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**ADULT MUSIC ENGAGEMENT:  
PERSPECTIVES FROM THREE MUSICALLY ENGAGED CASES**

A Dissertation in

Music Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of adult music engagement from the perspectives of musically engaged adults not currently participating in activities that are direct extensions of the typical K-12 music curriculum. Three participants were purposefully chosen and include an avid listener, a church praise team member, and a bluegrass rhythm guitarist/lead singer.

The following questions framed the investigation within an interpretative phenomenological approach to first construct the perspective of each case and second, to identify ways learning has occurred through music engagement over their lifespan:

1. What are the musical life histories of these adults?
2. How do adults place their current musical settings within the context of their lives?
3. What meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement?
4. How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?

Data were gathered from a series of one-on-one interviews with each participant. Constructed perspectives combined with the joint interpretation of data, by participants and the researcher, to provide an interpretive phenomenological analysis, which placed this data within the context of music learning. The emergent themes resulting from cross case analysis of transcript data are: connection to humanity, sense of fulfillment, and choice. Further interpretive analysis for learning yielded the following themes: formal learning settings, self-directed learning settings, and community learning settings. Triangulation was used to test the trustworthiness of these findings.

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## Chapter 1

### **Introduction to the Phenomenon of Adult Music Engagement**

Many adults routinely partake in musical activities and some make music an integral part of their lives. This study sought to explore the phenomenon of adult music engagement in order to better understand the experiences that motivate those adults who are deeply involved in music. Through a phenomenological approach, this research provided a window into the musical lives of three distinct individuals.

American adults engage in music in a variety of ways. Some are performers, involved in musical rehearsals and performances, while others are deep listeners, invested in listening to musical recordings as well as taking part in live performances. These forms of active participation with music, performance, and listening, constitute the bulk of quantifiable adult music engagement in America.

Participation in choirs, bands and orchestras is a direct outgrowth of the typical K-12 school music offerings. According to a recent study by Chorus America (2009), 32.5 million American adults regularly participate in choirs and 18% of all US households contain at least one adult choir member (Chorus America, 2009). The New Horizons International Music Association (NHIMA) lists approximately 171 instrumental performing groups, mostly bands, comprising nearly 10,000 adults playing instruments for the first time or after a substantial break (New Horizons International Music Association, 2010b). The Association of Concert Bands and the Association of Community Orchestras collaborated to produce a list of community bands and orchestras comprised of adults who are generally more accomplished players. They list 1,618 groups, of which 1,321 are located in the US (Association of Concert Bands, 2010), representing

approximately 66,000 adults engaged musically. In 2002 it was reported that 39 million (19.2%) of US adults personally engaged in musical arts activities (National Endowment for the Arts, 2003).

Adult participation in musical settings that are not direct extensions of the K-12 music curriculum offerings are less quantifiable, however, there are data that suggest adult engagement in musical settings other than concert band, orchestra and chorus. Musical instrument sales in the US have continued to surge, with an estimated six billion dollars in trade in 1999 and an estimated 7% increase in this number through the early 2000s. Electronic instruments, particularly keyboards and electric guitars, generated nearly a quarter of all music instrument sales (The Gale Group, 2010). Although there is no way to track how these instruments are being used or by whom, electric pianos and guitars are not instruments commonly used in traditional school choirs, bands or orchestras. These instruments tend to be used in musical settings that do not directly reflect the types of musical offerings available in the majority of K-12 curricula.

When adults are asked to identify their musical activities, the most common response is listening in some form via live performances, recordings, or the radio (Flowers & Murphy, 2001; VanWeelden & Walters, 2004). The 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (National Endowment for the Arts, 2003) reports that 81 million (39%) of the adult population of the US attended at least one of seven “benchmark” arts activities (jazz, classical, opera, musical plays, plays, ballet, and art museums) in the 12 months prior to the survey. The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (2010) states that the US routinely represents 30 – 35% of music album sales worldwide and in 2007, US album sales were estimated at 500.5 million and the number of digital tracks sold were 844.2 million, a 45% increase from 2003 (The



Associated Press, 2008). Adults who choose to actively listen to music now have easier access to recorded sound, an expanding array of venues for various types of music and increased sound reproduction equipment to enjoy music at home or take it with them wherever they may travel.

### ***Musically Engaged Adults***

With some adults devoting such a large investment of time and financial resources to music performance and listening, it stands to reason that music engagement is a part of adult American culture. Adults have discretion of how they spend their time and other resources; therefore, musical engagement is a choice. The action of choosing presents a host of decisions and reflects the motivations and intentions of each person. The phenomenological approach used in this study was shaped by the following findings regarding adult music engagement that imply that music is an organic part of life.

First, adults participate in music because of a natural connection to music and musical experiences. The ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle (Grout, 2001) felt that music was a fundamental human experience and had the power to influence the mind as well as affect the character of people. An aesthetic experience is induced within active listeners and elicits a feeling of transcendence (Langer, 1957; Reimer, 2002). Thus, we as humans are naturally drawn to music and the action of experiencing music. Some choose to engage musically in specific ways, such as learning to play guitar, and others more passively accept the music that is chosen or programmed for them in the process of day-to-day life (DeNora, 2000, 2003; Gaston, 1968; Sharan B. Merriam, 1984).

Second, adults choose to participate musically because it fulfills a personal need in their lives. Beyond the fulfillment that professional accomplishment brings, personal fulfillment is known to enhance adult's perceived quality of life (Cavitt, 2005; Coffman, 2002; Farrell, 1972;

Hinkle, 1987; Hylton, 1980; Meyer, 1956; Minichiello, 2005; Myers, 2005; Rohwer & Coffman, 2006).

Third, adults choose musical environments that accommodate their particular needs at given points in time. Throughout one's lifespan needs change, as do opportunities. Adults generally prefer to direct and plan the nature of what they wish to experience musically and, even if they are not in control, they choose environments that match their desired needs when possible (Elliott, 1995; Knowles, 1968; Langer, 1957).

As young adults transition into adulthood during their middle to late twenties they begin to experience life changes that alter their personal needs as well as practical options (Levinson, 1986; Reese, 1977). These changes affect the choices they make regarding resources, including time and money. As adults mature their identities and self-concepts are often redefined during benchmark transitions (Coates, 1984; Reese, 1977) that spark a need in adults to rediscover who they are at that particular time in life.

Music often plays a role in allowing developing adults to find themselves and express a sense of belonging. Some are drawn to the opportunity to learn or refine a new musical skill and the feeling of accomplishment they experience through the process (Coffman & Levy, 1997; Ernst & Emmons, 1992). The adult musical performance environment often fulfills both musical and non-musical needs of adult participants. Social aspects are cited as motivations for participation in musical groups. Adults find identity, attachment and socialization from being a part of a musical group (Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Machover, 1990). The physical aspects of singing or producing sound on instruments has provided a physical health benefit for older adults. These benefits of participation are reported in studies focused on adult performance

groups and provide other possible motivations for why adults choose to engage in musical activities (Coffman, 2002; Cohen, Bailey, & Nilsson, 2002; Pickles, 2003).

### ***Listening as Active Music Engagement***

Performing is more readily accepted as a form of musical engagement and active participation whereas non-performing acts of musical engagement, especially listening, are less readily accepted as active. Although listening is the most frequently identified form of adult musical engagement (Flowers & Murphy, 2001; VanWeelden & Walters, 2004), it is often considered to be less active than the forms of engagement that involve the production of sound. This view of listening being less active is a value that holds performance in higher social position than listening and is linked to the dominant view supported within a social environment (Bourdieu, 1984; Dimaggio, 1982; Myers, 2005; Weber, 1975).

Avid listeners are frequently not considered musically talented even though they listen with intent and choose music that in some way represents who they feel they are at that given time (DeNora, 2003; Meyer, 1956; Willis, 1978). Adults who listen avidly, deliberately choose music that speaks to them in some fashion and often endeavor to discover as much as possible about the music and the performers. Meanings derived by the listener, while the music is happening, create a musical identity. In this sense, music becomes a personification of how listeners interpret it within their social-musical practice (Anderson & Sharrock, 1993; Elliott, 1995; Gibson, 1966; Small, 1998).

Many listening practices endeavor to use music as the medium that allows transcendence to another emotional state (DeNora, 2000; Gomart, 1999; Juslin & Sloboda, 2001; Reimer, 2002). The listener is not a passive victim or receptacle, but rather an active participant in the listening practice. This sensation of being ‘taken away’ by the music is not a form of musical

manipulation on the part of the composer or performer alone but is considered an accomplishment by the listeners who knowingly put themselves in a position to be taken.

Therefore this type of active listener,

Strives tentatively to fulfill those conditions which will let him be seized and taken over by a potentially exogenous force. ‘Passivity’ then is not a moment of inaction – not a lack of will of the user who suddenly fails to be a full subject. Rather passivity adds to action, potentializes action. (Gomart, 1999, p. 243)

This notion of listening speaks to a paradigm shift from music being seen as distanced from and reflective of social structures to a conceptualization of music as an action, as a medium of social practice. In this paradigm, listening is a form of musical doing not a lesser act of passivity subservient to performing (DeNora, 2003; Elliott, 1995; Regelski, 1998; Small, 1998).

### ***Toward Lifelong Music Engagement***

The overarching goals of public education in America have changed over time to include: preparing children for citizenship, cultivating a skilled work force, teaching cultural literacy, preparing students for college, helping students become critical thinkers (PBS.org, 2001). Today the U.S. Department of Education (2010) states that its “mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/landing.jhtml>).

These goals of traditional public school education have framed policy and curriculum over time. The argument that music is an important part of a well-rounded education is often positioned within the context of the role of the arts in life in general of which music is a part. The National Standards for Arts Education (MENC, 1994) catalyzed an effort to “describe, specifically, the knowledge and skills students must have in all subjects to fulfill their personal

potential, to become productive and competitive workers in a global economy, and to take their places as adult citizens” (MENC, 2010b). These skills mirror the aims of public education in America and the assertion is made that those who develop basic knowledge and skills in the arts can consider themselves truly educated.

The Consortium of National Arts Education Associations guided the development and establishment of the following nine National Standards for Music Education disseminated by MENC (2010a):

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

These standards guide K-12 music curricula in order to give students the experiences and opportunities to be ‘fully educated’ and become active citizens capable of stimulating their creativity and expression to feed their humanity in ways that fulfill their lives. These young adult citizens, prepared for life via elementary and secondary education, are then sent into the world to make their own informed choices regarding how they utilized that which they know.

One goal of music education is to give children experience in music, enough that they will have the ability to enjoy music throughout their lifespan in the same way that general education is meant to be used by citizens after their schooling is complete. Jellison (2000) encourages teachers to think of their students as future adults and endeavor to give them the opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills, “that will enable them to participate successfully in a variety of meaningful music experiences in adult life” (p. 112). Ultimately, teaching toward this type of transition, “ensures that when...students leave the music classroom...they will take music with them” (Solomonidou, 2005, p. 20).

This idea that formative music experiences during the schooling years spark or encourage a value, within students, for lifelong music engagement takes various forms within the literature (Bowles, 1991; Stollak & Stollak, 1996). Westerlund (2008) borrows John Dewey’s term valuation or “learning experiences which contain personal desire and interest” (p. 80). Inherent within this context of promoting a love for lifelong music engagement, is a focus on the process within music making of any kind including listening (Arnett, 1995; Brake, 1985; Frith, 1987; Leming, 1987; Thompson, 1993). This type of focus enables music educators to plan the type of experiences that students can own for themselves and carry with them to future experiences with music (Allsup, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2008; Baxter & Allsup, 2004; Berenson, 2005; Westerlund, 2008). It also allows educators to acknowledge and accommodate the type of musical engagement that happens outside of the K-12 school curriculum (Rutkowski, 1993; Thompson, 1993). The formal and informal musical learning that occurs outside of the school setting also influences future music engagement.

Within this framework, the means are as important as any particular end within a musical experience. The repertoire, for example, is a servant to the performer or listener who happens to

be going through the process of performing or listening to the work. The process of rehearsal is as important as the performance experience. What can be learned and owned within the process sticks with the student longer than a particular product. Students develop positive attitudes toward music and the music making process when the experiences are democratic - both nurturing interpretation and empowering individuality (Allsup, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2008; Baxter & Allsup, 2004; Berenson, 2005; Westerlund, 2008). These developed musical capacities become precious commodities that students add to their repertoire and carry with them into the world as educated citizens.

### ***Music in 'Real Life'***

Some 'educated' adults choose to actively engage in music while others do not make that choice. Music education researchers have focused primarily on music that occurs within the K-12 curriculum and have not fully considered what happens musically both outside of the school during the K-12 years and into adulthood. There have been findings indicating that significant numbers of school-aged students who actively participate in elective secondary music classes do not continue their participation into and through adulthood (Bancroft, 1964; Boswell, 1992; Cavitt, 2005; Lawrence & Dachinger, 1967). These findings represent data on the carryover or transfer of traditional music offerings from secondary K – 12 into adulthood but do not capture data on the carryover of musical engagement that does not represent a direct extension of K-12 curricular offerings.

It has been acknowledged that adolescents actively engage in musical activities outside of school, especially listening to music they identify with most in their 'real life' outside of school (Arnett, 1995; Campbell, 2007; Frith, 1987; Larson, 1995; Larson, Kubey, & Colletti, 1989; Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2002; Thompson, 1993). This perceived separation between what

is taught in school music classrooms and how music is experienced in ‘real life’ creates a gap between school music and music of ‘real life’ to the point that even students who are participating in K-12 school music offerings do not necessarily consider their engagement as part of ‘real life’ (Mantie & Tucker, 2008).

Research on high school music participation shows that roughly 20% of the total school population enrolls in music classes (New Horizons International Music Association, 2010a; Thompson, 1986), which coupled with the aforementioned data on carryover rates for band, chorus and orchestra, represent an even smaller percentage of adults in ‘real life’ engaging in these traditional music offerings. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of adult music engagement is still occurring within the real lives of American adults, with far more adults engaging in musical settings that are not direct extensions of the major K-12 curricular musical offerings.

### ***Rationale, Purpose and Research Questions***

The rationale for this study stems from our need, as music educators, to learn more about the phenomenon of how adults in the real world experience and make meaning of music within the context of their lives. Increased understanding of adult musical life histories, current musical environments, and the meanings they derive from this participation better inform the field of music education of those musical skills required of educated citizens who choose to be engaged in music.

The purpose of this study was to explore how music has been actively experienced from the perspectives of musically engaged adults not currently involved in activities that are direct extensions of the typical K-12 musical offerings. The following research questions framed this phenomenological investigation:

1. What are the musical life histories of these adults?



2. How do adults place their current musical settings within the context of their lives?
3. What meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement?
4. How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?

This inquiry provides implications and insight for how music educators, teaching at all levels, can structure curricula to foster lifelong music engagement and continue to expand the scope of music education to include adulthood.

## Chapter 2

### **Review of Related Literature**

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of adult music engagement from the perspectives of musically engaged adults. Literature was reviewed within the areas of adult development, adult music learning, music participation, and adult education. What follows is a synthesis of literature within each of the emergent themes from the literature review: musical experience, musical engagement, motivation, and adult music learning.

#### ***Experience with Music***

Many American citizens have had a variety of experiences with music by the time they reach adulthood. The role that musical experience has on adults currently involved in music is not clear, however, aspects of these experiences have been chronicled in the literature over time (Bowles, 1991; Flowers & Murphy, 2001; Lawrence & Dachinger, 1967; Stollak & Stollak, 1996; Turton & Durrant, 2002; VanWeelden & Walters, 2004).

The role of early experiences in music was a thread within the research. For example, according to Stollak & Stollak (1996), early positive experiences affect later adult participation. Bowles (1991) contends that early music participation influences music interest and music involvement in adulthood. VanWeelden and Walters (2004) encourage “greater alignment between real-life and classroom music experiences” (p. 31), and further suggest that meaningful experiences that transfer and can be found in adult life should be the focus of school music activities (Jellison, 2000; Kratus, 2007).

Lawrence and Dachinger (1967) investigated the question of carryover from school music to adult life. Lack of developed skill was considered to be the number one reason people

were no longer participating in music. Surveyed adults (participants and non-participants) ranked sight-reading, improvisation and playing by ear as the most important skills. Many survey participants wished they had become more proficient on an instrument before graduating from high school.

Research on musical experiences during adolescence indicates that youth engage in personal and communal listening (Leming, 1987; North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000) and consumption of musical media (Brake, 1985; Fine, Mortimer, & Roberts, 1990; Geter & Streisand, 1995) in large percentages. These types of adolescent musical activities are said to provide opportunity to fulfill emotional needs (North, et al., 2000; Roe, 1985), provide distraction from boredom (Gantz, Gartenberg, Pearson, & Shiller, 1978; Sun & Lull, 1986) and relieve tension and stress (Gantz, et al., 1978). Music is also a medium for identity formation during the adolescent years (Arnett, 1995; Campbell, 2007; Frith, 1987; Larson, 1995; Larson, et al., 1989; Tarrant, et al., 2002; Thompson, 1993).

Bowles (1991) found informal music learners to be musically motivated and more likely to stay engaged for intrinsic reasons. Findings from the Lawrence and Dachinger (1967) survey illustrate this notion further as the highest rate of adult music participation is found in those musicians who were self-taught. Listening is a commonly cited activity of adult music participants (Flowers & Murphy, 2001; VanWeelden & Walters, 2004).

Although the role that pre-adulthood music experience plays in adulthood music participation is unclear there is some evidence that early positive musical experiences related to what people consider to be valuable later in life are correlated with adult music participation. The poor carryover of school music participation into adult life is attributed in part to a lack of opportunity (time, venue, established organization) and a perceived lack of proficiency in a

performance area prior to leaving high school. Adolescents consume and listen to music for various reasons and this practice generally transfers to adult life more readily than performance modes of participation. Informal musical environments tend to yield a higher level of carryover into adult participation.

### ***Musical Engagement***

Students in K – 12 public schools in America experience general music from the onset of their formal education. Later, in some cases, students have the opportunity to gain entry into the choral and instrumental performance music tracks in middle to upper elementary school. The nature of instruction is heavily weighted toward performance experiences and the preparation for these performances. The high school student has the choice to continue with music or select another elective. After graduation, what happens to this cadre of skills and experiences, both for those who elected out of music and those who continued through high school?

Mantie and Tucker (2008) propose the existence of a gap between K-12 music and lifelong participation and claim little to no connection between the two. Students do not see themselves, through their learning, as “co-participants with in-real-life social practice” (p. 221). Teachers do not see their teaching as leading toward the goal of lifelong learning, which adds to this gap phenomenon. Myers (2005) presents the case a bit stronger by stating that the irrelevancy of current school music is disjointed from community and adult experiences. He suggests that the school years should be seen as a part of life not just preparation for life and that habits and values do not just happen because of music education exposure in school.

Why people choose to engage in music stems from the meaning they derive from the experiences. These meaningful musical pursuits (Myers, 2005) help participants fulfill their needs and motivate them to continue. Collaboration of in-and-out of school experiences

establishes “meaningful authentic experiences” (Jaffurs, 2006, p. 19). Fredrickson (1997) found that students were socially influenced to participate in music for what he calls good reasons; but individual students construct the real reasons why they continue or discontinue participation. A democratic teaching process that promotes worthy life-long skills is what we should strive for as music educators both in-and-out of school settings (Allsup, 2003; Green, 2005; Jaffurs, 2006).

Music tends to happen whether it is planned or incidental and can provide a sense of connection to one’s own humanity and the humanity of others. Christopher Small (1995) proclaims that performance of any kind is action, something that people do. He suggests that a performance is an exchange between human beings with music as the nonverbal medium. This view of performance as “musical doing” draws all participants into action, each contributing to that particular moment in time. In this sense, the listener is not a passive victim but rather an active participant in the listening practice. To do music is the act of doing life (DeNora, 2003; Elliott, 1995; Regelski, 1998; Small, 1998).

People generally choose to be engaged in music that in some way represents who they feel they are at that given time (Campbell, 2007; DeNora, 2003; Meyer, 1956; Willis, 1978). When thinking about creating opportunities for adults to continue to engage musically, it becomes clear that a great deal of music education is geared toward preparing students to become as much like professional classical musicians as possible. School music programs often focus on performance related skills and primarily provide large ensemble opportunities. Many of the musical opportunities currently available to Early Adult Transition – Later Adulthood Era adults also mirror this professional orientation in regard to the goals and purposes for the musical and music-making experiences. Creating adult venues may require a focus on the amateur in ways that allow for a different paradigm to guide the purpose and aim of adult music making

(Coates, 1984; Mahlmann, 2004). The idea that adults choose to engage in music because of what they get out of the pursuit, regardless of whether or not they reach a certain level of attainment per se, is an approach that may benefit those creating venues for adults to continue to engage musically (Boswell, 1992; Coates, 1984; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Machover, 1990).

Carlsen (1988) suggests a list of basic human needs that include identity, participation, partnership and intimacy. Music-making, in its various forms, has the potential to fulfill each one of these basic needs (Boswell, 1992). Carlsen considers creative aging to be a critical process of aging where there are two developmental perspectives: “the catching of similarities in putting ideas and experiences together in new ways; and an openness to new experiences that capture the imaginative, the unexpected, the novel, and the possible” (Carlsen, 1988, p. 39). Musical experiences can create venues that foster creative aging. The group interaction helps to satisfy the aforementioned needs for identity, participation, partnership and intimacy.

Adults choose to devote their time and energy to meaningful experiences that provide them with some type of reward (Boswell, 1992; Bruhn, 2002; Coates, 1984; Cohen, et al., 2002; Ernst, 2001; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Farrell, 1972; Gates, 1991; Machover, 1990).

When planning venues for adults that facilitate lifelong learning and engagement, Machover (1990) considers the following seven categories of adult participants:

1. the novice,
2. someone returning to music,
3. the serious amateur,
4. a music teacher,
5. practicing professional,
6. parent,

7. senior citizen.

Although it is not always possible to address the needs of all seven types of adult participants in the same setting, they should all be considered when designing venues for adult lifelong learning and engagement.

Although music tends to happen whether it is planned or crops up organically, there exists incongruence between the music that happens inside school and music that happens in life outside school. Adults are motivated to actively engage in music because of the meanings they derive from their musical experiences. Musical settings are chosen based on the needs adults feel can be met by this particular setting and the meanings they derive from having those needs fulfilled. This has implications for music educators who are planning lifelong learning venues for adults.

***Motivation for Musical Engagement: Adult Development and Quality of Life***

***Lifespan Development Perspectives.*** As people age they experience their surroundings, relationships, and experiences in different ways. These changes in perspective are a direct result of their life experiences and their ever-evolving sense of self. Various stages of life present challenges that invite change within us as we live through transitional phases and emerge redefined in new moments in time. Daniel Levinson (1986) put forth a conception of adult development or the “evolution of the life structure in early and middle adulthood” (p. 3), that is built on the concepts he named life course and life cycle.

Embedded in the term life *course* is the idea of sequence and, in this case, studying life as it moves forward through the years both during periods of stability and during times of change. Life *cycle*, “suggests that there is an underlying order in the human life course; although each individual life is unique, everyone goes through the same basic sequence” (p. 4). This sequence

has discernable periods that Levinson likens to seasons of the year that are well defined and yet have overlapping transitional phases. He calls these seasons eras. Thus, the life cycle for Levinson is as sequence of eras with several “cross era transitions” (p. 5), which tend to last about five years:

1. Pre-adulthood: birth - 22
  - Early Adult Transition: 17 – 22
2. Early Adulthood: 17 - 45,
  - Midlife Transition: 40 – 45.
3. Middle Adulthood: 40 - 65
  - Late Adulthood transition: 60 - 65
4. Late Adulthood: 65+

Framed by these concepts of the life course and the life cycle (including the macro level eras), Levinson (1986) was:

Interested in apprehending the nature of a person’s life at a particular time and the course of that life over the years. Personality attributes, social roles, and biological characteristics are aspects of a life; they should be regarded as aspects and placed within the context of the life. The key concept to emerge from my research is the life structure: the underlying pattern or design of a person’s life at a given time. (p. 6)

This idea of life structure describes a period within a life cycle that portrays a person’s particular make up at that given time as influenced by both internal and external forces and relationships. During the Late Adulthood era, many adults experience a period when their self-concept is redefined often at or around the time of retirement (Coates, 1984). Usually they are heavily influenced by external factors and take on the roles they have often anticipated for years. Adults



in this transitional phase begin to tailor their behaviors to meet their internal goals and needs for their life. Adult internal goals at retirement are often similar to those held before retirement. “A recognition of the continuity of fundamental values results in the discovery of richer meanings in present and future experiences” (p. 35). The mature adult often wants to continue to grow and continue to learn through experiences they construct as meaningful.

There is a continuing capacity for making and appreciating music as we age. Regardless of mental status, music can have importance to older people (Cohen, et al., 2002). In 1900 approximately 4% of the United States population was over the age of 65. The year 2010 marks the year that the baby boomer generation starts to turn 65 and make up over 13% of the total population (Hooyman, 1996). As life expectancy increases, a larger demographic potentially seeks to fulfill their lives outside of work and immediate family concerns, especially as they approach or reach retirement.

This population is said to be living in the Third Chapter (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2009) or the Third Age (Pickles, 2003) which are both names given to an emerging stage of human development. This life cycle stage, established by life-span scholars, covers the years from age 50 – 75 and espouses the idea of active and creative aging (Carlsen, 1988). These ideas were spawning at the same time the societal idea of retirement as a time for slowing down and retreating from active life became acceptable in the 1960s.

Put side-by-side, they [creative aging and retreated retirement] offered a paradoxical perspective on people in their Third Chapters. On one hand, life-span theorist urged us to view learning as lifelong; their optimistic work suggesting that people between the ages of fifty and seventy-five should continue to be actively engaged in the world around them, seeking out opportunities for continued growth, challenging definitions of elderly

decline. On the other hand, 'leisure entrepreneurs' forged a view of people in the second half of life that emphasized their need for rest and entertainment, and began to build institutions that would protect them from the complex, overly stimulating, and unwelcome communities that no longer wanted or needed them. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2009, pp. 49-50)

Since the 1960s adult engagement in many types of activities has increased, and more people living in the Third Age are choosing the active option of continued growth and stimulation.

This lifespan perspective on adult human development presents a backdrop on which motivations for musical engagement in adults may be projected. Adults tend to pass through phases of development and at each phase their life structure or particular make up at that time is reconstructed as influenced by both internal and external forces. This process of redefining one's sense of self, or self-concept, causes reflection on personal needs and ways for those needs to be fulfilled. Adult development research has been expanding the boundary of development to extend beyond retirement and well into old age. These later phases of development are characterized as a continued stage of growth and active engagement in activities and endeavors that fulfill adult participants in ways they construct as meaningful.

***Quality of Life via Music.*** Quality of life issues motivate some adults to engage in music for various reasons. Participants often place considerable value on nonmusical benefits of music activity. Music activity often enables people to accommodate socio-cultural, physical, and psychological influences that directly affect their perception of quality of life (Coffman, 2002). Jutras (2006) reported that adults found self-actualization and personal accomplishment through studying the piano. Many found refuge and solace in playing the piano and saw it as a form of escape from the routine, and a stress reducer. Through studying the piano, adults report

enhanced self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-expression. Personal satisfaction is achieved by way of feelings of accomplishment, a sense of pride and developed self-esteem and self-discipline (Cavitt, 2005; Farrell, 1972; Hinkle, 1987).

There are various factors that motivate music engagement in adults. With piano playing, Cooper (2001) found that love and enjoyment of music, sense of efficacy, supportive teachers and challenge contributed to positive feelings. Whereas, the demands of other interests and activities were often cited as factors for discontinuing piano study. Previous study proved to be a motivator as adults continued or restarted at a higher frequency if they took piano lessons for at least six years as children. Johnson (1996) points to success, volition, value and enjoyment as four levels of adult motivation. Jutras (2006) reports the benefits of adult piano study in the following rank order: skill, personal, social-cultural as well as technical ability and overall level of proficiency. Cavitt (2005) reports enjoyment, fun, and playing in a group as positive factors influencing participation in community bands.

The nature of the musical activity or environment also contributes to engagement. Music activities that account for adulthood life events have the best chance of meeting adult musical needs (Coffman, 2002). Johnson (1996) discovered four attitudes that need to be present and positive to motivate adults continued participation. First, adults need to like and have respect for the subject, and second, for the teachers presenting the course of study. Third, adults need to feel confident as learners, and finally adults need a realistic belief that they can be successful at the task in hand.

Adults are motivated to engage in music for various reasons. Based on the self-determined needs of each individual at a given moment in time (life structure) within their lives, music has the ability to fulfill these needs in ways adults, who choose to engage musically, find

meaningful. Some experience a heightened sense of quality of life due to the nonmusical benefits of music engagement, while others find personal accomplishment, enjoyment and a sense of efficacy through being actively engaged musically. Music engagement, both formal and informal, has the ability to fulfill various needs that adults have throughout their development.

### ***Adult Music Learning***

This idea of considering what adults need within an experience in order for it to be meaningful was also approached by Malcolm Knowles (1968) when he explored his concept of andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). He originally set andragogy at the polar opposite position on the learning continuum from pedagogy, the art and science of helping children learn. Knowles assumed that adult learners are:

1. independent and self-directed,
2. experienced (coming to the learning situation with a repertoire of life experiences),
3. motivated by change,
4. problem-centered and application oriented, and
5. internally motivated.

These five assumptions frame his landmark concepts regarding andragogy.

There has been much debate over whether andragogy is a valid theory of adult learning (Davenport & Davenport, 1985; Hatree, 1984). Over time andragogy has been defended as a theory, a technique, and a set of assumptions. Hatree (1984) said that andragogy was “just principles of good practice, or descriptions of what the adult learner should be like” (p. 205). Knowles (1980) eventually began to see andragogy more as a model or conceptual framework than a theory and revised his initial position accordingly.

Another aspect of andragogy that drew much criticism was whether or not the assumptions were relevant to adult learners alone. Merriam, Mott, and Lee (1996) found examples of adults who did not exhibit the behaviors of andragogy in certain training situations; as well as examples where children exhibited behaviors assumed to fall under andragogy as Knowles originally described. Particularly, they found that some adults are highly dependent on the teacher for structure, especially while learning a new skill, whereas there were also some children who were independent, self-directed learners. A similar situation was found with motivation. Adults may be externally motivated to learn as in job training sessions dictated by an organization. Children may be motivated by curiosity or the internal pleasure of exploring life. Experience was not always a positive for adult learners as certain life experiences can serve as barriers to learning. It is also possible that children in certain situations may possess a range of experiences as rich or richer than some adults (Hanson, 1996). Again, Knowles adjusted his position from andragogy versus pedagogy to a continuum ranging from teacher-directed to student-directed learning and agreed with his critics that both are appropriate for adults and children depending on the situation.

Houle (1996), a mentor to Knowles and an adult education scholar in his own right, was a strong proponent for focusing on the teaching-learning situation and felt that:

education is fundamentally the same wherever and whenever it occurs. It deals with such basic concerns as the nature of the learner, the goals sought, the social and physical milieu in which instruction occurs, and the techniques of learning or teaching used. These and other components may be combined in infinite ways...andragogy remains as the most learner-centered of all patterns of adult educational programming. (p. 29 – 30)

Over time andragogy became defined more by the learning situation than the nature of the learner. However, andragogy spawned thought on the topic of adult learners and the type of educational programming that is most appropriate for learners regardless of age or experience.

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) was another model that differentiated adult learning from elementary/secondary school learning and emerged at the same time Knowles was introducing andragogy to North America. Although SDL exists as one of the five andragogy assumptions, it sprouted as an independent thread of scholarship put forth most comprehensively by Tough (1967, 1971) building on the work of Houle (1961). Early research on SDL was descriptive and later moved into the areas of model building and discussions of the goals and ethics of SDL. Merriam (2001) clarified what is meant by self-direction, and ways of assessing the effectiveness of self-direction in learning.

Three general goals have been identified for SDL. The first goal is to develop in learners a responsibility for their own learning. This goal grows out of the humanistic philosophy of learning and development (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Knowles, 1975; Tough, 1971). The second goal of SDL is to facilitate transformational learning (Brookfield, 1986; Merzirow, 1985). The process of facilitating transformational learning deals with creating opportunities for critical reflection on the part of the learner, which ultimately leads toward SDL. The third goal of SDL is the promotion of emancipatory learning and social action (Andruske, 2000; Brookfield, 1993; Collins, 1996). This goal focuses on social and political action, more so than the individual learner, and how that learner fits into and influences the larger whole. This goal mirrors the idea of democracy in music as community-in-action (Allsup, 1997, 2003) and the concept of 'groove' as a sense of community action (Keil & Feld, 2005). Manchover (1990) makes the following suggestion regarding educational planning for adults, "offerings cannot

simply be ‘old wine in a new bottle.’ That is, one should not just add a new cover to old materials...meant for children...and expect them to succeed with an adult audience” (p. 28).

Music learning takes place in many venues from formal settings in school music programs and private lessons, to more informal settings such as living rooms, backyards, walking down the street with a portable listening device, and in places of worship. Tucker and Mantie (2006) mentioned that even within community music there is a bifurcated classification between formal and informal settings. This type of differentiation is further characterized as a tension between formal-school and informal-community music learning when describing the various kinds of musical learning. Mark (1996) suggests that there is a need to build bridges between school music and the community in order to develop a new paradigm that draws the two together. There is some evidence that informal learning may provide a key to increased adult participation (Cope, 2002; Green, 2005).

The context of the musical community is important to how the music is learned and experienced. However, a particular community is only experienced by immersion in its total sensory and intellectual surrounding (Mark, 1996). Context is less important to the formal settings, since the rules of engagement are well defined. With informal learning the social context is a crucial factor. Furthermore, instruction without context is potentially unsatisfactory for the informal learner (Cope, 2002). Cope (2005) found that having a social context in which to play was paramount in the informal learning situation.

Learners in community or informal learning settings are generally not looking to be professionals but rather fall into one of the nonprofessional categories such as aficionado (Reimer, 2002), musicer (Elliott, 1995), musiker (Small, 1998) and others (Gates, 1991; Mantie & Tucker, 2006). The social venue to make music is an important source of motivation for the

informal learner (Cope, 2002). The concept of self-teaching/learning was the norm not the exception for informal learners and the medium for learning is the tune (Cope, 2005; Green, 2002).

Two major threads within the literature of adult education, andragogy and SDL, provide tenets and a framework of adult learning that can be applied to investigating adult learning within the context of active adult music engagement. Music happens inside and outside of school settings in both formal and informal settings for various purposes. Adults choose to actively engage within musical environments that serve their personal needs best and continued engagement hinges on the degree to which these musical contexts are congruent with their needs at that particular time. These meanings are socially constructed from the individual adult's perspective.

### ***Guiding Questions***

The purpose of this study was to explore how musically engaged adults actively experience music from their individual perspectives through the lens of an interpretative phenomenological analysis. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to studying lived experiences and the methods are effective in illuminating meaning from within an individual perspective (Lester, 1999). Analysis within this method is interpretative and intertwines the data produced by each participant with the context in which the data is interpreted by the researcher (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

This review of literature in the areas of musical experience, musical engagement, motivation, and adult music learning informed the following guiding research questions within an interpretative phenomenological approach:

1. What are the musical life histories of these adults?



2. How do these adults place their current musical settings within the context of their lives?
3. What meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement?
4. How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?

## Chapter 3

### **Methodology**

#### *Introduction and Overview*

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of adult music engagement from the perspectives of musically engaged adults. The following questions framed the investigation within an interpretative phenomenological approach to first construct the perspective of each case and second, to identify ways music learning has occurred through their lifespan:

1. What are the musical life histories of these adults?
2. How do these adults place their current musical settings within the context of their lives?
3. What meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement?
4. How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?

Qualitative research emerges from a constructivist stance that is concerned with how the social and cultural worlds are experienced, interpreted, and understood within a particular context at a given point in time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000; Neuman, 2000; Schwandt, 2000). Within the qualitative approach, the case study was chosen as the best methodology for this research project. The case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon, which is put into context by way of time and place (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 1998; S. B. Merriam, 1998; S. B. Merriam & Associates, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2001). As Yin (2009) indicates, qualitative case study is an ideal design for understanding a phenomenon.

Furthermore, within the case study methodology, a holistic multi-case study design has been utilized. In this study there were three individuals considered both separately and across cases during analysis and discussion. This design fits Yin's (2009) description of "holistic" because there are no subunits within each individual case and the phenomenon of adult music engagement is explored by considering each individual as a case who exhibits this phenomenon then collectively considering the combined data sets across cases.

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to studying experiences and the methods of this approach are effective in illuminating meanings from within an individual perspective (Lester, 1999). Phenomenologists take particular interest in considering the experience of being human especially in regard to what matters most to us in our particular circumstances. Husserl (1970) stressed the importance of focusing on experience and the perception of those experiences. Building further on Husserl's work, phenomenology philosophers (Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Satre, 1956/1943) took the view that a person is rooted in a world surrounded by objects, relationships, language, and culture. Collectively these phenomenologists have described the understanding of experience as an organic process which uncovers perspectives and meanings that are, "unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world" (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 21).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a type of phenomenological research dedicated to examining how people derive meaning of life experiences (Smith, et al., 2009). IPA is phenomenological because it explores experience from within the context of life and does not place experience within predetermined categories. The concept of experience is complex, but IPA researchers are particularly interested in everyday phenomena that take on particular

importance to people. Participants making sense of their experience is an interpretive effort, which is the second leg of IPA and is influenced by hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation.

Like hermeneutics, IPA considers humans to be sense-making creatures and thus recollections of experiences become attempts at meaning making for participants. Within this hermeneutic framework it is also acknowledged that researcher access to experience is dependent on what participants tell them, and then the researcher interprets the participant information in order to understand the experience. Smith et al. (2009) describe this process of interpretation as:

A double hermeneutic because the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them. This captures the dual role of the researcher. He/she is employing the same mental and personal skills and capacities as the participant, with whom he/she shares a fundamental property – that of being a human being. At the same time, the researcher employs those skills more self-consciously and systematically. As such, the researcher's sense making is second order; he/she only has access to the participant's experience through the participant's own account of it. (p. 3)

### ***Research Sample***

A purposeful sampling method was used to identify three adult participants who were currently musically active. I was most interested in focusing on adults because they were more likely to have enough life experience to provide a description of their musical past as well as enough lifespan to develop an informed perspective on their own music engagement, both past and present, given their current life structure (Levinson, 1986).

Smith et al. (2009) state that IPA studies usually contain a small sample size and, “aim to find a reasonably homogenous sample, so that, within the sample, we can examine convergence and divergence in some detail” (p. 3). Within the population of adult music participants, there are

two broad categories: (a) those musical settings that are direct extensions of the K-12 offerings available to many adults when they were those ages, and (b) those musical settings that are not direct extensions of K-12 offerings. I chose to focus on the subset of the adult music engagement population participating in musical settings that are not direct extensions of K-12 music offerings because data suggest there are more adults engaged in musical settings from this category, and most music education research tends to focus on direct extension musical settings. Thus, I felt a focus outside of the K-12 extensions might provide enriching data to the discussion of adult music engagement.

One goal of purposeful sampling is to achieve heterogeneity in the population, enabling the conclusions to reasonably represent the full range of variation within the population, (Maxwell, 2005). Guba and Lincoln (1989) referred to heterogeneous purposeful sampling as maximum variation sampling. The dimensions of variations within the population are clearly defined and those most related to the topic are selected for the study. In order to achieve heterogeneity within this subset population, I chose to focus on a range of different cases within the subset of adult music participants engaged in settings that are not direct extensions of K-12 offerings. While I recognize that depth of findings in any particular type of case is a limitation with this sampling approach, I favored the broader representation within the same subset of adult music participants.

Potential participants were identified by referral from dissertation committee members or others familiar with the research project. Once identified, an informational contact, either email or phone call, was made to the prospective participants explaining the nature of the study and inviting them to contact the researcher for further information. The researcher set up personal appointments with those prospective participants who responded to the informational contact.

During these meetings the researcher thoroughly explained the research protocol including the amount of time required, the nature of the interview sessions, and the extensive audio and video recording that would be involved. The recording archival approval options of destroying data after the conclusion of the study or archiving indefinitely for use in presentation and other educational purposes were presented to each potential participant. During this meeting, a letter of consent was presented and explained by the researcher and signed by the prospective participant.

Five people were identified as potential subjects through a vetting process. Three people were selected to participate in the study based on the combination that created the maximum variation along the dimension of musical settings that are not direct extensions of K-12 curricular offerings, and availability to participate within the given timeframe of the study. The three individual cases selected to participate in the study were currently musically engaged as an avid listener, a praise band singer, and a bluegrass guitarist/lead vocalist.

### ***Constructing Perspectives on Music Engagement within the Adult Music Learning Context***

The aim of this study was to explore music engagement from the perspectives of adults who are currently musically active. This inquiry focused mainly on these adults' experiences and understandings of the phenomenon of music engagement. As researcher my orientation toward these experiences and understandings was open, process-oriented and focused on the interpretation of meaning, which is consistent with "IPA's inductive procedures" (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 46).

In order to address the guiding research questions set forth in this study, information needed to be gathered from perceptual, demographic, contextual and theoretical domains (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The perspectives of each case were paramount to framing insights

regarding the phenomenon of active adult music engagement. Three of the four guiding questions were designed to explore the areas of musical life histories, current musical settings, and derived meanings. Each case participant's unique journey and viewpoint added to a rich collection of individual case and cross case information for analysis and interpretation.

Demographically, it was important to better understand who each case was and what their experiences were along the way to the musical point we collectively were investigating.

Question one, what are the musical life histories of these adults; was devoted to drawing out historical background both from Pre-adulthood musical experiences through the experiences that took place from Early-adulthood to this point in their lives.

Contextually, it was important to investigate how their current music making fit into the whole of their musical lives in order to develop a picture of their musical 'life structure' at that moment in time. Question two, how do these adults place their current musical settings within the context of their lives; was developed to gather information regarding their current chosen form of musical engagement, and the nature of that choice. This data illuminated how each case placed their current music engagement within the context of their broader life musically and otherwise.

Perceptually, it was necessary to elicit each person's thoughts and reflections on their own music engagement and what that meant to them. Question three, what meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement; provided the opportunity for each case to both reflect and construct meanings related to their music engagement from their perspectives.

Smith et al. (2009, p. 47) state that IPA researchers, "ask questions about people's understandings, experiences and sense-making activities, and we situate these questions within

specific contexts.” These first three questions provided the opportunity to collect data that could more fully represent the perspectives of these three cases by emphasizing the areas of musical life history, current musical setting, and derived meanings. I developed a construct (see Figure 1), based on a structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing (Seidman, 2006).

This construct illustrates my thinking on the theoretical interaction of musical life history, current musical setting, and derived meanings as part of the double hermeneutic process of developing an interpretation, alongside each participant, of their perspective on music engagement. Each of the first three in depth interviews focused on the three aforementioned areas, as represented by spheres in Figure 1. The participants and I constructed their perspective on music engagement through the process of jointly interpreting their reflections.

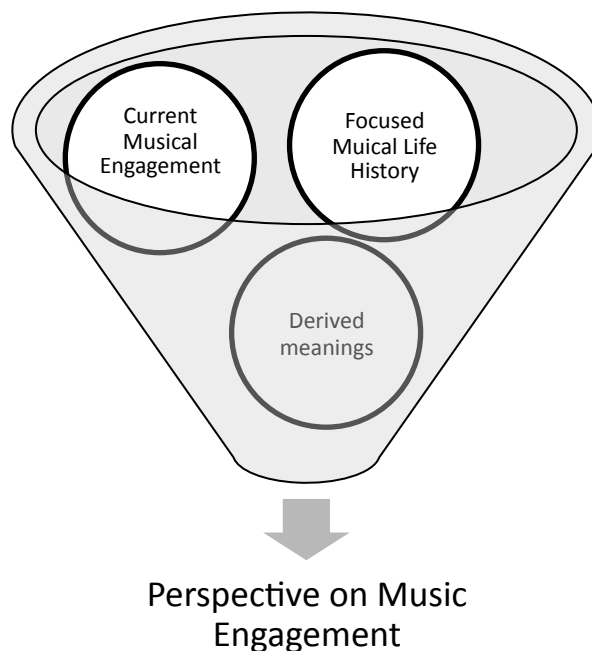


Figure 1. Construct of Adult Perspective on Music Engagement

Theoretically, the review of literature in the areas of musical experience (Bowles, 1991; Flowers & Murphy, 2001; Lawrence & Dachinger, 1967), musical engagement (Campbell, 2007; Coates, 1984; DeNora, 2003; Gates, 1991; Small, 1998), motivation (Coffman, 2002; Jutras,



2006; Levinson, 1986), and adult and adult music learning (Cope, 2002, 2005; Knowles, 1968; Mark, 1996), provided a point of departure. Question four, how have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives; provided a mechanism to tie the analysis on the phenomenon of adult musical engagement back to existent literature within the areas of adult and music learning.

### ***Data Collection***

Each case participant was interviewed four times, with the first three interviews focusing on the emphasis areas of musical history, the current musical setting, and meanings derived from their music engagement; while the fourth interview was used as a wrap-up and review session. I observed the current environment where each case engaged musically as a secondary data source. The data were collected from the following sources: 12 individual participant interviews (4 per case), 3 observations (one per case), as well as member checks with each case member.

***Participant Interviews.*** All three participants consented via the agreed upon Institutional Review Board protocol, to four separate one-on-one interviews. The first interview focused on their musical life histories with an emphasis on their Pre-adulthood through Early-adulthood years. The second interview focused on details of the current musical setting. This session was designed to probe how each case placed their current musical engagement within their life overall. The third interview was devoted to reflections on the meanings they derive from their musical engagement. The fourth interview was used as a follow-up and wrap-up opportunity to seek further clarification of material covered in previous interviews and to allow the participant to add further comment on any topic.

Two hundred and twenty minutes of recording were collected for the first case in his living room/listening room, 199 minutes were collected for the second case in the gathering area

of her church, and 232 minutes were collected for the third case in his office, totaling 651 minutes of recorded interview data collected across cases. I took brief notes during each interview both to aid with follow-up questioning and to provide an additional data source for triangulation during analysis. These interviews took place between April 13 and May 20, 2010.

This data set of 12 individual interviews over three cases was digitally recorded in audio and video format. The digital audio data was captured on a Samsung Zoom H2 Recorder and a Flip Video Ultra HD video recorder was used to capture the participant's images and sound during each interview to provide redundancy.

After each interview the audio and video were downloaded to a password protected Macintosh MacBook. A copy of the audio was downloaded into iTunes and then uploaded to WeScribeit.com, an online transcription service, for transcription. Once the transcripts were returned, I proofread the copy for accuracy referring to the original sound recordings when necessary. The audio data produced 263 pages of transcript material.

The strength of interview data is the ability to focus directly on only the topics identified in the case study protocol. Interviews also allowed each case study participant to provide insightful "casual inferences and explanations" (Yin, 2009, p. 102) that was helpful when looking for meanings.

***Musical Setting Observations.*** I observed each case setting once for a combined total of 281 minutes. The observations were pre-arranged with each case, and occurred sometime after the second interview session and before the last interview session between April 20 and May 20, 2010. I took field notes on a note pad during each observation. Within twelve hours after the observation, I typed up my written notes and further reflections resulting from the observation. I

also video and audio recorded each observation with the permission of each case member using the same recording equipment from the interview data recording process.

The observation with the avid listener took place in his home listening room where I was a participant observer in a listening session and discussion with him. The observation with the praise team singer was in the sanctuary of her church during a rehearsal of the praise group of which she is a part. I was a participant observer while leading the group rehearsal. The bluegrass guitar/lead singer observation took place during a regular rehearsal of his band where I was an observer but not a participant. These observations allowed for the gathering of secondary data that could be used for corroboration and triangulation during analysis.

***Ethical Considerations.*** The audio and video recording of one-on-one interviews presented the largest ethical consideration within this study. According to the approved Institutional Review Board protocol, all participants provided informed consent to participate as a case in this study. There was no deception used within the design of this study, and all participants were fully aware that they were being recorded at all times. Safeguards were taken to secure digitally recorded data on password-protected computers and secure storage facilities in the case of external storage archiving.

Aliases were used for each case on research reports and in presentations of this research. During the consent process, each participant indicated whether they wanted data archived for a fixed period of time and then destroyed or if they gave permission for the data to be archived indefinitely and used for research dissemination and teaching purposes. All three participants agreed to allow their data to be archived indefinitely.

## *Analysis*

***Intra-case analysis.*** I first focused the analysis on the individual case level starting by reading through each transcript for overall continuity and accuracy, using the audio-recorded data as a reference. Then, in subsequent readings, I coded the transcript data and looked for themes within each interview. This process was done by hand, using a set of highlighter pens and a note pad. The unit of analysis for each code was thematic.

Once emergent themes were identified and all four case interview transcripts were analyzed, I looked at the relationship of coded themes among the three individual participants/cases. At this point themes were further refined and defended with supporting transcript excerpts.

***Inter-case Analysis.*** After themes were identified within each case, cross case analysis was done to investigate the relationship of emergent thematic material. Broader themes across the three cases, over the twelve individual interviews, were coded. Cross case codes were then analyzed for emergent themes. These cross case themes were supported by quoted transcript material to retain the voice of each participant and validate the trustworthiness of each theme.

***Music Learning Analysis.*** Within the intra and inter-case analyses, I focused on direct and indirect reference to musical learning. It should be noted that though there were questions in the protocol geared toward probing musical experiences, there were no questions specific to music learning. This aspect of the analysis was more interpretive on the part of the researcher using participant's discussion of their experiences to highlight examples of music learning, even if the participant did not describe the behavior as 'learning.'

### *Issues of Trustworthiness*

Threats to validity of conclusions drawn by researchers are inherent within the process of qualitative research inquiry. Two more common overarching threats are researcher bias and reactivity. Selecting data that fits the researchers pre-existing theory and gravitating to data that naturally sticks out to the researcher creates a type of subjectivity that can influence or force conclusions that may not be valid or defensible given the full body of data available (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Likewise, the influence of the researchers presence in the setting, reactivity, is unavoidable and can be even more pronounced in intense interview situations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In both cases, it is important to acknowledge these threats and understand the potential effects it has on conclusions researchers draw from data collection and analysis.

I entered into this research project from the perspective of a music educator keenly interested in musical learning that occurs outside of the K-12 setting. Furthermore, through my personal music engagement journey, in both formal and informal music settings, I have developed a value and respect for musical experiences. These music-making experiences inspired me to enter the profession of music education and to research the perspectives of other adults who are musically engaged. However, my own sense of fulfillment through these experiences presents a self-acknowledged bias toward the value and meaning of those experiences.

Within the design of this study, I have attempted to address issues of validity while staying mindful that nothing eliminates threats entirely. The thrust of data collection in this study is in-depth interviews with each case. These interviews provided 'rich data', which afforded a more complete description of what may be happening (Becker, 1970). Member checks, asking participants to read, comment and approve my analysis of their data, were also

utilized to validate my interpretation of case participants' thoughts shared during interview sessions. I used multiple data sets within each case and across cases to support the construction of emergent themes. Participant interview transcripts, interview notes, and observation field notes provided dataset diversity for triangulation (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). During analysis, I sought both evidence that encouraged the stories of each case, and the collective, to emerge from the data collected and provided a balance to my own bias.

Interview data have embedded weaknesses that cause researchers to be cautious (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2009). There can be inherent bias during intensive one-on-one interviews due to a poorly stated question or response bias based on the perspective of a particular case participant. The interviewee may attempt to give the interviewer what he or she wants to hear, a process known generally as reactivity (Maxwell, 2005). Participants may not accurately represent the phenomenon due to poor recall or bad memory. The issue of reactivity is always at play with interview data since the researcher is part of the world being studied, there is an unavoidable influence and what the informant shares is influenced by the interviewer and the situation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

The interview protocol was deliberately designed to probe, but not restrict case responses and allow the participant to guide the course of the discussion. Member checks on transcript data, interview notes, and observation notes were used to triangulate and corroborate data presented in interviews. When scheduling interviews, I allowed participants to select the location and time so they might be as comfortable and at ease with the situation as possible.

Observations are very time consuming and without multiple observers during the same observation, broad coverage is difficult. Therefore, observations within this study were subject to the threat of subjectivity due to a lack of broad coverage. Since I was an outsider in the

bluegrass guitarist/lead singer case setting, reactivity may have been a problem with that observation because events may have been affected by my presence in their rehearsal, which was an unusual occurrence. On the other hand, in the other two interviews reactivity was less of an issue. I did video record the observations but purposefully kept a low profile while taking notes in an unobtrusive fashion. The purpose of the observation was to compliment the interview data and to provide a better sense of context for the researcher. This added to data available when triangulating and during analysis of data within and between cases.

Within the design of this phenomenological study and throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data, threats to the trustworthiness of both the data collected and the conclusions drawn from these data were considered.

## Chapter 4

### **Findings**

This research study was designed to explore how music has been actively experienced from the perspectives of musically engaged adults. The following questions framed the investigation within a phenomenological approach:

1. What are the musical life histories of these adults?
2. How do these adults place their current musical settings within the context of their lives?
3. What meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement?
4. How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?

A construct for perspectives on music engagement (Figure 1) was developed which includes the explorative areas of 1) focused life history, 2) details of the current musical setting, and 3) reflections of meaning. A series of four in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant focusing on the content of the three aforementioned areas of exploration with the addition of a fourth review/wrap-up interview.

The interview protocol stressed the construction of each participant's perspective on musical engagement. Based on the resulting transcript data, participant reflections and meanings were interpreted within the contexts of both their perspectives on music engagement and identifiable music learning experiences. What follows is a presentation of findings from the three sets of case interviews.



## Max

Max hails from Chicago, Illinois, and is currently a retired professor of sociology from a large northeastern state university where he taught his entire professional career of over 30 years. He still enjoys an active academic life presenting at conferences around the world, while catching up with friends and colleagues along the way. Max's son lives in the same town with his seven-year-old grandson. His daughter currently lives out of the country. His partner is still working but they enjoy traveling, going to musical events around town, and enjoying their backyard together. Although Max also enjoys reading, cooking, birding and fine wines and spirits; he spends most of his time listening to music in some way throughout his daily life.

### *Observation Vignette*

This is the scene that I walked into upon my arrival for my music setting observation with Max (MaxObNotes, 4/20/10).

*I hear classical music reverberating from the house as I walk down the driveway to Max's door. I let myself in after no response to my second knock at the kitchen door. Max comes around the corner heading back into the kitchen and notices me making my way inside. Lunch fixin's are on the counter and the second movement of Beethoven 9 is playing on the local National Public Radio station. Max asks if I would like a sandwich and I take him up on his offer. He explains that he normally would listen to the remainder of this symphony to hear the radio announcer say who was performing, so that he may find the recording and potentially buy it. He is particularly fond of the balance between the sections of the orchestra and the voices, and though he has five recordings of Beethoven 9, he just might have to add another to his collection. I ask Max not to change his routine on my account, but to do what he would normally*

*do if I were not there. We both settle into his newly purchased leather couch with sandwiches close by on the coffee table.*

### ***Choice and Investment***

Max is an avid active listener of multiple styles and genres of music, and invests much of his time and resources creating an enjoyable listening experience within his home, as well as availing himself to the musical offerings within reach of his domicile. Max recounts:

...when I retired five years ago one thing I did was give myself roughly \$10,000 to upgrade my stereo. So, I just started reading a little before that happened. I subscribed to *Stereophile Magazine* and started reading and looking for sort of the sweet spot there, in a sense, the bargain, the places where you could get something that was rated “A” by the critics but was at a price level – you know, the A minus. The range for an amplifier in the “A” class might be from \$20,000 - \$1,500 and I’d buy the \$1,500. It’s still rated “A”. So, I was getting by with what I hoped—who knows, I don’t know—with what I hoped would be a really more high-end system that was good value for the money. (Max-2, pp. 4-5, lines 36-32)

Max’s collection of recordings is to the point where he has to physically check his shelves before making a new purchase at the risk of buying a copy of something already in his collection.

When choosing what to buy next, he will consult the *Penguin Guide* as well as other trade magazines for recommendations on the best recordings within each genre. He will often hear something on the radio or at a live concert and then research his collection and these other sources to make a choice of which recording to add to his ever-growing musical library.

### *Types of Listening*

Listening takes on many forms for Max. There was a 30-year stretch of time in his adult life when he did not own a television and the radio and recordings became a natural part of his day-to-day life. If he were at home and not reading or working then he was listening to music. During his junior year in college, he had the opportunity to study abroad in Sweden. Since the arts were heavily subsidized when he was there, students could attend concerts regularly and he attended a variety of performances, including the ballet, the opera, symphony concerts, and folk music concerts happening in local clubs. Much to his own chagrin, as he reflected on his musical past, prior to his experience in Sweden, he could not remember attending any live performances outside of church and school.

Throughout his adult life, Max would invite friends to his home to share in the hearing of a new recording or, for what he entitled “a listening session,” where they would each contribute material to be heard and discussed. Although he did not listen to music while at his campus office, he often listened to music at home while working or completing daily tasks. Currently, when he is working at home, he rarely works constantly and will weave between what he is working on and what he is listening to at the moment. In Max’s life there appears to be a continuum of music listening engagement - from music as something to be listened to in the background, to music as a co-activity shared with others, to music as the focal point of concentrated personal listening.

Having music around the house while growing up is a fond and salient memory for Max. He fondly remembers the family gathered around the radio listening to *National Barn Dance* every week. With his brothers he would pop popcorn while their mother would make fudge and they would feast on both during the broadcast. “I didn’t even think of it as country music...but

here I was getting introduced to country music. And then there were variety shows on TV...The *Dean Martin Show*, *Nat King Cole*. They all had musical guests” (Max-1, pp. 5, lines 3-14).

In 1950, when Max’s family moved from living in inner city Chicago to the suburbs, they discovered that a new neighbor worked for RCA records. On many occasions this neighbor would give his family a variety of new records, the majority of which were 45s. His parents would often select show tunes, classical music and opera. Max remembers at a young age, around fourth or fifth grade, taking a stack of 45s up to his room to listen to Franck’s *Symphony in D minor*:

...when I was reading I would put them on. You know it would be a stack and you know it would play five minutes on a 45 and then kerchunk, down would come another one, go through half of [the symphony] and then you would have to take the stack off and turn it over and get the other half, I loved that. I loved that music.”

(Max-1, 4/13/10, p. 2, lines 10-15)

These sounds of music around the house were a memorable influence on Max’s current listening habits and, perhaps, the starting point of his deep love for music.

### ***Individuals as Influences***

Throughout Max’s life there were many individuals who influenced him musically. One of his earliest memories was of his elementary through junior high school music teacher, Mr. Lucas. This teacher’s name is still within his memory banks almost six decades later. Max remembers singing throughout his time with Mr. Lucas and recalls singing parts of Handel’s *Messiah* in choir with orchestral accompaniment during his eighth grade year prior to heading to high school. For Max, this was a notable accomplishment at that age. He remembers the amazing feeling of singing this famous work on stage with a live orchestra.

In college he was exposed to what he described as an ‘obsessed friend.’ This person was obsessed with classical music and felt that everyone else needed to be obsessed with it as well. “He would say ‘hey, come on over, you got to hear this.’ And would play the *Russian Easter Overture*...and he knew how to do it. He picked that bombastic, romantic stuff, you know, that would just blow you away” (Max-1, pp. 3, lines 23-27). This type of musical exchange piqued Max’s interest in classic music even further. He wanted to learn as much as he could about any new piece he heard in order to figure out why he enjoyed those sounds. These types of influences had a lasting effect on Max’s musical engagement as an avid listener.

Later in Max’s life, when he first began teaching in higher education as a faculty member, he was introduced to a graduate student who loved music and they became fast friends. After this student graduated, he would often come back to town and visit with Max for a week or so, with a stack of recordings to share, mostly blues and rock. They would spend the week catching up and listening to as much as they could pack into these brief encounters.

Thus Max expanded his musical horizons as others exposed him to a wider range of music within and beyond the classical genre. These encounters with fellow avid listeners seemed to validate and encourage his musical engagement and spark an interest in exploring further. The roles that he plays in these formative musical episodes vary from being one of the masses in a choir singing *Messiah*, to more of a conversant with his obsessed classmate in college, to a close musical comrade with his graduate student turned colleague listening friend. Although Max has a decided preference for classical music, his listening does expand beyond those bounds.

During a sabbatical in Austin, Texas, Max got further turned on to the blues. Growing up near Chicago, Max had heard the blues on the radio but didn’t venture up to the city to hear live blues. While he was down in Austin for a semester he had the good fortune of staying in an

apartment within `walking distance from campus. On his daily route to campus he passed by Antoine's, the legendary blues establishment. At the time he did not know much about the blues but he felt drawn to stop into the bar on his way home in the afternoons and enjoy a refreshing beverage and the music that was spilling out onto the street. Max enjoyed the atmosphere and the music and began asking questions about the music while he was there each afternoon. The owner of the club also owned the record store across the street with the same name. Before leaving town that semester, Max walked across the street and asked the owner, Clifford Antoine himself, to recommend 10 recordings to start his own personal blues collection.

This experience discovering and exploring the blues demonstrates Max's curiosity when it comes to unfamiliar sounds and his willingness to learn and make sense of what he is hearing. When Max recall's his introduction to the blues he is startled by his omission of rock and roll, folk and reggae music during our discussion of music through his life.

### ***Dance and Movement***

With this new awareness, Max begins to discuss the role dancing plays in his musical listening experiences. He admits that all types of music evoke movement in him, if not dance in the common definition of that word, but he has learned to control his behaviors depending on the acceptable practices for each style of music and venue. "I can't not move...even to classical...It seems odd to me that everybody else isn't doing this to the classical music...because the rhythms are part of the excitement and part of the music and I want to move to it" (Max-1, pp. 24, lines 19-21). However, blues, reggae and rock music in particular make him get up and move. He explains how the advent of *The Twist* revolutionized dancing and made it more accessible to people who felt they were clumsy and uncoordinated on the dance floor. *The Twist* took away the specified steps and etiquette required to dance the prescribed dance steps prior to rock and

roll. From that point on, you could just get up and move however you wanted and nobody would have a second thought. Max found this to be very liberating and, for him, it opened up a new world of expression and connection to music.

I can get pretty wild and absorbed in the music and dance by myself... When dancing to the blues, for example I find myself looking at the performers, really getting into them, as the solo moves from one person to another, really getting into the person and often even, you know, making eye contact and communicating my absorption and love for music and making signs to the performers, you know, yeah, you know, and letting them know that, that I'm really into it. And of course, they can see if I'm up dancing. But I want to let them know that I'm not just dancing to the whole band, I'm dancing to the saxophone, you know? So...it's [dancing] got an added element to it, I guess. (Max-3, pp. 9, lines 25-41)

### ***It's Magic***

Max finds listening to music to be an emotionally intense experience and recalls that from an early age he experienced music very intensely. The beauty of music conjures up these strong feelings. "Sometimes you're just, like, overwhelmed by how beautiful something is. And yeah, that's the strongest real emotional experience" (Max-3, pp. 2, lines 38-41).

I just love it. I mean I just can sit here and listen to music for hours. It's a satisfying, fulfilling experience. I just, I just feel it, it makes me happy...It transports me into the music somehow...there is something about being absorbed by being, having your focus demanded by [the music]...I mean just being sucked in, being, sort of falling into – I don't know how to describe it, maybe falling into the music...being absorbed by the music, being focused on it, feeling emotions connected with it mostly of, just the, a

reaction to the beauty of it. Beauty, I keep saying that. And when I think of that, I think of the more romantic, you know, kinds of sounds. But no, it's not always that, sometimes the beauty is a harsh...but it grabs you. (Max-3, pp. 7-8, lines 27-10)

The listening experience is not purely emotional for Max; he also has a strong interest in knowing about music.

### ***Knowing About Music***

As Max describes it, there is another side to listening to music, "hearing the way the music is done" (Max-4, 4/28/10). This other side is not an emotional experience for him, but more so a cognitive experience. He enjoys noticing what is happening in the music. He simultaneously analyzes what he is hearing in the music while thinking about what he knows about that genre or that particular composer. Having knowledge about what he is listening to in the music gives him pleasure. He is particularly fond of working on his ability to recognize the different periods in western classical music and composers in each period.

This element of his musical knowledge is fun for him and gives him a sense of accomplishment. Although he is very good at this kind of recognition skill, he is rather self-conscious about demonstrating his knowledge outside the close circle of people that know and love him. He finds that some people are taken back by it or seem annoyed by his ability to successfully identify composers and works on the radio.

When Max listens to music that he is unfamiliar with he actively calls on years of aural experience and the cognitive information he has gathered via this experience and is metacognitively aware of this action. He then begins to determine what he is hearing and how that fits with his prior aural experience.



But to hear a brand new piece, that happens to me sometimes on the radio, I'll hear something and say, 'oh, that sounds like Copland,' you know and then I'll ask myself, 'How did I know that was Copland? In a sort of vague, you know, un-scholarly way I answer myself that there is something about his woodwinds and something about the harmonies, and I mean, I don't really know what-I don't have the language to really describe what it is. (Max-2, pp. 22-23, lines 44-11)

This type of reasoning enables Max to get pretty close with identifying music that is unfamiliar to him. Drawing from his repository of musical knowledge helps him to make sense of new music he hears and also helps him to hear new things in music he has heard many times.

### ***The Future***

Listening for Max is a major part of his life, yet he considers it to be unattached from his professional life and something he generally does in solitude. With the exception of the occasional conversations that occur with those who sit next to him at the University Performing Arts Series, to which he subscribes, he doesn't engage with others at live concerts. Besides the music he dances or parties to and the occasional listening session, the bulk of his musical listening he considers to be non-social, at least at this point in his life. Max does not foresee any changes in his listening habits as he continues to age. As long as he maintains his hearing, he will continue to dedicate much of his time to listening. However, he does anticipate that technology may change the format in which he experiences his listening. He has been reading about people switching to online servers and a new format called *lostless*, where you get a much higher quality because the digital information is less compressed than it currently is in MP3 or MP4.

## ***Musical Learning***

***Formal Learning Settings.*** Max participated in choirs from elementary school through high school. He also recalled joining his local church choir which “involved evening rehearsals and singing at services on Sunday” (Max-2, pp. 1, line 26). During his elementary school years, he recalls learning to read music well enough that he “could probably read a lot of music and sing along sort of” (Max-1, pp. 6, line 11).

In college, Max was required to take an introductory course in western culture, of which music was a part. The music portion of this course, “started giving [him] some way to think about the music that [he] was already liking from his childhood”(Max-1, pp. 2, lines 41-42). These reflections indicate evidence that Max learned music and about music in formal settings both inside school and at church.

***Self-Directed Learning.*** Listening to the radio provided Max with access to music that he wanted to explore in greater depth. He would often be turned on by something he heard on the radio and would find out more about the music he heard as well as seek out more music that was similar, as he says, “I would listen to music on the radio and that is how I would find out about things. That’s how I found out about jazz for sure” (Max-1, pp. 9, lines 32 - 34).

Max did a great deal of research before investing in a new sound system. He subscribed to audiophile magazines and consulted online resources. Max would hear something in concert or on the radio and become interested in purchasing. However, before purchasing new music he would consult the *Penguin Guide* for their recommendation on the best recordings of certain works. “*Stereophile* has a small recording section where they recommend, you know, recording of the month. So there will be one recording of the month and then they’ll be a couple each in

classical, jazz and rock” (Max-2, pp. 25, lines 15-18), and Max would use this information to make selections of new recordings to purchase.

Max experienced musical learning through his own discovery, in “hearing the way music is done,” which he considers to be an experience that is more cognitive than emotional:

I just really enjoy noticing what’s going on in the music. You know, I know the instruments pretty well, so I can often, not always, obviously, but often identify what’s going on and some of that’s just about the sound...There is a real cognitive part sometimes, where I’m really analyzing, you know, where I’m really thinking...But there’s an in between where you’re just sort of really into the beauty of it and at the same time sort of noticing what it is that makes it so beautiful...I enjoy knowing what I know about music. You know, that adds some pleasure in that sort of cognitive thing, you know, like that I can recognize the different periods in western classical music and I recognize composers pretty well. (Max-3, pp. 5, lines 9 -30)

This cognitive knowing about western classical music is developed further by Max’s self-assessment, as he practices identifying composers and pieces while listening to the daily radio broadcast. As he explained, “I guess I’ve listened to enough music over the decades that I’m more often right than wrong when I hear a new piece by a composer that I’m familiar with” (Max-3, pp. 6, lines 38-41).

Max learns from this previous cognitive knowing by applying it to repeated listening or hearings, “I’m sort of hearing, sort of, my experience, whether it is true or not, my experience is of hearing new things when I listen [to something with which I am familiar]” (Max-2, pp. 8, lines 40-41). He also applies this aural experience and knowing to his understanding of new music:

I know enough about music that I may be familiar with the composer and this may be something I haven't heard before by that composer, but I'll hear this, then there'll be an element of comparing, thinking, why does this sound like Copland? What is it that makes Copland sound like Copland? But to hear a brand new piece, that happens to me. (Max-2, pp. 22-23, lines 44-25)

***Surroundings as a Source of Musical Learning.*** Music was happening within Max's house growing up and throughout his life since. The stereo was located in the living room and his mother would play opera recordings while his father would tend to play Mantovani, a form of orchestral music that was described as, "very light sort of semi-classical orchestral music" (Max-1, pp. 4, lines 16-17). The radio continues to be a prominent part of his daily life and he often will listen to classical music and be reminded of a composer or a genre that he has in his collection of recordings. He will often switch from the radio to recordings of the same piece so he can listen for new things and learn more from the record or compact disc jackets.

Max subscribes to the music Performing Arts Series available in the eastern university community where he lives. During these performances Max reads the program notes to learn about new pieces and pick up new information about pieces with which he is already familiar. The works programmed on a concert provide new learning opportunities for Max, as he is exposed to literature outside of his knowledge base and generally attempts to learn all he can about these new works. The act of watching music happen provides an opportunity for Max to learn through observation:

I don't know, it depends on where I am, at a concert or at a club; the visual pretty much has to do with seeing the human activity that's producing the sounds. You don't have that when you sitting here [in the house] listening. You just don't have it. There's

something added when you actually see the oboe player with the oboe in her mouth doing it. (Max-3, pp. 13, lines 38-42)

***Learning from Others.*** Max spoke of many occasions when he learned from others in the process of sharing music together either from listening to recordings or participating in live performances. This was a continuous thread from high school when his older brother began to introduce him to jazz, through college when his residence hall floor mates, roommates and other friends shared the music they were excited about with him, and friends and colleagues once he began his teaching career.

Beyond these influences he has learned from his children, “their music, yeah, I know, I hadn’t heard, Elvis Costello had been around for a long time before [my daughter] turned me on to him...and there are others, you know that they liked. They liked the rock better than the other stuff” (Max-3, pp. 19, 18-28). Currently, his partner has been exposing him to the music she likes most. As Max talked about how his listening habits may change once she also retires and spends more time around the house during the day he anticipated:

[They] might [change]. And that might not be a bad thing. Her tastes are a little bit different from mine, but it’s not that I don’t like her music. So, it might expand my horizons a bit and listen to more folk stuff, which is her favorite. And some rock, more rock. On the other hand, she might get into the classical more. And that might add a dimension of conversation that would expand things as well. (Max-4, pp. 2, 27-35)

### **Jane**

Jane was completing her Ph.D. after a well-developed career as a special education teacher when we started interview sessions. A native of New Orleans, she frames her experiences through the perspective of growing up and living most of her life in this city. During

her matriculation through her graduate program, Hurricane Katrina affected her and her family's lives dramatically. Some of her immediate family relocated to the large northeastern public university town where she is studying and have remained, while others have returned to, or never left, New Orleans. Jane now resides in the northeast, but she still considers New Orleans her home.

### ***Observation Vignette***

This is the scene that emerged during my music setting observation with Jane (JaneObNotes, 5/6/10).

*It is a Thursday night and I am in the front of the sanctuary working with the sound system as I await the arrival of the special Women's Day choir that I am rehearsing tonight for the special programming on Sunday. Slowing women start to trickle in with that, "I'm tired already and this is not the last event of the day," look on their faces. As more people arrive the volume in the room begins to climb to a healthy chatter. Jane, the organizer of the Women's Day program, works the room checking in with everyone regarding details for the event in general and also just to see how they are doing on this particular night.*

*Before the rehearsal, Jane settles the group down and walks them through the logistics of what needs to happen before Sunday and then handles any last minute questions or concerns. She then hands the gathered choir over and takes her seat in the soprano section. As we begin to sing, she becomes absorbed in singing the correct words and listening to the other women who sing her part.*

### ***Music and Identity***

New Orleans is one of the best-known music cities in America. It fascinates outsiders who gather for weekends or the special seasons of the year such as Mardi Gras and the Jazz

Festival. One early memory that Jane had about growing up in New Orleans was what she called the “second line bands.” These were brass bands that would march down the street during street parades, funerals and for different community social events.

Jane remembers watching these second line bands and their colorful outfits, but her eyes and attention were drawn to the people, usually women, who would get involved in the dancing. She grew up knowing that when you heard certain beats and sounds that it was time to “second line.” So that second line had a connotation to locals and the musical signals would elicit certain dance movements and style. She remembers very clearly the New Orleans’ celebration of Ella Fitzgerald’s life when she died. Musicians from all over the city and beyond played in all aspects of the service - from the church, through the dirge to the cemetery, and through the rejoicing celebration after the burial.

Jane grew up and lived in the Seventh Ward of the city, which was considered the Creole area of the city, where she said you had to “pass the paper bag test” in order to get into certain places or clubs.

If you were dark, or your skin color was darker than a brown paper bag, then you were just not accepted, and not allowed in certain places. So, the Creole...New Orleans is the Creole capital of the world, and...there was racism, if you will, of classes amongst black people within the city. So, that – and it kind of still exists today. It hasn’t faded out completely. (Jane-1, pp. 15, lines 21-26; , p. 15, ln 21-26)

This type of stratification within the community was something Jane considers to be a leading force in the pride that each area of the city has, both in their specific area or ward as well as the entire City of New Orleans. It should be noted that though Jane grew up in a Creole ward and passes the paper bag test, however, she does not consider herself to be Creole.

The annual *New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival* represents the various types of musical styles natural to the region and influenced the aural palettes of the residents of New Orleans. Jane attended this event each year growing up and as an adult worked at the festival in various capacities. When describing her musical influences she relays:

I'm trying to place it for you, the best way I can put it in context for you is the *New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival*. Because there are different tents and different stages that specialize in different types of music. For example, one of the most popular things is the gospel tent, where the gospel groups perform. There are two jazz tents. There's one that's called Economy Hall, and that's where you have traditional jazz music, brass band kind of music, but there's also another stage that has more progressive jazz, more contemporary jazz. Then there's another stage where you have the big name draws...and it was eclectic – yeah, eclectic crowd. There's a Lagniappe Stage where there's mostly cajun fiddlers, and zydeco music. (Jane-1, pp. 17-18, lines 38-43)

This rich exposure to music in her everyday life both growing up and as an adult, provides the backdrop on which Jane paints her reflections regarding her musical engagement.

Jane considers music to be “just a natural flow of who I am. It's just always been...in my life...I connect different experiences now to different parts of music, whether it be church music, secular music, or to different parts to who I am” (Jane-1, pp. 24-25, lines 44-45). This thought gets extended further when speaking of New Orleans music in particular, in which there is a certain type of ownership implied in her reflections:

It's ours. It's ours and...I've been in different areas of the country...listening to someone else's interpretation of what I know. For example *Bourbon Street Parade* you know and there is a certain beat. There is a certain drum cadence that goes with that that everybody



doesn't capture. It's a different...It's a certain...I mean I may not even be describing it right, but it's a peculiar. It's a distinct cadence that kind of goes with the song and with the beat and the drums kind of, even though you don't think so, the drums kind of lead that you know. (Jane-2, pp. 14, lines 32-44)

Embedded within this statement is the sound nurturing that occurred for Jane over time that enables her to now, as an adult, discern the nuances between what she considers to be authentic New Orleans style and other interpretations.

The "second line" experiences cropped up throughout the series of interviews and for Jane these experiences left impressionable memories. It has become a part of her in a way that she can barely articulate, because it is more felt and acted upon than articulated. To listen to her describe the second line you get a sense of how she identifies herself musically:

It's just who I am...it's like it's natural. It's you know like you hear a certain song you know we just know that it's time to second line...For example, if you hear *When the Saints Go Marching In* then you might see people either wave handkerchiefs in the air when they're dancing or...folks may have decorated umbrellas...dancing with that or you know you can throw the umbrella down to the ground and dance around it or if someone throws a handkerchief on the ground it's like that is a challenge to see if you can do...to see what you got. And then you get into a line (but it's not a line dance).

The band could be on the stage stationary, but they're still playing the music and then folks you know you'll have somebody there that will kick it off and lead it and then you just have a group kind of going around the room...between tables, chairs, get on top of a table, stand on top of a chair. (Jane-2, pp. 15-17, lines 36-21)

Jane feels strongly that music is a part of her and she could not imagine her life without being connected to music in some way, shape or fashion. This is especially true for her in regard to music in the church setting.

### ***Music and Worship***

Jane converted to Catholicism at age 12 and became involved with the Catholic Youth Organization in her parish. She participated in worship through singing in the church gospel choir. Later she worked in the parish office as a secretary, which gave her more direct involvement and understanding of how worship was planned and executed. As a member of the choir she started a liturgical dance troupe in the parish that would dance during special music offering portions of the mass.

She was currently serving as the chairperson of the Worship Team at her church and, as such, she was responsible for planning all aspects of the weekly service along with the Pastor and other members of the worship team. Within that role she felt strongly that the music should “relate to whatever season or liturgical period of time we’re in” (Jane-1, pp. 3, lines 30-31). Aside from her role as worship team chair, she also served as a member of the Praise Team at her church. This group led the praise and worship section of the worship service. Jane had these feelings regarding the function of the Praise Team:

I look at the Praise Team as a moment in time, a moment of transition in the service after we do the welcome. I see it as connected with the welcome that we help the congregation or we act as a conduit to give the congregation an attitude of prayer and that each of us, each member of the praise team brings certain gifts to the group. I mean we sing collectively, but our backgrounds...our prayer styles, if you will, bring certain things to the different songs...And it is also a camaraderie with a nice group of people and just

lifting my voice to the Lord, scratchy and as bad as it is, but you know you do what you can do. (Jane-2, pp. 5, lines 1-14)

This expression and lively interaction has been a thread throughout her life and that sense of ensemble is something that motivates her past and current musical engagement. Though she doesn't consider her voice to be very good she relayed this regarding the nature of ensemble:

Oh, it's always a learning – our rehearsals and my rehearsals and practice through the years has always been, to me, an act of trying and being a part of a whole, being an individual that's a part of a group and knowing that when a group comes together, it's stronger than the individual. That when you ride together as a group, it makes sense, the voices are stronger, you don't hear the bad notes or the missed notes or those kinds of things. (Jane-4, pp. 5, lines 33-38)

### ***Enjoyment/Fulfillment/Accomplishment***

When the praise team gathers they start and end each rehearsal with a time of prayer. For Jane, this helps to put Jesus at the center of what they are doing as they lift up their praises. During the rehearsal they are sometimes playful in learning new styles or really getting into a style that is very familiar, but more importantly, to Jane, the excitement comes from enjoying each other's company.

Jane listens to gospel CDs and that experience connects her to God through a feeling of prayer via song and brings her peace in the active process of singing praises. She reports that while listening to these CDs in the car, people passing might think she has lost her mind because she might be sitting at a stop light clapping or waving her hands in the air expressing her praise. Music for Jane is a joyful celebration:

I just think music should be joyful. You know it should be enjoyed. It should be a celebration. You know even when it's sad, even when it's you know somber in some way it still should be a comfort and bring some sense of joy to the person.

(Jane-2, pp. 24, lines 32-35)

In conjunction with this feeling of joy are the feelings of fulfillment and accomplishment that Jane gets from her active participation in praise through musical expression. She described these feelings as she recounted the ways she is fulfilled by her musical engagement:

One way is I think I'm living what my purpose is supposed to be, in terms of what my role is here on earth. And that, music is – is like entwined within me, that – it's like living out what Christ asks of us. It's – it's an outward sign, outward demonstration if you will. So it does bring me happiness and joy and fulfillment in terms of that, in terms of like I know what I am doing and it makes me feel good as a Christian, in that I may not live all of my life right...but during those moments, that it just – it just feels right and it just brings me fulfillment and joy, a sense of accomplishment...allowing myself to step out of my role because even though I have, that I project an extroverted personality, I'm really an introvert, in really a lot of ways. (Jane-3, pp. 5, lines 203-214)

Even from within her role as worship team chair, she gets a sense of satisfaction seeing how things come together in the end. But that act of participation gives her the most personal connection through praise.

The act of fellowship with others is important to Jane and is felt as a part of the intention of worship. She has a natural gift for hospitality and views fellowship as a form of praise. Like her role as worship team chair, she volunteers to organize extra activities beyond the weekly worship service. As part of a yearly Women's Day celebration at her church, she organizes both

the worship program and the dinner that follows. She recounted a moment from this year's event where the women were done with all of the work of the day and yet, were there in the kitchen area just talking and "you know just kind of socializing, but it wasn't because we were actually physically working" (Jane-3, pp. 13, lines 573-575).

Specific to music, she mentioned her thoughts and feelings about the women's chorus, that was constructed to lead the praise and worship portion of the service for Women's Day. As she said, "it was good singing in that, we had people who wouldn't normally participate, to actively engage and I think that was more important than the actual song itself. Because it was just good to see different people come forth" (Jane-3, pp. 3, lines 100-102). Both of these examples display the enjoyment and fulfillment Jane derives from being active in both worship leadership and music making within the liturgical setting. This communal act of fellowship is a key ingredient to Jane's satisfaction. Music and church are very connected for Jane and it is difficult to isolate one aspect from the other when considering the affect each has on her enjoyment. How well the music is done seems less important to her than the fact that music was done in a spirit of community and praise.

### ***Essence of Praise***

The concept of praise is an ongoing spiritual connection for Jane. She sees praise as a combination of several moments in any given day of the week. When she reflects on her current musical engagement with the praise team at her church, praise is the word that sums up her thinking.

...the word praise. And that it's part of my prayer life that the constant theme of praise is giving honor and glory to God, comes to me through all... is connected to praise and when you get into – for me when you get into that moment of what does that song really

mean to you and where do you see yourself. How do you see the connection with your spiritual walk? That is praise. (Jane-4, pp. 2, lines 28-34)

These moments of praise provide the opportunity for a stronger connection to the spirit of God and his greatness according to Jane.

During these praise moments, Jane would find herself transcended, detached “from the bustle of the moment and just immersed...in the song, listening to the words and in the moment” (Jane-3, pp. 4, lines 171-175). She states many times through the series of interviews that she is not the most talented singer but for her it is a gift for her to be able to show her thanks and “express [her] Christianity” (Jane-3, pp. 8, line 359).

Although there is often a good deal of stress involved in coordinating aspects of worship and even singing with in the praise team, everything seems to come together for Jane in a way she feels is for the greater glory of God. Jane sums up her thinking by saying, “ultimately, it’s not us, it’s not about us” (Jane-3, pp. 16, line 174). Toward the very end of her reflections on the subject of her engagement with music within the church, in particular, she left me with the following thoughts:

So it’s just inbred. It’s like it’s within me, it’s within my being, it’s in my soul, it’s in my spirit that music is just a part of who I am. And because I love the Lord and because I love church activities that it just makes sense for me. That’s the common thread, that’s where my heart is drawn. Everyone has different gifts. Mine may not be to sing really well but to try and the feelings you get from trying and the participatory action means a lot. (Jane-4, pp. 5, lines 19-24)

As Jane finishes her degree she anticipates working in a faculty position on another campus, which will take her away from her current northeastern town during the work week and could

potentially curtail her ability to participate as fully on both the worship leadership team and the praise team. However, she anticipates that her listening will increase as she drives back and forth and during her time away from her church and immediate family.

Jane is very self-conscious about the quality of her voice and is also not very comfortable singing in front of other people. However, she sings in church because she feels it is what she must do to fulfill her spiritual need to actively praise. A common thread throughout Jane's story is the purpose of the singing as it relates to praise. Comment on the quality of music being produced was noticeably missing from her story. The purpose of the music takes the headline, not the music itself. The act of doing music is more important to Jane than the particular aspects of the performance.

### ***Musical Learning***

***Formal Learning Settings.*** Jane played the clarinet in her elementary school band for a few years but “eventually, like anything else, when you have to practice, it wore out” (Jane-1, pp. 5, lines 29 - 30). She also participated in the elementary school operetta, which exposed her to show tunes and dancing. Around the age of twelve she joined the Catholic Church and began participating in the youth group gospel choir providing service music for mass. At this same time she also sang in her junior high school choir.

During her college years she had the opportunity to participate in an All-City Choir made up of people from different churches:

It was a mass choir. And Pope John Paul came to New Orleans...He had an audience with black Catholics [and] there were about 200 maybe 250 black Catholics in the room...When he entered the room, there was this, you know, outburst of 200 voices coming together that was really kind of awesome. (Jane-1, pp. 25, lines 27-17)

Jane considers her participation in musical ensembles over time to be an act of learning, “our rehearsals and my rehearsals and practice through the years has always been, to me, and act of trying and being a part of a whole, being an individual that’s a part of a group” (Jane-4, pp. 5, lines 33-35).

The majority of Jane’s musical experience has taken place within director-lead ensemble settings. Though she has taken on organizational functions within these groups, she did not assume musical direction and preferred to be a part of a whole, inside the group, instead of out in front of the group.

**Learning From and Through Community.** Jane’s identity of being from New Orleans is steeped in the musical community of the city in which she grew up experiencing as a member of the community. “It’s a part of who I am, it’s, you know, I’m proud to be a New Orleanian and from early on, there were what we called second line bands playing through street parades, playing for funerals, playing for different [events]” (Jane-1, pp. 8, lines 6-9). Jane learned the sounds and appropriate reactions to this music from watching these community second lines parade down the streets of her neighborhood.

Within the context of worship, this idea of community is extended to include learning through active participation by way of planning and participating in the act of praise or worship. As part of her role on a worship committee in her church, Jane had the responsibility of selecting the music for worship services and determining how many verses would be sung for any given hymn. During this process she learned more about the nature of these hymns, “I started going back and looking at some of the songs and looking at the origin of the writer of the music and it’s listed as spiritual, but I guess I really don’t know what a spiritual is, so I continue to explore that further” (Jane-2, pp. 11-12, lines 45-12).



## John

John is a tenured associate professor in bioengineering at a large northeastern public university. He moved cross-country from the northwest coast to accept this faculty position after several years of working as a post-doc. Around the same time as this he and his wife found out that they were expecting the arrival of their first child. He describes this major life changing series of events as “shaking up the etch-a-sketch” (John-1, pp. 13, lines 19-16). Prior to these major life changes, John had focused a considerable amount of time concentrating on his skills as a bluegrass musician.

At the time we sat down to talk about his musical engagement, it was eight years after the move and John had two children as well as promotion and tenure. He was in the midst of refocusing efforts to sustain opportunities to play bluegrass in a group setting. He is now the lead singer and rhythm guitar player in a local bluegrass quartet. They rehearse once a week and were starting to play gigs a few times a month.

### *Observation Vignette*

This is a scene I experienced while observing John and his group during a regularly scheduled rehearsal (JohnObNotes, 5/20/10).

*Outside the house I hear the summer sounds of birds chirping in the last few hours of daylight, lawn mowers moving back and forth, and the sporadic sounds of the band warming up on the back porch. When I arrive in the back yard, most members of the group are there tuning strings and finding just the right place to put their cases and such. It is a cooler spring evening and they have decided to rehearse outside tonight since the basement of the bass player’s home is too cold. John arrives last in whirl, coming directly off the little league ball field with his guitar case in one hand and bag of lyric sheets in the other.*

*They quickly decide on a plan of action for this dress rehearsal before the happy hour gig tomorrow night in a local downtown establishment. John nods to the banjo player who takes the signal and plays an introduction to a barn burning, fast picking, toe tapping bluegrass tune. They exchange glances and nods as they work their way through the first verses and instrumental breaks. Then the chorus section of the song arrives and the bass and fiddle players' voices join John's lead singing creating this tight edgy harmony that is unmistakably bluegrass. As they loop back to the top of the form, for what I anticipate will be the last time through the song, I begin to take a few notes on my pad only to be interrupted by a surprise at the chorus section. This time, the instruments drop out with the exception of John's rhythm guitar, which accompanies the trio of singers. They lean into the one centrally located microphone and look right into each other's eyes as they sing with soulful understanding of the story they are trying to tell...the instruments kick back in to bring the tune to a triumphant close. When they finish they all say, yeah, that's it. I think to myself, that "it" must be the high lonesome sound that John says drew him to bluegrass in the first place.*

### ***Music Around the House***

One of John's earliest musical memories is a yearly event he attended with his family from age four until he was 24. At the "Hartselle's Christmas Party every family would sing...a Christmas carol, which was kind of quaint, when the kids were really little, but through adolescence and into high school, it was a whole, you know, a total, you know..." (John-1, pp. 2, lines 35-38). There would be 12 -15 families at this yearly party and his father would play piano for all of them.

His father was a rather accomplished pianist and John would frequently hear him playing in the house and also in recital as a piano duo with another pianist. John's paternal grandmother

taught piano, but didn't teach John. He did take piano lessons for about three years but states that he was not very good. He had a "good ear" as he recalls, but was not a very good reader and that held him back as well as caused him frustration. His mother also played the piano and sang a little bit, so between both of his parents there was a fair amount of music making within the home.

His mother had a record player in the house and records from the 60s were often laying around which John played at his leisure. The Mamas and the Papas and *Hello Dolly* were two of the "random" records he remembers listening to over and over again. Along with this eclectic collection within the house, John was influenced by the sounds of pop radio while growing up:

And then, you know sort of randomly stuff on the radio. I remember Elton John that must have been 1975 or so, I would have been nine, *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, you know, one of those. It was a kind of this learning, introduction to pop radio where they actually played every hour. You can just turn on the radio and if you listen for 20 minutes, you'll hear that song since it's number one on the charts, you know. (John-1, pp. 6, lines 34-39)

Music was part of his education in school as a child but it was mostly singing which he did not love at the time. "There was a chorus so a lot of singing which I didn't love, but I liked and it was just there and it was just sort of part of life, a part of things" (John-1, pp. 5, lines 25-27). When he was eight or nine he remembers an older boy who was in a band that practiced down the street. He went over to hear them play and they were playing *Smoke on the Water*:

...of course...And that was like – I think maybe I saw it two or three times, but I had the same experience every time and it was something I'll never forget because it was loud and it was like – it was rock and roll and it was simple and like wow, you know, because

I could sort of see then because then it links between doing it yourself and popular music you hear on the radio, because there's often that rift. And that's actually what I didn't like about the piano. There was like – there's all this music out there and then you, the way that I learned the piano is here's all this music for piano that you wouldn't hear anywhere else and you won't really hear anyone play and you learn this music on the piano and it's good for you. (John-1, pp. 5, lines 32-45)

These basement rock band observations established for John the connection between what he was drawn to on the radio and recordings and the possibility that he could actually be recreated and performed them himself.

### ***Discovering Bluegrass through Listening and Learning to Play***

In high school John started listening to a lot of music, from a variety of genres. A friend introduced him to the sounds of the Grateful Dead. At that time he lived in the Bay Area of California and the Grateful Dead were playing around that area a great deal. He had heard about them but hadn't latched on to them because, "they sounded weird" (John-1, pp. 13, line 10). Going to their live concerts exposed him to the entire experience that surrounds the Grateful Dead and he began to enjoy their music and became curious about the influences that informed their music making. Following those influences, John delved into both the blues and jazz.

Then he latched onto Jerry Garcia's varied and eclectic musical output and discovered bluegrass. Garcia was a banjo player before he was a guitar player and played with a bluegrass band called Old and in the Way in the 70s along side his main gig with the Grateful Dead:

He played banjo and this guy David Grisman, who is one of the great mandolin players. So there's this seminal album, they only put out one album. They put out some re-issue, I mean some live shows subsequently, but there was only one album...

So a friend of mine turned me on to that and I just sort of like, it just, you know, it was one of these musical epiphanies and so from that, I got really into bluegrass in sort of the later part of college and after college. I really didn't play, so the year after college, I picked up the – I started playing the banjo because I just thought it was the greatest. It's still kind of my favorite instrument, it's just great. (John-1, pp. 3, lines 19-32)

The banjo was a rather short-lived endeavor as John found the chord structures to be too difficult to pick up on his own. His brother was a very accomplished guitar player by that time and helped him with the basics of guitar playing.

Later in life, as a graduate student, John met up with a friend he knew from college who was learning to play the mandolin and also starting to delve deeply into bluegrass. This musical friendship became a pivotal moment in John's musical life as they exchanged records and practiced together all the time. Their mission was to learn all of the songs they possibly could and, through exploring the repertoire of bluegrass, build playing chops on the guitar for John and on mandolin for his friend Bob.

The draw to bluegrass for John came first through the virtuosic fast picking instrumental aspects of the genre. "Initially it was the fast banjo ones and, you know, the fiddle and the mandolin...the way there was a melody and...the melody tends to be fairly straightforward and then you're playing around the melody...that really got me" (John-1, pp. 4, lines 26-30). Then he later developed more of a preference for the vocal melodies and the vibrant harmonies found in the more "folk, kind of old-timey," sounds.

Bluegrass festivals played a major role in John's bluegrass education and playing development related to the genre. He gives this account of the role of festivals within the bluegrass culture:

You know, bluegrass since it was invented in 1946 till now, it's gone in and out of popular culture. It rises every decade or two decades, but it's the whole sort of an underground thing and then the more you get into it, like there's bluegrass festivals and you go and people will spend all summer going to a dozen bluegrass festivals. Each one, one a weekend,...is four days and you camp there and you bring your instruments and you play and then there's stage acts and it's kind of this whole community. Everybody knows the same songs and so it's a little bit like the Grateful Dead in a way that there's this sub-culture and those that are outside of it really don't know anything about it and those that are inside of it, there's all this stuff and folklore...(John-1, pp. 4-5, lines 42-46)

And really, when you go to bluegrass festivals...people just start informally jamming and then people, you know, the etiquette is you can just come up and play along and sing along and then maybe you want to do a song and since there's three part harmony, you can try to work out harmony; since there are solo breaks, then you can pass around the breaks. So it's really neat, I mean, it's sort of made to, it's like folk music, kind of the essence of folk music.

So that was a really appealing thing and then in the summers...you'd go and you'd camp and drink beer and you know, nothing better. Playing music into the wee hours of the night. (John-1, pp. 9, lines 17-26)

The festivals provided a venue for John, and usually his friend Bob, to test out the fruits of their practice sessions and to learn new material within a safe and nurturing musical community.

### ***That Lonesome Sound***

As John developed his bluegrass palette his ears gravitated toward the vocal aspects. There is a phrase that he utilized with much reverence when describing the essence of the

bluegrass sound that resides in the “high, lonesome sounds,” of the tenor harmony singer who has a powerful voice singing in the dangerously high range of the harmonic structure:

So I think the more I got into it [bluegrass], the less I got into the showy, instrumental part...and stuff and more into the core, I don't know emotional part of it, the lonesome part of it, the – and so that's the lyrics but it's also, it's really the sound. It's the sound of the vocals...then a lot of it is just the emotionality of it and the feel of the singing and the, you know, high lonesome singing with the trio harmony in it, you know something would click along the way like that singing in three parts and singing a chord and like that, you know, buzz, you know and then also doing it. When you do it, you sing it and you're nasal passages vibrate when you're singing really close. (John-1, pp. 17-18, lines 34-14)

The classic trio harmonic structure of bluegrass, according to John, builds on the lead singer singing the melody line with the tenor singer, usually the strongest voice within the trio, singing a third above the melody; and then a baritone singer singing a 4<sup>th</sup> below the melody so you end up with a chord in second inversion. Often times the three-part harmony is showcased during the chorus of the song's form, leaving the verses to be carried more so by the interplay between the lyrics and the instrumental fills that weave between them. Sometimes for added effect the instrumentals drop out during a chorus and the trio takes over completely. This is when the high lonesome sound shines most, as John describes:

The lead singer is doing his thing, but the stuff is really the tenor harmony singer and often that is actually louder in the mix, considerably louder and a high lonesome sound and it can be really high, so it can be really high and ideally not in a falsetto, so it's strained and high and loud and that gives it that tension. (John-2, pp. 12, lines 17-21)

The musical physics of bringing out the third of a second inversion chord creates tension with the third, such a volatile chord tone, perched on top. Then that tenor harmony voice timbre, as John describes, creates this high (on top of the chord), lonesome (out there on the volatile third) characteristics associated with bluegrass. When those parallel second inversion chords are sung in tune, balanced to feature the tenor harmony part, it creates that high lonesome sound.

### *Performing*

Before moving eastward, John and his mandolin playing friend Bob were in three different bands together as they continued to explore various aspects of the bluegrass traditions during and between groups. John also had the opportunity to play in what he calls a “semi-pro” group without Bob during his time playing in the northwest coast. Bob moved away from where they lived two years before John left the area. This was the beginning of a host of life changes for John and he began to listen more as his playing opportunities began to diminish due to the departure of his musical comrade.

Six years after the move, John met another musical playing friend; this time it was a banjo player, Brian, who he met through his volunteer DJ work at the local National Public Radio station as one of the hosts for a folk music show. This led to a second major turning point in John’s musical journey:

I was looking for people to play with and we both liked bluegrass and so we started playing, the two of us. And that was instantly like okay, you know, a real – and we were both good, but not great, but good and we knew songs, we could carry a song and so that was a big epiphany, that was a big one. (John-1, pp. 14, lines 35-39)



This new friendship eventually led to the formation of the fifth band experience for John, a quartet comprised of banjo, guitar, bass guitar and lead vocalist. This also served as the first group he was involved with in the new location.

This group was short lived due to musical incongruity and general group disagreement over governance. John then sought a more democratic band. “It was really important...that we all made decisions together, because that’s a key thing in bluegrass. I mean bluegrass is an ensemble form” (John-1, pp. 15, lines 34-36). With this type of philosophy he eventually teamed up with the bass player from this previous band and they added a different banjo player along with a fiddler to comprise the group he was currently playing with at the time of the interviews.

This interview process caused John to consider the role of performance in his own musical engagement:

It’s fun to you know get together and just play, but you eventually want to do something with it and you know really bring it to the next level. You need to perform and get people to hear you and see how they respond and do that part of it. So the main motivation is just playing really good music, but the performing part of it goes along with it because that sort of makes it sustainable or that gives it a focus for all the practice that you do and for trying to work things out and making things sound good. (John-3, pp. 1-2, lines 45-53)

This relationship between playing and performing was an issue John pondered and struggled with over the course of our conversations.

He saw playing and performing somewhat as polar opposites on a continuum and seems at odds with where he lies on that continuum. For example, he said, “some people are driven to perform and so it’s coming to pass that I am performing a lot on stage and...I don’t really put

myself in the class of people that are driven to perform” (John-4, pp. 2, lines 84-87). Then through talking through this concept a bit further he arrives at a meaningful conclusion:

For me it’s the – the performance is sort of a means to musical things rather than the music being a means to perform (and if it weren’t music it would be something else). That’s not it at all; it’s much more about the music...I guess I could see – in theory I could see getting all the musical satisfaction I need without actually doing a lot of performing on stage. I could see that in theory but in practice with the band and with other people and doing this, when you’re that focused – having that [performance] as a focus and doing that, it really helps and really defines the activity. (John-4, pp. 2-3, lines 89-99)

The fact that he now gets paid to perform is “gravy” but he considers getting paid to be a formality that validates that he is “really doing this” (John-4, pp. 3, line 99).

### ***The Mediator***

John admits that he is non-confrontational and avoidant by nature which he has had verified by taking the *Enneagram Type Indicator Test*. Of the nine personality archetypes within this personality screening instrument, he registers as a “mediator [who] is avoidant of conflict and is sensitive and cares about groups of people and wants to mediate...you work to resolve conflicts in people around you and relationships around you even if they’re not internal to you” (John-3, pp. 5, lines 221-225). John traces this mediator role through his life both pertaining to music and life in general.

He recalls playing on the football team in high school, not because he was very good or the team was very good but more because he would be part of the team. The idea of everyone

having a common goal and working together to reach it with the focus being on group and not individual is extended here in regard to music:

So, I really like this kind of thing and being in a band is like that, so you're all on the same team. It's a common goal that you're pursuing and you want to do really well for yourself, but it's everybody working together, so you have to get it all working together and so for that reason it really is very congruent. Being in a band and being a leader of a band in a democratic band in an ensemble form is very congruent with the way that I kind of see the world and I go through the world, so it's kind of...So it's very convenient that my you know musical passion and my sort of way of thinking about things have come together. (John-3, pp. 6, lines 241-250)

This mediator worldview explains, to some degree, John's musical choice regarding how he contributes to the bluegrass ensemble. As the lead singer, not the high lonesome voice of the tenor harmony, he moves the song forward but is not the voice that is keyed on within the harmonic structure. As rhythm guitarist, he rarely partakes in the solo leads during instrumental breaks but plays an accompaniment role within the texture.

When John and his bass guitar friend pulled together the band they are playing in currently, they were purposefully looking for people of like mind musically. "So we sort of came together...by design...the reason that we all came together and said you know lets do this, this is our band, is because we had this common sound that we liked and this common musical vision" (John-3, pp. 19, lines 749-752). It turns out that they are, according to John, rather flexible personalities though they feel strongly about bluegrass, "but...we've all been in bands and we understand the dynamics of...getting along and everybody feeling positive about things" (John-2, pp. 5-6, lines 46-42). Bluegrass also lends itself to common knowledge among

aficionados, as there is a well-established cannon of tunes that are played by novices and professionals alike. So coming into any playing session, everyone is likely to be at least familiar with the tune and the most familiar recording artist. John feels that is very much the case with his current band.

During rehearsal as John's learns new songs, they work on arranging the tune to best fit their instrumentation and musical preferences. "If we can change it around and you know do something interesting to it and make it our own, then we're much more engaged with it" (John-2, pp. 11, lines 15-17). They have developed what they consider to be their sound that focuses on tight harmonies, good balance between instruments and vocals, and an arranging style that provides clarity to the listener. John describes a signature arranging technique they use to provide clarity and a focus on the vocal harmonies:

We kind of get this sound that sounds good and so like one of the things that we do is we like to dropout and sing an a cappella chorus, which some people do. You hear it, but that's like our thing and it's very satisfying...that has become our sound. (John-3, pp. 17, lines 760-765)

This signature a cappella chorus provides an ideal place for a mediator to thrive. The focus in this instance is the team not the individual and John endeavors to do his very best for the greater common good. The aesthetic affect of the trio harmony is greater than the sum of its parts.

### ***Music Is My Thing***

Within the band, John feels that the amount of time he can devote to music making is far less than all other members of the band who are in different phases of their life, both in terms of family obligations and employment or work obligations. In order to keep all aspects of his life balanced, he has boundaries that do not permit him to do everything he may want to do musically

at times. It is a constant negotiation but he feels his “wife understands that this is what I like to do most...this is like my number one priority [outside of family and work]” (John-4, pp. 8, lines 358-361).

John describes his music making very passionately and though he has interests in other things, makes it clear that music is his thing:

I like music and it’s what most consistently excites me. It’s what I have sort of the deepest knowledge base of...it’s what most quickly or let’s say most consistently just connects with me, my emotions, connects, just connects with me at all levels and because there are so many outlets, so there is well there is listening to it. There is playing it. There is discovering new bands. There is going out to see shows. There is teaching it to my kids and getting them started on it. There is participating in stuff at there school [musically]. There are just all these outlets and it’s what I put the most value on for something to do. You know something to spend time on because I think it’s so important...So that’s why I think it’s my thing. It’s my main hobby. It’s my main pursuit...Outside my family and my job it’s what I like to do most. (John-3, pp. 3, lines 121-138)

Although John describes many aspects of music, he makes a point to clarify further that playing music is the highest form of “his thing:”

I still love to go out and see music and I love to listen to music, but playing music...is really where it happens and so I love to play music with people and make good music that sounds really good and sing it and play it and play with people that are really good and hear them play and you know work together. (John-3, pp. 1, lines 32-39)

This process of reflection was a form of validation for John as he thought through his music engagement over time and began to unearth the recurring themes that frame his self-identity as a musician and the role that music plays in his life as a whole.

### ***Musical Learning***

***Formal Learning Settings.*** John grew up in a musical family where both parents were piano players and his mother, as well as his grandmother, taught piano. When he came of age, according to his father, he too began studying the piano, “but it didn’t really click completely with me...I was quite bad actually at reading music, but I had a good ear, and so as long as I heard it enough times then I could sort of work it out, but I wasn’t very good at reading music” (John-1, pp. 3, lines 2-5).

During his elementary and secondary years he participated in the school music program by singing in chorus, but his interest in doing so was only marginal. “There was a chorus so a lot of singing which I didn’t love, but I liked and it was just there and it was just sort of part of life, a part of things” (John-1, pp. 5, lines 25-27). Although he seemed to enjoy aspects of singing he did not recall being enthusiastic about his school music experience.

***Self-Directed Learning.*** In high school John started to listen to a lot of music and, in the process, a friend turned him on to the Grateful Dead, which ultimately lead him to discover bluegrass.

I discovered bluegrass because Jerry Garcia was a banjo player before he was a guitar player and there’s this band, Old and In the Way that he played with on the side in the early 70s. He played banjo and this guy, David Grisman, who is one of the great mandolin players, played with him. So there is this seminal album, they only put out one album...So a friend of mine turned me on to that and I just sort of like, it just, you know,

it was one of those musical epiphanies and from that, I got really into bluegrass. (John-1, pp. 3, lines 20-29)

John was drawn to the sound of the banjo and began to learn to play on his own, but he wasn't able to figure out chord structures on the instrument. His brother had some guitars around. He borrowed one and started teaching himself guitar, which he found to be more accessible. His brother would give him pointers from time to time to help him along.

Once John became hooked on bluegrass he began listening to older styles of bluegrass to learn all that he could about the genre through its historical background and evolution. He labels himself as "encyclopedic" when it comes to learning about new things:

You know, get into all the details of it and the history of it and linking things together, so getting into like tapping the vein of bluegrass and then you kind of tie it, you go back in history and you see how all the threads to what then arrived and the threads go into all kinds of musical forms and sort of replicates other forms like some aspects of the blues or some aspects of rock and roll even. (John-1, pp. 5, lines 9-13)

From this encyclopedic discovery, John also analyzed the evolution of song form and harmonic structure in bluegrass music. The sounds of iconic bluegrass groups provided him with the aural palette to learn the harmonic language of bluegrass which he claimed, "had its own way of talking about it [harmony] and my music theory is okay, but it's not...it's much self taught" (John-2, pp. 11, lines 44-46).

As a performer and bandleader, John also likes to observe others perform live because he feels that he is engaged in a totally different way when observing a live performance. "Seeing people play it [music] and then figuring out you know what they're doing...it's like three

dimensional then because you can see them playing off of each other. You see what connects to what” (John-3, pp. 4, lines 180 - 183).

***Learning from the Bluegrass Community.*** The song is the avenue into the heart of the bluegrass community. As John began to immerse himself into this community he first found peers who were on a similar quest and at a similar ability level with which he could improve his craft and start to learn the canon of songs important to the community. John spoke to this during our first interview when he described meeting up with an old friend from college, “he was learning mandolin and I was learning guitar and we both were really getting into bluegrass and ...we just played all the time and learned all the stuff and traded albums back and forth and then eventually started a band and went to festivals” (John-1, pp. 4, lines 3-8).

The bluegrass festivals gave John the opportunity to expand his ever-growing repertoire of songs and to practice with more advanced performers during the evening jam sessions. “So a lot of bluegrassers...go to festivals camping and seeing the pros on the stage and then camping and hanging out and meeting people and playing music all day and all night” (John-2, pp. 9, lines 37-40).

John learned a great deal about bluegrass through performing with various bands throughout his journey. He discusses the group learning process where members of the band learn songs together during rehearsal and they each have certain roles that they play based on their instrument and voice part. Once they have mapped out the structure of the particular song, they begin to arrange the instrumentation and vocal parts to best accentuate their strengths and relay the message of the song. This type of groupthink allows each member of the group to both bring their expertise and learn from other members of the group. The group will learn a song by listening to it together and dissecting it then putting it back together with their own flavor and



style. Ultimately, for John, he “love[s] to play music with people and make good music that sounds really good and sing it and play it...and you know work together, so to do that you have to be on the same page. You have to learn things together” (John-3, pp. 1, line 36-42).

### **Cross-Case Analysis**

#### ***Connection to Humanity***

***Touching the Emotions.*** Musical engagement seemed to be a catalyst for these adults to connect with their humanity in various ways. When speaking of music, each case member spoke of an intense emotional feeling they derive from their music making and/or listening to music. Max recalls listening to classical music on 45-inch vinyl records while reading in his bedroom as a young child, “I loved that, I loved that music” (Max-1, pp. 2, line 15). In another context he says, “Sometimes you’re just, like, overwhelmed by how beautiful something is. And yeah, that’s the strongest real emotional experience” (Max-3, pp. 2, lines 38-41).

Jane also expressed this type of emotional response when describing her feelings related to music in general being a joyful celebration, “you know even when it’s sad, even when it’s you know somber in some ways it still should be a comfort and bring some sense of joy to the person” (Jane-2, pp. 2, lines 33-35). John related his sense of the “emotionality” of both the sounds of close harmony singing and the physical act of producing those sounds in context of singing with others:

...then a lot of it is just the emotionality of it and the feeling of the singing and the, you know, high lonesome singing with the trio harmony in it, you know something would click along and the way like that singing in three parts and singing a chord and like that, you know, buzz, you know and then also doing it. When you do it, you sing it and you’re nasal passages vibrate when you’re singing really close. (John-1, pp. 17-18, lines 34-14)

**Transcendence.** While actively engaged musically the participants would find themselves absorbed in the moment. The music and the act of being actively involved with it occupied their senses and attention in such a way that it provided occasions of transcendence, which they seemed to regard as intensely meaningful. Within Jane's concept of praise, she described listening to or singing gospel music and finding herself caught up, "from the bustle of the moment and just immersed...in the song, listening to the words and in the moment" (Jane-3, pp. 4, lines 171-175). This idea of being in the moment was a common theme across cases.

Max provided a rich description of this idea of transcendence when discussing what he calls the "magic of music."

It transports me into the music somehow...there is something about being absorbed by... having your focus demanded by [the music]...I mean just being sucked in, being, sort of falling into – I don't know how to describe it, maybe falling into the music...being absorbed by the music, being focused on it, feeling emotions connected with it mostly of...a reaction to the beauty of it. (Max-3, pp. 7, lines 27-10)

**Expression.** Music provides a means of expression through the response to music heard or the act of music created. John talks about his excitement about music making in particular and how it is what he likes to do most with his discretionary time. For John, music "just connects with me, my emotions, connects, just connects with me at all levels...because there are so many outlets" (John-3, pp. 3, lines 121-138). John finds personal listening, watching live performances, playing with others in rehearsals and playing live to all be outlets for his musical expression.

Jane considers music to be a natural part of who she is and she, "connects different experiences now to different parts of music, whether in church music, secular music, or to

different parts of who [she is]” (Jane-1, pp. 25-26, lines 44-45). Music evokes some type of expression on her part. Her recurrent description of the New Orleans “second line” experiences is a good example: “It’s just who I am...it’s like it’s natural. It’s you know like you hear a certain song...we just know that it’s time to second line” (Jane-2, pp. 15-17, lines 36-21).

Movement is a natural response to music for Max and he finds it very hard to control himself in settings where movement is not socially acceptable: “I can’t not move...even to classical...it seems odd to me that everybody else isn’t doing this to classical music...because the rhythms are part of the excitement and part of the music and I want to move to it.” Within settings where movement is not an issue, Max will show his appreciation to musicians on stage by dancing in order to let, “them know that I’m really into it” (Max-3, pp. 9, lines 25-41).

### ***Sense of Fulfillment***

***Accomplishment.*** In these adult cases, accomplishment emerged as a common theme within the context of fulfillment. Through their engagement in music, they feel a sense of pride and validation through the musical skills they demonstrate. Max recounts singing parts of Handel’s *Messiah* while in middle school choir, “I remember doing the *Messiah* like in eighth grade. We sang along with some kind of orchestra. I don’t remember what it was...I learned stuff from *Messiah* that early” (Max-1, pp. 2, lines 22-26). He mentions this accomplishment, singing portions of *Messiah*, within the context of talking about a music teacher he had from grade school through middle school that was a big influence on him musically.

John does not play music as his main source of income; in fact he considers the gig to be “gravy.” However he does consider, “getting paid to be a formality that validates that [he] is really doing this” (John-4, pp. 4, lines 145-147). The fact that he is being paid to perform

validates, for him, his accomplishment as a musician and the status of his group that they, a bluegrass organization, can get hired to play various gigs in a northeast college town.

Max spoke of a different type of validation that he often gets when astonishing friends and family with his ability to recognize and identify composers and compositions on the radio before such information is announced:

To hear a brand new piece, that happens to me sometimes on the radio, I'll hear something and say, "Oh, that sounds like Copland?" you know, and then I'll ask myself, "How did I know that was Copland? I wonder what it is about him?"...In a sort of vague, you know, unscholarly way, yeah. Something about his woodwinds and something about the harmonies, and I mean, I don't really know what – I don't have a language to really describe what it is...but I'm really, this sounds too egotistical, but I'm really good at it.

(Max-2, pp. 23, lines 22-15)

Though Max is shy about this ability to correctly identify music played on the radio, he is validated by the astonished reaction he receives by those around him when he displays this skill.

**Realization.** It became clear over the course of four in-depth interviews with each participant that these sessions helped them, in some ways, to develop understandings and comprehensions of their musical engagement. These realizations illustrate how they are fulfilled and satisfied by music engagement. Jane provides a description of how she is fulfilled through praising her God through musical engagement:

One way is I think I'm living what my purpose is supposed to be...music is like entwined within me, that it's an outward sign, outward demonstration if you will. So it does bring me happiness and joy and fulfillment...it just feels right and brings me fulfillment and joy. (Jane-3, pp. 5, lines 203-214)

John was discussing his experiences playing with various bands as he was developing his playing skills and exploring the bluegrass cultures as much as possible. As he was relaying these experiences he worked through the realization that democracy within ensemble is important to him. It goes beyond playing with great players. The nature of the process is in some ways more important. “It was really important...that we all made decisions together, because that’s a key thing in bluegrass. I mean bluegrass is an ensemble form” (John-1, pp. 15, lines 34-36). Jane had similar things to say regarding ensemble being, “an act of trying and being a part of a whole, being an individual that’s part of a group and knowing that when a group comes together, it’s stronger than the individual” (Jane-4, pp. 5, lines 33-38).

These realizations emerged over the course of the interview process and were astonishingly new understanding for these adults. All three of them mentioned at some point during the interview process, that these sessions felt like a form of therapy for them as they delved into aspects of their musical engagement and what it means to them.

### ***A Matter of Choice***

Adults have many responsibilities and obligations that occupy their time and other resources. However these participants have chosen to spend their discretionary time actively engaged musically. Within this choice to be musically active each has carved out the particular activity in which they are currently invested.

Max is an avid listener and though he listens to music in many contexts, his most common activity is personal listening in his home living room:

When I retired five years ago one thing I did was give myself roughly \$10,000 to upgrade my stereo...I started reading and looking for sort of the sweet spot, in a sense, the bargain, the places where you could get something that was rated “A” by the critics but

was at a price – you know, at the “A-minus [range]...” with what I hoped would be a really more high-end system that was good value for the money. (Max-2, pp. 4-5, lines 32-32)

This type of monetary investment illustrates Max’s devotion to personal listening and the nature of the choice to create a listening space to best serve his musical engagement.

Jane is a member of her church praise team and as such spends time during the week rehearsing with the group and then on Sundays within the worship service. In preparation for rehearsals she listens to music, sings along, and spends time introspectively considering the text of each song to be sung that particular week. Music seems to be embedded within actively living out here faith:

So it’s inbred. It’s like it’s within me, it’s within my being, it’s in my soul, it’s in my spirit...music is just a part of who I am...Everyone has different gifts. Mine may not be to sing really well, but to try – and the feelings you get from trying and the participatory action means a lot. (Jane-4, pp. 5, lines 19-24)

Although Jane takes on many responsibilities within her church, she acknowledges her singing and participation with the praise team as her current form of musical engagement.

John has developed into a talented guitar player and singer. He has musical interests that span many popular styles, however it is bluegrass that has captured his attention the most over the course of his musical life. He admits to being a non-confrontational and avoidant person by nature, however, he not only serves as both the lead singer and rhythm guitarist for his bluegrass band but he also serves as the bandleader. This choice may seem incongruent at the surface however to John:

Being in a band and being a leader of a democratic band...is very congruent with the way that I kind of see the world and go through the world, so it's kind of...So it's very convenient that my...musical passion and my sort of way of thinking about things have come together. (John-3, pp. 6, lines 241-250)

His need to be a part of a team working toward a common goal supersedes his non-confrontational nature and connects with his “mediator” (John-3, pp. 5, line 221) personality to create an environment where everyone’s input is valued. Therefore, his choice to musically engage as bandleader, lead singer, and rhythm guitarist makes sense within the context that he orchestrates for himself.

### ***Musical Learning***

***Formal Learning Settings.*** Jane participated mostly in formal learning musical settings throughout her life, where the bulk of the musical decision-making and leadership was coming from a director of the group or organization. She recounts the rehearsals and preparations for performance to be acts of learning. Max and John both participated in formal music instruction during their elementary and secondary schooling years via chorus, but did not continue in these formal settings after graduation from high school. Max seemed to enjoy his school music experiences and spoke fondly of them throughout the series of interviews. John, on the other hand, saw his school music program as part of his general education, something that was “there” but nothing in which he felt much personal investment. Ironically, John eventually ended up doing a great deal of singing as lead singer of his bluegrass band, which implies that perhaps his choir and school singing may have helped him in ways that he was not fully aware.

***Self-Directed Learning.*** All three participants expanded their musical knowledge through listening to music of their own choosing. The music itself would spark their interest to explore

further. Jane would read up on the derivation of the hymns she was programming for church service. Max would often follow up on something he heard on a radio broadcast by reading more about the composer or finding reviews of various recordings of the same work to consider purchasing it for further listening. John would trace the historical origins of a particular bluegrass style and study the influences that shaped the music he was currently exploring.

John was interested in performing bluegrass and spent a great deal of time learning to play bluegrass instruments and to sing in an appropriate style. Max was concerned with appreciating the music that he became aware of “along the way” and expanding his listening vocabulary to help him to place music he heard within his cognitive understanding. Jane used music as a tool in worship and endeavored to “lift her voice in song” as an expression of praise through her active participation on the praise team.

*Learning from and within Community.* Each of the participants learned from the communities around them at various points in their lives, and within the musical community in which they were currently engaging. Max, Jane, and John grew up with music in the house and within their communities. Jane had the rich musical heritage of New Orleans just outside her door. Through participation and observation of common celebrations she learned the sounds of her community. Within the context of the church she also grew quickly accustomed to the sounds and musical traditions of the church.

Max had access to many recordings inside his parents’ home and radio broadcasts were a major part of his day-to-day existence both as a child and throughout his life. His musical palette began to expand after high school, yet, he maintained a keen interest in Western classical music. Many avid music listeners influenced Max, however, throughout the series of interviews did not consider his engagement to be communal. To him they remained private. John grew up in a



household full of music that did not entirely register to him. His parents were both piano players and his mother also sang a good amount. He himself took up piano but stopped playing after a few years. His father would take him to orchestra concerts and his family would go hear his father play piano duets. He also recalls there being a mix of records including show tunes, folk music, and rock music. Listening explorations with a group of high school peers lead him to the sound of bluegrass. Since then, John has been delving into the bluegrass community and culture learning how to hear and perform within the genre.

Through the series of interviews each participant walked through their musical histories past to present. In the process, they described many incidents of learning, although musical learning that was self-directed or community oriented was not generally acknowledged as “learning” by the participants, who often placed it in the context of musical engagement in general.

## Chapter 5

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore how music has been actively experienced from the perspectives of musically engaged adults. The following questions framed the investigation within a phenomenological approach:

1. What are the musical life histories of these adults?
2. How do these adults place their current musical settings within the context of their lives?
3. What meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement?
4. How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?

The series of four in-depth interviews with each participant yielded a list of emergent themes both within each case and between cases. Themes converged to provide insight into the phenomenon of adult music engagement as experienced by these collective cases.

#### ***What Are The Musical Life Histories Of These Adults?***

Focused life history is one of three spheres included within the researcher-developed construct of perspective on music engagement. The focus in these cases was on their musical life histories as they reflected on the various phases of their lives. Participants were asked to think back to their earliest musical memories and tell their history from that point to the point they decided to engage in their current musical setting. Through this reflective telling, which was the thematic focus of the first interview, it was anticipated that each case would recall points in their lives that have impacted them enough to still be in their recollection.

The focused historical musical telling also allowed the participants to guide the researcher to the salient points of their history from their perspectives. The sample for this study was selected using a purposeful method designed for maximum variation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). However, the discussion of music life histories will be organized based on chronological cross-case themes starting with childhood then moving through young adulthood.

During childhood there was a musical interest for each case at a relatively young age (Bowles, 1991; Stollak & Stollak, 1996). Max tells the story of a neighbor who worked for RCA Records and would give his parents classical and show tune recordings that he would play up in his room while he was reading. He also recalls family gatherings listening to radio show broadcasts that prominently featured music. Jane was surrounded with the musical sounds of her New Orleans neighborhood as she watched and participated in community events. This later became a undergirding of her sense of identity. John remembers the sounds inside of his house being of marginal interest. He recalls family gatherings singing around the piano and listening to his parents play the piano and sing during other times. However, he experienced a type of epiphany while witnessing a neighborhood basement band rehearsing *Smoke on the Water* when he was still a young boy.

All three cases participated in their school music programs. They remember general music classes that were required of everyone, but they remember singing the most and continued in school choirs through middle and high school years. Jane also played the clarinet for a few years in elementary school but discontinued before middle school. Jane was also heavily involved with the music program at her church. These reflections on childhood reveal categories of influence, which include: music in the home, family outings, neighborhood surroundings, school, and peer groups.

Although their childhood influences were similar, they were affected differently and to varying degrees. They all had music happening within their homes, however, Max and Jane continued to engage with the types of music heard as children while John moved in a different direction from his home influences.

The influence of family was present in each case. Family-organized musical events outside of the house were also an influence that each case experienced. Max would attend the occasional concert with his parents. Jane would attend church with her mother and John was taken to piano lessons and orchestra concerts with his father. Max and Jane continued this type of engagement once given the choice; however John began to move in the direction of more popular music at this point in his development.

Neighborhood events provided musical outlets for each participant during their childhood. Jane and John remember this being a more salient aspect of their formative identity as children, whereas Max remembers the bulk of his musical experiences happening in school or at home. School as an extension of neighborhood was influential in the lives of each case to varying degrees (Lawrence & Dachinger, 1967). Jane continued to sing after her school years, Max did not continue to sing in a choir and John returned to singing later as an adult but first turned his attention to playing bluegrass instruments that were not generally offered in the school curriculum.

The aspect of peer influence on childhood musical engagement varied between these cases (Fredrickson, 1997). Max mentions very little peer interaction during his childhood; the majority of his musical engagement was personal listening. Jane had a great deal of peer interaction with music during her childhood in school, at home and at church. Music was closely related to social gatherings within her life as a child. John attached to a peer group that was

interested in what he considered to be the subculture of the more popular music of that time. He would listen and absorb himself in that popular music culture with his friends.

These three adults had different musical childhood life histories; however, there are similarities in regard to areas of influence. These early experiences set the foundation for life long musicianship for these cases. The next phase of development between childhood and adulthood, or the Pre-adulthood era (Levinson, 1986; Reese, 1977), is the time when each case begins to shape their musical identity.

During this Pre-adulthood era, each case member remembered a point where they were conscious of their decision regarding the importance that music would play in their lives (Coates, 1984; Jutras, 2006). Max serendipitously met other music enthusiasts in his college residence hall. He recalls one floor mate that would call him over to his room and play his classical music favorites. During his junior year he studied abroad in Sweden where he enjoyed the live music scene and attended many concerts of all types. This was the first time in his life that he attended concerts regularly and he quickly became very fond of that live concert experience. By the time he left college he had built a rather good stereo system and begun to build his recording collection. He remembers making the conscious decision to start putting together the best sound system possible. The radio was also a major influence on Max during his college years and shortly after with the emergence of rock and roll. His musical preferences began to expand from this point but the nature of his musicianship became more solidified. Max was an avid listener who enjoyed all types of music with a preference for personal listening.

Jane recalls gravitating to the musical elements of worship in church during her teen years and throughout her young adult life. She started a liturgical dance troupe in her church and sang in gospel choirs throughout high school, college and beyond. Popular music was also a

major part of her formative teen years and she recalls the house parties she and her friends would organize most weekends. They would pool their record collections and make sure to have all of the latest rhythm and blues hits of the day. Music became a way that Jane expressed herself and felt a strong attachment to her spiritual and emotional feelings. This realization propelled Jane to become more active in the planning of worship and the roles that music has in enhancing the worship experience.

John's pre-adulthood musical journey took him through the eclectic musical style of The Grateful Dead. He and his peers became very attached to this group and would attend as many live performances as possible. They began to explore the musical influences that attributed to The Grateful Dead's sound and style and this winding road lead John to bluegrass. During his years just after college he began learning to play first the banjo and then the guitar with another bluegrass friend. This friendship was what John considers to be his second epiphany after the *Smoke on the Water* first as a child. He realized that playing with others was what excited him most and he began delving more deeply into his musicianship in this fashion.

All three cases can remember those moments of "epiphany," and the power that these realizations had on their musical identity (Allsup, 1997; Andruske, 2000; Brookfield, 1993; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2009; Pickles, 2003). Being present during these tellings gave me the opportunity to witness these realizations along side each case. Each of them commented on how recounting their musical history was a form of validation and very therapeutic for them now, to think about how they have become who they are musically.

The thrust of Max's musical history can be summarized by various types of listening exploration as guided by his own discovery and influenced by individuals he came in contact with along the way (Flowers & Murphy, 2001; VanWeelden & Walters, 2004). Music is

primarily a personal endeavor for Max. He spends the majority of his time listening to classical music in his home or in live performance within a concert hall setting, although he does mix social elements with certain kinds of music listening.

Music as identity and the relation of music to worship are two themes that are threaded through Jane's musical history (DeNora, 2000; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Hinkle, 1987; Machover, 1990). Jane uses music to express herself spiritually and emotionally and music is very social. When she listens to music alone she feels connected spiritually to God and to people she associates with that music. Exploration through listening and informal learning was a mode of discovery for John throughout his musical background (Bowles, 1991; Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Knowles, 1975). This process led him to bluegrass and continues to fulfill John through playing and singing.

Through telling their musical life histories, these cases collectively illustrate the influences of music in their childhood homes, neighborhoods, schools and peer groups. They draw connections throughout the pre-adulthood transitional years when formative childhood influences were challenged and/or expanded by personal musical choices and experiences. Exploring the musical life histories of these adults set the stage for delving into their current musical settings.

### ***How Do These Adults Place Their Current Musical Setting?***

Adults engage in non-obligatory activities by choice. The action of choosing presents a host of decisions and reflects the motivations and intentions of each adult (Knowles, 1980). Adults choose musical environments that accommodate their particular needs at given points in time and generally prefer to direct and plan the nature of their experiences. They choose

environments that match their desired needs when possible, even if they are not in control (Elliott, 1995; Knowles, 1968; Langer, 1957).

Details of the current musical experience represent the second of three spheres in the Perspective of Music Engagement Construct (Figure 1). This question was designed to delve into their perspectives on what roles these musical settings are playing in their lives by exploring the particular elements and aspects of the musical environment. Another purpose for this question was to provide the opportunity for each case to reflect on how their adulthood musical experiences have led them to this particular musical setting. The collective cases frame their current musical engagement as a matter of choice at this point in their lives. There is a process embedded within the choice to engage, which enables each case to establish a niche within each setting (Knowles, 1968).

John, for instance, loves to play and sing within the bluegrass ensemble. However, he prefers to play in a band that utilizes a democratic management process with fellow members that respect each other's input (Brookfield, 1986; Merzirow, 1985). These preferences caused John to be proactive as bandleader and recruit players that share his philosophy of how a bluegrass band should operate. Jane is very self-conscious about her singing voice and considers herself to be introverted. She holds a leadership role within her church as the chair of the worship committee, which is a fulfilling way for her to serve the congregation behind the scenes and affect the role that music plays in worship. She chooses to sing with the praise team because she prefers the fellowship with the other members of the team and the spiritual connection she feels while singing within the worship service (Farrell, 1972; Keil & Feld, 2005; Mark, 1996). Max enjoys listening to music in various ways. When he retired, he made the choice to invest in



rebuilding the best listening room he could afford, thus giving preference to personal listening at this point in his life.

These adults were very self-directed in their exploration of musical settings. They made choices based on past experiences and an evaluation of what they needed at this particular point of their lives. The musical setting decisions were internally motivated and the nature of the engagement was to continue to become better at what they do and apply newly learned skills to that setting (Cope, 2002, 2005; Gates, 1991; Mantie & Tucker, 2006).

Prior experience was a factor in considering musical settings. Max was facing his upcoming retirement, a major life transition, and knew that he enjoyed personal listening but had not previously had as much time due to work. Jane had been involved in various churches throughout her life and knew that her gifts and talents were best used organizing team efforts toward enhancing the worship service through the integration of music. John knew that for him to get the most out of a musical setting it needed to provide for him players who were as good as he was or better.

Participants made decisions about their current musical setting in part based on personal needs. Jane needed to feel the element of fellowship within the act of praise and worship. After making the move across the country John needed an outlet to reconnect to “that high lonesome sound” that drew him to bluegrass in the first place. Max needed something to occupy his time as he made the transition from working life to retirement.

These adults did not take the musical setting decision lightly and their choice was driven by their personal values. John valued the democratic bluegrass ensemble setting most of all, so much so that he decided to form his own group based on that philosophy (Allsup, 1997, 2003; Jaffurs, 2006). Max valued the pure sounds of live performance and wanted to recreate that

sound within his home listening experience so he invested in the highest end equipment he could afford. Jane valued the spiritual connection she feels deep down in her soul while actively praising God, thus she joined the praise team though it was outside of her comfort zone (Boswell, 1992).

Each case had high expectations going into these chosen musical settings. Max was expecting to hear new things in old recordings on his new system and expected to explore new music as well as learn more about music already in his collection. Jane expected to have the experience of being on a team of like-minded people who understood the value of praise. John expected to create an environment that brought out the best in him and the members of the band. This type of informed decision-making based on prior experience and personal needs, values, and expectations mirrors the tenets of andragogy, the art and science of adult learning (Knowles, 1980) and Self-Directed Learning (Merriam, 2001; Tough, 1971).

### ***What Meanings Do Adults Derive From Musical Engagement?***

The rationale for this study emerged from my desire to identify the aspects of music engagement that adults find meaningful. This question is the cornerstone on which the study is built and the previous questions of musical life history and how the current setting is placed provide rich support to explore the question of meaning.

When reflecting on their musical engagement these cases collectively converged on two overarching meanings: fulfillment and a connection to humanity. The adult music setting often fulfills both musical and non-musical needs of adult participants (Ernst & Emmons, 1992). Social aspects are cited as motivations for participation in musical groups. Adults find identity, attachment and socialization from being a part of musical groups (Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Machover, 1990). Humans are naturally drawn to music and the action of experiencing music.

Some choose to engage in music in specific ways while others more passively accept the music that is chosen or programmed for them in the process of day-to-day life (DeNora, 2000, 2003; Gaston, 1968; Merriam, 1964).

***Fulfillment.*** A common theme in adult participation (Cavitt, 2005; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Jutras, 2006) is the concept of fulfillment. Within the meaning of fulfillment is a sense of accomplishment that comes from mastering skills required to progressively improve or move closer to the aficionado (Reimer, 2002) or professional level of attainment within the given setting. Fulfillment was recognized by each of the cases within the study and manifested itself in distinct ways.

Max enjoys identifying unfamiliar pieces he hears on the radio before the announcer provides the composer and title of the work. He feels accomplished whether he is alone or is able to demonstrate this skill with another listener. Jane is a self-reported reclusive introvert and finds it very rewarding when she is able to stand up front with the praise team during worship service and help to lead the congregation in song. There is a sense of triumph, for her, in overcoming her introversion and doing a good job singing. John feels validated by being paid to perform with his band. Although the money he makes playing is of no real consequence to his livelihood, being paid is an external validation that he is playing at a level commensurate with real gigging musicians. These ideas of being validated (Elliott, 1995; Gates, 1991; Johnson, 1996; Tucker & Mantie, 2006), having an applied venue in which to practice and display skills, and receiving signs of acceptance from within that culture are supported by previous literature.

Realizations arose as a result of reflecting on musical engagement over time. Participants acknowledged these realizations as another aspect of their sense of fulfillment. Singing praises to her Lord gives Jane a sense of fulfillment and she realized that for her this act of singing is an

outward expression or meaningful display of what she feels on the inside. If she did not sing, it would not change how she feels on the inside, but singing fulfills her in a more rich fashion.

John worked through reflections of his history performing with various bands and figured out that democracy is at the heart of what bluegrass ensemble is for him. This realization has shaped him as a bandleader as well as an ensemble member. Max realized that the primary fulfillment he derives from his listening is the act of making sense, or meaning, out of what he hears using his knowledge about music and previous hearings to validate his expectations or explore the unexpected.

These cases felt fulfilled when they realized that they were accomplishing the goals they expected to attain when they were in the process of choosing a musical setting. It was not easy for these adults to articulate these feelings of fulfillment. However, through the process of telling, they unearthed deeper realizations of fulfillment that gave them a greater sense of accomplishment and satisfaction with their current music engagement. These realizations help them to confirm that their musical needs are indeed being met.

Acknowledged fulfillment is an important finding because it creates a framework for identifying what aspects of musical engagement adults consider most meaningful. It is important to note that these realizations came to light during the process of the cases telling and the researcher's deep listening and hearing. Through their words they were able to mark for me, the researcher, what they found to be meaningful.

***Connection to Humanity.*** The other overarching meaning was the sense of connection with one's own humanity and the humanity of others. Christopher Small offered these musings on the idea of music providing a connection to our humanity:

Now if there is anything that's clear about performing it is that it is action, it's something that people do. We could call it an encounter between human beings that is mediated by nonverbal organized sounds. All those present, listeners as well as performers are engaging in the encounter, and all are contributing to the nature of the encounter through the human relationships that together they bring into existence during the performance. (Small, 1995)

People generally choose to be engaged with music that in some way represents who they feel they are at that given time (DeNora, 2003; Meyer, 1956; Willis, 1978). Music becomes, a personification of how listeners interpret it within their socio-musical practice (Anderson & Sharrock, 1993; Elliott, 1995; Small, 1998). Many musical listening practices endeavor to use music as the medium that allows transcendence to another emotional state (DeNora, 2000; Gomart, 1999; Juslin & Sloboda, 2001; Reimer, 2002).

In this sense, the listener is not a passive victim or receptacle, but rather an active participant in the listening practice. This notion of listening speaks to a paradigm shift from music being seen as distanced from and reflective of life, to a conceptualization of music as an action, as a medium of social practice. In this new paradigm, to do music is the act of doing life (DeNora, 2003; Elliott, 1995; Regelski, 1998; Small, 1998).

Active engagement in music touched deep emotions for these cases. Feelings of love, comfort, joy, closeness, and connection were mentioned when speaking of the intense emotional feelings they derived from music making, including listening.

There was an expressed sense of transcendence that occurred while in the act of musical engagement that involved the sensation of being drawn into the moment, captivated by the music, absorbed, and transported from the current surroundings. These feelings of

transcendence, as articulated by the participants, resemble descriptions of being in the zone during moments of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) or “groove” (Farmelo, 1997; Keil & Feld, 2005).

Music engagement provides a form of expression in response to music heard or created. John finds the many outlets music offers via personal listening, watching live performances and playing with others; to be rewarding forms of expression that connect with his soul on many levels. Both Jane and Max associate music closely with movement and dance. Their movements are a response, and expression of what they are feeling.

The participants struggled to articulate the meanings they derive from their active musical engagement. However both the sense of fulfillment and the connection to their humanity were considered to be value-added benefits to their lives as a whole. Their quality of life was considered better because of their chosen musical involvement (Coffman, 2002; Fredrickson, 1997; Myers, 2005).

These articulated meanings derived from musical engagement pull together each case story. These adult perspectives of their musical journey provide insight into the aspects of music engagement they currently find meaningful and what aspects of prior music engagement provided lasting influences on them throughout adulthood.

### ***How Have These Adults Experienced Learning Through Musical Engagement?***

This question is not embedded within the construct used to develop each case perspective on their music engagement. However, learning in musical settings is the context in which participant reflections have been placed from my perspective as researcher and co-interpreter of case findings (Smith, et al., 2009). Learning takes place in many venues from formal settings in school music programs and private lessons, to more informal settings such as living rooms,

backyards, walking down the street with a portable listening device and places of worship. My analysis of case interview transcripts drew out many descriptive incidents of learning over the course of their musical lives.

Among the three cases, three learning categories arose: formal learning music settings (Cavitt, 2005; Cooper, 2001; Jutras, 2006), self-directed learning music settings (Cope, 2002; Green, 2002; Tucker & Mantie, 2006), and learning from and within a musical community (Allsup, 2003; Green, 2005; Keil & Feld, 2005). Although participants generally did not directly acknowledge self-directed and community oriented learning as “learning,” their accounts of musical engagement described learning situations.

***Formal Learning Settings.*** All three cases participated in their school choir programs until graduation. Max and Jane were also active in church choirs outside of the school setting during adolescence, which is often considered an influence in adult music participation (Bowles, 1991; Stollak & Stollak, 1996). John did not sing in choir outside of school, but did receive private piano lessons for a few years during his late elementary early adolescent years. Each case was thus exposed to formal learning musical settings both inside and outside of school as children.

Jane was the only case engaged in a formal learning setting at the time of the study. Historically, she has continued her involvement with church-oriented performing ensembles that were formal learning settings in that the bulk of the musical decision-making and leadership was coming from a director of the group or organization, more so than the members of the ensemble. The praise team was a formal learning setting that Jane chose to meet her need to be an integral part of worship within her church service.

Two tenets of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) are that adult learners are application oriented and internally motivated. Jane's engagement with the church praise team is a fulfillment of her desire to be active within the worship service. The praise team provides her with the opportunity to be social with like-minded peers and feel a connection with her faith through her musical praise. The setting may be formal, however, to Jane the purpose of her involvement is more social and spiritual, than goal-oriented on the musical elements of the music making (Coffman, 2002; Jaffurs, 2006; Myers, 2005).

***Self-Directed Learning.*** Self-Directed Learning (SDL) differentiates adult learning from elementary/secondary school learning, much like andragogy. Self-Directed Learning (SDL) identifies three learning goals: to develop in learners a responsibility for their own learning, to facilitate transformational learning, and to promote emancipatory learning and social action (Andruske, 2000; Brookfield, 1993; Collins, 1996). Each case exhibited aspects of self-directed learning through their musical engagement.

Max investigated music that sparked his interest during a radio broadcast by reading more about the composer or finding reviews of various recordings of the same work to consider purchasing for further listening. In the process of planning the order of worship for her church, Jane explored the derivation of the hymns she was programming and studied the lyrics to coordinate with the theme of the sermon. John spent time tracing the historical origins of a particular bluegrass style and studied the influences that shaped the music he was currently exploring.

John was interested in performing bluegrass and spent a great deal of time learning to play bluegrass instruments and to sing in an appropriate style. Max was concerned with expanding his listening vocabulary to help him to place music he hears within his cognitive



understanding. Jane used music as a tool in worship and endeavored to lift her voice in song as an expression of her praise through her active participation on the praise team. In each case, their self-directed learning allowed for responsible involvement in their learning, transformation, and emancipatory action toward what they wanted to achieve through their musical engagement.

***Learning from and within Community.*** Learners in community and informal learning settings are generally not looking to be professionals but rather fall into one of the non-professional categories such as aficionado (Reimer, 2002), musician (Elliott, 1995), musician (Small, 1998) and others (Gates, 1991; Mantie & Tucker, 2006). The social venue to make music is an important source of motivation for the informal learner (Cope, 2002).

Jane had the rich musical heritage of New Orleans just outside her door. Through participation and observation of common celebrations she learned the sounds of her community. Within the context of the church she also grew quickly accustomed to the sounds and musical traditions of the church.

Max had access to many recordings inside his parents' home and radio broadcasts were a major part of his day-to-day existence both as a child and throughout his life. His musical palette began to expand after high school while still maintaining a keen interest in Western classical music. Many avid music listeners influenced Max, however throughout the series of interviews he did not consider his engagement to be communal even though he would often go into the community to hear live music of various kinds.

John grew up in a household full of music that did not entirely register to him. His father would take him to orchestra concerts and his family would go hear his father play piano duets. Listening explorations with a group of high school peers lead him to the sound of bluegrass.

Since then, John has been delving into the bluegrass community and culture to learn how to play and perform within the genre.

### **Implications**

The rationale for this study was based on the findings that: adults participate in music because of a natural connection to music and musical experiences (DeNora, 2000, 2003; Gaston, 1968; Grout, 2001; Langer, 1957; Sharan B. Merriam, 1984; Reimer, 2002), adults choose to participate musically because it fulfills a personal need in their lives (Cavitt, 2005; Coffman, 2002; Farrell, 1972; Hinkle, 1987; Hylton, 1980; Meyer, 1956; Minichiello, 2005; Myers, 2005; Rohwer & Coffman, 2006), and adults choose musical environments that accommodate their particular needs at given points in time (Coates, 1984; Coffman, 2002; Coffman & Levy, 1997; Cohen, et al., 2002; Elliott, 1995; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Knowles, 1968; Levinson, 1986; Machover, 1990; Pickles, 2003; Reese, 1977).

The findings of this study imply that there are many musical factors over time that have contributed to all cases' current music engagement as they sought out music to satisfy their needs at given times in their development (Campbell, 2007; DeNora, 2003; Levinson, 1986; Meyer, 1956; Thompson, 1993; Willis, 1978). Musical collective influences indicated by these cases include the following factors: home/family, community/surroundings, school music, peers, radio, live music experiences, dance, parties/celebrations, age, reference materials, recordings, life changes, church, portable listening devices, and the internet. These influences occurred at various points of the lifespan and include both school experiences and outside school experiences (see Appendix for complete results by case).

The data from this exploration of adults who found their way to meaningful music engagement raise the question of how can we, as music educators, enable the growth and

sustainability of musically engaged adults? Could we think of our students as future adults and endeavor to give them the opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills to, as Jellison (2000) states, “enable them to participate successfully in a variety of meaningful music experiences in adult life” (p. 112)? How can we help students to see themselves, through their music learning, as “co-participants within real-life social practice” (Mantie & Tucker, 2008, p. 219)?

As Max’s story unfolded, it became clear that his main form of musical engagement is personal listening. His interest in knowing more about the music he hears and how it works stems from listening. He is also very resourceful in finding new music of interest and exploring genres he is unfamiliar with by referencing music resources, recommendations from friends, and things he hears at concerts and on the radio. Much of Max’s exploration skills are self learned though he does attribute his love for music in part to a strong music education through middle school and continued singing in choir through high school. Max came to classical music first, then expanded his intent listening to other genres over time. Max’s story evokes the following questions:

- How could music education, both in school and beyond, provide students with the skills to explore music of which they are unfamiliar without direct guidance?
- Is it possible to give equal weight to all, or at least more, genres in formal learning settings?
- What are the sources of aural influence for adult avid listeners and how did they access those influences over the course of their lives?
- In what ways has mass media effected how we instruct learners within our influence to make sense of the sounds they hear?

- Does the high school graduate feel equipped to independently explore any type of music they may encounter in a fashion that is meaningful to them?
- What role do performing organizations and performers, in every genre, have in ‘educating’ children and adults?
- What role do parents have in fostering music engagement in their child’s formative years?
- How can music that learners encounter outside of school enhance and potentially guide curriculum for both school aged children and adults continued learning?

The use of music for utilitarian purposes has been challenged within music education. The *Mozart Effect* phenomenon and the *Music Makes You Smarter* movement are two examples where music is not being used for music’s sake alone but is potentially serving other nonmusical purposes.

As Jane relayed her musical life history and the role her current engagement plays in her life, the emergent themes pointed to music as a means to something else in most cases. Her focus was much more on the extra-musical elements of the engagement than the actual music-making itself. The beauty and awe of music does capture her, however the meanings she derives from her engagement provide a deeper spiritual connection as well as fellowship with others in the group.

- Is this aspect of “fellowship” a legitimate aspect of ensembles that we should acknowledge more openly?
- Do directors of performing ensembles hope for this type of fellowship without explicitly expressing it as a learning outcome or goal?

- Can directors/conductors actively prepare learners/ensemble members, or train them within the context, for this type of fellowship engagement within ensemble?
- Should we teach “fellowship” outright or leave it understated and allow it to happen?

The idea of musical leadership was more prevalent in some cases than others but each case displayed an element of musical leadership. John and Jane both explicitly mentioned the nature of their musical leadership as a bandleader and worship team chair respectively. However, Max’s musical leadership is implied by the fact that he makes choices about what to listen to, what his next area of interest may be, and how he goes about digging further into a genre. Here are three examples of adults who found their own way to varying aspects of musical independence. Do we teach learners within our charge, either inside school or elsewhere, to be musical leaders independently and with others? How do we go about teaching musical leadership and independence?

John is an instrumentalist, and vocalist, and openly admits that the choir singing available at his school and his piano lessons outside of school did not grab his attention. However, the music happening in the neighborhood and on the radio got him to buy into the idea of engaging in music himself. Once hooked, John persevered the steep self-taught learning curve and adjusted his skill sets to keep pace with his changing interests over time. Today music is an integral part of his life and he derives much fulfillment through his engagement. How is it that John was able to attain this level of music engagement, and how do we foster that type of empowerment?

- Could industries driving mass media build in ‘education’ or ‘outreach’ components to encourage learners to be involved in using this media to enhance their musical engagement?
- Does music education develop learners’ skills that are transferable and versatile enough to change with their interests throughout their lifespan?
- Can venues, like the bluegrass festivals, be made accessible to learners at a younger age if they are not currently?
- Are school districts and music educators willing to expand the notion of school music to capture more of the Johns in the world?
- Can we train music educators to incorporate community music relevant to the lives of learners within their charge?
- Can we draw bolder lines between school music learning and music learning that happens outside of school both during the school years and beyond?
- How can music educators, at all levels, create venues that allow learners to find a community related to their musical interests and feel empowered to join in.
- How can we change the conception that continued music learning is for the few and not the many?

The larger question suggested by the findings of this phenomenological investigation is - How do we grow more people like Max, Jane and John? What can be done to foster more musically engaged adults? Can the scope of music education be expanded to more broadly consider adult music learning and teaching, create viable learning communities for continued musical learning, and enhance the connection of school music engagement with music engagement in life during and after the schooling years?

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Suggestions for further study focus on the notion of adult music engagement using the individual as the unit of analysis. It is critical to determine which musical skills equip adults to engage in music however they wish. This current study is a step in that direction but does not surround the issue entirely. Further research is needed to more thoroughly investigate this phenomenon. For example, studying non-engagers, those who do not claim a relevance of music in their lives, in order to explore how they have come to be non-engagers. Studying cases from similar settings where the case is still the individual but the sampling approach is designed for homogeneity versus variation could add further insight into the phenomenon of adult music engagement. The areas of homogeneity could include: age, musical genre, and type of music making. It is important to hear the voices from within the phenomenon as well as represent the population in which these voices reside. Therefore, multiple studies designed from the vantage points of multiple methodologies could more thoroughly address the topic of adult music engagement and potentially produce the most informing results as a body of work.

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## Appendix

### Influences on Adult Music Engagement

Influence	Childhood	Adolescence	Pre-Adulthood	Adulthood
Home/Family	A, B, C		B	A, B
Community	A, B	B	A, B, C	A, B, C
School Music	A, B	A, B		
Peers	B	B, C	A, B, C	B, C
Radio	A, B	A, B	A, B	A, B
Live Music	B, C	B, C	A, B, C	A, B, C
Dance		B	A, B	A, B
Parties/Celebrations		B	A, B	A, B
Age				A, B
Reference Materials			A, C	A, B, C
Recordings	A	A, B	A, B	A, B
Life Changes			A, B, C	A, B, C
Church	B	A, B	B	B
Portable Listing Device				A, B, C
Internet				A, B, C

Note: A=Max, B=Jane, C=John

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The Pennsylvania State University, Ph.D. in Music Education, December 2010  
University of Missouri-Columbia, M.M. in Instrumental Conducting, May 1995  
National Louis-University, M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction, August 1991  
Northwestern University, B.S.Ed. in Human Development and Social Policy, August 1989

**College/University Teaching Experience**

Pennsylvania State University, University Park 8/2010 - Present  
*e-Learning Institute Faculty Fellow*: College of Arts and Architecture, School of Music  
Pennsylvania State University, University Park 8/2007 – 8/2010  
*Assistant*: Athletic Bands and Concert Band  
*Assistant*: Undergraduate Brass Methods  
*Student Teacher Supervisor*  
State University of New York College at Fredonia 1/1998 - 5/2002  
*Conductor*: All-College Band  
*Lecturer*: Instrumental Conducting

**Public School/Community Experience**

Albright-Bethune United Methodist Church: State College, PA – 8/09 – 6/10  
*Director of Music and Worship*  
Silver Creek Central School District: Silver Creek, NY - 8/00 - 5/02  
*District Instrumental Music Teacher*: Grades 4-12  
*Virtual High School On-line Instructor*: American Popular Music  
Iroquois Central School District: Elma, NY, 8/99 - 6/00  
*Instrumental Music Teacher*: Iroquois Central High School  
City of Buffalo, NY, 9/98 - 6/99  
*Instrumental Music Teacher*: Grades 5-12

**Administrative Experience**

Director, Graduate Fellowships and Awards, Penn State – University Park: 3/04 – 7/2007  
Director, Upward Bound Math and Science Center, Penn State – University Park: 5/02 – 3/2004  
Director, Fredonia Arts Enrichment Program, SUNY – Fredonia: 9/00 – 2/02  
Enrollment Management Consultant, Graduate Studies, SUNY- Fredonia: 1/99 – 9/99  
Coordinator, Graduate Student Affairs, University of Missouri Graduate School: 6/95-7/98

**Research Presentations**

*Adult Reflections: Fostering Lifelong Music Engagement*  
Pennsylvania Music Education Association Conference, 4/2010  
CIC Music Education Conference, 10/2009  
*Sinfonia from Stravinsky's Octet: Back to the Future*  
College Band Directors National Association Meeting, 3/2009  
*Predicting successful completion of the undergraduate music education degree program*,  
Instrumental Music Teacher Educators Colloquium, 5/2009  
Pennsylvania Music Education Association Conference, 4/2009  
Music Educators National Conference – Eastern Division Conference, 3/2009