a potential debate about pedagogy. The issues raised fall into two broad groupings: those specific to the ideologies, running and teaching of school instrumental ensembles, and broader ones relating to music learning and teaching in general. By allowing the voices of each of these positions to be heard and to unsettle perfectionist views of music education as a process that supposedly will always work and produce desired results, narrative inquiry demonstrates an ability to problematise issues of music learning and teaching. Vince’s narrative suggests a need for narrative inquiry to become, alongside other forms of research, a regular type of music education investigation.

References

Chapter 15
Stories from the Front

Loretta Niebur Walker

Abstract This narrative gives an account of a professor’s reflections on her recent experience of full-time K-6 music teaching in an elementary school. The account is recreated from data she collected during that time (field notes and artefacts) and from memories of typical events. It also includes fictional interjections of what students might have been thinking during the events. As the teacher/researcher reflects on events that occurred in that elementary setting, she ponders their relationship to broader educational and societal issues such as the purposes of music education, specifically, and education in general, the role of schools in the emotional development of children, how teachers and students experience the same events differently, and what constitutes success in music education.

It is fall, my season of new beginnings, reflection, and renewal. This fall, in particular, everything comes full circle as I sit in the back of a university classroom as a professor once again. I watch my students give creative presentations about their life experiences with the arts and how they feel about teaching the arts to children later in this course. Within a year many of them will have an elementary classroom of their own in a school not entirely unlike the one I recently left. My hope is that by imagining a place for the arts now, they will make real space for them in their future schoolrooms and schedules.

I am stunned at how many of these university students cite one or two elementary school art projects or music units as high points of their accomplishment in that art form. At the same time, I am sobered by story after story of unspectacular, watershed moments during childhood and adolescence that have shaped attitudes towards and choices about the arts ever since, for better or for worse. I marvel at the long shadows of childhood experiences and wonder. What is the relationship between the musical worlds we attempt to create in our classrooms and those the children experience? Over time, how closely do the shadows cast in memory by those experiences characterise the experiences themselves? Can teachers know which will loom large

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and which will fade quietly from memory? Then there is the grand question for teachers: Is there any way to know, while experiences are still malleable, how to fine tune them so they provide the maximum possible lifetime output of warmth and enlightenment?

My mind wanders back through the halls of the grade school where I recently taught. As if with time-lapse photography, I watch the faces of my young students grow and change from year to year. Then my imagination extends this process through its natural course until those students are in their early 20s, like most of my university students – or until they are 40 or 50, like a few of their older classmates.

What would my young-students-grown-up say if they were given an assignment to reflect on their elementary music experiences? How might they feel about them when they look back after a decade or more? What will stand out in their memories, and what will have faded from their minds? Indeed, what themes are beginning to emerge in my own mind as I revisit my own elementary music teaching experiences, and how might my young students have perceived those same events? I am painfully aware that the content and meaning of memories is sculpted continuously by each new day’s experiences, even when we attempt to preserve their original shape with documents and artefacts, as I had done.¹ Forewarned of the perils of the journey, I begin the attempt to make sense of my most recent years spent teaching elementary general music.

The world of education is not as tidy as it often appears. This includes my re-immersion into public schools. I had been at least one generation removed from the classroom while earning my doctorate and then teaching student teachers when my heart and a coming together of circumstances told me it was time to return to the front lines for a while. So here I was, late in the first week of school, driving to an interview for a K-6 elementary music specialist position that had just come open.

The public road wound along the chain link fence that surrounded Cliff Air Force Base, the local military base. Backyards of military duplexes lined the fence, displaying trampolines, riding toys and bicycles that belonged to some of the 700 elementary-age children who lived on base. Most of those children walked through a pedestrian gate every morning to attend Cliff Field Elementary, the local public school on the civilian side of the fence. In fact, fewer than a dozen of the students lived off base.

Continuing around a bend in the road, an inviting expanse of playground welcomed me to the school. Children temporarily released from the confines of their classrooms swirled and wheeled around the playground like flocks of late-summer birds and took no notice when I pulled into a parking place at the foot of a long stretch of low steps that led past the flagpole and up to the front door of the school.

¹ The author’s memories of these events are supported by a variety of artifacts such as lesson plans, plan books, video tapes, audio tapes, copies of notes sent home with students, and vignettes and reflections written by the author shortly after events occurred.
As I paused to gather my thoughts, my gaze fell upon a sacred scene unfolding at the base of the flagpole.

There, a brawny father in military fatigues leaned down to kiss the eager, upturned face of his little daughter. Time held its breath in an attempt to postpone their parting hug, but with only minimal success. Finally, her pinkness turned towards the school, and the desert camouflage of his uniform began making its way towards the parking lot, though they kept turning to exchange glances. Only after she had bounced to the top of the remaining steps and through the school doors did his pace quicken to reflect the urgency of the other duties that pressed upon him.

Over the next few days, my employment was finalised, and I set up my classroom over Labor Day weekend. Having a classroom was a luxury in itself. Many music teachers in the state did not have a classroom to call their own, let alone a portable where they could make all the noise they wanted and have control over their own thermostat, to boot. Among the room’s treasures I found a motley assortment of rhythm instruments. There were also three precious Orff instruments: one xylophone, one metallophone, and a little glockenspiel – each about as likely to have all of its bars as were our students to have all of their teeth. However, when I got to the two portable phonographs that were older than most of my students’ parents, I was inspired to attempt to track down a boom box/CD/cassette player somewhere in the building as soon as school resumed.

My mind kept returning to the scene at the bottom of the flagpole, imagining any number of circumstances that might culminate in such a scene. I wondered at the vast range of feelings that might accompany them. Musings aside, it was clear that the only feelings I could positively identify were my own, and one of those feelings was that my experience at this school would illuminate facets of life and learning in ways I had never known before.

The day after Labor Day, the constant parade of children through the music room door began. I saw up to seven classes per day, eventually seeing 25 different classes per week with no transition time scheduled between class periods. My principal had instructed me to spend my first 2 weeks teaching all first- through sixth-grade students the theme song and accompanying sign language for a community-building programme recently adopted by our school. The children enjoyed the challenge of learning the lyrics in American Sign Language even though, in my estimation, the song bordered on musical malpractice. Its debut at the grand kickoff of the community-building programme out on the front lawn of the school was a success, and I felt generally welcomed into the school community, although there were a couple minor exceptions.

The first was when the principal introduced me at my first faculty meeting as Dr. Niebur. While most seemed willing to give me a chance, certain teachers’ faces communicated quite clearly that they saw no need for the new doctor to “cure” them of anything. This experience renewed my personal resolve to maintain a low profile as “Dr. Niebur” and function in my day-to-day roles simply as Miss Niebur, tending to the needs of students and teachers.
The second exception consisted of various combinations of fourth- and fifth-grade boys who regularly stopped me to ask (or rather beg and plead) that they be allowed to lip-sync and do “The Worm” and other pseudo-gymnastic moves in the school talent show, just like other kids did last year. I sensed pending accusations of cruelty to children if I my answer were to be “No.”

“If you won’t let us do it for the whole school, can’t we at least do it in music class? We promise we won’t get hurt.”

This was an obvious reference to my *prima facie* argument for denying their earlier requests, but Dr. Niebur and Miss Niebur were in full agreement on this one. Neither persona of my professional identity was willing to perpetuate the recess mentality that the children seemed to have adopted in music class the year before, let alone bear the liability for doing gymnastics in the music room. Yet I wondered how to harness their enthusiasm without letting it run roughshod over what I felt was my mission at the school. Holding firm to my conviction that music should be fun – but it should also be music – an inchoate idea gradually took shape. We began having Young Musicians’ Day every few weeks during music class to give those children who so desired a chance to perform for each other in musically productive ways. I sent home a note with detailed instructions about what was and was not acceptable for Young Musicians’ Day and waited to see what would happen. Little did I realise how much of it would happen to me.

Young Musicians’ Days brought home to me the transitory nature of military life. I thought my sensitivity to this fact of their lives was evidenced, at least symbolically, by the fact that I had taken to writing students’ names on sticky notes rather than directly on my seating charts. All the easier to move them. Assigning children specific places to sit on the music room floor was my only hope for associating their ever-changing faces with the ever-changing names on my rolls. Yet for all this I had not realised the toll their lifestyle takes on extra-curricular endeavours, including lessons of any kind.

Only the most persistent of these military families managed to provide consistent music lessons for their children. Of my “young musicians” who did play piano, it was the exception for even the older children to be advanced enough to play simple pieces that required using both hands at once. Furthermore, of those children who had learned to play a more portable instrument in band or orchestra at a previous school, few continued playing when they got to Cliff Field. In our school district, band did not start until junior high and the beginning string programme didn’t start until sixth grade. In short, music performance was in no danger of developing into a competitive sport at Cliff Field.

Instead, Young Musicians’ Day grew into a casual, comfortable affair for performers and audience alike. It was held together by the basic premise that the performers needed to generate some kind of music that was loud enough for the audience to hear. We all came to cherish these times.
On a typical Young Musicians’ Day, many simply sang. Some sang alone. Others, especially the older students, sang along with a commercial CD of their favourite pop artist, sometimes adding dance moves. Others improvised on whatever instrument struck their fancy. One third-grade class fell in love with the hand drums.

“Joshua, you are next. What are you going to do today?” I asked.

“Just a minute—.”

He paused, purposefully strode to the back of the room where he picked out a drum, examined it carefully, and returned to the front of the room. As my gaze followed him I wondered what was playing out in his mind.

_His eyes became distant with concentration and I thought I saw the carpeted space in the front of the class become a stage._

Silence. Twenty-seven third-graders frozen in time awaited the downbeat.

Finally, the drum spoke, “Tum-de-dum-de-dum-de-dum.”

_In the fragment of silence after his performance and before the applause, he stood with the poise of an NBA basketball player after starring in a critical game, knowing the reporters would descend upon him at any moment. As if on cue, the crowd thundered and he looked upon a wave of would-be interviewers who were full of praise, thrusting their microphones into the air to harvest his wisdom._

Joshua deliberately surveyed the sea of raised hands before calling on his friend.

Matthew asked, “What was the name of that song?”

Joshua replied nonchalantly, “I don’t know. I just made it up.”

“How long did it take you to learn it?” the next favoured child-interviewer asked.

With an air of authority, Joshua replied, “About a day.”

Using his third, and final, opportunity to exercise a teacher’s privilege, Joshua called on a girl who could always be counted on for a compliment.

“You did a great job,” she pronounced.

“Tell us something about it that made it great,” I prompted.

“It was a very nice rhythm,” she nodded.

We all knew that the performer’s reign in front of the class was limited to three comments, so the rest of the hands went down and a smattering of applause accompanied Joshua to the back of the room where he returned the drum to its shelf. When he returned to his assigned spot on the music room floor, we reviewed the previous week’s lesson and prepared to conquer new musical territory.

The official music curriculum that was sanctioned by both the district and the state designated a number of musical concepts and skills the students were to master at each grade level. However, the manner of reaching those landmarks and the nature of any additional exploration were left entirely to the discretion of each individual teacher. Furthermore, the random assortment of ageing teacher’s editions, student texts, LP records, and CDs (very few of which coordinated with the teachers editions or student texts) provided minimal direction for navigating the broad expanse of the year. In short, I had the blessing and challenge of deciding what musical territory I would explore with the children and how.
Given the lack of systematic music instruction at Cliff Field in previous years, and the constant turnover of the student population, I had decided that we should start with the basics in every grade level: beat, rhythm, and singing simple songs on pitch, along with listening to all kinds of music.

Our first challenge in all the grades was to master staying together on a steady beat – a deceptively simple task. Children who have been moving and singing and playing along with the underlying pulse of music since their earliest years seem to feel the beat in the marrow of their bones, but those who have not often struggle to settle into the “groove” of music.

So, every week, for my youngest classes through to sixth grade, I would have music playing as they entered the music room. Their job was to find their assigned spot on the floor and pat the beat on their knees until I got new students seated, duly acknowledged freshly toothless grins, or bent down low to hear reports of where a child was moving next week or next year. After all, only after these critical matters were addressed could I hope to fully engage the children’s attention with the musically urgent matter of beat.

The beat-keeping music might be of any genre that fit with the day’s lesson but, if no other style was suggested by the lesson, jazz was everyone’s favourite, especially Ella Fitzgerald.

One early October day I tend to the usual business as a class files in. Then I scan the room to see who is participating (a good monitor of mood) and who is really staying with the beat.

In one particular class, Brittney jives a bit as she pats her knees and I give her a smile. Then I move in the opposite direction to do an exaggerated, rather silly motion near Marcus and William in an attempt to cajole them into succumbing to the beat.

“Go ahead and move your whole body to the beat,” I suggest aloud.

“Can we stand up?” a restless student asks.

“Sure. Wiggle however you want, but be sure you wiggle to the beat – and stay in your spot, no moving around the room this time.”

Some stand, some remain seated. A few do moves worthy of a music video while others gaze at them in amazement. Others barely tap their fingers to the beat, but when I look their way they look up at me with a knowing smile and tap a little more conspicuously. The room looks rather like a pulsating free-for-all, but it is not without purpose, for the entire object of this exercise is to shake the beat into their bones so they can draw it out again when we play a simple accompaniment to a song later in the lesson. Because this semi-structured activity keeps each of the students in their assigned places, it also allows me time to affix a few faces more firmly to their names by studying my seating chart, five rows across and five or six students deep. When the beat-keeping music ends, the children settle onto their assigned spots on the floor.

We sing a newly familiar song “Bats” (Mariconda & Puccio, 1993) that I learned at a recent teacher workshop. We sing it again, with a reminder to keep the beat on our knees as we sing. Accuracy improves to near 100% this time around and several students give me a look as if to say, “This is so eeeeeeasy! Why bother?”
My unspoken answer consists of setting out a tenor xylophone and asking a student to play a steady beat on the pitches of high and low A while we sing the song.

“Let Jasmine get the steady beat going before we start the song.”

I signal for her to start and let her continue until she settles into a consistent beat at about the tempo we had been singing. Then we start the song. Because she stumbles a little in the middle, we sing the song again to allow her more time for success. Then the class counts out eight beats while I signal for Isaiah to come to the xylophone and ask Jasmine to show him which bars to hit. He starts out tentatively and loses the beat soon after the class starts singing. I stand behind him and tap him lightly on the shoulders to reinforce the beat while we sing the song again. Eventually we arrive at the end at approximately the same time and I signal for the class to count to eight while Tiffiny comes forward.

She carefully places herself in front of the xylophone then grips the mallets as if they are conspiring to escape. With her arms rigid as angle irons, she hammers a tense beat. The class starts singing. Thrilled with her success, she concentrates ever more intensely on the mallets striking the bars, totally unaware that her beat is pulling ahead of the class’s singing. Before the brief song is over her beat has taken off like a runaway train and her tempo bears no relation to that of the singers. A look of surprise spreads across the classroom.

“Oh, my! Train wreck!” I laugh, verbalising the golly-that-sounded-bad look that is on young faces throughout the room.

Then my teacher-wisdom speaks, “You know, in music, you don’t win by getting to the end first! In music, we all win by getting to the end at exactly the same time.

“It’s not as easy as it looks, is it? That’s okay. Come on, we can make it sound better. That’s why we keep the beat on our knees – to practice for when we play instruments.

“Here, Tiffiny, relax your arms, and let’s start that again. Morgan, do you want to come and play along with her? We can make this sound good. Everyone pat the beat on your knees with these girls so we know right where the beat is. Once they get a steady beat going we’ll start singing the song again.”

I move behind the two girls and tap them lightly on the shoulders to help them feel the beat. They start out tentatively and gradually become more solid. Then we sing the song again, with everyone listening to hear if we will stay together until the very end.

We make it, and a sigh of relief mingles with a cheer. When I invite the girls to return to their seats, Tiffiny’s arm lingers behind and coaxes two more notes out of the xylophone before she finally relinquishes her mallets. At the same time the rest of the class senses from my tone of voice that not everyone will get a turn. Looks of resignation and disappointment spread across the room.

Unbeknownst to the children, earlier in the year I had won a few hundred dollars of grant money to buy more Orff instruments and mallets, which had recently arrived. One of my regular after-school loiterers had helped me assemble the new arrivals, and now I had enough xylophones, metallophones, and glockenspiels for each row to have an instrument.
Eyes light up as I set an instrument and mallets in front of each of the five rows of students. I explain that the first person in each row will have a chance to play anything they want on their instrument for a few seconds, and then they will hand their mallets to the person behind them who will get a turn while the first person goes to the back of their row. I explain that we will continue this process until every student gets a chance to experiment on his or her row’s instrument.

While they take their turns, the room fills with joyous musical chaos until everyone has had an opportunity to improvise freely, at which point they seem ready to try something more challenging. When I explain that on their next turns, everyone will get to play high and low A on the beat along with the song, they seem anxious to show their stuff.

As we begin the first round of turns to play the steady beat with the song, visions of grandeur shine in the children’s eyes. They are going to sound so good. The first child in each row scoots up to his or her instrument, takes the mallets in hand, finds the two bars marked “A,” poises one mallet over each bar, and waits for my signal to begin. I start snapping my fingers at a deliberate pace, nod my head, and say, “Beat, beat, beat, beat, . . .” The children’s intense gazes shift from my face to the instruments in front of them and they begin navigating the airspace between their mallets and the bars marked “A.” As the scene unfolds, I marvel once again at how many ways there are to get two mallets to repeatedly hit two bars on an instrument.

My attention turns immediately to Marcus, to whom I have deliberately assigned a seat in the front of the first row. His expression bespeaks sublime indifference as he lets his mallets meander in the neighbourhood of the A bars, making no attempt to stay on the right bars or with the beat. He is one of the tougher kids in school and has a reputation to maintain. I catch his eye, move a little closer and sense that somewhere beneath his bravado he does not like the sounds that are coming out of his instrument.

Isn’t this stuff for little kids?? Why does she make us do it? Oops, here she comes . . . This is really stupid. Yuck, that sounds bad. I can’t do this anyway.

I lightly tap his shoulders and whisper, “A, A, A.”

He falls onto the correct pitch and tempo with surprising ease.

At least that doesn’t sound so bad. His ear begins to pick up the music and he plays rather nonchalantly. Maybe I could be good. They say it takes a lot of practice. I don’t want to have to practice like other kids do. I don’t know. But I’m really not bad at this, you know.

Kristina, in row two, attracts my attention next. She conscientiously places her mallets on the correct bars as if she were pressing piano keys, eliciting a series of dull thuds that move in and out of phase with the class beat.

When my friend showed me how to play piano she said you have to hold down your fingers like this. Gee, these mallets sure are a bother – I wish we could play just with our fingers like on piano. I got pretty good at the song she taught me . . . A melody wafts through Kristina’s mind . . . “Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater . . .”

Like competing ice cream trucks coming down the same street in opposite directions, another tune in a different tempo enters Kristina’s consciousness.

Uh-oh! The beat . . .
This instrument doesn’t sound very good. I don’t think it works right. Maybe if I hold these down a little better...

I approach her from behind and place my hands under her forearms to help her bounce the mallets off of the bars after each stroke. Her muscles resist for several strokes until I instruct her verbally to bounce the mallets off the bars as if the bars were hot burners on a stove. She looks at me quizzically, but tries it. With the help of my hands initiating her rebound on every stroke the bars begin to resonate to the pulse of the Bats song. We exchange glances, I give her a nod, and slowly remove my hands from under her forearms.

Bounce, bounce, bounce... Oh, that one stuck... Come on... Like a hot stove... Bounce, bounce...

Whoa! Where did that beat come from?

Are we stopping? I guess not. It looks like she’s doing the song again. Okay, this time stay with the beat more... Bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce...

You know, sometimes this sounds pretty good...

I turn my attention to Hope, who heads up the fourth row. From the moment I had first snapped the tempo she had locked onto it. She is still clinging to it like a metronome. There is an alertness in her eyes that suggests wheels turning behind them like the gears in a Swiss watch.

Snap, snap, snap, snap... A, A, A, A... “Bats, when they fly go squeak”2... This is kind of fun... A, A, A, A... “I think something’s kind of off with the instrument next to me... Stay with the beat... A, A, A, A, A, A, A...

Joshua, in the third row, stays with the beat much of the time, but periodically wanders a bit before rejoining it.

Snap, snap, snap, snap... A, A, A, A... Hope is good. It sounds cool when we play it right together... It’s easier when it’s slower like this. Kristina’s going this speed, too... Are they there already?... I don’t think Kristina and Hope are going the same speed... Miss Niebur??... Where are we? She’s with Hope... Now, stay with Hope...

Finally, I approach Tiffiny who has renewed her death grip on her mallets.

OK, mallets, go straight down and hit those A’s... both of them... Get it right, you stupid left hand! Keep aiming! The A is over here... A, A, A, A... I think we’re getting it... A, A, A, A... The music fades from Tiffiny’s mind as her concentration and mallets gain momentum... Keep going straight for the A’s. I’m getting this... A, A, A, A, A, A, A, A, A, A, A, A...

“Hey, Tiffiny, relax.”

My whisper barges into her consciousness as the light touch of my fingers under her angle-iron forearm tries to communicate the feeling of bouncing and floating to resistant muscles.

Don’t bother me! I’m already trying as hard as I can!

“Just let your arms bounce like this. You are doing fine. Just relax.”

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2 From the Bats song (Mariconda & Puccio, 1993).
Fragments of the song make their way into her consciousness as her muscles waver between locked-down tension and some degree of relaxation. Every time I feel evidence of relaxation, I ease my fingers away a little more until, before long, she is on her own, sometimes tense, sometimes more fluid, and always working very hard at being relaxed. I see the song gradually melding into her consciousness and starting to guide her tempo. However, the process is not yet stable as we approach the end of our first time through the song. So, I signal to the class to sing it again so Tiffiny and the others can have an uninterrupted opportunity to hone their skills.

As we near the end of the second time through the song, most of my little Orff quintet is on the beat most of the time, with a little help. This is about what I had hoped for all of the intermediate grades at this stage, given their newness to singing and playing instruments. About then I notice a glimmer in Hope’s eyes.

_I wonder what it would sound like if I played something different on the end? . . . Different notes? I’m not sure – they might not sound good. What about – How ‘bout if I change the rhythm and play it really loud?_

Hope plays the last few notes with a grand flourish, much to the class’s delight, and I can see wheels turning behind other bright eyes that are still waiting for turns.

In each class, when we have a group at the instruments that is particularly good at staying together, we record ourselves on the class audio tape, listen to it, celebrate how good we sound, and get a good chuckle out of some of the things that don’t sound quite like we imagined they would. Another day we will take turns playing the scale figures in the melody and improvise sound effects during the rests, but for today we will give everyone a chance to try to stay with the beat and allow a little creative space at the end of the last phrase for the musically adventurous souls among us.

As we continue into October, we set out to explore additional musical territory, including an examination of the effect of tempo on the mood of music and recognising ABA form. Capitalising on the rather Halloween-like feeling around the school, I chose to illustrate these concepts using the third movement of Chopin’s “Funeral March” Sonata.

I begin a third-grade class with a variation on our regular music-listening routine and ask the children to choose a place to lie down on the floor where they can relax and keep the beat to the music. When I put on the music, a few students gratify my expectations by calling out that they have heard this music before. Then we settle into keeping the beat, first with one hand and then with a foot, then three fingers, elbows, eyebrows, and any other body parts we could think of. At the conclusion of the familiar A section, we move our bodies more energetically to the quickened tempo of the B section, then return to our resting positions for the quiet return of the slow beat in the final A section.
When the piece is over, I ask the children how the music felt to them.

“Spooky.”
I am gratified.

“Scary.”
Bingo, again. I had planned this lesson hoping to ride the wave of the general preoccupation with Halloween.

“Sad.”
Another child chimes in matter-of-factly, “Yeah, it sounds like somebody died.”

“Ah! Can you read the title of this piece on the board?” my teacher-self asks, diving in to take full advantage of the teaching moment this lesson had been designed to present.

“Fun-er-al March,” a child reads. And we discuss briefly why a composer might write slow music for a sad occasion such as a funeral.

I call on another raised hand.

“My uncle died. And I was sad.”

From another corner, without any hand raised at all, comes, “I know someone who died and they put a flag on their casket.”

I see other young heads nod gently with empathy. Unprepared for the depth in the eyes behind the comments, I mumble something about feeling sad. Then, true to the innate sense of equilibrium native to children, the conversation lightens up and we move on to our next activity with an added measure of reverence in the room.

I hadn’t realised how close these children live to death. The vividness and immediacy of the images they share parade through my mind. Who was in that flag-draped casket? How did this boy know him?

I peered at the casket through third-grade eyes, staring at the eye-level stripes, like red and white roads. Stripes broad enough for my favourite toy truck to carry its own solemn, flag-draped burden to its final resting place amid the field of stars. I clutched the large hand that warmed mine and looked into that familiar face seeking comfort, if not answers. Hoping that at least we were all in this together and not each one of us alone.

When Miss Niebur played the funeral music in class, all those feelings came back again, but I could tell from what other kids said that my family and I were not the only ones who had felt this way. Lots of kids knew people who had died in different ways. Alicia’s grandmother died just last summer. She was old but Alicia was really sad. I don’t know how Jeremy’s uncle died – he wouldn’t talk about it. The one I really didn’t like was Casey and Cameron’s mother dying of cancer. She had been sick for a long time and just before she died they gave tiny teddy bears to each of their teachers. Miss Niebur cried when they gave her one. I really didn’t like that because kids’ moms aren’t supposed to die and teachers aren’t supposed to cry and both of those things happened at once.

All of us kids worry about people dying, but we don’t talk about it much. Of course, I don’t like any of the ways I feel when people die, or when I worry about someone dying, but when we listened to the music together and some of the kids talked about it, it seemed like it was okay to feel those things and I didn’t feel like I was the only kid who felt that way.
Thinking this class must have had an unusually high exposure to death, I played the same music for the next class – followed by hauntingly similar responses from the children and additional soul searching by this teacher. This is an unremarkable elementary school with the standard-issue curriculum, sugar-coated with the typical elementary culture of hype, energy, rah-rah, and fun. How is it that one piano sonata can provoke all these comments about death, sadness, and fear that someone might die? It seemed that nearly a third of the children’s comments focused on the somber realities and potentialities for death in their young lives. Had I unwittingly led two classrooms of children into enemy territory or at least into sectors into which we never should have ventured without the escort of a school counselor?

As these questions haunted my mind, I reassured myself that, aside from playing the music itself, I had not prompted the students’ comments. Admittedly, in keeping with our typical format for discussion of how music “feels,” I had not prevented their expression, but this time during the discussions, I had deliberately taken the precaution of moving the discussion along when the comments felt too deep or personal for classroom consumption. Still, I wondered if this emotional journey was too risky. Perhaps I should illustrate the same concepts of tempo and form for the remaining classes with a different piece of music.

Yet this piece of music seemed to have tapped into a well of feelings deep in the children’s souls that yearned for acknowledgment and a safe haven for expression. My mind turned to all the times I have felt powerful, amorphous, and occasionally frightening feelings. So many times those feelings had refused to be sculpted into any recognizable shape by language, but had yielded like butter under the influence of music.

As my mind returned, yet again, to our post-Chopin discussions, it seemed that somehow our mutual experience with this music had created a sacred space in which we could all share those feelings, whether we chose to clothe them with words. It was as if the intertwining of our shared, yet private, experiences formed the musical equivalent of Michelangelo’s Pietà in the centre of the room, which we all paused to behold and feel, without having to say a thing. We tarried in its presence for a while, gaining strength from one another, until it was time to move on.

I made a deliberate choice to play the same selection for the rest of my classes that week, with two protective conditions. One being that in the youngest grades I kept the discussion portion of the lesson lightweight and brief. The other was a constant prayer in my heart to know when and how to move on to the next, and cheerier, gallery. Nevertheless, it felt important not to hurry past our Pietà.

After all, even when our schools do make time and space for children to explore their emotional worlds, how often are provisions made for children just to sit quietly with – and learn to not be afraid of – feelings such as sorrow, or loss, or fear of loss? How often can they do this in a setting where they know they are not alone in these feelings? And how often is the healing salve for those feelings matched as perfectly to the feeling itself as in music? And, incidentally, how often do we allow them
to experience this healing without conscripting at least part of the process into the service of some activity designed to boost test scores?

As the long emotional journey of that week approached its close, I basked in the golden autumn sun with a first-grade class while we waited for their teacher to collect them. An F-16 streaked through the October blue overhead and the boy hanging on to my hand stretched to his full height and pronounced, “My dad is in that airplane!”

The ripple effect began immediately.
“‘My dad is in that airplane, too!’
“‘My dad is on that plane!’

As the circle of voices expanded, so did their volume. So also did the elaboration of their stories as the Lilliputian crowd pressed itself around me, eager to be heard.

I pictured the scene in each mind, envisioning their own personal hero climbing into the cockpit of the crown jewel of the United States Air Force, making a superhero take off, and carving safety into the skies.

My teacher mind chuckled at the field-trip-like logistics of such a proposition. We would need 26 fighter jets taking off in succession, something I did not expect to see, even with the benefit of all the imaginative power of an entire class of first-graders. Of course, it could be done school style by putting all 26 superheroes in a big, yellow Airbus. If we planned ahead, we might be able to get each pilot a sack lunch from the school cafeteria. About the time my mind conjured up this picture, the first-grade teacher showed up, and we had a laugh about how all the fighter pilots seemed to have children in her class. A healing smile lingered on my face as the children bounced along behind her across the blacktop and into the building.

Fall blew into winter with studies of rondo form as embodied in the March from Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker and with songs about snow. As spring thawed we reinforced beat, learned to read some rhythms, and continued to work on singing. Almost all students had graduated from grumbled mutterings to genuine singing voices, and now I was hoping for them all to be able to sing a few pitches accurately within a limited range. Of course, quite a number could do that on their own terms when I came, but to get a whole class on the same pitch and have individuals also sing confidently on the same pitch was an ongoing challenge.

In early spring I chose the three-pitch song, Pizza, Pizza, to sing with all my classes to assess singing skills. The song and pitches are simple enough for first graders, while the rhythm and associated game are catchy enough to engage children all the way through sixth grade. In addition, it provides multiple opportunities to hear children sing alone. It suited my purposes perfectly.

I gathered each class in a large circle on the floor, where we learned the whole song, and then I sang alone on the lead part, or “call,” and the class sang the “response.”
Every time we sang “Pizza, pizza, daddy-o,” we patted the beat on our knees, one beat with right hand on right knee and left hand on left knee, and the next beat with crossed arms. This alternating pattern rocked steadily beneath the carefree, syncopated melody.

Then the real fun began. Instead of patting the beat on our knees, we stood up and jumped, crossing and uncrossing our legs on each beat. After certain responses, the entire class ended up standing with legs crossed, complete with plenty of wobbles and giggles, until the next call was finished.

Soon we played the entire game, with students taking turns singing the call alone and choosing the next student leader by inserting a student’s name into the song and tossing a stuffed animal to the new leader. Almost every child willingly took a turn as solo leader. Those who were reticent to sing alone could choose a friend to sing with them. In the end, all but a few of my most shy first-graders took the lead and no one seemed to mind the notes I jotted down on my class list after each child sang. I was gratified to hear most of my students sing on pitch by early spring, and those who didn’t almost always sang the correct melodic contour in a lower key. Very few used no singing voice at all.

In one way, this was heartening to me, considering where we had started in the fall. On the other hand, it was discouraging to have many of my fifth- and sixth-graders just learning skills that are easily mastered by second-graders who receive regular music instruction.

We finished off the year with more singing, a keyboard unit, and had time for hands-on exploration of band and orchestra instruments. I also organised a new version of the school talent show, with the intent of making it more satisfying for performers and audience alike.

Even so, at the end of the year, I wondered what I had given to the students and the school. What had I really done with my time, the students’ time, and taxpayers’ money? Were lives any different?

The technical answer to that question came a week or two before school let out, when each class listened to the class tape they had made throughout the year. We all noticed that our performances at the beginning and the end were qualitatively different. The singing and the instrument playing in our performances of the Bat Song, which were such a triumph in October, sounded pale and insecure compared to what we could do in May. My younger students had progressed to a reasonable
level for their age and my older students had made at least 3 years’ worth of progress, even if they weren’t to the level I might have hoped. I became more grateful for what we had accomplished and less worried about what we had not.

However, more importantly, students had become increasingly responsible for their own musicianship. When I arrived, silent lip syncing and pseudo-gymnastics to commercial pop music were, paradoxically, two of the most admired achievements in music – yet, by spring students were taking turns singing the lead in Pizza, Pizza and were making their own music in Young Musicians’ Day and the talent show.

Perhaps my most gratifying realisation was that we had developed a culture of singing and music making in the school. Music was something we did together. We had built a small repertoire of songs that the entire school knew. We had listened to all kinds of music together. We no longer felt compelled to race to see who could get to the end of the song first. Instead, I repeatedly saw students take personal risks, such as leading the class in Pizza, Pizza, in order to have fun together. In short, music was gradually becoming a team sport at Cliff Field – and we were all on the same team.

And what did I gain from the year? Professionally, I was in the enviable position of spending all day, every day, refining the teaching skills I had been talking about at the university. I was rediscovering the real children behind the theories – always a plus for a professor of education. But it ran much deeper than that. Being deeply involved with children invited me to take a compassionate view of life. Their frank gazes invite us to honest self-examination, and their unguarded love will strip away our façades, if we let it. If we let the lessons that children teach sink into our souls, they will make us much better grown-ups.

As for what the children carried away in their souls from our experiences together that year, I can only guess. Perhaps in a decade or two someone will ask them and they will tell stories like the ones I heard this fall. Maybe they will remember our time together, maybe they will not. If they do, I hope those memories entice them to bask in musical sunshine that nourishes their souls and warms their lives.

Methodological Considerations

This research provides a heuristic framework that invites the reader to explore fundamental issues in music education within the context of classroom practice. Narrative constitutes both the phenomenon being studied and the method by which it is studied. Participants were an elementary general music teacher, who is also the researcher, and her students. Her daily experiences with the students became her data. These experiences were documented to the extent possible, without compromising the integrity of the classroom experience, in the form of field notes written by the researcher shortly after events occurred, recordings of lessons and performances, lesson plans, schedules, seating charts and other typical classroom artefacts. The narrative is woven from these data (especially the field notes) and
from reconstructions of typical classroom scenarios. In addition, fictional sequences (indicated by italic type) have been inserted into the narrative portraying imagined accounts of the students’ feelings that illuminate pertinent educational issues.

Reference

In his book, *Inventing Kindergarten*, Norman Brosterman (1997) displays the work of 20th-century artists and architects such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Le Corbusier, and Frank Lloyd Wright alongside photographs of colourful instructional materials used by those who followed the educational philosophies of the German pedagogue Friedrich Froebel. Froebel’s method, widely adopted in schools throughout Europe and to some extent in America in the 19th century, made use of carefully prepared manipulative materials he called *gifts*. These materials included blocks, balls, wooden forms for design work, paper for weaving and cutting, jointed slats, sewing or “beauty” forms, and coloured parquetry shapes. Brosterman speculates that these artists may have drawn upon their early experiences as children in Froebelian-inspired kindergartens, incorporating these simple but infinitely variable gifts as essential elements of their aesthetic vocabularies. Brosterman is cautious in his claims, since little direct evidence of the early schooling of these artists and architects exists. Nonetheless, he juxtaposes the geometric tiles and shapes with what seems like incontrovertible parallels in the adult work of these notable individuals. For example, boldly coloured strips of paper woven in horizontal and vertical lines on paper beauty forms look stunningly similar to Mondrian’s geometrical lattices. Parquetry and paper folding in grids, squares, and triangles parallel Frank Lloyd Wright’s architectural drawings. Although documentation may be sparse, the argument made by the visual evidence is compelling. Our eyes are convinced by the strong resemblances. Brosterman maintains that early school experience with Froebel’s gifts must have had lasting impact on the aesthetic sensibilities of the artists who founded major movements in modern art and architecture. The reader is left to wonder at the indelible impressions of school experience on an individual’s adult identity. Is it possible that children’s early school experiences could leave such a mark?

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Such a phenomenon also lies at the centre of Loretta Niebur Walker’s *Stories From the Front* as she wonders about the long shadows of childhood. Are the traces of early school experience enduring or fleeting? Why do preservice teachers recall with vividness and sometimes discomfort their own memories of music class, which colour their attitudes towards the arts experiences they seek for their own students? What is it about music class that calls up such diverse and deeply felt recollections? When the particular details of any given day fade, what qualities of musical experience remain? Walker’s return to the university classroom after several years teaching at Cliff Field Elementary invests these questions with purpose and poignancy. When she asks whether teachers can craft and organise instructional encounters that will have a lasting influence, Walker pinpoints one of the fundamental uncertainties of classroom life. Using narrative inquiry as a vehicle, she invites us to reflect on this impact, ponder examples from our own experience, and use her wonderment as an invitation for dialogue with others. If the process of reflecting upon the phenomena she describes and portrays raises more questions than it answers, then Walker’s narrative provokes another kind of tension, what Barone refers to in arts-based research as the *enhancement of uncertainty* (1995, p. 172). The power to invite multiple responses and interpretations connects narrative inquiry with artistic forms of representation.

Clandinin and Connelly maintain that the central phenomenon of narrative inquiry is often less central than we might suppose. They compare neatly composed statements of the problem and research questions with a kaleidoscopic array of research puzzles they have encountered in their studies of Bay Street School (2000). They write, “narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution” (p. 124). If in the process of conducting a study, “phenomena in narrative inquiry are a kind of shifting ground” (p. 126), then understanding a narrative study requires that readers be alert to emphasis, awake to nuance, and prepared for turns in the author’s account of classroom life. One way to read such a study involves tracing some of these shifts.

Narrative inquiry prompts us to recall worlds we have previously inhabited. The author of a narrative strives for verisimilitude, in which the world on the page rings true with the reader’s lived experience of similar contexts, interactions, challenges, and resolutions. Walker’s story invokes the familiar as she inventories the musical instruments left by previous teachers, encounters the resistance of new colleagues in a new setting, or responds to the eager jockeying of her new students as they ask for the opportunity to lip synch and gyrate during music class. Joshua’s brief foray into classroom stardom via the hand drum is well known to general music teachers who recognise the magnetic lure of percussion instruments and children’s yearning to be in the limelight, however brief. In this episode, Walker’s classroom is portrayed through description, dialogue, her reflective voice, and imagined responses of the children. She offers us a series of encounters that characterise children’s engagement with music – grappling for the elusive steady beat, finding their singing voices, and most evocatively, responding to the daily listening episode. We are convinced of the veracity of this account through its strong resemblances to classrooms we have known.
Narrative inquiry also allows us to step into less familiar worlds. In this instance, we enter a school where children’s interactions with teachers are shadowed by uncommon circumstance. In this classroom, sticky notes used in place of more permanent seating charts mark the instability of children’s comings and goings. In this transitory context, Walker explains how the theme of death surfaced in her classroom on a clear fall day through the guise of Chopin’s *Funeral March*. Chosen for straightforward and practical purposes to teach tempo, ABA form, and to align with topical associations to Halloween, the daily listening example shifted to a different sort of lesson altogether. As the children lead Walker into the sensitive territory of fear, loss, and grief evoked by the music, readers are drawn in to consider the significance of curricular decisions, the implications that attend seemingly mundane choices of musical examples, and the serendipitous spaces for expression that are created when teachers are sensitive to children’s emotional needs and are willing to accommodate them. When children live in such uncomfortable proximity to loss, how does music intensify feeling and what kind of lasting impressions might such encounters create? Through Loretta Niebur Walker’s portrayal of her music classroom at Cliff Field Elementary, we grapple with these significant questions and search for resemblances.

**References**


Part III
Chapter 17
Troubling Certainty: Narrative Possibilities for Music Education

D. Jean Clandinin

As I read the narrative accounts in the previous chapters of this book, I found myself caught into the stories of the lives represented on the pages. As someone with little knowledge of music and music education, I felt filled with wonder about what it meant to live a life . . .

. . . as a musician, as I read the account of Jan Peterson, who said “But being a singer it is in your head, it is – what you perform is actually you”;

. . . as a preservice teacher learning to teach music, as I read the account of Anne, who said, “I’m not a fan of lesson plans . . . It’s not that it’s hard, it’s just tedious. And it seems pointless. . . . Why can’t I just get up there with the music and work from there? Why do I have to have a set plan?”;

. . . as a choir member, as I read the account of Henry, who said, “I love singing, I love music so much, and I love singing so much because singing is the only part of music that I can really do. I’m not competent enough with another instrument, so the voice is the one, and it will be a very sad day when I’ve got to give it up”;

. . . as a cooperating music teacher, as I read the account of Nora, who said, “I spend an enormous amount of time with them . . . As a result you can’t not have some sort of interpersonal relationship and you can’t not be affected by that . . . When a person is coming to you and is asking for help with their future, with their career . . . I take it seriously”;

. . . as a specialist music teacher, as I read the account of Anne, who said, “Everybody should be heard. Everybody has got a story to tell, or a song to sing . . . And I think in my teenage years nobody would listen to my song, they told me I didn’t have a song or that my song wasn’t valid and I think of the kids who I work with and they can’t sing or they can’t speak and I think they’ve got a message to tell and it’s our responsibility . . . to find a way for them to express their message”;

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1 I am indebted to the responses of those gathered at the Research Issues table in the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development and especially to Dr. S. Griffin for asking me to “say more.”
... as a school band director, as I read the account of Grayson, who said, “I pick a couple tunes that I think the kids’ll like, kind of like a bait, and reel them in on a tune to get them to practice”;

... as a university music teacher, Loretta Walker, who moved from university classroom to school classroom and back again as she said, “being deeply involved with children invited me to take a compassionate view of life. Their frank gazes invite us to honest self-examination, and their unguarded love will strip away our façades, if we let it. If we let the lessons that children teach sink into our souls, they will make us much better grown-ups.”

The richness of the stories of each person’s experience positioned in relation to music education helped me awaken to the complexity of music education. My own experiences in music education had done little to make me thoughtful about the teaching of music in schools. And, as I read the chapters, I was drawn into the richness of the lives of the people whose stories filled the pages. Thinking narratively as I read the stories of their lives, I heard the temporality of lives, lives that unfolded and enfolded over time, in particular places, embodied lives of people with emotions, moral sensibilities, and a sense of the aesthetic possibilities as their lives were lived out on shifting landscapes. Music was threaded through each life.

One way of reading the book is to focus on the individual narratives of experience, to each person’s stories lived and told from unique vantage points, to each person’s unfolding plotlines with attention to temporality, the personal, the social, and place. There was much to learn from reading each narrative account as a stand-alone piece. For example, the narrative account of Jan Peterson taught me much about the lived experience of a music student. Who she is, and is becoming, was illuminated by her words, her stories, her parents’ words, their stories of her, and David Cleaver’s words and stories of both Jan and her parents interwoven with his own resonant stories of music.

When I read each chapter on its own, I could see what I could learn from each experience. Each chapter called forth resonant rememberings of my own experiences, experiences I have rarely storied as strong threads in my life. I recalled country dances where local bands played; I recalled symphony performances, operas, and ballets; I recalled soft music carrying out onto decks and porches on summer evenings; I recalled carol singing at the community hall; I recalled dancing in living rooms and in country halls. I could not recall music classes in school. Each chapter called forth much I could learn about my own knowing of music education and perhaps about the thread of music in my stories to live by.

However, as I read across all of the narrative accounts in the book, I began to sense the institutional, the social, and the cultural narratives of music education that shape the landscape of music education and that shape the lives of the participants and researchers whose stories are represented in this book. From reading across the narrative accounts, across the representations of the lives, I began to sense the dominant narrative of music education and to sense the possibilities that Barrett and Stauffer see for shifting the dominant narrative of music education. As I awakened to my own stories of music and the absence of music education in my life, I wondered how many stories of music are silenced or kept secret as the dominant narrative shapes the landscape.
The Place of Uncertainty in Narrative Inquiry in Music Education

I wondered at Barrett and Stauffer’s use of the phrase “troubling certainty” in the title of the book and in relation to music education. I wondered how they wanted readers to read the title. Could it mean that they hoped, through bringing narrative ways of thinking to music education, they could disturb the smoothness of beliefs about how music is taught, that is, that music is a knowledge or sets of skills taught in a particular way. What was once certain, that is, the what and how of music education, would become less certain if we attended closely to the narrative accounts.

Or perhaps they wanted to cue readers to their intention of shifting the starting point of music education from the subject matter of music to the starting point of the lives of children, teachers, teacher educators, and others and, through that shift in starting point, highlight the importance of lives with their embodied uncertainty. As I turned the subtitle over and over, I began to see the different shades of meaning in a kaleidoscope-like fashion as I played with what it might mean to trouble certainty in music education.

Certainty connotes that something is clearly established and/or assured. There are no question marks associated with it. I believe their title calls us to add question marks to music education through beginning to think narratively. It calls us to disturb, to trouble, the taken-for-granted institutional narrative of music education with a starting point in the certain knowledge and skills of music so that we may shift the narrative of music education to a starting point of lives. Troubling the institutional narrative of music education necessarily troubles how we imagine teaching teachers to teach music, how we imagine children learning music, and how we continue to work with children, youth, and others in various vocal and instrumental ensembles.

I began to play with an idea borrowed from my colleague Florence Glanfield (personal communication, 2008) who spoke of a recent math conference with the provocative title Becoming Certain about Uncertainty. As Florence and I talked about uncertainty in music education and in mathematics education, she highlighted how the title chosen by Barrett and Stauffer troubled the certainty, the taken-for-grantedness of music education. In that choice, they made a place for acknowledging that the only certainty that might remain is the certainty of uncertainty. It is, for them, narrative inquiry that offers the possibility of the necessity of troubling certainty in music education.

Understanding Narrative Ways of Thinking of Curriculum Making in Music Education

Through the narrative accounts co-composed by the researchers and participants represented in this book, I came to understand something more about curriculum making in music education. Reading the narrative accounts raised wonders for me about the lives of the researchers and about the people with whom they engaged in their narrative inquiries. Reading the stories of youth, teachers, choir members,
teacher educators, and band directors allowed a multiplicity of voices to be heard. What could we learn from these narrative inquiries about what it means to compose a life as a teacher and teacher educator interested in thinking about curriculum making in music education with attentiveness to composing lives?

My view of experience is one shaped by the ideas of Dewey (1934, 1938), and it has, over the years, become a deeply narrative view of experience. While Dewey focused on the principles of continuity and interaction within situation as a way of thinking about experience, Michael Connelly and I (1988) began to think about Dewey’s conceptualisation of experience as a profoundly narrative one. We began to attend more directly to how we might read Dewey’s ideas, taken up by Mark Johnson (1987) and Donald Schön (1983, 1987, 1991), and to see how we could re-imagine the idea of experience narratively.

As I think about my experiences and the experiences of children, teachers, parents, others, and myself, I think narratively about experience, attending not to experience as vagrant shards but as narrative threads of experience unfolding and enfolding within embodied persons as they live in situations over time and in diverse places. Within a Deweyan view of experience, I have learned to be attentive to temporal unfoldings, as well as to the personal, that is, to the interaction of the personal and social, embodied in each person at the same time as attending to the “interactions of the embodied person with the social, that is, to the social, cultural, institutional narratives and to the minute-by-minute particularities of ongoing events” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 1). Attending to the particularities of place or places where events were lived and told as well as to the place or places where stories of those experiences were told and retold is also important. Thinking narratively, I have also learned to be attentive to the ways that language shapes social, cultural, and institutional narratives and how those narratives, in turn, shape each individual person.

This narrative sense of experience emerges in Loretta Walker’s chapter as she slides backward and forward in time, from “the halls of the grade school where I recently taught” to her present university classroom where she is a professor again. She slides forward to an imagined future of the children she taught “until those students are in their early 20s, like most of my university students – or until they are 40 or 50, like a few of their older classmates.” She takes us to a scene she observes between a child and parent, “an attempt to postpone their parting hug” outside the school, and her feeling that her imagined future “experience at this school would illuminate facets of life and learning in ways I had never known before.” She takes us to familiar places in the school: the music room, the faculty meeting room, and the playground. As she unfolds her storied experience, Walker lets us glimpse the institutional narrative of music education in which music teachers do not have classrooms and have meager resources, markers of a narrative in which music education is marginalised in the dominant story of school in which “academic” subject matter matters most.

The social, cultural, and institutional narratives that shape individual’s experiences of music also become apparent in Kroon’s chapter as Kroon and Anne, a specialist music teacher, work together. Anne works against the grain of the dominant narrative of music education as a process of teaching musical skills and con-
cepts. Anne foregrounds communication and social skills in her teaching of music. For Anne, music education becomes a story of inclusion and of enjoyment. While note values, form, phrasing, and pitch are taught, Anne weaves them into a counter-narrative, an against-the-grain undoing of what matters in music education.

Thinking narratively about experience is both a familiar idea and a strangely difficult idea. Thinking narratively opens up the necessity of acknowledging uncertainty, of knowing that each person’s experience is always contingent on time, place, people, and events. The subtitle of this book acknowledges the uncertainty that narrative research allows us to glimpse in music education. This book causes me to wonder again about the certainty we sometimes think we can achieve in curriculum making whether in school classrooms or teacher education classrooms. Griffin’s (2007) study of how children’s intergenerational stories of music-making shape the classroom curriculum-making highlights how there is no certainty in what each child will experience in a music classroom. Reflecting on her work with the children and their parents about the interconnections between in-school music and out-of-school music causes Griffin to call for “broader visions for what music education is or could be” (p. 186) and to work with preservice teachers to reach beyond a narrow view of curriculum to one where “children’s voices become genuinely embedded within their teaching practices” (p. 187).

My view of curriculum making is one that emerges theoretically from the work of Schwab (1970) and is one that has emerged experientially from more than 40 years of teaching and counselling in schools, teaching in university classrooms, working between schools and universities as a preservice teacher educator, and engaging in narrative inquiries with children, youth, parents, teachers, both preservice and in-service, administrators, and others. What I have come to know as a curriculum maker emerges from being positioned in these multiple ways and being engaged with various theoretical ideas about curriculum.

Following Schwab (1970), curriculum can be understood as the interaction of four curriculum commonplaces – learner, teacher, subject matter, and milieu (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). In order to understand the negotiation of curriculum, we need to attend to each commonplace in relation with the others, in shifting relational ways. We see this in Walker’s music classroom as she acknowledged the official music curriculum with its designated “musical concepts and skills” to be mastered at each grade level. As I read her chapter, I saw how these skills and concepts were her starting point, but she attended closely to what the children knew and did not know. Working within a particular school, community, and state milieu, she created an in-classroom milieu where children such as Joshua and Marcus could express who they are and are becoming. This view of curriculum making asks us to understand teachers like Walker by attending to each teacher’s personal practical knowledge, his/her embodied, narrative, moral, emotional, and relational knowledge as it is expressed in practice. This view of curriculum making asks us to understand children as learners and to understand their knowledge as personal, relational knowledge (Lyons, 1990; Murphy, 2004). This view of curriculum making asks us to attend simultaneously to the nested milieux of different school places such as in- and out-of-classroom places, community places, state or provincial places, countries, and so on.
As Walker storied her classroom curriculum making in this air force base school, I watched how a particular subject matter, slow music, became funeral music and shape-shifted to the children’s experiences of family deaths in conflict zones. Walker awakened and wondered “how is it that one piano sonata can provoke all these comments about death, sadness, and fear that someone might die?” She realised as she awakened that their “mutual experience with this music had created a sacred space.” As curriculum makers, I realise that different subject matters are structured by the dominant narratives of the discipline. In Walker’s classroom, music was structured by the skills and concepts of the mandated curriculum, but the negotiated lived curriculum was a curriculum that made lives visible.

Michael Connelly and I (1992) wrote that curriculum “might be viewed as an account of teachers’ and children’s lives together in schools and classrooms” (p. 392). Lives in such a view are central to the negotiation of curriculum. Curriculum is a course of lives in motion. As I have written with colleagues elsewhere (Clandinin et al., 2006), “within this complex fluid mix, lives are what become central. Lives, people’s experiences, who each of us are, and who we are becoming are central” (p. 173). Imagining the place of a curriculum that places lives at the center of curriculum making draws attention to the importance of staying wakeful to people’s experiences. As I read Walker’s chapter, I saw that she became wakeful to how she and the students had come to see music as “something we did together.”

Lives also became central in the curriculum making that Nora engaged in with her student teachers in Davis’ chapter. As Davis described Nora he described her as someone who “occasionally displays inconsistencies in her views and practices.” For Nora, “these inconsistencies merely corroborate Nora’s own view that she has not finished learning to be a teacher.” In Davis’ account, it was Nora, the teacher, whose life became central in curriculum making with her student teachers. In the curriculum making in the classroom when the student teacher, Nora, and the children were together, it was all of their lives in relationship that was the space of curriculum making.

**Conceptualising Narrative Inquiry in How It Is Taken Up in Music Education**

While there is a great deal of debate about the borders of narrative inquiry, and about whether we should police those borders, there is some agreement on the following definition.

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study

(Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375).
There are different starting points for narrative inquiry, that is, either telling stories or living stories. While most narrative inquiries begin with telling stories, that is, with a narrative inquirer interviewing or having conversations with participants who tell stories of their experiences, “a more difficult, time-consuming, intensive, and yet, more profound method is to begin with participants’ living because in the end, narrative inquiry is about life and living” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 376).

In the chapters of this book, I see different starting points: some narrative inquirers begin with telling stories, others with living stories. The book is the richer for it. Some of the chapters that begin with telling can be seen, using Chase’s (2005) categories of different approaches to narrative inquiry, as following more of an identity approach with a focus on how people construct themselves within institutional, cultural, and discursive contexts, such as Ferguson’s account of Josh and Anne, or a sociological approach with a specific focus on specific aspects of people’s lives, such as Langston’s narrative account of Henry. Other chapters that begin with living, such as the autobiographical narrative inquiry of Walker, offer readers another way of understanding narrative inquiry.

What the chapters in the book offer readers, then, are different ways of seeing the starting points for narrative inquiry and different possible approaches. However, the various chapters also highlight tensions at the methodological borders as narrative inquiry bumps against more formalistic and reductionist methodologies. As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) highlight, there are tensions with the place of people, context, certainty, action, and temporality at the reductionist border. There was little evidence of tensions at this border in these chapters. I could, however, sense tensions at the formalist border around the place and balance of theory, people, and the place of the researcher in some chapters. These tensions highlight the ways that narrative inquirers push against the edges of more dominant methodologies and how we often find ourselves in what Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) see as methodological borderlands.

Justifying Narrative Inquiry in Music Education

Earlier I wrote that I imagined Barrett and Stauffer as wanting to shift the dominant narrative of music education, to make the taken-for-granted less filled with certainty and more open to question, to wonder, to wide awakeness about what could be otherwise. They want narrative inquiry to be more than a “‘musical ornament,’ an elaboration on the established themes of psychometric inquiry, those of measurement and certainty” (this volume, p. 1). While each narrative inquirer locates himself/herself differently in their personal justification, I sense the importance that the work offers to each researcher. But there must be more than a personal justification in research. It is necessary to be able to answer the “so what” and “who cares” questions about our narrative inquiries, and to do that there must also be practical and social justifications. I sense that Barrett and Stauffer justify the overall work of introducing narrative inquiry within the area of music education as a way to shift the dominant
social narrative of music education, to make it more responsive, more inclusive of the lives of all people, regardless of who they are and how they are positioned on the landscape. They imagine troubling as a way to give pause for thought and to prompt the music education community to consider the many ways in which we know and come to know. They link their justification around troubling certainty to Maxine Greene’s (2001) notion of wide awareness, a way of living that Greene hopes will help us to look beyond the taken for granted. They borrow Greene’s words in their hope that music teachers can learn to be “open to the mystery, open to the wonder, open to the questions” and can be the ones “who can light the slow fuse of possibility even for the defeated one, the bored one, the deserted ones” (p. 146).

As Barrett and Stauffer challenge us to trouble certainty, we need to understand that what works in shifting the dominant narrative is always what works “for now.” As the dominant narrative of music education begins to shift and change as music teacher educators and researchers take up the challenge of inquiring narratively into the living, telling, re-telling, and re-living of individual’s experiences of music education, we need to remind ourselves that what works “for now” depends on each of us remaining open to the possibilities that things can be otherwise, in our music classrooms, in our choirs, in our bands, and in our music education classrooms. As Greene (2001) reminds us, we need to find ways to stay awake to the shifting landscapes and to what is happening to us in these uncertain, tumultuous times.

As others take up the challenges that Barrett, Stauffer, the researchers, and participants in this book offer, I believe that we can compose spaces that help all of us, as researchers and as music educators, to stay “open to the mystery, open to the wonder, open to the questions” (Greene, 2001, p. 146) of each life, each music teacher’s life, each child’s life, and each student teacher’s life, as they dance along on this shifting, changing landscape. There is, indeed, no certainty, only the certainty of uncertainty, in what will happen next in music education. And it is from attending in wide awake ways to the lives of children, youth, families, teachers, and others that are being shaped in, and through, music education that will enable us to make sense of the uncertainty that faces us all.

References


Chapter 18
Charting Narrative Territory

Wayne Bowman

Whither Narrative?

Narrative inquiry presents the music education discipline with conceptual and methodological territory that is largely uncharted and relatively unexplored: territory whose assumptions and pursuits are in many respects foreign to those of conventional research in our field, territory that offers both intriguing possibilities and difficult challenges. What does it presume to introduce that has been previously neglected or that is otherwise missing? How does it improve on extant research practices? What differences might it make to professional practice? How will its introduction to the field be remembered in years ahead?

As I have argued elsewhere, how or whether we make good on the promise of narrative inquiry depends fundamentally on what we understand that promise to be. And that, as it turns out, is not the kind of concern to which there is a single, definitive answer. Narrative inquiry means different things to different people, as this volume clearly demonstrates. We can do many interesting and potentially useful things with narratives: we can create them, collect them, categorise them, analyse them, interpret them, elaborate upon them, criticise them, and dramatise them – all these and quite a bit more. Narrative inquiry designates not so much a neatly unified research method or field of study as a loose affiliation of practices, a constellation of orientations and strategies that can serve a broad and diverse range of human interests. As such, we might do well to resist the notion that its diversity and plurality are undergirded by some single, elusive essence – that there is a single job narrative is quintessentially suited to do. It is not just that narrative inquiry does not appear to be that kind of thing: rather, it appears to be precisely the kind of undertaking that probably should not be conclusively defined – whose openness is an important aspect of its power and utility. Efforts to explicate and categorise narrative must not

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1 Bowman, 2006.
suppress things like its pliability, porosity, or processual character – its capacity to create its own channels. Narrative inquiry is not a single-use tool.

And yet, despite the diversity and divergence of the forms it may assume, what stitches the field of narrative inquiry together is the distinctive character of narrative. Because beginnings are so rich with possibilities, this volume affords a propitious opportunity to chart the future course of narrative work in music education. At the same time, narratives appear to be precisely the elusive kinds of things that resist charting, at least as conventionally understood: their capacity to create and follow their own, largely unique courses is a central part of their attraction, a fundamental part of both what they promise to teach us and how they presume to go about it. The quest to define narrative inquiry is best pursued cautiously, then, and the standards that are to guide it must be conditional, supple, responsive, and open to change. This represents a kind of rigour to which the music education profession is largely unaccustomed – in itself a good reason to pursue it.

One useful approach to charting narrative territory is to designate it a fundamental way of shaping, organising, or imparting meaning to human experience: a way of knowing that, as Bruner argues, stands sharply contrasted to “paradigmatic” knowledge. On Bruner’s account, narrative is a distinctive and important way that people make sense of their worlds and share meanings. In contrast to schematic, abstract, and general knowledge, narratives are temporal, processual, and sequential. Narratives are also situated, particular, contextually embedded: they create and convey knowledge that is up close and personal rather than general and generic. As such, narrative accounts are particularly well suited to capturing and conveying the lived quality of experience, the ways events and relations feel from the inside – needs and purposes that largely elude paradigmatic knowledge.

Another useful distinction between narrative and other forms of inquiry takes as its point of departure narrative’s personal, experiential character, stressing the uniqueness of each individual’s life-story and the divergence of ways people experience what may appear from the outside to be “the same” events and circumstances. Besides, there are often substantial differences between large-scale, officially sanctioned accounts of what things like music and education mean, or of their supposed significance, and the ways these things are experienced personally, individually. Personal narratives thus may challenge, resist, or disrupt the generic accounts that circulate through positions of power and authority. On this view, one of the important promises of narrative inquiry is to render audible the voices of the disempowered and the marginal, contesting official discourses and – as Barrett and Stauffer suggest – to “trouble” the certitude on which universal claims and broad generalisations are so often based. This political concern is not just wilfully arbitrary or resistant, but an inevitable outcome of the particularity of narrative meanings: instead of logically governed, absolute truths, narrative convictions are grounded in things like persuasiveness or “resonance.”

Still another distinctive characteristic of narrative inquiry follows from the idea that all narratives are personal, contextually embedded, and experientially grounded and from the deep conviction that these considerations obtain for research subjects and for researcher alike. Since a research report is itself a narrative, whose
narrative and whose voice should be heard must remain open questions, as must concerns about verisimilitude or authenticity. The narrative researcher cannot, given the fundamentally personal nature of all narratives, assume a position of privilege with regard to what is said, or how, or what it “really” means. As such, the relationship between researcher and research subject in narrative inquiry is deeply collaborative, consultative, cooperative, reflexive, and governed by profoundly ethical obligations. The “truth” or veracity of the researcher’s representation requires the research subject’s verification and assent. To this extent, the meaning and significance of narrative work is co-constructed.²

Still another way to characterise the interests that tend to motivate narrative pursuits – the “nerve” that knits these diverse practices loosely together – is their pursuit of “a” story rather than “the” story. Narrative inquiry and narrative inquirers are quite wary of presumptuous, knock-them-dead accounts that claim to speak for everyone, everywhere. Such “grand” or large-scale narratives do not really have the privileged access to transcendent truths they tend to claim for themselves: they are just stories, after all. Their power and influence derives not from some uncanny capacity to tap into the innermost truths but rather from the institutional resources and conventions to which their tellers have privileged access. The narrative turn, then, is a levelling of the playing field that denies the inherent superiority of grand narrative to small: it involves the relegation of grand-scale pontificating and a corresponding promotion of everyday accounts of everyday happenings, here on the ground, amongst real people. Narrative inquiry seeks to take people’s accounts of things for what they are instead of what they resemble or represent. Narrative’s concern is with this event, with my experience, and with our meanings, rather than with some abstract category of occurrences or things of which these are deemed illustrative. Accordingly, the truths to which narrative inquiry lays claim are necessarily provisional: the narrative inquirer is deeply wary of efforts to speak for everyone and everywhere and is keenly sensitive to the fallibility of generalisation.

Multiplicity, particularity, and personally or individually constructed meaning do not sound to me at all like the things music education has traditionally sought to affirm and honour in its professional discourses. To that extent, narrative inquiry is indeed a distinctive – perhaps even a revolutionary – way of pursuing questions of music’s (and education’s, and music education’s) potential meaning(s) and value(s).

But I wonder, Can a profession with methodological obsessions at its heart learn to accommodate habits, attitudes, and dispositions such as those implicated by considerations like these? An important part of what conventionally has been presumed to constitute professional knowledge, at least in North American music education, has been instructional method,³ how best to teach in order to assure that music’s nature and value are learned by all. Plurality, diversity, and particularity

² Perhaps it is more accurate, especially in light of what I say below, to think of these as three-way constructions involving researcher, participant/subject, and reader. Perhaps one of narrative inquiry’s distinctive features is the balance it requires among these.

³ I believe we could make the same claim for much music education research: that it has been conceived of and pursued as a technical undertaking governed by the rules of “research methodology.”
have not been salient among the interests historically served by instructional method or pursued in our research efforts. Rather, we have sought one-size-fits-all solutions, strategies and approaches to musical instruction, musical learning, and musical experience. This is the “perfectionist” notion of music education to which Dunbar-Hall alludes critically in this volume, and the need for such perfectionism – for neatness and button-down coherence – is precisely what narrative inquiry would have us “unlearn”.

What does narrative inquiry presume to introduce that has heretofore been neglected by the research endeavors of the music education profession? What differences might it make for professional practice or for the way our field is defined? How will its introduction to the field be remembered in years ahead?

**Troubling Certainty**

I very much like the bold claim made by the subtitle of this volume: “troubling certainty.” Part of what I like about it is that “troubling” can be read two different ways: as present participle and as adjective. In the first case, the emphasis is on the verb “to trouble,” suggesting that narrative inquiry consists in the process of questioning or challenging certainty. To engage in narrative work is, then, to trouble certainty. Read as an adjective, on the other hand, it implies that certainty is itself a “troubling” state of affairs – that certainty is an inherently troubling notion.

There is an English-language saying that plays similarly with the slipperiness of this word “trouble”: “Never trouble trouble,” it goes, “until trouble troubles you.” As I think about the idea of troubling certainty, I find myself substituting “certainty” for one of the “troubles” in this proverb: *Never trouble certainty until certainty troubles you.* It seems to me that if we’re intent on endorsing an approach to inquiry that commits to troubling certainty, we need to be very clear what it is about certainty that warrants troubling. I make this suggestion because I suspect that without such an understanding, we are at considerable risk of slipping over into more-of-the-same as researchers – into just telling stories, or into telling mere stories – without regard, that is, for their important potential to *unsettle the inappropriately settled.*

This notion that narrative inquiry involves a commitment to troubling certainty is, in other words, a courageously challenging one, not to be taken lightly or casually. It goes to the very heart of what kind of difference narrative inquiry might make within our profession.

One finds certainty troubling, presumably, because there is something fundamentally wrong with that notion, something particularly unhelpful and misleading in the assumption that certainty is a desirable state of affairs. Philosophical pragmatism offers some pretty compelling insights into what these problems and shortcomings might be and some very useful suggestions as to what the alternative might be, but I must leave their exploration to another time. Suffice it to say that among the reasons we should find certainty troubling are such considerations as the constructedness of human knowledge and understanding, the inevitability of change in the human
world, and the contextually relative nature (the “situatedness”) of truth claims. In view of these, inquiry should emphasise contingency rather than certainty, questions rather than answers: the mutability, the potential fallibility, and indeed, the fragility of all knowledge and knowing.  

These two readings of “troubling certainty” advance important complementary claims, both of which challenge certain of music education’s conventional assumptions – assumptions about the aims and purposes of research on the one hand and about the nature and the point of knowledge on the other. As I have commented elsewhere, narrative inquiry is “a way of keeping alive questions, conversation, and controversy, by stirring up the sedimentary deposits of official discourses” (Bowman, 2006, p. 14). If certainty is a characteristic product of the paradigmatic, and if narrative is indeed the distinctive, alternative way of knowing we have suggested it is, then narrative inquiry involves a fundamental endorsement of the potential value of things like uncertainty and ambiguity. These are bold commitments and significant challenges to the music education discipline as conventionally constituted.

It is perhaps an indication of the significance of these challenges that “trouble” does not consistently emerge as a salient feature in the chapters published in this volume. Should it? That is among the questions we need to address. One of the

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4 Some would say that certainty is a childish attribute, one we adults would do well to “get over”: that one of the reasons for engaging in narrative inquiry is precisely to help rid ourselves of the human needs apparently served by unwavering certainty, so as to become adults whose actions are more responsive and responsible. Of course, those who take the existence of absolutes as an article of faith will see the matter somewhat differently.

5 Barone (1995) expresses this in another way that is nicely complementary: the “enhancement of uncertainty” (p. 172). I particularly like the positive spin this imparts to the process, and the suggestion that uncertainty is the kind of thing that actually warrants enhancing.

6 I have tried to explore the importance of “genius for ambiguity” in Bowman (2004, passim). I have also urged the educational necessity for things like complexity in Bowman (2005).

7 While I do not want this assertion to sound overly harsh or critical, neither can I justify shying away from it. While, clearly, what constitutes “trouble” – and indeed, what warrants “troubling” – is very much a personal matter and, to that extent, “in the eye of the beholder,” its endorsement at least suggests that it is or should be an invariant and prominent feature of narrative work. One of the interesting tensions I sense, then, is between narrative’s commitment to honouring the integrity of the story and the story-teller and its commitment to troubling certainty. Not all narratives trouble certainty: indeed, one might argue that “certainty” itself is narratively constituted. Perhaps, then, it is among the narrative scholar’s responsibilities to distinguish between affirmative discourses that appear warranted and those that do not: to judge what kinds of certainty warrant troubling and what kinds do not. This is, to say the least, no easy task, no trivial responsibility. If, on the other hand, judgments like this do not figure among the narrative researcher’s obligations (and there are obviously many who would take this stance), it is hard to see how a commitment a priori to troubling certainty can be sustained.

By the way, in no way do I intend my comments here to imply that this volume lacks critical intent or a critical “edge”. After all, the inclusion of commentaries represents a deliberate and strategic effort to assure critical dialogue, one that is often highly successful. Nor do I mean to suggest that the narrative work presented here is uniformly “un-troubling” since there are numerous instances where “trouble” or “cognitive dissonance” figure centrally. What I do want to advance is that, to this reader at least, something I would characterize as “troubling certainty” is not always
concerns of this volume is, I gather, to help establish standards for narrative inquiry, to enhance its status, and to improve its practice so that it can more effectively make the kinds of differences to music education to which it is suited. How does one tell good narrative inquiry from poor narrative inquiry, the profound from the pointless, the tantalising from the trivial? Of what does rigour consist in a practice that purports to deal in particularity rather than generality? How do we rectify the multiplicity and openness of narrative with the quest for rigorous standards? How might we distinguish “mere talk” or “mere telling” (“just stories”) from the kind of inquiry that promises to improve and enrich professional praxis? If it is indeed crucial to the nature of narrative work and to its success that it “trouble” certainty, then presumably the nature of this trouble – the dissonance it injects into paradigmatic accounts of music teaching and knowing and learning – needs to become a more prominent feature of narrative work.

**Troubling Resonance**

The critic to whom I am most grateful is the one who can make me look at something I have never looked at before, or looked at only with eyes clouded by prejudice, set me face to face with it and then leave me alone with it. From that point, I must rely on my own sensibility, intelligence, and capacity for wisdom.

(T. S. Eliot)

As is probably evident, I spend a lot of my time working in discourses people characterise as philosophical. For some, these ways of thinking and talking are the utter antithesis of narrative inquiry: prolix, pedantic, and presumptuous, the things that incline people to modify “philosophical” with words like “only” or “merely,” as if philosophy were inherently and necessarily abstract and therefore incapable of engaging actively with life and living. But to some of its practitioners at least (and certainly to this one), philosophical inquiry is a very concrete, personal, and active process: it need not subscribe to or indulge in the presumptuous, universal claims that many find so off-putting. I am as impatient as anyone with the writer who tells me how I must think and the conclusions to which such thought must inexorably lead. But just as T.S. Eliot’s quote suggests of criticism, the philosopher to whom I am most indebted is the one who suggests, describes, and shows me new ways of approaching, perceiving, experiencing, and understanding: who helps me achieve and refine my own wisdom rather than attempting to awe me with his or hers. It’s much more effective when I’m shown than when I’m just told.

8 Again, pragmatism is just such a non-foundational approach. But again, this is not the place for an exegesis on the merits of philosophical pragmatism.
I want to make a parallel claim for narrative work. That is, the narrative researcher to whom I am most indebted is the one who presents me with a story that challenges and expands my understanding, leaving me a different and in some way a better person, a more perceptive educator, a more critically aware music education practitioner. Because this revelatory and transformative power is a potential, never a guarantee, this can be a rare occurrence, both in philosophical and narrative inquiry. Of course, it is better to have excellent things in short supply than to have mediocrity in abundance; but my main point is that effective narrative inquiry relies upon narrative to do its own work rather than upon analysis and explanation. The narrative researcher shows, rather than tells. The power of narrative resides in the narrative itself, as opposed to things we might be inclined to say about it.

What does this mean in light of the comments made above about the narrative researcher’s need (or obligation?) to trouble certainty? If narrative’s force derives from its particularity, how does it presume to relate to or interrogate the “certainty” it wants to trouble? How does it work, when it does, without resort to the generalisations on which logical argument relies? In this volume, Barrett and Stauffer suggest that we think of narrative’s capacity to engage us deeply and concretely as a kind of “resonance”: the power of narrative to which I have been alluding here, the power of narrative work done well, is, perhaps, a function of its capacity to set in motion some kind of sympathetic vibration. Narrative that fails to resonate is just so much talk.

It’s well and good to invoke the idea of resonance. But what is that? Resonance with what? Resonance for whom? Is resonance enough? Is it necessarily the kind of thing that warrants our trust? The philosophical pragmatist in me wants more and needs something more robust and trustworthy than resonance alone. I think we need to hold out for resonance that makes a positive difference, resonance that promises to change things somehow for the better. Resonance can serve undesirable ends or incline music educators to actions we might prefer they avoid rather than emulate, nurture, or celebrate. The dubious claims of politicians are mostly calculated efforts to exploit resonance, after all. And if I’m not mistaken, the reprehensible practices associated with things like racism and misogyny can often be traced to some kind of resonance between stories told and the experience of those who hear them. There is, in other words, an intuitive dimension to this business of resonance that we might do well to resist or that, in any event, requires some kind of critical or analytical ballast to hold it accountable. The power of narrative may be a function of its resonant capacity, but that capacity can serve ends good or bad, liberating or culpable. Clearly we need more.

And philosophy is a narrative form, after all. As a musician, the term resonance is especially apt, invoking as it does (for me, at least) the unique capacity of sonorous experience to grip my body, to become one with it. I hasten to add that my characterization of resonance as sympathetic vibration represents only part of what Barrett and Stauffer intend. As Barrett and Stauffer (this volume, p. 2) indicate, in a “resonance only” state one “would never deal with any ‘issues’” – a point well taken. But wearing rose-colored glasses, as they also characterize this resonance-alone state, is not just an innocuous diversion: it is, in the specific case
In fairness, Barrett and Stauffer obviously intend something more by “resonance” than what I have characterised as sympathetic vibration, and I think important clues as to what they intend come from its situation in a constellation that includes all those other “r” words: respect, responsibility, resilience, rigour, and the like. My concern is to point out that in itself (and presumably, Barrett and Stauffer would counter that they do not intend to invoke resonance in itself?) resonance is something of a double edged sword. If, like certainty and trouble, resonance is the kind of subjective consideration one can simply invoke by saying, in effect, “Well, it resonates for me,” then what does it really contribute to the enhancement of narrative methodology? Resonance names something narrative clearly requires, but perhaps we need to define more clearly what it entails.

In a way, this question of resonance arises from narrative appeals to particularity. It is cliché, almost, to maintain that narrative work does not seek to generalise: it seeks only to confront us with something unique and particular. But is that really so? After all, the wholly unique or the absolutely particular just is. For something to resonate or have meaning or value requires a relationship or connection to something else. Meanings are connections. And what a particular connection means is a function of the uses it serves. Meanings are uses. I won’t pursue this line of philosophical argument further than to suggest it indicates a need to be fairly circumspect towards naïve endorsements of the particularity of narrative meanings. They may not consist primarily in schematic, abstract relations, but neither are they wholly unique or individual. Resonance (and I believe Barrett and Stauffer are right to invoke it) operates in the middle ground between two untenable extremes: the utterly abstract and the utterly concrete.

In another context and with other ends in mind, educational philosopher Joseph Dunne (2005) observes that the actions of individual human agents are always inserted into “webs of interaction,” webs with their own power and limits to which individual actions relate dialectically. This creates, continues Dunne, a “space of possibility” with the capacity to “elicit initiatives that have an event-like quality, finding their intelligibility not in a predictable chain of causality but rather in the plot of a story that can be narrated only retrospectively” (p. 380). This finding implicates a different kind of research, claims Dunne: one that renounces “generalizing ambitions,” that embraces “a variety of narrative modes,” and that are “strongly of narrative inquiry (as contrasted to mere story-telling) an evasion, an abdication of researcher obligation.

12 It might be argued that the utterly unique or the utterly particular is, to the extent it is unique, particular, and connected to nothing else, simply imperceptible. Human awareness consists of patterns of convergence and divergence, similarity and contrast, of relations and connections. To be is to be in relation.

13 To acknowledge these points, Dunne observes, is “to recognize the frailty and intricacy of human affairs – or, what amounts to much the same thing, the non-sovereignty of the single agent” (p. 381). This remarkable statement makes clear, I think, the fundamental difficulties that attend both notions of particularity and of generality. It is only in the dialectical encounter between particular and general that something like “resonance” can arise. Or so it seems to me (I would not necessarily attribute this conclusion to Dunne).
hermeneutic in character” (p. 386). This entails telling stories “with the kind of interpretive skill that can bring out the complex weaving of plot and characters, the dense meshing of insights and oversights, of convergent and contrary motivations and interests, of anticipated or unanticipated responses . . . all conspiring to bring relative success or failure” (p. 386). In language that speaks directly to the issues I have been probing here, Dunne concludes,

If, with their deep embeddedness in a particular milieu, these studies . . . renounce the generalizing ambitions of wider-gauge research, they are not on that account condemned to narcissism or self-enclosure. To the contrary . . . they disclose an exemplary significance . . . [that] proves capable of illuminating other settings – without the need for re-routing through abstract generalities and, indeed, with greatest potential effect for those most deeply in the throes of the very particularity of another setting.” (p. 386, all emphases mine)

The term Dunne reserves for this capacity for unmediated disclosure is “epiphanic power”: an evocation of “entirely particular characters and situations, so that any effort to create representativeness would already betray weakness” (2005, p. 386).

I’m not certain that the idea of epiphanic power resolves all the problems attending resonance – in fact I’m reasonably certain it does not. It does, however, begin to sketch the details of the more highly nuanced accounting I think we need. It makes narrative’s ameliorative obligations more salient, and it makes clear the complexity and profundity of such obligations. It suggests to me the importance of developing more dialectical ways of thinking about narrative inquiry and the ways it works – when and if it does.

The insufficiency of story is, I think, one of the important recurrent themes in the pages of this volume: many if not most authors invoke the need for resources beyond stories. Narrative inquiry is storied, but mere stories and story-telling are not enough. In philosophy-speak, stories are necessary but not sufficient to narrative inquiry. In this section, I have likewise argued the insufficiency of resonance. Can we embrace the need for resonance without assuming it’s all we need, confronting its potential for mischief as well as affirmation? Can we embrace narrative without the dubious assumption that narrative is all there is or that meanings are nothing but stories we take pleasure in telling and hearing? Can we learn to embrace particularity without renouncing generality? Interesting questions, these. Or so they seem to me.

Setting Standards Without Standardising

At present, because of its relative novelty, narrative inquiry occupies a space outside disciplinary norms. Perhaps, in light of the things we’ve had to say above, that is exactly where it belongs. Perhaps its ability to trouble certainty and to challenge the centre – if, indeed, these are constitutive capacities – depend in important ways on its rejection of mainstream status. However, if there is something appealing about this prospect, we need to recognise its adverse professional consequences for those drawn to this work. To regard narrative work as marginal or maverick will not do if it implicates marginal or maverick status for those who pursue it. We need, instead,
to work to achieve a more robustly diverse conception of what music education is, of what it consists, and whom it involves. Narrative research can and should play a vital role in a de-centred, contextually responsive, constantly evolving music education profession.

One of the challenges that faces narrative inquiry as an emerging research interest is to identify standards that will help improve and advance narrative practices while honouring and protecting the inherent diversity and openness of the orientation. How do we enhance standards without creating standardisation, without invoking the kind of rules and guidelines that would transform narrative inquiry into some other kind of undertaking? How can we enhance the rigour of this work without confining it to the kinds of narrow channels that are more likely to lead to rigour mortis? How can we describe and refine narrative “method” without transforming it into yet another music education research “methodology”? How, in short, can we impart to narrative work a kind of strength that is maintained by being flexibly and creatively applied?

One way, it seems to me, is to present exemplars – outstanding models of what narrative work can be (provided, of course, these are not advanced or taken as exhausting the range of legitimate possibilities). This volume represents an important preliminary step in such a project. Another useful strategy might be to attempt to conceptualise excellence in narrative inquiry in terms of valences and potentialities rather than criteria – to characterise it in terms of a range of potential symptoms rather than in terms of necessary or sufficient conditions. Just as a physician learns to distinguish symptoms from diseases, then, we might identify attributes that are desirable (or not) in varying degrees, without attempting to reduce narrative practice to a particular set of actions or interests that answer to some unified or definitive set of concerns.

While there is extraordinarily cogent and provocative narrative work being undertaken in music education, there is also some that consists in what I will bluntly characterise as the telling of stories just because they’re there to be told. Narrative inquiry is not a haven for all who are sceptical of the merits of positivistic research or who are otherwise interested in collecting stories. Narrative work is not for anyone: it requires particular skills, inclinations, passions, and proficiencies. Another way of advancing standards without standardising, then, is to focus on what kind of person – what kind of attitudes, dispositions, character, and capacities – narrative inquiry entails: to think carefully and critically about the requirements of “the job,” without stipulating the particular configurations such attributes must assume or the specific product they must create. I won’t presume to create an exhaustive list here, but it might well feature considerations and attributes like these:

- interest in people and the spoken word in addition to music;
- exceptional listening and communicative skills;
- the ability to write with grace and precision;

14 Nelson Goodman made noteworthy use of this strategy in his *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), and Monroe Beardsley (1979) employed it in his effort to characterize so-called aesthetic experience.
imagination, innovation, and creativity;
- aversion to technicism and paint-by-numbers projects;
- an optimal blend of independence and empathy;
- comfort amidst ambiguity, complexity, and contradiction; and
- willingness to re-invent oneself and ones work – acceptance of the necessity that each narrative journey be, in important ways, a fresh start.\(^\text{15}\)

The narrative inquirer must be comfortable working without a net, making crucial decisions without resort to explicit rules and criteria, and determining when to stop listening and talk, when to stop talking and listen, and when to act instead of either talking or listening.

Perhaps above all – in keeping with the narrative commitment to honouring the particularity and the integrity of others’ voices and of others’ stories and in keeping with the collaborative, interactive processes these considerations implicate – the narrative inquirer must be willing to change, willing to be changed by what she hears and finds. That is no small order. It may, in fact, be among the most daunting challenges confronted in this mode of inquiry: for no small part of the understanding sought by and required of the narrative inquirer is self-understanding, a mode of understanding profoundly mediated by one’s openness to others.

Where in the music education profession as currently constituted do we develop and nurture attitudes, dispositions, and ethical capacities like these? My sense is that they are not widely represented in those drawn to the instructional endeavours that currently typify the discipline. If that sense is accurate, it highlights still further the significance of the challenge faced by efforts to establish a broader and more substantial presence for narrative inquiry among music education’s research undertakings. On the other hand, if the promise of narrative inquiry is as significant as has been claimed here, making music education more amenable to people with such capacities and inclinations is an undertaking worthy of our most serious efforts.

**Narrative Obligations**

Chief among the concerns that have motivated my remarks in this essay is the concern that we find ways to enhance the rigour and clarify the standards of narrative work without unduly circumscribing the range of practices it represents – without suppressing the remarkable diversity of forms it can take. In closing, let me suggest that a viable alternative to articulating or ratifying a general code of standards

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\(^{15}\) It might be claimed that this list is as applicable to other modes of inquiry and research as it is to narrative, a point that has some merit. It might also be claimed that one may have each of these qualities or capacities yet fall short as a narrative researcher. Clearly, narrative has no proprietary claim to attributes or characteristics like these, and just as clearly, such tendencies and dispositions can be applied to other kinds of work. In my view, however, neither of these caveats diminishes the particular need among narrative scholars for qualities like those I have listed here. To take but one example, what I have described as comfort amidst ambiguity appears to me to be an indispensable trait amongst those who commit to troubling certainty.
for narrative work is for individual researchers to address explicitly the concerns and considerations guiding their work in each project. This would mean that each narrative researcher accept the obligation to communicate (1) what s/he understands narrative to mean and its significance to be, (2) why s/he has chosen to approach it in the way s/he has in this particular situation, (3) what potential advantages and disadvantages of that choice may be, and (4) what s/he hopes to achieve – the difference it makes (Why this particular approach, this particular version of narrative work, in this context?). 16 What is needed is a way of enhancing and advancing rigour without compromising the flexibility and multiplicity that are not just among narrative inquiry’s conspicuous strengths, but requirements of the kind of work we expect it to do. Narrative inquiry takes as its object not the norm, but the exception, and we’re all exceptional, after all.

References


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16 Some might argue that explicit and detailed consideration of such concerns makes for theoretical rather than a narrative work, and that narrative, artfully done, requires no such rationale or rationalization. That may be: Where narrative’s power and resonance are such that to say anything else would only detract from it, it’s clearly best to set it before the reader and leave her alone with it. Where one’s concerns extend to things like enhancing rigor and clarifying standards, however, it may be that we need something more structured and systematic.
The narratives presented here demonstrate the diverse ways in which music threads through and thrives in lived experience. The accompanying commentaries offer possible “readings” and point to the potential of these particular narratives to provoke or trouble. But troubling is a troubling matter, uncertain and unpredictable, as individual as each participant, researcher, and reader, and inseparable (in some ways) from positionality and place. Clandinin points to the ways in which the accounts presented here begin to shift the dominant narrative of music education from “the subject matter of music to the starting point of ... lives” (this volume, p. 203). For Clandinin, troubling starts when we begin to acknowledge the “certainty of uncertainty” and in that process begin to “become thoughtful” about music education, its purposes, its practices, and its effects on the lives of all those who participate in these purposes and practices. Bowman notes that “multiplicity, particularity, and personally- or individually-constructed meaning” – some of the most crucial qualities of narrative – “do not sound ... at all like the things music education has traditionally sought to affirm and honor in its professional discourses” (this volume, p. 213). But engaging in narrative just to tell a story, even a story of difference or one that appears to be untraditional, is not inquiry. Bowman asks us to look critically at “both the intriguing possibilities and difficult challenges” (this volume, p. 211) that narrative affords and to examine the same kinds of questions that Lyons (2007) poses when writing about the “possible future influence” of narrative: “Why is narrative so powerful within a profession? Why is it valued? How is it used? Justified? What does its future look like to its practitioners” (p. 615). As Bruner (2002) suggests, “narrative ... is indeed serious business ... and something else as well. There is surely no other use of mind that gives such delights while at the same time posing such perils” (p. 107).

We return, then, to our opening assertion – that narrative inquiry in music education is a way to look beyond the familiar or the expected, a means of attending to tensions below the surface of lived experience, and an opportunity to reconceptualise
the ways in which we think about music, education, and inquiry. Narrative can provoke “wide awareness” (Greene, 1995); it can enhance uncertainty (Barone, 1995). Moreover, we see in narrative inquiry the potential for resonant work as inquirers and the possibility of making evident to others resonant work in the lives of children, adults, teachers, students, musicians, and community members engaged in music and music making.

Our view of resonant work is an accumulative one – something more than sympathetic vibration. Resonant work inhere and becomes apparent in and through the qualities of respect, responsibility, rigor, and resilience. Resonant work is respectful, embodying an ethical disposition. It is responsible to the public good, to the discipline, to the participants, and to the researcher(s) involved. It is rigorous, scrupulous in its attention to issues of design, implementation, analysis, and reporting. It is resilient, speaking not only in and of this moment, but also across spaces and places, to varying constituencies, and through time. Resonant work requires “living alongside” with humility and care. For as Richardson (1997) suggests,

We can never fully know what consequences our work will have on others. We cannot control context and readings. But we can have some control over what we choose to write and how we write it. . . . For me, it might be ‘text’; for [the participants], it is life (p. 117).

We hope that the narratives in this book, the commentaries, and the discussion of narrative in the opening and closing chapters prompt readers to thoughtfulness: thoughtfulness about what we do in music education, thoughtfulness about the beliefs and values that underpin our practice, and thoughtfulness about the ways in which we pursue inquiry about our beliefs, values, and practices. From such thoughtfulness we hope to prompt further conversations, further inquiries, and further troublings.

References


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D. Jean Clandinin is Professor and Director of the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, University of Alberta. She is a former teacher, counsellor, and psychologist. She is co-author with Michael Connelly of four books, including *Narrative Inquiry*. A recent co-authored book, *Composing Diverse Identities: Narrative Inquiries into the Interwoven Lives of Children and Teachers*, was a 2008 winner of the AERA Narrative Special Interest Group Outstanding Book Award. She is the editor of the *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (Sage, 2007). She is an ex–Vice President of Division B of AERA and is the 1993 winner of AERA's Early Career Award. She is the 1999 winner of the Canadian Education Association Whitworth Award for educational research. She was awarded the Division B Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002 from AERA. She was awarded the University of Alberta’s 2001 Kaplan Research Achievement Award, a 2004 Killam, and the 2008 Beauchamp Award.

David Cleaver
After a career working professionally as a musician, David Cleaver undertook a Bachelor of Music Education degree with Sydney University. He graduated in 1997 with 1st Class Honours and also the Sydney Conservatorium *Music Education Student of the Year* award. After experience as a classroom music teacher and band director, David received a scholarship to undertake a PhD with the University of Tasmania. His thesis entitled *Illuminating Musical Lives: Phenomenological narratives of the musical lifeworlds of five senior secondary music students* received a University *Dean’s Commendation Award* and also the 2005, inaugural, biennial *Sir Frank Callaway Award for an outstanding thesis in Music Education* which is presented by the *Australian Society for Music Education*.

As a lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland, David is engaged in general preservice teacher development in the areas of music, the arts, and creativity. With an active approach to music, David enjoys “jamming” with his students.
Jeffrey Davis

Jeffrey Davis has taught choral music and music education at the secondary and university levels and is an active church musician. He also served as Artistic Director for Rosie’s House, a community school of music in Phoenix, Arizona.

Davis has a Bachelor of Music in Composition from Pacific Lutheran University, a Masters of Music degree in Choral Music Education from Arizona State University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Music Education, also from ASU. His dissertation, *Capable of a Miracle – Meanings and Purposes in an Urban Community School of Music*, is a narrative research report stemming from his experiences at Rosie’s House. His ongoing research interests range from music teacher training, community arts development, lifelong music learning, and hymnology.

Currently, he is on the faculty of Bishop Kelly High School and the staff of Covenant Presbyterian Church, both in Boise, Idaho.

Peter Dunbar-Hall

Peter Dunbar-Hall is Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) at Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney. His research interests include the history and philosophy of music, popular music, Australian Aboriginal music, and Balinese music and dance. He is the co-author of *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places: Contemporary Aboriginal Music in Australia* (UNSW Press 2007). Peter is a regular performer in the Sydney-based Balinese gamelan group Sekaa Gong Tirta Sinar.

Magne Espeland

Magne Espeland is Associate Professor in Music Education at the Music Department, Stord/Haugesund University College (HSH) in Western Norway. His specialties are curriculum studies, music methodology for the general classroom, and research methodology for arts education.

Magne is a well-known clinician, researcher, and author in Norway and beyond. His authorship features resource books for schools (composition and music listening) as well as research on music listening, music composition processes, and the use of technology in music education.

Kaye Ferguson

Kaye Ferguson holds a D.M.A. in music education from Arizona State University and master’s degrees in both education and in counselling. She taught elementary and secondary strings in New Mexico and Arizona public and private schools and music history and theory courses in Arizona community colleges. At University of Maryland-College Park and Arizona State University, she has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in music education. Her research interests include qualitative studies of preservice teacher perceptions and psychological development. Her work has been published in the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, and she has presented papers at state, national, and international conferences.
Andrew Goodrich

Andrew Goodrich is assistant professor of music education in the College of Fine Arts of Boston University. Prior to his appointment at Boston, he was assistant professor and coordinator of the music education programme in the School of Creative and Performing Arts at Northwestern State University. Prior to his appointment at Northwestern State University, Dr. Goodrich held a one-year position as visiting instructor of music education at Michigan State University. Goodrich’s teaching experience includes four years of conducting bands at the high-school and junior high-school levels in Billings, Montana, and one year of teaching general music, band, and choir in Missoula, Montana. Goodrich’s research interests currently focus on the intersection of jazz culture and school culture, the application of systems thinking in the school ensembles, and the interaction of community musicians and students. Dr. Goodrich is active with presentations of research at symposia and conferences in addition to giving clinics throughout the United States. Goodrich received a B.M.E. degree from the University of Montana, the M.M.E. with a Jazz Concentration degree from Arizona State University, and a D.M.A. in Music Education from Arizona State University.

Catherine Kroon

Catherine Kroon is a teacher of Music and Humanities in a Tasmanian secondary school. Previously, she worked independently as a piano teacher and accompanist. She undertook a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts (Music), graduating in 2004, and a Bachelor of Teaching, graduating with honours in 2006, both at the University of Tasmania. Professional interests include the influences of music education in overall social and cognitive learning, especially with relation to students demonstrating special social, emotional, and intellectual needs and the ways in which music education can be designed and adapted so that it is a relevant and meaningful experience for all students in a constantly changing world.

Tom Langston

Tom Langston is a music teacher, choir director, and singing teacher in northwest Tasmania, Australia. He conducts two choral groups – an a capella group and a large community choir. The a capella group specialises in music of the English Renaissance. His community choir performs the standard repertoire of large-scale works such as Handel’s Messiah, Haydn’s The Creation, Mendelssohn’s Elijah, and Mozart’s Requiem. Tom is also a regular performer with other choirs in the area. As a musicologist, Tom’s interests lie in Renaissance music especially Cavalieri, Striggio, the Camerata, and the music of the Florentine court. Tom worked as a secondary school teacher for the Tasmanian Education Department for 30 years before taking early retirement in 2005. Although a music specialist, Tom also taught Tourism and Hospitality, English, IT, Indonesian, and Studies of Society and the Environment. He is now a relief teacher. Tom Langston completed an Ed.D. at the University of Tasmania in 2005.
Kathryn Marsh

Dr. Kathryn Marsh is Chair of Music Education at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, where she teaches subjects relating to elementary and early childhood music education, multicultural music education, and music education research methods. With a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology and a professional background in music education, her research interests include children’s musical play, children’s creativity, and multicultural and Aboriginal music education. She has written numerous scholarly and professional publications, including *The Musical Playground: Global Tradition and Change in Children’s Songs and Games*, published by Oxford University Press. She has been actively involved in curriculum development and teacher training for many years and has presented internationally on a regular basis. She is a member of the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Music Education* and *Research Studies in Music Education* and has been the recipient of major national research grants which have involved large-scale international cross-cultural collaborative research into children’s musical play in Australia, Europe, the UK, USA, and Korea.

Marie McCarthy

Marie McCarthy is Professor of Music and Chair of the Department of Music Education at the University of Michigan since 2006. Prior to that, she was on the faculty of the University of Maryland for 16 years. She teaches courses on general music, music learning theories, music cultures in the classroom, and research methods in music education. Her research studies have focused on the historical, social, and cultural foundations of music education. Her publications include two books, *Passing It On: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* and *Toward a Global Community: A History of the International Society for Music Education, 1953–2003*.

She has served on the editorial boards of several journals in music education and is currently Chair of the History Standing Committee of the International Society for Music Education. Her interest in narrative research stems from her work as a historian of music education and a keynote paper she presented at the 2003 Mountain Lake Colloquium titled “Using Story to Capture the Scholarship of Practice,” later published in *The Mountain Lake Reader* (2004).

Rosalynd Smith

Rosalynd Smith received her Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from Monash University, where she now teaches in the Faculty of Education. Her research interests include choirs and choral singing, vocal pedagogy, Kodaly education, and Japanese music.

Sandra L. Stauffer

Sandra L. Stauffer is Professor of Music Education at Arizona State University where she teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses. Prior to joining the ASU faculty, she was Coordinator of Music Education at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, and she has taught general, choral, and instrumental
music in public schools. Sandra’s recent research focuses on music teacher education, children and young people as composers and improvisers, and creativity. She has worked with composer Morton Subotnick in the development of software for composing music and hearing music and has consulted with numerous arts and education agencies on music curriculum initiatives. Sandra’s articles on music listening, composition, general music, and teacher education have been published in various journals and books. She is a former national chair of the Society for General Music (USA) and currently serves on various editorial committees in the music education research community.

Loretta Niebur Walker

Loretta Niebur Walker grew up in Arizona (USA) where her early music education was primarily as a student in public school music programmes. During high school she determined she wanted to become a band teacher. Upon completion of her B.A. in music education at Brigham Young University, she taught elementary band and general music in Arizona and discovered the joys of general music. After earning her M.M.Ed. in woodwind pedagogy from the University of North Texas, she returned to teaching elementary band and general music while continuing to perform on the clarinet. Although she found great joy in performance, she discovered that her educational passions were bringing the joy of music to those who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience its breadth and depth as well as helping educational decision-makers recognise the power of the arts in education. With these goals in mind, she earned a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on elementary general music from Arizona State University. After teaching at the University of Utah, she taught K-6 general music for five years before accepting a position at Weber State University.

Graham F. Welch

Professor Graham Welch holds the Institute of Education, University of London, Established Chair of Music Education and is Head of the Institute’s Department of Arts and Humanities. He is President Elect of the International Society for Music Education (2010–2012), elected Chair of the internationally based Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research (SEMPRE) and a past Co-Chair of the Research Commission of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) and has recently been appointed as a member of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Review College for music. He has acted as a special consultant to (i) the USA National Center for Voice and Speech (NCVS) in Denver, the Swedish Voice Research Centre in Stockholm, and UK Government agencies on aspects of children’s singing and vocal development; (ii) the British Council in the Ukraine and Ministry for Education and Youth in the United Arab Emirates on education and teacher development; and (iii) the National Research Foundation of South Africa and British Council in Argentina on the development of their national research cultures in music. Publications number over 200 and embrace musical development and music education, teacher education, the psychology of music, singing and voice
science, and music in special education and disability. Publications are primarily in English, but also in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Swedish, Greek, and Chinese. He is on the editorial boards of the world’s leading journals in music education, including *IJME, JRME, RSME, BJME*, and *MER*. External research funding awarded in the past three years as Principal Investigator (2005–2008) totals over £1 million, with grants from major UK Research Councils, the European Community, and leading Charities.
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