SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY:
THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE MEANING-MAKING
PROCESSES OF OLDER PERFORMING MUSICIANS

A Dissertation in
Adult Education
by
Sandra Marlene Reed

©2008 Sandra Marlene Reed

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

May 2008
The dissertation of Sandra Marlene Reed was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Patricia A. Cranton  
Visiting Professor of Adult Education  
Thesis Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Elizabeth J. Tisdell  
Associate Professor of Adult Education

William J. Mahar  
Professor Emeritus of Humanities and Music

Clemmie E. Gilpin  
Assistant Professor of Community Systems and Afro-American Studies  
Coordinator, Social Studies Program

Edgar Farmer  
Professor of Workforce Education  
Head of the Department of Learning & Performance Systems

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to determine the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. The study was informed by literature from three fields, specifically, adult education, social gerontology, and music. The findings of this inquiry suggest that performing music may be one way to ensure good health, foster productive engagement in activities with others, and facilitate self-knowledge and thus, individuation.

The theoretical framework for the study was grounded in experiential learning theory, continuity theory, and Jung’s concept of individuation. Research was conducted utilizing the methodology of narrative inquiry, closely informed by phenomenology. To ensure information-rich data, both personal and focus group interviews were used in data collection. The intensity sample was comprised of nine performing musicians from the New Holland Band, a community band situated in the borough of New Holland, Pennsylvania. Participants ranged in age from 72 to 93 at the time of the study.

Four cross-themes emerged from data analysis. First, mentors and early encounters with music shaped the musical lives of the narrators so significantly that being performers has served as a constant throughout their adulthood, especially during times of stress or transition. Second, the commingling of context, repertoire, performers, and audience created musical experiences for narrators that were profound, and for some of them, spiritual. Data supporting this cross-theme also highlighted music’s capacity to influence narrators’ emotions and spirit, thereby contributing to the development of a more mature spirituality. Third, the New Holland Band was viewed by narrators as a community in which they felt valued for their contribution to musical excellence. Fourth, narrators either did not feel as old as their chronological age, or they
managed symptoms of aging so as not to have them interfere with the continuity of their preferred lifestyle. And, participants’ obvious passion for what was personally relevant – performing music – further suggested their progression toward individuation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF FIGURES</th>
<th>x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Research</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Research Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Research Methods and Design</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions and Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1: Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education and Experiential Learning Theory</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Gerontology and Continuity Theory</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of the Theory</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the Theory</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and Emotions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and the Spirit</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and the Unconscious</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Summary</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 2: Meaning Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jung’s Concept of Individuation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views of Knowledge</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Ways of Knowing</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives on Meaning Making</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Age and the Meaning of Life</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung and the Meaning of Life in Old Age</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality in Old Age</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erikson’s Single Stage Theory of Older Adulthood</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Constructivism, Self-Knowledge, and Old Age</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3: Aging in the 21st Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Paradigm Shift in Gerontology</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacArthur Foundation Study of Successful Aging</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging-Related Myths</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Aging</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Studies and Literature Related to the Study</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies in Adult Education</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study of Motivations for Learning Among Older Adults</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study of Continuity in Leisure Activities Participation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music-Related Studies With Older Adults as Participants</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies That Utilized Older Performing Musicians as Participants</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section Summary                                                        | 49   |

Section 3: Aging in the 21st Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Paradigm Shift in Gerontology</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacArthur Foundation Study of Successful Aging</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging-Related Myths</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Aging</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Studies and Literature Related to the Study</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies in Adult Education</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study of Motivations for Learning Among Older Adults</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study of Continuity in Leisure Activities Participation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music-Related Studies With Older Adults as Participants</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies That Utilized Older Performing Musicians as Participants</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section Summary                                                        | 62   |

Section 4: Meaning Making Through Music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Musical Experience and Meaning</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Psychological Dimension of Meaning Making Through Music</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Actualization, Peak Experiences, and Music</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcendence, Spirituality, and Music</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Opportunities for Older Adults</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Culture of Bands</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bandsman as Individual Musician</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Band as Community</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The grace of great things</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring: A band’s lifeline</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section Summary                                                        | 84   |

Chapter Summary                                                        | 84   |
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paradigm and Rationale</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interpretive Paradigm</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenology and Narrative Inquiry: Distinctions and Connections</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Inquiry</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Inquiry as a Methodology</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Analysis and Interpretation</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Narrative Methodology</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Narrative Analysis and Interpretation</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Analysis Methods</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Approach Interview</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Interviews</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Interview Analysis</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Interview Analysis</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility and Trustworthiness</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics of Confidentiality</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 4: STORIES OF PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A J</td>
<td>A J's Story</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A J’s Theme: Initiative</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Bob’s Story</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bob’s Theme: Perfectionism</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Charlie’s Story</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charlie’s Theme: Perseverance</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence</td>
<td>Clarence’s Story</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarence’s Theme: Refuge</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jere</td>
<td>Jere’s Story</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jere’s Theme: Calling</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bandsmanship........................................................................................................ 204
Aging and Musical Performance................................................................. 206
Findings and the Theoretical Framework.................................................. 208
Experiential Learning Theory................................................................. 208
Continuity Theory.......................................................................................... 210
Implications for Theory and Practice...................................................... 212
  Implications for Experiential Learning Theory.................................. 212
  Implications for Continuity Theory....................................................... 214
  Implications Specific to Adult Education Theory and Practice...... 215
  Interdisciplinary Implications............................................................... 217
Implications for Future Research............................................................. 220
Summary and Conclusion........................................................................... 223

EPILOGUE........................................................................................................ 226

REFERENCES.................................................................................................. 228

Appendix A  Participant Recruitment Letter.............................................. 238
Appendix B  Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research............. 239
Appendix C  Individual and First Focus Group Interview Guide................. 242
Appendix D  Participant Letter and Interview Questions
  for Second Focus Group Interview......................................................... 243
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Study participants during rehearsal break, February 10, 2008……  227
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Participant Profile…………………………………………………..  161
Table 2  Participants’ Mentors………………………………………………….. 199
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My journey toward completion of this project began in August 2003 when I returned to the classroom as a student in Adult Education. I have been fortunate to have learned from four uniquely talented teachers: Daniele Flannery, Ed Taylor, Libby Tisdell, and Patricia Cranton. Their ongoing encouragement during my years of study has meant more than they can imagine.

Patricia Cranton, my adviser and committee chair, is quiet, patient, and wise. Her insight and positive approach to critique inspired me to do my best and to finish before I too am an older performing musician!

Committee members Libby Tisdell, Bill Mahar, and Clemmie Gilpin have made outstanding contributions to my research and writing along the way. I was truly blessed to have each one of them view my work through fresh eyes and offer suggestions that improved its quality.

The participants in my study: A J, Bob, Charlie, Clarence, Jere, Kenneth, La Rue, Thomas, and Tom graciously and enthusiastically shared their stories with me and helped to shape how I presented the narratives in this thesis. Their lives as older musicians will remain an inspiration to me as I age.

Numerous colleagues and friends have been helpful in their own special ways: Jane Keat, Rob Coffman, Terry Blue, Ken Laudermilch, Sarah Hartman, and my friends on the New Holland Band Board of Directors immediately come to mind. And then, of course, there was Frank who, fortunately for me, remained a source of encouragement throughout this challenging process.

Finally, I thank my parents Arlene and Jim McConaghay, my favorite octogenarians, who sacrificed so much in order for me to experience the world of music at a young age.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

He sits behind me in rehearsals and sometimes plays a bit flat. And, unless the conductor is particularly focused on the clarinet section, he also plays a bit too loudly. There is a reason for what I am hearing. After all, Clarence has been a clarinetist since long before I was born. In fact, Clarence is 93.

To Clarence’s immediate right sits Tom who is 83. One of the few musicians in the band who can improvise, Tom solos with the dance band and Dixieland band regularly. I think he may darken his graying hair regularly, too, perhaps because of his frequent guest appearances with out-of-area jazz groups.

Thomas is 81 and plays in the first clarinet section with four other musicians, including myself. I will never forget four summers ago when he fell climbing the stairs to the stage at a concert in the park. Although he cut his arm fairly severely at the time, Thomas did not want the leader to know for fear he would be sent home.

Leading the second clarinet section is Charlie who is 80. The band’s longtime treasurer, Charlie, like Clarence, was once concertmaster of the band until he mangled both of his hands in a metal press. After dozens of surgeries and years of physical therapy, Charlie’s technical ability on the instrument is nothing short of amazing.

The only septuagenarian in the brass section, situated to my left, is Jere. Before his retirement, Jere held two full-time jobs, specifically, high school band director and commander of the 553rd Air Force Air National Guard Band. An excellent cornetist at 73, Jere leads the dance band and is associate conductor of the concert band.
Across the room from me sits Bob who is 79. Like me, Bob was a high school principal, but in his case, for most of his professional career. Vice president of the band, Bob plays baritone saxophone, a gigantic, heavy instrument that requires a musician with enormous lung capacity to do it justice. Not only can Bob fill the horn, but also his rich, round tone quality supports the efforts of the band’s considerably younger tuba section. In fact, Bob only gave up parading with the band when the director made parading off limits to members who exceeded age 65.

The newest septuagenarian to the band is La Rue who is 73. A former music store owner and, like Jere, a retired member of the 553rd, La Rue is one of the most physically agile older men I have ever encountered. In fact, he is drum major of the marching band and can ably navigate the parade band through even the most difficult terrain, including the 13 cemeteries in which the band performs on Memorial Day.

Positioned at the back of the band opposite the conductor is Kenneth, the band’s 84-year-old bass drummer. Kenneth’s failing eyesight is affecting his capacity to see both the music and the conductor. Fortunately for Kenneth, the leader is patient on those rare occasions when Kenneth’s tempos are out of sync with the baton.

The only female member of the band who has reached 70+ years of age is Alice Jane, 72, who insists on being called A J. A former junior high school music teacher, A J is first and foremost a keyboard player who is equally competent whether seated at a grand piano or a pipe organ. A bass clarinetist, A J is also the band’s secretary and wardrobe guru. In the latter capacity, A J is quick to spot anyone who is out of uniform and tell the person about it.

As I continually observe the older musicians with whom I share rehearsal and concert experiences, I find myself comparing them to other older adults that I know and have known. Some of these other adults are family members. More of them are former or current work
associates or acquaintances from church. Why do my musician friends seem to be healthier and happier than these other older adults? How have some of them weathered tenuous life circumstances so much better? I wonder if my fellow musicians’ active, continuous involvement in musical performance has somehow assisted them in making sense of and accepting life experiences. And, I also wonder to what extent the field of adult education is advocating for the inclusion of music as a way of knowing for the older adult learner.

Background of the Study

This study is about older adults, music, and how music impacts upon meaning making in older adulthood. I introduce this inquiry by clarifying the link between this study and adult education. Except for its contribution to what has been an interdisciplinary approach to cognitive learning theory and corresponding cognitive development models, adult education does not regularly differentiate between older and younger adults as learners. Consequently, there is a conspicuous absence of both empirical studies and scholarly writing on the older adult learner. However, the field of adult education does tout a longstanding partnership with music. Throughout its history, adult education has incorporated music to unite people around daunting causes for social justice: causes such as civil rights, women’s issues, workers’ equity, and illiteracy. However, despite the capacity of songs such as “We Shall Overcome” to inspire people to engage in social action, the integration of music and other arts into the adult education classroom has not been widely embraced nor been promoted by adult educators (Lawrence, 2005; Olson, 2005). Perhaps this is because there are few of us who have been researching the link between music and adult education issues including spirituality, diverse cultures, and creating learning communities. Foremost among the exceptions to this conspicuous research void
are the studies of Tisdell (2003) and Olson (2003) which are highlighted in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Although the book *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997) precipitated the exploration of other approaches to knowledge that reach beyond traditional academic reading, writing, and discussing, it is only recently that the topic of artistic ways of knowing has entered the adult education literature. Because music is among these newly-considered alternative approaches to knowledge, the thoughts of adult educators including Lawrence (2005), Lems (2005), and Olson (2005) on the topic of arts as a way of knowing also are summarized in Chapter 2. Their work is representative of what contemporary adult educators know so far about the power of the arts to stimulate the imagination. By accommodating the emotional nature of learning, educators can unleash learners’ self-knowledge, their knowledge of others, and often the knowledge of something else that is routinely taught by drawing on more technical-rational pedagogical techniques (Dirkx, 1997; Lawrence, 2005).

The absence of both data-based research and literature in adult education on the topic of older adults as learners led me to Jung’s (1933) concept of individuation, the lifelong process of reuniting the conscious self or *persona* with the unconscious self or *shadow*, and how it has shaped the writing of other scholars on the topic of meaning making in general, and more specifically, meaning making in old age. Although it is appropriate to explore individuation more thoroughly in Chapter 2, it is necessary to begin this thesis with a working definition of meaning making since it frames the research purpose for this study. What exactly is it? And, how is meaning making mediated by the aging process?
Although little is known or written about how humans actually make sense of life experiences (Courteney, Merriam, & Reeves, 1998), several scholars provide clues as to how both individual and social construction of meaning occurs. Among these scholars are adult educators, including Mezirow and Dirkx. Mezirow (1991) defines meaning as “... an interpretation, and to make meaning is to construe or interpret experience – in other words, to give it coherence” (p. 4). Often, humans interpret an experience through old expectations by interacting with objects and events within awareness, or consciousness. Clearly influenced by Jung, Dirkx (2006) focuses on the role that affect has on meaning making, emphasizing that tuning in to the inner self and integrating it with the conscious self is essential to understanding life experiences.

Meaning making takes on a different focus at midlife. Jung (1933) contends that the second half of life has its own unique purpose aside from that of the first half of life. The first half of life is necessarily devoted to establishing ourselves in our chosen work and pursuing family goals. Once work and family goals have been attained, Jung advocates turning inward to strive to reconnect with the inner self that has been repressed by young and middle adulthood obligations. A benefit of this process of individuation is a better understanding of self that leads to more authentic, rewarding relationships with others (Kaufman, 1986; Missinne, 2004).

I also found an absence of data-based research and a paucity of literature on the role that music plays in meaning making, although the meaning of a musical experience has been a frequent topic of writers in a variety of fields. Reimer suggests that music “is everything a person experiences when involved with it” (cited in Smith, 2003, para. 20). Music can also facilitate humans’ accessing their inner selves, or the unconscious aspect of their personalities (Smith, 2003). Affective media such as poetry, drama, metaphor, nature, visual arts, and music can bring
adults’ intuitive and emotional sense of their experiences to the conscious level, thereby opening them to alternative ways of knowing (Brookfield, 2002; Dirkx, 1997, 2001b; Korb, 2003; Smith, 2003). Dirkx (1997) describes affective learning as learning through soul and Reimer (cited in Smith, 2003, para. 5) describes it as knowing within. The connection between music and the inner world of the unconscious will be explored thoroughly in Chapter 2.

Purpose of the Research

The field of adult education has contributed to the interdisciplinary development of cognitive learning theory and corresponding cognitive development models (Jarvis, 1987, 1996; Kegan, 1982) that address cognition in older adulthood. However, there is an absence of data-based research studies on the older adult as learner (Kim & Merriam, 2004), meaning making in general (Courtenay et al., 1998), and meaning making specifically in old age. Turning to the field of music, much of the discourse that swirls around meaning making focuses on the complex issue of what makes a musical experience meaningful (Reimer, 1992). Although there are empirical studies on how listening to music affects people of various ages (Cheek, Bradley, Parr, & Lan, 2003; Hirokawa & Ohira, 2003), there is a conspicuous absence of data-based research that focuses on the relationship between music making and meaning making. There is also a lack of empirical studies and literature on how humans make meaning of life experiences (Courtenay et al., 1998). Having identified these specific gaps in both adult education and music research, I embarked upon this narrative inquiry to determine the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians.

Guiding Research Questions

This study focused on the following questions:

1. How do older performing musicians make meaning of life experiences?
2. What do performing music and listening to music mean to older performing musicians?

3. How do older performing musicians describe their aging process?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in the literature from three fields. These fields included adult education, social gerontology, and music. The literature in the area of adult education was limited to works that addressed the older adult learner. The literature in the field of gerontology was confined to works that informed both social and educational gerontology, the latter of which is a component of social gerontology. The literature in music was selected because it addressed how music can facilitate the process of individuation.

Of the adult education theories that contribute to the understanding of the older adult learner, it is experiential learning theory that provided the most substantive grounding for this inquiry. Experiential learning theory also complemented other components of this study’s theoretical framework. Scholars have long viewed the experiences that adults have as contributing to learning in adulthood. Of these scholars’ works, the writings of Dewey ([1933] 1998), D. Kolb (1984), Jarvis (1987),Merriam (1994), and Fenwick (2000) are examined in Chapter 2 for their contributions to experiential learning theory.

There are four interrelated components that comprise the study of aging known as gerontology. These four components include physical, psychological, social psychological, and social. Social gerontology is the subfield of gerontology that studies the nonphysical side of aging (Atchley & Barusch, 2004). There are multiple theories within social gerontology that were explored during the literature review process for this study. Of these multiple theories, continuity theory contributed most to the theoretical framework of this inquiry. Continuity theory
is based on the assumption that both adult development and adaptation are continuous processes (Atchley, 1999). The connection between this theory and experiential learning theory lies in the premise that most people learn continuously from life experiences and as a result, make informed choices as to the directions in which they hope to continue to learn and to grow.

Much of the contemporary theoretical discourse in music and music education focuses on the nature of musical experience. Although words fail to completely describe how musical experience affects the human emotions and the human spirit, the connection between music and the unconscious world is both grounded and documented in psychology, specifically, the work of Jung (1933). Dirkx (2006a) explains that the language that best assists the process of individuation is not one of words, but one that triggers imagination, such as the language of music. The role that music has played in the meaning-making processes of this study’s participants emerges in their personal stories that comprise Chapter 4.

Overview of the Research Methods and Design

Research for this qualitative study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm using the methodology of narrative inquiry, closely informed by phenomenology. Narrative inquiry is an approach to research that honors people’s stories as the only essential data for documenting experience (Bochner, 2001). Phenomenology is a school of philosophical thought that is frequently utilized to support studies that consider the meaning of experience. It is also a stand-alone research methodology (Patton, 2002).

An evolving field, narrative inquiry is grounded in Dewey’s interpretation of the term experience. Dewey suggests that each experience is comprised of two criteria: continuity and interaction. Continuity describes the reality that experiences grow out of other experiences; these same experiences trigger still other experiences. Interaction describes how people must be
understood both as individuals and social beings who cooperate with others in a variety of relationships. In short, Dewey asserts that human experience is personal and social and continuous, with each experience emerging from and perpetuating another (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry elicits people’s experiences in storied form.

Chase (2005) defines narrative inquiry as “... an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (p. 651). Because most of us heard or read stories as children, it is natural to view and tell our life experiences as stories. Doing this helps us make sense of what we have or are experiencing. The participant in a narrative inquiry is often referred to as the narrator. The methodological terms narrative, narrative inquiry, narratology, and narrative analysis within the context of qualitative research are sometimes used interchangeably. However, regardless of which term is applied, each approach considers people’s stories as data that can stand alone. Individual narrators can reveal cultural, political, psychological, and social nuances with a translucence that may not emerge during other kinds of data gathering. But, without the researcher’s careful interpretation of narrators’ stories, these nuances can be overlooked (Bochner, 2001; Chase, 2005; Patton, 2002).

Rationale

When deciding upon a research design, the researcher should consider the appropriateness of its methodology, its flexibility, and its situational responsiveness. Additionally, it is prudent to plan for broad contingencies, while allowing enough flexibility to explore any unanticipated phenomenon that might emerge during data collection. This is because
it is not unusual for qualitative design to continue to be shaped during fieldwork (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1997, 2002).

Because I was searching for the role that music played in the meaning-making processes of nine individual older musicians, I determined that of the various research methodologies available to me, narrative inquiry had the most potential for eliciting nine unique stories that would inform the research problem. I anticipated that giving narrators time to talk about their life experiences both in personal interviews and as a group would yield rich data. I was not disappointed. Additionally, my earlier study of phenomenology as both a philosophy and a methodology helped to sensitize me to subtleties of meaning that I later encountered during the analysis and interpretation of data.

**Research Design**

The primary purpose of this basic research study was to determine the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. Because an in-depth look at the phenomenon under study was the intent, both personal and focus group interviews were utilized. A content analysis of data collected at the interviews was completed to identify patterns of experience shared by participants.

An intensity sample consisting of performing musicians who were at least 70 years of age at the time of the study and who were all active members of the New Holland Band was used to ensure information-rich, qualitative data. By way of background, the New Holland Band, situated in Eastern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in the borough of New Holland has been in continuous existence since 1856. Until recently, the older members of the band all have been men, reminiscent of the early days of the organization when, as the Boys’ Band, ensemble membership was closed to women. When the research process was begun, there were ten active
members within the band, one woman and nine men, who were at least 70 years of age and who, therefore, were considered for participation in this study. Of these ten bandsmen, one woman and eight men, ultimately participated in this research inquiry.

Significance of the Study

Demographics show that in the year 2000, approximately 21% of Americans were age 55 or older. It is projected that this aging trend in the United States will continue and will reach almost a third of the population, specifically, 31%, in 2050 (Russell, 2000). In addition to enjoying increased longevity, older Americans today are more health conscious and take better care of themselves. When they fall ill or require treatment for chronic conditions, advances in medical technology and pharmaceuticals either facilitate recovery, or manage those conditions that were terminal only a few decades ago (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

Thinking about these demographics, it seems obvious that the greater society will benefit if the older population is physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. Just from an economic standpoint, it is to everyone’s advantage for aging adults to remain independent throughout their life span. The aging of the population most certainly presents a challenge for both present and future practitioners in both the field of adult education and social gerontology. According to Findsen (2005), “older adults’ involvement in mainstream adult education has not been commensurate with their percentage of the population” (p. 71). If this is so, why is it so? And, is participation in music experiences another way to maintain lifelong independence?

This study is of personal significance due to the fact that performing music has been an important part of my life since I took my first piano lesson as an eight-year-old child. I continue to be in awe of the mystical power of music and its capacity to fill life’s empty spaces. My early experiences with music led to my earning two degrees in music education; teaching music at the
elementary, middle, high school, and undergraduate levels; and supervising and coordinating an urban public school music program. Despite all of these experiences with music, none of these has affected me as profoundly as playing clarinet in the New Holland Band, a journey that I began nearly 20 years ago. During these years, I have come to know and respect the nine bandsmen who graciously participated in this research inquiry.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

There were four assumptions that I held as I entered the research process. First, performing musicians find making music to be meaningful. If they did not, they would not invest the effort that is required to faithfully adhere to a rigorous rehearsal and performance schedule. Second, older performing musicians can articulate the role music has played at important times in their lives. Music has been a part of their routine for most of their lives, so it was assumed that these musicians would associate at least some important life events with specific music or musical performances. Third, older bandsmen experience listening to music differently from how they experience music while performing it. Therefore, they should be able to differentiate between the two experiences. Fourth, older performing musicians will be able to describe their own aging process. This description may or may not make connections to their involvement with music.

I identified three limitations before embarking on the study that I thought were significant. First, an intensity sample of eight to ten New Holland Band members over the age of 70 would be selected. Second, narrators would reside within a 25-mile radius of the researcher to facilitate data collection. Third, the time for data collection would be restricted to a time frame of four months in order for the research and data analysis to be completed by the end of 2006.
Definition of Terms

The following terms and their definitions are offered to assist the reader in understanding this study:

1. **Authenticity** embodies the process of developing a genuine sense of self. Striving to be authentic is much like the process of individuation (Cranton, 2006b).

2. **Band** within the context of this study refers to a performing ensemble comprised of woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments, the repertoire for which is primarily traditional concert band music.

3. **Bandsman** is a term that refers to someone who plays in a band. Because the word appears to be gender biased, this definition includes a synopsis of the history of bands that is relevant to the term and to the term’s derivative, bandsmanship. Although the word is not commonly employed today, the term bandsman was sometimes used in the nineteenth century to refer to American and English musicians who played in bands. Early American bandsmen were almost exclusively male, although there is one account of a woman who disguised herself as a man in order to join the drum corps of a Michigan regiment during the Civil War. It is important to note that American bands have been associated with the military since the Revolution. This association may be largely due to the military’s practice of assigning a corps of musicians to most regiments during wartime (Newsom, 1979). In the twentieth century before World War II, musicians who played in American bands still were most often men. However, it was during World War II when both the U.S. Army and Air Force created all-
women bands for the first time, only to disband them in the early 1960’s. Although there is limited documentation on the history of the Women’s Army Corps Band (WAC Band) and its demise, the history of its Air Force counterpart (WAF Band) is well documented and suggests that the band was a victim of its own success, often being requested to play over the all-male Air Force Band. It was not until the 1970’s that qualified women musicians were integrated into the all-male bands that are part of the five branches of the U.S. military (Wilson, 2007). It may have been the popularity of the two all-women military bands that gave civilian women the confidence to join all-male community bands such as the New Holland Band in the 1940’s and thereafter. Since the 1950’s, community bands have become more gender integrated, with women assuming a larger percentage of chairs available within bands.

4. **Bandsmanship** embodies what it means to belong to a band, including the responsibilities and privileges of membership.

5. **Continuity theory** is instrumental in shaping the field of social gerontology and is based upon the underlying assumption that adults continue activities in later life that provided them with rewarding experiences earlier in life (Atchley, 1999).

6. **Experiential learning** is “a process of human cognition” (Fenwick, 2000, p. 243) and the basis of experiential learning theory.

7. **Individuation** is a lifelong process of differentiating the self from the collective of society while integrating and reintegrating the self into that same collective. It is the ongoing struggle to assimilate the unconscious self with the conscious self (Jung, 1933).
8. **Instrumentalist** is a musician who plays an instrument as opposed to one who sings. The term in this study will be used at times as a synonym for performing musician or bandsman.

9. **Music** is “the actualization of the possibility of any musical sound whatever to present to some human being a meaning which he [/she] experiences with his [/her] mind, feelings, senses, and will” (Clifton, 1992, p. 54).

10. **Musician** is a person who is capable of translating the symbol system of music into sound, either by singing or playing an instrument.

11. **Music listening** is the deliberate act of choosing to totally immerse oneself in actively listening to a piece of music as it is performed or to a piece of recorded music.

12. **Meaning making** is to “make sense of an experience” (Courtenay et al., 1998, p. 65).

13. **New Holland Band** is among the oldest community bands in the United States. In continuous existence since 1856, the band has had a colorful history. It was reorganized in 1864 for Civil War duty as the 203rd Regimental Band. With each subsequent war, up through and including World War II, the New Holland Band served as a military band, undergoing a name change at the onset of each conflict. Today, the band’s membership is comprised of professional women and men from diverse walks of life. High school and university students also participate in the band, first as apprentice members. The band celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2006 (Rehrig, 2006).
14. **Peak experiences** are “transient moments . . . [characterized by] total fascination with the matter-in-hand, . . . getting lost in the present, [and] detachment from time and place” (Maslow, 1971, p. 48).

15. **Performing music** within the context of this study is playing an instrument either alone or with an ensemble and with or without an audience.

16. **Performing musician** within the context of this study will be used interchangeably with the terms instrumentalist and bandsman.

17. **Persona** is the “I” that persons present to the world; the ego (Jung, 1933).

18. **Rehearsal** is a session in which musicians practice together in preparation for public performance.

19. **Self-actualization** is “experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption” (Maslow, 1971, p. 45).

20. **Shadow** is the unconscious self or the part of the personality that has been repressed or hidden from others (Jung, 1933).

21. **Social gerontology** is the subfield of gerontology which addresses the nonphysical aspects of aging (Atchley & Barusch, 2004).

22. **Spirituality** is “about a connection to what is referred to by various names, such as . . . the Life Force, God, a higher power. . . . It is about meaning making and a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things.” (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006, p. 2).

23. **Transcendence** is a contemplative experience that extends awareness beyond the boundaries of thought or consciousness (Atchley, 1997).
Organization of the Study

In this first chapter, the background of the study, purpose of the research, theoretical framework for the study, overview of the research methods and design of the study, significance of the study, assumptions and limitations of the study, and a definition of terms were provided. Chapter 2 offers an analysis and summary of related literature in the fields of adult education, social gerontology, and music. Chapter 3 details the methodology and design utilized to gather data for the study. Chapter 4 presents the nine narrators, their stories, and one theme that emerged for each narrator. Chapter 5 identifies and interprets four relevant findings that participants share. Chapter 6 comprises discussion, conclusions, and implications of this study’s research findings for the fields of adult education, music education, and gerontology and proposes areas that invite future investigation.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature that informed my research on the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. The intent of any literature review is not only to present ideas in a field of research, but also to find similarities, differences, and relationships between and among those ideas (Hart, 1998). Three bodies of knowledge are considered: adult education, social gerontology, and music. By studying these three discrete bodies of knowledge and the relationship between and among them within the parameters of this study, I found that a cogent theoretical framework emerged to ground the research process that is detailed in Chapter 3.

The literature for this chapter is organized into four sections. In the first section, I present the literature that informs the theoretical framework for the study. The second section examines literature on meaning making in general, after which I present sources that are specific to meaning making in old age. The third section explores literature that addresses aging in the 21st century. Here I also review the relevant research studies and data-based literature on meaning making as it pertains to older adults in general, and more specifically to older musicians. The fourth section delves into additional sources on meaning making that look at it within the context of music. I also include literature on the culture of bands. Finally, I close the chapter with a summary of the written works examined in each of the four sections and an identification of themes that emerged from a synthesis of the literature reviewed for this study.

Section 1: Theoretical Framework

In this section, I highlight literature that comprises the conceptual and theoretical foundation for this study. I have chosen literature in the area of adult education that explores
issues of particular relevance to the older adult learner. From the social gerontological literature, I have selected works that inform both social and educational gerontology, the latter of which is a component of social gerontology. Finally, I have included literature in music as part of this section because of music’s capacity to summon the unconscious self.

Adult Education and Experiential Learning Theory

There are several learning theories in adult education that contribute to the understanding of the older adult learner. Of these theories, experiential learning theory provides the firmest grounding for this study. References to constructivist learning theory are made later in this chapter as part of the review of literature on meaning making and meaning making in old age. There is a plethora of experiential learning models, most of which espouse the conventional view that experiential learning comprises the ongoing knowledge gathering that occurs informally as a part of daily routine. However, many adult educators believe that what creates knowledge is not only the experience, but the critical reflection and dialogue that follows, although there continues to be debate on how reflecting on experience actually translates into knowledge. Ideally, experiential learning is holistic, reflecting a synthesis of cognition, behavior, and perception (Fenwick, 2006; D. Kolb, 1984).

Of all of the scholars who have written about the role experience plays in learning, John Dewey is probably cited most. Dewey ([1938] 1998) posed that “there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (p. 7) – a view that was considered radical by his more rationalist contemporaries. The 1930’s educational landscape that Dewey was trying to change was highly structured and always teacher directed, emphasizing rote learning with little consideration for the individual learner. To maximize the chance that his ideas would be considered in the ongoing discourse on education reform, Dewey, from the
outset, emphasized that the quality of an experience was of utmost importance. He further qualified that not all experiences were educational; in fact, Dewey warned that some experiences actually negate the possibility of educative experiences in the future. He also realized the importance of linking past learning experience with the present, thereby ensuring continuity of the educative process. Of significance, also, was the acknowledgment that not all experience goes on inside the learner, for experience is shaped, also, by context and social interaction. So, according to Dewey, the formula for experience involves linking past experiences to present – or continuity – along with context, or interaction with others (Dewey, [1938] 1998).

More than 40 years after Dewey first posed his theory of experiential learning, D. Kolb (1984) presented his own, but not before studying two scholars who, along with Dewey founded experiential learning in the traditional sense: Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget. Lewin, the father of American social psychology, studied group dynamics and developed the research methodology of action research. A common theme in any of Lewin’s work was the integration of theory and practice. His facilitation of open dialogue between employees and supervisors in the workplace was unprecedented, leading to cooperative leadership, and thus, an exhilarating, more productive work environment. Piaget, a developmental psychologist who researched cognitive development processes and the nature of intelligence, theorized how environmental experience shaped intelligence. Although Piaget restricted his study to children and adolescents, his contemporaries including Jung, Erik Erikson, Rogers, Perls and Maslow extended his theory so that it would illuminate adult development. They did this by introducing the concept of adaptation to experience. When adults are successful in integrating their affective and cognitive processes, they more readily adapt to changes which they experience throughout life. This group of psychologists also advanced the idea that social and emotional development continue throughout
the life span (D. Kolb, 1984). A synopsis of Erickson’s and Maslow’s contribution to adult
development appears later in this chapter. Jung’s concept of individuation and his thoughts on
aging are fundamental in framing this study and are more thoroughly discussed and integrated
throughout this literature review.

Taking what he had embraced from Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, D. Kolb (1984) developed a four-stage cycle of experiential learning that included four adaptive learning modes: *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization*, and *active experimentation*. The concrete experience learning mode comprises the learner’s full involvement in new experiences. The reflective observation learning mode comprises the learner’s reflecting on and observing each experience from different perspectives. The abstract conceptualization learning mode comprises the learner’s capacity to integrate their observations into concepts and theories. The active experimentation learning mode comprises the learner’s ability to apply new theories and concepts to decision making and problem solving. Just as the models that preceded his own. D. Kolb’s model is based upon the premise that the learner must act and reflect at the same time and be concrete and theoretical at the same time. It is the labor of dealing with these polar opposites that fosters the learning process. D. Kolb suggests that the learning process is made up of two dimensions, the first of which represents the concrete experiencing of events in real time and the abstract conceptualization of these experiences. The second dimension consists of active experimentation at one end of the spectrum and reflective observation at the other. So, the learner moves from actor to observer and from direct involvement to detached analyst. The way that conflicts among these dialectically opposed modes of adaptation achieve resolution determines the quality of learning that takes place. If conflict is resolved by suppressing one mode in deference to another, learning will tend to be
specialized around the dominant mode and limited in areas overseen by the dominated mode. At the highest stages of development and growth, there is a strong need for integration of the four adaptive modes. When integration occurs, one mode triggers development in the others. D. Kolb suggests that interaction between and among these four learning modes shapes the structure of the learning process, especially as the tensions that are created by the modes’ interactions are resolved (D. Kolb, 1984).

Expanding on D. Kolb’s model, Jarvis (1987) augmented Piaget’s stages by adding four more levels that he calls learning or non-learning responses. Jarvis’s learning model shows nine different pathways or responses that emanate from an experience. Learning may follow one of these pathways, a few or several of the pathways, or none of them at all. These nine pathways or forms of response form a hierarchy, with three pathways being non-learning responses, the next set of three being pre-conscious learning responses, and the final three being higher forms of learning responses. For further identification, each response has a name. I list the names in hierarchical order: presumption, non-consideration, rejection, pre-conscious, practice, memorization, contemplation, reflective practice, and experimental learning. Jarvis (1987) emphasizes that the three non-learning responses, specifically, presumption, non-consideration, and rejection, still serve a function by providing stability to both the learner and society.

Merriam (1994) departs from experiential learning models to discuss how context influences adult life experience by pigeon-holing learning into four structures. Based upon the life roles assumed by adults, these structures include work and family; life events and transitions; developmental tasks; and social roles. It is from the work and family contexts that most learning needs emerge which adults fulfill through both formal and informal learning opportunities. Life events and family transitions such as divorce or children leaving for college also motivate adults
to pursue education. Each life stage brings developmental tasks and roles that may suggest pursing relevant learning goals.

A meaningful synthesis of experiential learning theory models lies embedded in a typology of five contemporary perspectives on experiential learning theory that was developed by Fenwick (2000) who defines experiential learning as “a process of human cognition” (p. 243). These five views on experiential learning theory include reflection which is the constructivist perspective; interference which is the psychoanalytic perspective; participation which is the situated cognition perspective; resistance which is the critical cultural perspective; and co-emergence which is the enactivist perspective.

The reflection or constructivist perspective on experiential learning holds that the learner goes through life making meaning of personal experience by reflecting on the experience, interpreting it, and generalizing it to form mental structures that become knowledge to be applied to new situations. At the heart of this perspective is the research of Piaget who saw that the assimilation of a new experience to the old and the accommodation of the old experience to the new is what defines the learning process. The reflective view of experiential learning has been explored by scholars that include Brookfield, Mezirow, and Schön, the latter being one who promotes employing constructivism to understand learning in the workplace. Both Brookfield and Mezirow wrote on how critical reflection affects beliefs by challenging and reconstructing them (Fenwick, 2000).

The interference or psychoanalytic perspective of experiential learning is rooted in Freudian tradition. Informed by the writings of not only Freud but also Jung, its most distinguishing characteristic is that it opens pathways to the unconscious mind by suggesting that a person has the outside world of culture and objects interacting with the inner world of psychic
energies that are driven by the unconscious. Learning occurs in the interference perspective when the learner attends to conflicts that arise when inner and outer worlds collide. The learning process is not as ordered as the one suggested by the reflection perspective, for it involves a person’s crafting the self by coming to terms with conflicting desires and fear of self-knowledge (Fenwick, 2000).

The participation or situated cognition perspective on experiential learning holds that learning is grounded in the situation in which the person is participating, thereby restricting knowledge to the process of participation in the immediate situation. Wilson [1992] in Fenwick (2000) contends that adults learn in experience – not from experience. The relevance of the situation is critical to the learning process, and emphasis is on improving the ability to participate meaningfully in specific activities that are valued within a particular community of learners (Fenwick, 2000).

The resistance or critical cultural perspective on experiential learning regards power as a core issue. Those who embrace this perspective see that other perspectives do not attend to the power relations issues that are embedded in human culture. According to the critical perspective of experiential learning, a first step in understanding learning is to analyze power relationships. Scholars who embrace this perspective suggest that learning in any specific cultural context is influenced by the discourses and symbols that are recognized by those with most authority. A learner in this perspective aspires to come to a critical awareness about what knowledge counts, how it is measured, and by whom. Groups of learners in a critical cultural experience are usually found in nonformal sites such as consciousness-raising groups or social movements (Fenwick, 2000).
The co-emergence or enactivist perspective on experiential learning assumes that learning is contingent upon the integration of internal and external forces within experience. One premise in this perspective is that person and context cannot be separated. The other premise is that change will occur as person or context interact with the other. The co-emergence perspective is all about relationships – relationships that unfold as the learner experiences circumstances that evoke particular actions. Each learner’s knowledge co-emerges with another learner’s knowledge (Fenwick, 2000).

**Social Gerontology and Continuity Theory**

Gerontologists sometimes refer to their field as a-theoretical, perhaps because none of the multiple theories that have been explored during the twentieth century can completely stand alone as an overarching, organizational framework. Of the dozens of theories on aging that have been proposed by what is a multi-disciplinary cadre of scholars, perhaps social gerontologist Robert Atchley’s continuity theory has come closest to being the organizational framework for the field of gerontology. This section explores continuity theory which comprises the part of the theoretical framework that is informed by social gerontology, the subfield of gerontology that addresses the nonphysical aspects of aging (Atchley & Barusch, 2004; P. Kolb, 2002).

Continuity theory is based on the presumption that both adult development and adaptation are continuous. Atchley (1999) created the theory to accomplish three things. First, he wanted a theory to explain how so many aging adults can remain physically, socially, and emotionally healthy in spite of society’s obsession with all that is youthful. Second, he intended to demonstrate why continuity of thinking and lifestyle is essential to adult development in midlife and thereafter. Third, he hoped to show why continuity is a coping strategy that older adults draw upon when faced with change. In constructing the theory, he presumed that most
people learn continuously from life experiences and as a result, make deliberate choices as to the directions in which they aspire to continue to grow.

**Development of the Theory**

Foundational to the continuity theory were data that Atchley analyzed from the Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Adaptation (OLSAA), a 20-year study in which he followed more than a thousand individuals who were 50 years of age or older in 1975. The context for the study was a college town near a large Ohio city that offered many opportunities for activities and a full range of health and social services to its residents. The participants were surveyed six times during the 20-year period. By 1995, the final year of the study, there were more than 300 respondents still involved. The survey instrument was comprehensive, designed to document both inner psychological frameworks such as beliefs, attitudes, values, and goals as well as external social frameworks that constitute lifestyle-related things such as household composition, occupation, and leisure activities. Demographic, financial, and health-related facts were also thoroughly explored (Atchley, 1999).

The results of the study confirmed that there is a strong probabilistic relationship among past, present, and anticipated thinking, behavior, and social patterns. The results also verified that continuity and change coexist as common threads in most people’s lives. Atchley found that both positive and negative change affected study participants in all aspects of development. Physical and psychological aging generally produced minor declines over time, although there were some participants whose physical health and psychological outlook actually improved as they aged. The results showed only minor effects of social aging on lifestyles of participants. In summary, an overwhelming majority of participants adapted well to the changes that confronted them over the 20-year course of the study (Atchley, 1999).
**Characteristics of the Theory**

Like the phenomenon that it represents, continuity theory is a theory of continuous evolution, thereby categorizing it as a feedback systems theory. All feedback systems theories assume that there is an initial pattern that affects behavioral choices which in turn affect the nature of life experience. Life experience, then, serves as an instrument to evaluate, edit, and improve both the initial pattern and the process that is followed to make behavioral decisions. This learning cycle is repeated thousands of times by each person during each year of life. Those persons who learn best from this cycle develop a highly sophisticated, proactive approach to whatever they encounter in life. Continuity theory is constructionist in that it assumes that people develop their own personal frameworks for organizing what is going on in their world and why. It also assumes that the habits of mind and skills that last a lifetime are those in which persons have focused their attention and invested more energy. These habits of mind and skills become the internal and external frameworks which sustain persons through life’s more challenging times (Atchley, 1999).

Continuity theory is comprised of four elements. The first element is *internal patterns*, which encompasses mental skills and loose constructs including self-concept, personal goals, moral framework, attitudes, values, beliefs, and preferences. When these characteristics are considered as a whole, it becomes clear what distinguishes each person from the other. The second element is *external patterns*, which addresses social roles, relationships, activities, and living environments. Like internal patterns, external patterns, when viewed holistically, clearly define a person’s uniqueness. When we age, it is the continuity of familiar activities and environments that minimize losses of physical, social, and psychological well-being. The third element is *developmental goals*, which consists of those things in life for which persons strive.
Life experience strongly determines the degree to which persons meet their developmental goals. The fourth element is *adaptive capacity*. Most adults learn during their life course what attitudes and actions produce good decisions and what experiences provide them with the highest degree of satisfaction in life. The interaction of the four elements that comprise Atchley’s (1999) continuity theory results in the emergence of coping strategies that facilitate smooth transition in times of change.

**Music**

In this section, I explore the literature which links music to human emotions, the human spirit, and the unconscious mind. One way that people make meaning of their lives and the world around them is through the arts. Arts-based meaning making relies on symbols and images to activate imagination and bring unconscious symbols and archetypes into consciousness. Unlike theory in adult education and gerontology, theory in music is a symbol system that through the interpretation of musicians brings the printed musical score to life as sound. The connections I have uncovered in the literature between what we perceive as organized, beautiful sound and its unexplainable capacity to touch the emotions, the spirit, and the unconscious justifies the inclusion of music in the theoretical framework for this study.

**Music and Emotions**

Experiencing emotion is a fundamental response to being human (Dirkx, 2001b). For many people, music can stimulate an emotional response, which is precisely why humans listen to it. Since the mid-twentieth century, scientists interested in the emotions have attempted to learn why most people are emotionally affected by music. The concept is called *thrills and chills* and is researched by looking at subjective bodily reactions to music. Symptoms of this effect include shivers or chills up and down the spine, gooseflesh, rapidly beating heart, lump in the
throat, welling up of tears in the eyes, or spontaneous smiling. Neuroscientists Panksepp and Bernatzky in Vitouch (2006) hypothesize that the thrill and chill experience is caused by the withdrawal of endorphins on the receptors located in the reward-motivation and emotion centers of the brain. The thrills and chills response can be to the music itself, to an event of which music is a part, or to a place where music is heard either as a live or recorded performance.

For most readers, the scientific explanation of how and why music sometimes gives us thrills and chills seems inadequate in capturing the intense personal and emotional response many people have to music. Curiously, the etymology of the word “person” is “per son” or, “through sound” (Updike [1994] cited in Abbot & Avins, 2006, p. 97). Music is heard and perceived by each person differently; therefore, response to music is intrinsically personal. Accordingly, each person reacts to it uniquely, if at all.

Some people describe what have become known as peak experiences that are triggered by music. Maslow (1971) defines the response to any peak experience as becoming totally absorbed in the matter at hand or getting lost in the present. In such an experience, the person becomes detached from time and place, although much of what is learned from the experience is transferable to the present. In an article that explores providing aesthetic experiences in the academy, Bogdan (2003) describes two personal peak listening experiences in music as a synthesis of the aesthetic and the spiritual. At the time that she was consumed by the experiences, she remembers being oblivious to her surroundings. Later, in analyzing the experiences through a Jungarian lens, Bogdan realized that both occurrences were incidents of transcendence, during which she was opening herself to the inner or unconscious side of her personality. For Bogdan, these episodes eradicated ego boundaries, leaving her with a sense of oneness and “what is” (p. 85). Being completely receptive to the inner self can generate

the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement. . . . Action follows action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part . . . in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future (p. 85).

Even people who claim to not be emotionally touched by music have been witness to music’s influence on others. What, then, about music makes it so powerful? Thielemann (2001) answers this question by suggesting that “music emanates from the soul and [is] perceived by the heart” (p. 12). It may be music’s inherent characteristics that give it the capacity to affect people in a profound way. Both humans and music experience elements of preparation, fulfillment, excitation, and sudden change. One parallel that illustrates this idea is offered by Abbot and Avins (2006) who searched good health and good music for commonalities. Both good health and good music possess an energetic flow of energy that propels them through time. The most obvious quality that both good health and good music share is rhythm: human life is ordered around the regular rhythm of the heart and the breath, whereas music is ordered by meter and rhythmic patterns. Good music also projects a sense of wholeness: there is a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Humans yearn to feel this sense of wholeness in each life episode, whether it be a day or a lifetime, a date or a 30-year marriage, a summer job or a career. Perhaps these qualities that humans and music share allow music to act in relation to humans’ emotional and
unconscious worlds in the same way that language acts in relation to humans in the conscious world (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997; Abbot & Avins, 2006).

Music and the Spirit

The Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus (2003) defines spirit as “the vital animating essence of a person . . . ” (p. 1466). Those things that concern the spirit are referred to as spiritual. Because of its use in multiple contexts and its connection to organized religion, the related term spirituality has been defined in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this research, I use the definition offered by Tolliver and Tisdell (2006):

Spirituality is about a connection to what is referred to by various names, such as the Life Force, God, a higher power or purpose, Great Spirit, or Buddha Nature. It is about meaning making and a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things. . . . Spirituality is also about developing a more authentic identity (p. 2).

Music contributes to the lively discourse on spirituality in two ways. First, music is a primary medium through which humans express profound spiritual experiences (Thielemann, 2001). In some Eastern cultures, the aesthetic, rational, religious, and spiritual aspects of being human are viewed holistically and not compartmentalized as in Western cultures. The Sufi tradition believes that music can connect all elements of the universe, specifically, the human with the divine, human with human, and the outer and inner worlds that constitute each human through the power of its vibration. The assumption is made that music has the capacity to touch humans at a deeper level than any spoken or written word. In fact, in some Hindu and Muslim traditions, being a performing musician is considered to be a sacred activity and the instrument itself to be sacred, as evidenced by the ritual of removing one’s shoes before touching the
instruments. Furthermore, instruments are placed periodically before a household shrine of Sarasvati, the patron of learning and the arts (Bogdan, 2003).

The second way in which music contributes to the discourse on spirituality is its capacity to arouse spiritual experience perhaps better than any other aesthetic medium. Thielemann (2001) explains the phenomenon in this way:

In music, the infinite meets the finite, the timeless meets the momentary, the divine meets the human. Music melts dualities, music fuses the disconnected fragments of reality in order to establish the eternal truth of unity. What is more, music fills the separateness of dual entities with meaning, because it incites their active interplay, because it inspirits the quest for union through interaction (p. 4).

When people participate in music as either a listener or a performer, they are opening themselves to the possibility that the new musical experience may join with an old. Tisdell (2007) suggests that when this phenomenon occurs, a “remembering, re-imagining, and a re-weaving of cultural meaning (p. 3)” results, but not necessarily at the level of consciousness. This is especially true with religious music, due to its influence during the formative years for many people for whom religion was an integral part of their culture growing up, but whose allegiance to religion changed over time.

In the second addition of Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning, Cranton (2006c) reviews Mezirow’s six habits of mind, the sixth of which is the aesthetic. The aesthetic habits of mind define a human’s standards for beauty which, for the most part, are shaped by parental, cultural, and community values and tastes. Brookfield in Cranton (2006c) explains that aesthetic experiences provide “new forms of visual and spoken language and [open] us to new ways of sensing and feeling” (p. 27).
Music and the Unconscious

Any theories about the connection between music and the unconscious world are grounded in psychology. Of all the post-Freudian psychologists, it was Jung who did the most extensive writing on the unconscious and its role in self-knowledge (Sharp, 1998). One of Jung’s profound beliefs was that the purpose of human existence is to become conscious – a process known as individuation that will be thoroughly investigated in the next section of this chapter. The more that people know about what is occurring in the unconscious, the more conscious they become. Jung poignantly tells us how much of what we are lurks in the unconscious self when he writes:

> Everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness: all this is the content of the unconscious (cited in Sharp, 1998, p. 132.)

The process of assimilating the contents of the unconscious into the conscious begins by observing and reflecting on daily events rather than only reacting to them. Over time, persons learn why it is they do what they do. To attain consciousness, Jung suggests that what is the inner world or “shadow” must be integrated into the ego or persona, or the “I” that persons present to the world. Everything that is not ego is shadow, or the unconscious. The shadow is creative by presenting those parts of us that are unknown to us but, contingent upon personal motivation and interventions of others and life events, may come to light. The shadow also is destructive by unsettling our conscious image of who we believe we are (Sharp, 1998).
The aspect of music that can facilitate a special relationship with the unconscious and upon which much of the psychoanalytic literature relevant to music is focused is its capacity to circumvent the material or conscious world. Coriat observes that “all music represents the deeper sources of unconscious thinking because it is untrammeled by the limitations of language, as in poetry, or by visual imagery, as in painting” (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997, p. 558). Using academia as the context, Tisdell (2007) discusses the need for a joining of rationality and spirituality/imagination in approaching diversity and equity issues. This joining of the rational or conscious self with the spiritual/imagination or inner self is consistent with the individuation process that all persons undergo, whether they desire to do so or not. Dirkx (2006) explains that the language that best assists the work of individuation is one that triggers imagination, such as the language of music.

Section Summary

Although the literature utilized in developing this study’s foundation draws from three diverse fields, it is striking how closely their discrete theories and concepts align. A few of these alignments are worth noting. First, continuity theory is based upon an assumption that is grounded in conventional experiential learning theory: most people learn continuously from life experiences. As a result, we make conscious decisions about which experiences warrant further investment of time and energy to ensure continued growth. Second, for some people, musical experiences can facilitate access to the unconscious self by triggering the emotions to the extent that the spiritual aspect of the personality or the imagination is activated. Depending upon the magnitude of the experience, we may move closer to consciousness and thus, authenticity. As people struggle to reconcile their unconscious self with their conscious self, they are participating in the ultimate learning experience called individuation, a learning experience that
is congruent with what Fenwick (2000) describes as the interference perspective of experiential learning.

Section 2: Meaning Making

In this section, I present literature that is relevant to meaning making in general and the meaning of life in old age. I begin with an examination of the work of Jung, especially his concept of individuation. Next, I review the work of authors whose writing on meaning making is informed by Jung before presenting a summary of literature that is more specific to meaning making in old age.

Jung’s Concept of Individuation

Until the middle of the twentieth century, psychologists devoted little attention to adult development in the second half of life. Psychology was youth-oriented, in keeping with Freud’s view that personality was set in childhood and changed very little over the life span. Swiss-born Carl Jung, one of Freud’s students, changed all of this when he posed that youth encompassed the years just after puberty to age 35 to 40. In justifying this expanded definition of youth, Jung pointed to that part of every human that wants to remain a child in order to avoid confronting life’s problems. He explained that this wish to remain a child is a wish to remain unconscious, or conscious only of our ego or outer world. After all, without consciousness, there are no problems. Consciousness arises when we know something and manage to link a new perception to one that is already established. According to Jung, knowledge begins when we connect something in a new context to something that we have already internalized. The first step to consciousness, or knowing, then, is based upon a conscious connection between psychic contents (Jung, 1933).
Jung compares the stages of life to the sun. Think of life as being a 180-degree arc that is divisible into four parts. The first quarter, lying to the east, is childhood in which we are a problem for our parents and others but are not yet aware of any problems of our own. An awareness of our own problems fills out the center two quarters of the arc. The last quarter in the west represents extreme old age when we once again become somewhat of a problem for others but are unaware of our own problems. Although childhood and extreme old age are very different, both are characterized by our submersion into the world of the unconscious (Jung, 1933).

Individuation is a lifelong process of differentiating the self from the collective of society and, at the same time, integrating and reintegrating the self with that same collective. Whether persons are aware of it or not, individuation takes place within everyone. Unlike Freud who supported a systematic approach to therapeutic analysis, Jung advocates four stages of an analytic process that can lead to individuation. In confession, the first stage, persons reveal everything deliberately concealed of which they are not proud. In elucidation, the second stage, persons become aware of dormant personal traits that have never before reached conscious awareness. This second stage is achieved by persons’ closely monitoring how they respond to daily events and nightly dream images. Once the unconscious is assimilated to consciousness, persons find their place in the world through education, the third stage. In the transformation stage, the final one, persons purposefully work on a relationship with self by concentrating on what is personally relevant. (Jung, 1933).

How successful persons are in reaching the transformation stage is dependent upon their motivation to get in touch with the unconscious self. As stated earlier in this section, individuation is a lifelong and continual process for all human beings. Jung cautions that
individuation cannot be avoided. What must happen is a disidentification from the persona, or what the person presents to others as himself or herself, and a deliberate assimilation of the shadow, or the part of the personality that has been hidden and repressed from others (Jung, 1933; Sharp, 1998). Being forced to recognize and accept what is different and strange about ourselves is difficult. Jung (1933) writes:

> Whoever protects himself against what is new and strange and thereby regresses to the past, falls into the same neurotic condition as the man who identifies himself with the new and runs away from the past. The only difference is that the one has estranged himself from the past, and the other from the future. In principle both are doing the same thing; they are salvaging a narrow state of consciousness. The alternative is to shatter it with the tension inherent in the play of opposites . . . and thereby to build up a state of wider and wider consciousness (p. 117).

The shadow is comprised of not only overt happenings that we have forgotten or repressed, but also reflections, doubts, and experiments that instinct suggests we should avoid. By dealing with these things via a path that seems dark and ambiguous, we emerge from the journey enlightened, and closer to being our authentic self. The ideal is to have a self that is strong enough to acknowledge both persona and shadow without identifying with either. According to Sharp (1998), Jung’s four-stage model of analysis assists persons in finding their dominant psychological disposition, or “the way we mostly are and how we mostly are not, but how we could also be” (p. 78).

Jung (1933) concedes that working through the final transformative stage of individuation earlier in life would be ideal; however, because society values achievement and usefulness far more than personality, giving serious attention to self is relegated to the end of
life. Endeavoring to achieve and be successful helps to defer dealing with problems, including who we really are. Jung reminds us that “the serious problems of life . . . are never fully Solved. . . . The meaning and design of a problem seem not to lie in its solution, but in our working at it incessantly” (p. 118).

**Views of Knowledge**

Adult learners in the 21st century, regardless of age, still find learning options framed within a technical-rational view of knowledge (Dirkx, 1997). However, this view of knowledge does not accommodate humans’ search for meaning and need to make sense of both personal and wider issues. Writing on how the gap might be bridged between rationality and other ways of knowing, Taylor (2001) explores the emotional nature of rationality from a neurobiological and psychological perspective. He reports that rational discourse can be tempered by adult educators’ promoting emotional understanding. In this section, I summarize conceptual pieces on artistic ways of knowing. I follow these with three perspectives on meaning making.

**Artistic Ways of Knowing**

Understanding that the arts facilitate expression differently from speaking and writing, Lawrence (2005) observes the arts’ capacity to release the imagination, thus stimulating learning to emerge that otherwise may remain untapped. She explains that “artistic forms of expression extend the boundaries of how we come to know, by honoring multiple intelligences and indigenous knowledge. Artistic expression broadens cultural perspectives by allowing and honoring diverse ways of knowing and learning” (Lawrence, 2005, p. 3). After noting the limitations of traditional ways of knowing, Lawrence (2005) emphasizes both that everyone’s culture is grounded in arts traditions and that humans’ first ways of knowing are preverbal and expressed through singing, dancing, drawing, or dramatization.
In an adult education collection of pieces on artistic ways of knowing that was edited by Lawrence (2005), two authors specifically address music. Lems’ (2005) practice context is the adult English language learner classroom. Her writing specifically illustrates music’s ability to break down barriers to learning that are imposed by language differences. Lems has learned that music activates students, particularly the music that they bring with them to her classroom by virtue of their culture. Stressing that “no culture has an ‘inferior’ music” (Lems, 2005, p. 35), the author builds a classroom climate of collaboration and mutual appreciation by regularly incorporating music that reflects her adult students’ diverse cultural heritage into her learning activities.

As a college music educator, Olson (2005) is aware of the adult education that occurs in venues such as community choirs, bands, and orchestras as well as at Elderhostel programs, informal concerts, and ethnic celebrations. He foresees adult educators collaborating with community music makers to foster intercultural understanding and ultimately, social change. Furthermore, he observes that “as adult educators look for new ways to encourage critical reflection, community identity, cross-cultural empathy, and social awareness and empowerment, joining forces with community music makers holds great promise in facilitating transformative and emancipatory learning in adults” (Olson, 2005, p. 63).

*Perspectives on Meaning Making*

Kegan’s (1982) understanding of meaning making clearly aligns with the participation perspective experiential learning model described by Fenwick (2000) that was summarized earlier in this chapter. He writes that “it is not that a person makes meaning as much as that the activity of being human is the activity of meaning-making” (Kegan, 1982, p. 11). In his book *The Evolving Self* (1982), Kegan ponders what would happen if the evolution of the activity of
making meaning were to be considered “the fundamental motion in personality” (p. 15). He explains his reasoning by recalling how an infant intuitively knows how to capture and hold the attention of its mother. Later, the infant extends this skill to gain the acknowledgement of others. Throughout life, humans engage in activities to be recognized; they also recognize others who engage in activities which capture their attention. Behind these efforts to be recognized is a physical, social, or survival meaning-making activity. When meaning is understood in this way, it cannot be separated from the physical body, the socio-cultural experience, or the will to survive (Kegan, 1982).

Mezirow (1991) views meaning within the context of transformative learning theory as existing internally, and not in external objects.Constructed from experiences, meaning is either validated or called into question through our interaction and dialogue with others. Persons filter experiences through their perspectives of the world or their habits of mind. These perspectives or habits of mind have been uncritically acquired from birth and include assumptions and expectations ranging from unquestioned beliefs about simple things to prejudices and stereotypes. Meaning expressed by language usually represents conscious experience; meaning expressed by symbol, unconscious experience. Most often, humans interpret experience through old expectations by interacting with objects and events within awareness, or consciousness. When persons interpret new experiences or reinterpret old ones through new expectations and a more inclusive, open perspective, meaning – or learning - is potentially transformative (Mezirow, 1991).

Dirkx (2001a) believes that emotions and persons’ interpretation of them are instrumental to meaning making. He explains that emotions should be viewed as “messengers of the soul” (Dirkx, 1997, cited in Dirkx, 2001b, p. 66) which show us connections that are occurring within
an experience. A proponent of soul work or inner work, Dirkx has devoted two decades to seeking to understand how persons view identity or self. By considering all dimensions that comprise human existence, he has determined that the intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual aspects of each of us are influenced by the socio-cultural contexts of daily life. Dirkx’s writing is clearly influenced by Jung, in that he advocates striving toward integrating outer and inner world contents. By tuning in to what our inner lives are saying to us, we come to see how connected we are to others, often by kinds of bonds that go undetected unless we dig deeply (Dirkx, 2006).

*Old Age and the Meaning of Life*

I begin this section by summarizing Jung’s thoughts on the purpose and responsibility of old age. His writings lay groundwork for the next parts of this section that highlight literature on spirituality, wisdom, constructivism, and self-knowledge as they pertain to old age. Then, I conclude this section with a picture of what it is like to age in contemporary society.

*Jung and the Meaning of Life in Old Age*

A human being would certainly not grow to be seventy or eighty years old if this longevity had no meaning for the species to which it belongs. The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life’s morning. The significance of the morning undoubtedly lies in the development of the individual, our entrenchment in the outer world, the propagation of our kind and the care of our children. . . . But when this purpose has been attained – and even more than attained – shall the earning of money, the extension of conquests and the expansion of life go steadily on beyond the bounds of all reason and sense? Whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning – that is, the aims of nature – must pay for so doing
with damage to his soul just as surely as a growing youth who tries to salvage his childish egoism must pay for this mistake with social failure. Money-making, social existence, family and posterity are nothing but plain nature—not culture. Culture lies beyond the purpose of nature. Could by any chance culture be the meaning and purpose of the second half of life? . . . Experience shows us rather that the basis and cause of all the difficulties in this transition [from youth to mid-life] are to be found in a deep-seated and peculiar change within the psyche. . . . Ageing people should know that their lives are not mounting and unfolding, but that an inexorable inner process forces the contraction of life. . . . For the ageing person, it is a duty and a necessity to give serious attention to himself (Jung, 1933, pp. 122, 125).

Jung maintains that the first half of life is rightfully devoted to the world of work and family. Regarding the second half of life, he suggests that as physical energy wanes and obligation to significant others diminishes, humans should look inward to familiarize themselves with contents of the unconscious, particularly the spiritual, because of its capacity to extend us beyond ourselves, thereby promoting psychological health. Often at midlife, our conscious and unconscious worlds become conflicted. The psychological term for this struggle is neurosis, a condition viewed by contemporary society as a form of mental illness for which professional intervention is often appropriate. As a practicing psychiatrist, Jung saw patients whose primary complaint was a lack of meaning in life, or meaninglessness. About this, he states, “A neurosis must be understood, basically, as a suffering of a soul, which has not discovered its meaning. . . . About a third of my patients are not suffering from any definable neurosis but only from the senselessness and aimlessness of their lives” (cited in Missinne, 2006, p. 114). But, for those who clearly were wrestling to reconcile conscious and unconscious worlds, Jung saw their
struggle as an opportunity to address not only limitations, but also strengths that persons did not know they possessed. He adds, “The apparently unendurable conflict is proof of the rightness of your life. A life without inner contradiction is either only half a life or else a life in the Beyond, which is destined only for angels” (cited in Sharp, 1998, p. 78). Jung also writes:

The wine of youth does not always clear with advancing years; oftentimes it grows turbid. All the manifestations [of neurotic difficulties] can be most clearly seen in rather one-sided people, turning up sometimes sooner and sometimes later. . . . The very frequent neurotic disturbances of adult years have this in common, that they betray the attempt to carry the psychic dispositions of youth beyond the threshold of the so-called years of discretion. . . . The neurotic is . . . a person who can never have things as he would like them in the present, and who can therefore never enjoy the past (Jung, 1933, pp. 120-121).

Jung advises that to capitalize on the opportunity of a midlife neurosis, purposefully reflecting and imagining in combination with dreaming, while turning inward, could potentially reconnect a person to the inner self – the self that was silenced by life’s demands. Convinced that dreams are a window to the unconscious, Jung suggests that dreams are self-regulatory and can lift up buried information that will be restorative to the psyche at midlife (Jung, 1933; Sharp, 1998).

**Spirituality in Old Age**

In Jung’s writing about the meaning of old age, he advances the idea that the second half of life should be devoted to attending to self, especially the spiritual self. Jung’s understanding of the relationship between spirituality and individuation is evidenced in his words cited in A. Palmer (2006): “Were organized religion to disappear by some quirk of social process, the human community still cannot and must not do without cultivating the spiritual . . .”
Like Jung, contemporary scholars whose research interest is older people observe that old age is the ideal time to focus on developing one’s spirituality. Many older people live a simpler life than they did when they were younger—a life characterized by fewer stressful distractions and obligations that comprise much of middle age (Atchley, 1997; King, 2004). Atchley goes so far as to suggest that our youth-oriented society actually creates the social context that can facilitate spiritual growth in the older population (Atchley, 1997).

Because the meaning of spirituality has been generalized to be applicable in most mainstream contexts of life, even those working in theology and religious studies may not associate spirituality with aging. After all, old age is when most of life has already been lived. Spirituality is for those who are trying to make their mark on the world but recognize the need for balance in their lives. Furthermore, the assumption is made that as people age, they become more religious. They do not work on fine-tuning their spirituality. Discussing spirituality in old age, both King (2004) and Atchley (1997) suggest that nurturing the spirit can be done without concern for those things that begin to decline as part of biological aging. In fact, it is more likely that persons more closely approach their full spiritual maturity in very old age when symptoms of chronological age are most severe. Atchley (1997) observes that “the moderation of energy levels and biological drives brought on by aging may be more conducive to patience, meditation and contemplation” (p. 129).

What does spiritual maturity look like? According to King (2004), “Integrity, wisdom and transcendence are celebrated as the hallmark of a mature spirituality, as is the making of connections” (p. 125). Although not explicitly stated, King’s reference to making connections is, I believe, a reference to meaning making, much like what Tisdell (2007) is saying when she writes about “[re-weaving] new patterns of meaning by combining new threads of cultural and
other experience with the old threads” (p. 3). While King describes the manifestations of spiritual maturity, Atchley (1997) devotes more attention to the process of achieving that maturity. He explains that in the case of many older people, spiritual experience, or what he also refers to as “mystical experiences,” (Atchley, 1999, p. 127) can occur suddenly. But more often, people grow into awareness of these experiences over time. Slowly, older people notice “a presence in their consciousness, a presence that gives them newfound wisdom and confidence in the face of spiritual questions” (Atchley, 1999, p. 127).

Erikson’s Single Stage Theory of Older Adulthood.

Building upon the foundation provided by Jung, German-born Erik Erikson was a pioneer in developing one of the first models of the life cycle, the *Eight Stages of Man* [1950]. This model is defined by developmental challenges or crises that must be addressed in sequence to ensure a healthy life. Depending upon how persons negotiate each challenge or crisis, they experience either continued growth or stagnation. When stages one through seven are completed successfully, persons will be satisfied with their lives as they have been. However, if earlier challenges have not been successfully overcome, persons may not be able to accept the last stage of the life cycle and thus will fear death (Korb, 2003; Schachter-Shalomi & Miller, 1995).

Erikson describes the crisis of later adulthood, or entry into the eighth stage, as ego integrity versus despair. For persons who effectively negotiate this crisis, the reward is wisdom. Wisdom is a quality that is acquired by synthesizing the past stages of life to the extent that persons are keenly aware of both the meanings they have helped to create, and the people with whom they have interacted. Erikson defines wisdom as “detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself” (cited in Schachter-Shalomi & Miller, 1995, p. 71).
As octogenarians, Erikson and his wife Joan collaboratively developed a description of lessons or meanings that can be attributed to each stage of life. These descriptions also show how each meaning transfers to the last stage of life and transforms into wisdom. Trust, a quality that starts in infancy, contributes in older adulthood to an appreciation of human interdependence. During the preschool years, learning to be responsible for the care of the body manifests in acceptance in old age of bodily deterioration. Early childhood’s development of initiative along with playfulness and creativity is reflected in older adulthood as empathy, resilience, and a sense of humor about life. The adolescent’s struggle to overcome confusion and find personal identity translates into commitment and fidelity in old age. The conflict of balancing the need for both intimacy and isolation that is integral to young adulthood appears in older adulthood as accepting life’s complex relationships. The tension of balancing the pressure to have and care for children with maintaining self-identity that is characteristic of much of adulthood is expressed in older age by passing on one’s life contributions to the next generation (P. Kolb, 2002). About the final stage of life, Erikson and Erikson suggest that life:

- culminates in a full wisdom to the degree each earlier phase of life has had a positive resolution. If everything has gone well, one achieves a sense of integrity, a sense of completeness, of personal wholeness, that is strong enough to offset the downward psychological pull of the inevitable physical disintegration (cited in P. Kolb, 2002, p. 300).

Social Constructivism, Self-Knowledge, and Old Age

Social constructivism is a cognitive learning theory model in which the learner attains knowledge through social processes. An important nuance in the social constructivist perspective – that knowledge is culturally mediated and influenced by historical factors – is rooted in
Vygotsky’s thinking that individuals develop meaning through language and social interaction (Stage, 1998). This social interaction deepens understanding as individuals observe how others frame real-life problems and offer solutions. I selected some pieces for this review that address the social interaction processes of older people because relationships are a major contributor to meaning making for the elderly.

Missinne (2004) emphasizes that social interaction in the form of relationships with others is the most effective way for older people whose lives seem meaningless to find a purpose for living. A feeling of meaninglessness is characterized by boredom with all that formerly had brought joy and personal satisfaction. Often, persons who have lost a sense of purpose in life turn to self-destructive behaviors such as the abuse of alcohol or other drugs in an effort to feel more alive. Writing about the importance of social interaction for those who are aging, Missinne suggests that “real life is meeting other people, helping fellow human beings, sharing what we have and what we think by loving and working” (p. 116). To restore purpose to life, Missine suggests two simple activities that older people can try. One of these is to help another older person who is having difficulty. Another activity is to simply exchange stories with an older acquaintance. Note that both of these activities precipitate dialogue, ideally laying the groundwork for a relationship and further social interaction.

Viktor Frankl was a survivor of the German concentration camps who became a professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Vienna. Missinne (2004) writes about Frankl’s theory of the meaning of life which is comprised of believing in values that fall into three categories: creative, experiential, and attitudinal. Creative values are realized by completing activities and tasks, or simply by doing something. Examples of creative values that would be those kinds of things that older people would enjoy include volunteering in an
elementary school, singing in a choir, learning to paint, or tending a flower garden. Experiential values are accomplished through experiencing authentic, beautiful places and people. Living in and appreciating one’s home or loving a spouse are examples of experiential values. When a person cannot find purpose in creative or experiential values, embracing attitudinal values such as finding meaning in suffering or sacrifice can bring meaning. Values in all three categories are discovered through social interaction with others (Missinne, 2006).

As mentioned earlier in this section, a nuance that sets social constructivism apart from other constructivist learning models is that socially constructed knowledge is mediated by culture and is historically influenced (Stage, 1998). In Glendenning (2000), Fennell points out that “old age has been given a distinctive shape by the ideas and beliefs of, first older people themselves (and those about to reach old age), and secondly by those who work on their behalf” (p. 17). Gilleard and Higgs (2000) call these influences from others scripts. Older adults follow these scripts to construct their life experiences. Through the lived experiences with others, cultures emerge to establish meaning (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Kaufman, 1986). Kaufman defines culture as the “sum or aggregate of customs, traditions, and behaviors that are learned and shared among a group of people (Kaufman, 1986, p. 15). Geertz expands this definition by suggesting that “culture consists of socially established structures of meaning” (cited in Kaufman, 1986, p. 15). Using Geertz’s definition of culture invites older people to interpret their own lives, using those understandings and symbols which they have created together and that inform their recollection of life experiences.

Central to meaning in old age, regardless of cultural influences, is each individual’s sense of identity. It is the sense of self through which a person expresses and interprets aging. During her collection of life stories from 60 older people during the 1980’s, Kaufman learned from her
narrators that “being old per se is not a central feature of the self, nor is it a source of meaning” (Kaufman, 1986, p. 7). Instead, she found that people talked about a sense of self that is ageless – an identity that maintains continuity in spite of the physical and social changes that growing old brings. As part of the study, Kaufman looked at both the effect of personality on successful adaptation to change and how cultural norms, values, and expectations influenced maintenance of continuity.

In the book based upon her study, Kaufman explains a framework of orientation called symbolic interactionism. Assuming that people are not passive observers but interact with their environment, symbolic interactionism suggests that people use symbols to not only preserve and integrate meaningful components of their pasts, but also use the same symbols as anchors for understanding and living in the present. They create these symbols as they participate socially in their communities and as they evaluate the meaning of their relationships with others. Through preserving and integrating meaningful components of their pasts using symbols, older people maintain not only a sense of self, but also a sense of continuity. They also use these same symbols to interpret the present (Kaufman, 1986).

**Section Summary**

This section of the chapter investigated the literature that informed meaning making in general, particularly the concept of individuation. Psychiatrist and analyst Carl Jung proposes that the extent to which persons can integrate the unconscious self with the conscious self influences the meaningfulness of life (Jung, 1933). Next, this section offered a synopsis of adult educators’ conceptual pieces on artistic ways of knowing, with emphasis on those that were written by authors who incorporate music as a way of knowing in their adult education classrooms. Abbreviated perspectives on meaning making from Kegan (1982), Mezirow (1991),

In the latter portion of this section, I reviewed additional writing by Jung in which he differentiates between the purpose of life prior to and after midlife. Jung proposes that the ultimate responsibility of the second half of life is to look inward in an effort to integrate the shadow, or unconscious self, with the persona or self that humans present to the world. After reviewing literature on mature spirituality and Erikson’s Single Stage Theory of Older Adulthood, I explored works that discuss the meaning and purpose of growing older. Authors who treat this topic stress the importance of building and maintaining a social network; therefore, literature in this portion of the chapter presented a social constructivist perspective. Finally, I examined self-knowledge – a topic that is central to meaning making in old age.

Section 3: Aging in the 21st Century

In this section, I review literature that sets the context for what it is like to experience growing older in the United States today. To do this, I begin by highlighting the evolvement of the concept of successful aging, after which I explain the three facets that comprise successful aging as articulated by Rowe and Kahn (1998). Then, I offer a synopsis of empirical-based literature that is relevant to meaning making as it pertains to older adults.

The Paradigm Shift in Gerontology

Until the final quarter of the twentieth century, the study of old age was relegated to medical textbooks. Medicine, as it pertained to older Americans, had “developed as an applied science of repair rather than prevention” (Rowe & Kahn, 1998, p. 40). There was a homogenous view of aging that focused on biological decline. However, interest in gerontology was
awakened as American society faced an aging population that was considerably larger than ever before. In fact, in 1998 it was estimated that of all the humans who had ever lived to be 65 years or older, half of them were currently alive at that time. The improvement in longevity during the last few decades is attributable to a decline in infant and childhood mortality in addition to a decrease in death rates among middle-aged and older people. For gerontologists to lead society in getting beyond the homogenous view of aging, a conceptual framework that recognized the many facets of aging was a necessity. It was against this backdrop that the MacArthur Foundation Study of Successful Aging was initiated.

**MacArthur Foundation Study of Successful Aging**

In 1984, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation enlisted sixteen interdisciplinary scholars representing aging-related fields and charged them with the lofty task of providing new insights into aging in the United States. The ultimate goal of the project was to enhance people’s capacity to function in later life. Based upon the premise that many factors allow individuals to live effective lives in old age, the research study actually was comprised of many smaller projects, including studies of over one thousand high-functioning older people for more than eight years. Another study looked at hundreds of pairs of Swedish twins to discern the role that both genetics and lifestyle play in aging (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

**Aging-Related Myths**

One accomplishment that data from the MacArthur study facilitated was to refute six myths that have been and still are, to a somewhat lesser degree, associated with aging. In their book *Successful Aging*, Rowe and Kahn (1998) collapsed the most familiar of these myths into single-sentence assertions. Each myth and a synopsis of the respective scientific facts that contradict it follows:
Myth No. 1: To be old is to be sick.

Fact: Acute infectious diseases of the past have been replaced with chronic illnesses. The most common of these chronic illnesses afflicting America’s elderly include arthritis, hypertension and heart disease, and disorders such as hearing and visual impairment. The number of Americans suffering from these ailments has declined as older adults benefit from advances in pharmaceuticals and medical technology and as they maintain more healthy life styles than did their predecessors (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

Myth No. 2: You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.

Fact: Although the pace of learning may slow down with age, older people can learn new things and learn them well. Horn and Masunage (2000) cite research findings that support the premise that many cognitive abilities are maintained through the aging process and some even improve with advancing age. Mental functioning in old age can be maximized by engaging in regular exercise, enjoying supportive relationships, and projecting an air of self-confidence (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

Myth No. 3: The horse is out of the barn.

Fact: Old age is not too late to reduce self-inflicted risky behavior such as overindulgence in alcohol, fatty foods, or smoking. Lost functioning can be regained, and risks can be reduced. In some instances, older people can increase function from what it had been before making life changes (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

Myth No. 4: The secret to successful aging is to choose your parents wisely.

Fact: Regardless of genes, humans can influence how they age. The most powerful influence of heredity on aging lies in genetic diseases that reduce the life span – diseases such as some forms of cancer and cholesterol syndromes that are precursors to heart disease. However,
the MacArthur studies indicate that environment and lifestyle choices impact considerably on the likelihood of developing inherited tendencies. The same is true with mental functioning. Heredity is less significant than environment and lifestyle in determining cognitive decline (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

**Myth No. 5: The lights may be on, but the voltage is low.**

**Fact:** Implying that older men and women are disinterested in sex, and in the case of men, unable to perform regardless of interest, is somewhat true to the extent that for many people, sexual activity does tend to decrease as people age. However, there are individual differences in this intimate, personal aspect of life. The basic human need for physical affection is life-long (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

**Myth No. 6: The elderly don’t pull their own weight.**

**Fact:** National statistics ignore a great deal of productive activity in which older people participate, including work, because it is unpaid. These activities keep society functioning. In 1998, one-third of the elderly worked for pay and another third worked as volunteers. Still others provided assistance to family members, neighbors, and friends (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

**Successful Aging**

Successful aging is more than freedom from disease and illness in old age. Realizing that society was entrenched in Myth No. 1, specifically, “To be old is to be sick,” Rowe and Kahn (1998) defined the concept of successful aging as the capacity to maintain three characteristics. Each characteristic and a corresponding explanation follow:

1. **Low risk of disease and disease-related disability** - Although susceptibility to disease is not totally subject to humans’ control, the chronic ailments of old age are preceded by red-flag symptoms. These symptoms include such things as modest increases in
systolic blood pressure, abdominal fat, and blood sugar or decreases in lung, kidney, and immune function. Other red flags are losses in bone density or muscle mass. These symptoms are synonymous with those of what has become known as usual aging; however, all of these symptoms are the result of lifestyle. Thus, they are avoidable.

2. High mental and physical function - Just like their younger counterparts, older adults want to maintain independence by living in their own homes, driving themselves from place to place, and managing their own business affairs. In order to do these things, both physical and mental health must be maintained. The best way to ensure ongoing good health is to remain physically active. Although there is undeniable decline in cognitive performance in very old age, any decline prior to that point does not significantly impair most cognitive tasks.

3. Active engagement with life - This characteristic is contingent in large measure on the other two characteristics. For older persons who are free of disease and physically and mentally fit, there are very few activities in which they cannot engage (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

It is important to point out that each of the three characteristics of successful aging that appear above is independent of the other two. There is a definite hierarchy. Specifically, persons who are free of disease and disability are able to engage in an active lifestyle, should they so choose. But, being active is not the choice of all healthy seniors. About this reality, the authors write, “Many older people, for many reasons, do much less than they are capable of doing. Successful aging goes beyond potential; it involves activity . . .” (Rowe & Kahn, 1998, p. 40).
Cited in Rowe and Kahn (1998), Freud wrote to his daughter in 1908 about the significance of active engagement in later life following the death of a family member:

You have, my poor child, seen death break into the family for the first time . . . and perhaps shuddered at the idea that for none of us can life be made any safer. This is something that all we old people know, which is why life for us has such a special value.

We refuse to allow the inevitable end to interfere with our happy activities (p. 45).

One key to an active life in old age is relationships. Like Missinne (2006) whose thoughts on the meaning of life in old age were summarized earlier in this section, Rowe and Kahn (1998) emphasize the importance of relationships with other people: “The task of successful aging is to discover and rediscover relationships and activities that provide closeness and meaningfulness” (p. 46). Furthermore, belonging to a social network of family and friends is a reliable predictor of longevity, primarily because of the support that such a network provides. Support can be viewed in two broad categories. The first category is *socio-emotional* and includes expressing affection and respect, which reassures a person that he or she is valued. The second category is *instrumental* and includes acts of overt assistance that can take the form of physically helping with household tasks, transporting the person to and from appointments, or giving financial support (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

*Empirical Studies and Literature Related to the Study*

To write this portion of Section 3, I searched databases in adult education, the behavioral sciences, the social sciences, education, and music, carefully looking for current studies that were relevant to either meaning making in old age, the role of music in meaning making, the role of music in meaning making of older adults, or the role of music in meaning making of older adult musicians. I discovered very quickly that there is a wealth of empirical research on related
topics that includes: music and the brain; music and mental illness in older adults; and the effects listening to music has on human emotions, physiology, spirituality, and the capacity to complete various tasks. However, I located far fewer data-based studies and literature that were directly relevant to my topic. Of these studies, I first turn to the research of adult educators Tisdell (2003) and Olson (2003). Then, I highlight several studies, two in social gerontology and the others in music, that either are relevant to older adults or are related to the topic by virtue of the impact music has on adults of various ages. Then, I survey empirical studies that utilized older performing musicians as participants.

Studies in Adult Education

What began as a research study evolved into Exploring Spirituality and Culture (Tisdell, 2003), a book that explores the cultural dimension of spirituality. To illustrate how meaningful life experiences are culturally embedded, Tisdell interviewed a multi-cultural group of thirty-one educators, all of whom were working in higher and adult education settings. Additionally, participants were profoundly shaped by their own spirituality and were keenly interested in addressing cultural issues in their teaching. The primary purpose of her research was to determine how participants interpreted the role of their own spirituality in their efforts to teach for social change and cultural relevance. Her research uniquely examined the socio-cultural dimensions of spirituality with special attention to participants of color whose voices are often missed or ignored. In each chapter, the author discusses themes that emerged from storied data that suggested implications for practice. Of relevance to my study is Tisdell’s finding that both spiritual and cultural knowledge is informed by affective means, including music. Although her study was about spirituality at midlife, clearly the references to music advance the idea that
music can create an environment in which all persons regardless of their differences move
toward a sense of oneness and community.

Building upon Tisdell’s (2003) research, Olson (2003) looked specifically at music and
its capacity to enrich social learning, build community, and foster cultural empathy. Participants
in his study were comprised of eight diverse musicians, all of whom were engaged in cultural
education programs in their respective communities. Of special relevance to my study is Olson’s
finding that individuals engaged in music, upon joining forces, can potentially create a
synergistic community that can accomplish great things ranging from making excellent music
together to participating in or inspiring social action.

*Study of Motivations for Learning Among Older Adults*

Seeing value in knowing the characteristics of older learners and their reasons for
participating in educational activities, Kim and Merriam (2004) examined the motivational
orientations of 189 members of a Learning in Retirement institute (LIRi) in a university
community. LIRi’s have been operational in more than 200 colleges and universities throughout
the United States and Canada since their beginning in 1962. These programs offer noncredit
college-level courses to older adults that are often organized and taught by retirees who are
experts in their fields. The sample for the study was selected from 266 individuals who had
joined the LIRi during the year prior to the study. Ultimately, 189 men and women over the age
of 50 who had engaged in more than one LIRi activity between Fall 2002 and Spring 2003
participated in the study.

To determine the motivational orientations of the subjects, Kim and Merriam
administered a survey which solicited socio-demographic information and followed this with a
questionnaire that asked about social contact, family togetherness, social stimulation, and
cognitive interest. The researchers found that the strongest incentive for older adults to participate in formal learning was their cognitive interest in a subject. Because participants had had past success with learning, they were inclined to pursue study of topics about which they were curious and wanted to know more. The second motivation for participation was the need for socialization with others.

Study of Continuity in Leisure Activities Participation

Agahi, Ahacic, and Parker (2006) utilized longitudinal data from three waves of an interview survey of 495 residents of Sweden over a 34-year period between 1968 and 2002 to study the continuity of older adults’ leisure activity participation. Individuals in the study ranged in age from 43 to 65 in 1968 and from 77 to 99 in 2002. The survey investigated interviewees’ participation in leisure activities and how their participation was modified, if at all, over time. Activities considered were reading books, hobby activities, gardening, cultural activities, fishing or hunting, restaurant visits, study circles and courses, religious services, and dancing. The general pattern found was that participation in leisure activities generally declined over time. At the individual level, later-life participation was generally preceded by participation earlier in life. Functional difficulties in later life had very little impact on results.

In accordance with Atchley’s (1999) continuity theory, the researchers’ results confirmed that leisure participation in old age is often a continuation of previous participation. The authors found that there were both differences and similarities between the different activities, although all subjects displayed continuity over either a short or a longer period of time. Engagement in an activity earlier in life was found to be a strong predictor of participation in late life. Exceptions to this predictor were found to be restaurant visits, dancing, and study circles – three activities that many people seemed to be open to trying for the first time in later life. The study also discovered
those who gave up activities because of functional difficulties or who started new activities in which they had not previously participated. An implication of the research is that in order to actively engage and maintain a healthy older population, it may be more important to facilitate participation in activities that older adults enjoyed earlier in life than to expect them to start new activities.

Music-Related Studies With Older Adults as Participants

There are many studies that examine the effects that listening to music has on people of all ages. Frequently, the results of these studies conclude that music listening can both alter mood and enable verbal expression of feelings (Cheek, Bradley, Parr, & Lan, 2003; Hirokawa & Ohira, 2003; Tornek, Field, Hernandez-Reif, Diego, & Jones, 2003). Hannemann (2006) writes about the effectiveness of utilizing creative activities to stimulate the emotional and cognitive capacities of patients with dementia. He found that nonverbal therapy methods such as music made a positive impact on patients’ well-being by giving them the power of choice, while reducing feelings of isolation.

In their study of the effectiveness of using music therapy interventions to treat teacher burnout, Cheek et al. (2003) challenged subjects to find a song that would resonate with them in terms of their teaching careers and what they had learned in group sessions about burnout. In subsequent weeks, participants listened to one another’s selections and processed them as a group. The results of the study suggest that music helped teachers to express feelings that may not have surfaced otherwise (Cheek et al., 2003).

Using older adults as participants, Gabrielsson (2002) sought to categorize subjects’ memories of strong experiences with music (SEMS). Although he found that people respond very individually to music, most reactions fell into these seven categories: positive emotions;
physiological responses; behaviors; loss of control; changed experience of body, time, and space; thoughts; and new insights and new possibilities.

In an earlier study, Lowis and Hughes (1997) compared the effects of sacred and secular music on 30 retired men and women living within a community in South Africa by playing both kinds of music to see what feelings it evoked in participants. Prior to this, the researchers administered pre and post-test questionnaires to measure the spirituality and ego integrity of the listeners. When results for all music were combined, a significant and positive correlation was found between the spirituality scores of the listeners and the ratings of both kinds of music for reverence. In addition to finding that most participants found the listening exercises to foster reminiscence and peacefulness, the authors saw music as a way to facilitate the individuation process.

Regarding music listening preferences, Halpern and Barlett (2002) noted in their research that people have a lifelong preference for music that permeated their lives during their young adult years. This finding is verified by Cohen and Bailey (2002) who point out that older people’s listening preference reinforces the significance that earlier exposure to music has on the acquisition of musical memory. In fact, Cohen and Bailey (2002) discovered that despite regular exposure to other music, participants named a song from long ago as the first favorite song to come to mind. Conducted on Prince Edward Island and in Nova Scotia, their research was meant to determine the significance of music in the lives of 300 senior citizens whose mean age was 78.3 years. Using a questionnaire, the researchers looked at how musical involvement such as daily listening to music, past and present playing of a musical instrument, and singing in a choir affected how important music was to their participants (Cohen & Bailey, 2002).
Studies That Utilized Older Performing Musicians as Participants

In his dissertation research, Moser (2003) attempted to identify the differences in the cognitive functioning of older wind and percussion instrumentalists compared with normative data for the same cognitive measures and demographic variables. Using the Mini Mental State Examination, the Trailmaking Tests A and B, and the Satisfaction With Life Scale, Moser worked with a convenience sample of 120 community bandsmen in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Washington, D.C. The results of his quantitative study suggest that older adult instrumentalists perform better in global cognitive functioning and memory recall skills than the general population. His participants also did better in executive and psychomotor functioning.

Coffman (2002) reviewed studies of both passive listening and active music making and their impact on physical and emotional well-being of older adults. In his literature search, Coffman found that studies on music’s effect on anxiety and stress during medical procedures are prolific. But, fewer researchers have examined relationships between singing or playing an instrument and quality of life indicators. However, he cites one Swiss study that was conducted by Bygren et. al [1996] that surveyed nearly 13,000 adults concerning their cultural activities and then followed them with respect to survival eight years later. Bygren and his colleagues found that persons who either attended cultural events, read books or periodicals, played instruments, or sang in a choir, or did a combination of these things had a lower mortality rate.

Coffman (2002) also reviewed literature on seniors’ participation in bands. In a survey of 52 members of a volunteer concert band for older adults, he found that quality of life was defined by social interactions, a personal sense of accomplishment, and rewarding leisure activities. Reasons for participants’ joining a band were their active desire to make music and their desire to be around others with similar interests. In fact, these bandsmen rated music making and
socialization just as essential to quality of life as family relationships and good health. Because older adults selectively rely on crystallized experiential knowledge structures when available, Coffman (2002) points out that musical activities which incorporate cognitive and affective dimensions of learning and that are relevant to life events usually influence adults’ perceived quality of life in a positive way.

Barton (2004) conducted a qualitative phenomenological investigation of one 71-year-old jazz musician. Setting out to learn what impact the aging process had on this one man, Barton used interviews and observations of the subject in performance environments. Her study suggests that older musicians may develop occupational performance problems resulting from age-related changes and features that are unique to being a performing musician.

Bryce (2003) examined the personal meaning systems of lifelong musicians as those systems pertain to music making. Defining meaning making as the personal experience valued and embodied in the actions of music making, Bryce studied eight musicians whose performance experience ranged from a major recording artist to part-time performers. His methodology included gathering data through videotaped interviews and videotaped performances. Findings of this study show that core constructs in these musicians’ meaning making comprised musician-identity, ownership, and competence.

Section Summary

This section of the chapter began with a description of the context which set the stage for a paradigm shift in the way gerontologists view aging in the United States. Then, the concept of successful aging (Rowe & Kahn, 1998) was defined and discussed. Next, the empirical literature that is relevant to this study was explored, including the empirical literature on aging; older adults; music and meaning making; and older musicians and meaning making appears in
multiple disciplines including adult education, psychology, sociology, gerontology, and music. However, the number of studies that have been conducted in these areas is limited. Significant findings from the studies that were reviewed in this section include that music is culturally mediated and, because of this, can create a sense of oneness and community, especially across cultures (Olson, 2003; Tisdell, 2003). In the area of research on older adults, Coffman (2002) found that activities which stimulate more than one domain or meet more than one need appear to contribute most to older adults’ well-being. Additionally, older people have a preference for music to which they were exposed when they were much younger (Cohen & Bailey, 2002; Halpern & Barlett, 2002). Finally, there exists limited empirical evidence that singing or playing a musical instrument in old age contributes to quality of life (Coffman).

Section 4: Meaning Making Through Music

At the heart of meaning making through music is the musical experience. Much of the conversation in the field of music that addresses meaning making focuses on the complex issue of what makes a musical experience meaningful. Because there is a strong literature base for this discourse, I first present in this section the points on musical experience that I believe are a good foundation for considering how humans make meaning through music. Then, I explore literature that informs the psychological dimension of meaning making through music, including works that address self-actualization, peak experiences, and transcendence. Next, I investigate authors who substantiate the link between the spiritual and music. After briefly highlighting opportunities in music that are designed specifically for older adults, I devote the final part of this section to literature relevant to the culture of bands.
The Musical Experience and Meaning

Writing on the nature of musical experience and what makes a musical experience meaningful, Meyer (1992) pens, “Something is meaningful if and only if it points to, indicates, or implies something beyond itself.” Reimer (1992) adds that in order for a musical experience to be meaningful, it must be “feelingful” (p. 157). Because people often use the word emotional to describe how music makes them feel, it is important to explain the distinction between emotions and feelings. Damasio (1999) proposes that the term feeling should only be used to describe the personal, mental experience of an emotion, whereas the term emotion should be utilized to designate a collection of responses that are often visible to others. To illustrate this distinction, Shreeve (2005) reports that the facial expressions for the basic emotions, specifically, anger, happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, contempt, and surprise, are universal. The fairly restricted subcortical regions of the brain that control emotions (Damasio, 1999) are also the least plastic parts of the brain, meaning that they are resistant to revising themselves, unlike much of the brain that continually changes throughout the life span (Shreeve, 2005). Feelings, on the other hand, are complex mixtures of personal subjectivities that exist below the level of emotions. According to Clifton (1992), feeling is a necessary part of the musical experience. For him, also, describing musical experience is an act of communicating with oneself. Clifton (1992) writes, “Music is the actualization of the possibility of any sound whatever to present to some human being a meaning which he experiences with his mind, feelings, senses, and will” (p. 54).

Like other stimuli, music has embodied meaning if it implies an event of the same kind as itself. In other words, if a listener hears John Philip Sousa’s Stars and Stripes Forever and it triggers memories of melodies in Sousa’s Semper Fidelis, the listening experience has embodied meaning. In contrast to embodied meaning, music – like other stimuli - has designative meaning
if it points to an event different in kind from itself (Meyer, 1992). To illustrate this, think about hearing an orchestral piece for the first time and finding that it brings back memories of a person whom you had not thought about for years. This experience has designative meaning. It is music that has designated meaning that is indicated when the term musical experience is used throughout this and subsequent chapters.

Music provides an avenue in and through which humans can either invest or elicit their own meanings. Shepherd and Wicke (1997) believe that “music is meaningful to individuals inasmuch as the inherent characteristics of its textures and structures are suitable to the investment in them of the meanings” (p. 178). They further suggest that “not all music can receive all possible ‘intended’ meanings, and not all possible ‘intended’ meanings can be successfully invested in all musics” (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997, p.178). What these authors are saying is that there is not a one-to-one relationship between music and meaning. Conversely, not all meanings can be derived from all music. Just as music is autonomous onto itself in relation to the meaning-making process it elicits from the individual listener, so is the individual listener autonomous in relation to the music which that person is hearing. It is here that culture plays a significant role in mediating music’s meaning (Tisdell, 2006).

Before discussing the psychological dimension of meaning making through music, exploring music as an auditory phenomenon seems warranted. In Shepherd and Wicke (1997), Zuckerkandl’s concept of the sonic saddle is defined and explained. Zuckerkandl engages in an analysis of time and space as presented through the experience of music. The sonic saddle is the “continually unfolding present” (p. 159) of the music. Within this sonic saddle are levels of articulation: the inflections of pitch and timbre, the character and length of phrases, and a variety of rhythms that give the sound creation life.
To understand the articulation of meaning through music, it must be noted how the sound of music continues to unravel in present time and space. Saliers and Saliers (2005) are active performers, one a church musician and the other, a singer-songwriter, who have discovered that making music has helped their knowledge of self over time. They suggest that this self-understanding is due to the commingling of music with the cycles of time across not only their own lives, but also across the communities of which they are a part. Persons live from moment to moment, one life event to the next, and one life stage to another. Persons move through time as does music. To experience the full value of music, the authors caution that:

Music itself takes time – it cannot sound in an instant but always has some stretch and duration – and opening ourselves to music requires some of our own time. Music summons us to be fully present in the moment and in a sequence of moments, with a presence shaped to the music itself. As the one art form that cannot exist apart from the time it takes, music is innately temporal (Saliers & Saliers, 2005, p. 43).

Therefore, as music opens and flows before a listener, there is the likelihood that the music will evoke the listener’s internal, affective world as well as the listener’s cognitive world. What happens internally will be designative meaning that the listener can use to make meaning. What happens externally will be embodied meaning – the kind of experience the listener will probably share with someone else through language.

Saliers and Saliers (2005) also consider how the meaning of music that persons experience changes with time. As we hear a piece of music again after time has passed, it may mean something fresh and different to us and may even show us how we have changed. Tisdell (2006) suggests that a later encounter with a song from the past can trigger new meaning as it is reshaped by cultural realities of the present. And, this same phenomenon of change and
revelation may occur each time thereafter we hear that old song or piece. Furthermore, by virtue of its “everywhere-ness” (Tisdell, 2006, p. 4), music can help us discover what Tisdell (2006) calls “Devine Is-ness” (p. 4), or the extraordinary in this very moment – in the midst of the humdrum of daily life. Finally, music also can contribute to the end of life by “opening up the poignancy of aging, of limits, of the passage of time” (Saliers & Saliers, 2005, p. 50).

*The Psychological Dimension of Meaning Making Through Music*

Bernstein (1992) writes:

Call the opening of Beethoven’s fifth Symphony “Fate Knocking at the Door,” or “The Morse Code Call to Victory,” and you still have three G’s and an E-flat. That’s *all* you have. Through some freak in the human animal, these four notes, in their particular rhythmic pattern, have the power to produce a substantial effect on us (p. 18).

The beloved composer and conductor selected what is probably the most famous four-note motif in Western music to raise the question of what it is about music that elicits such powerful emotional responses from people. Shepherd and Wicke (1997) suggest that the processes through which meaning is generated and the power these meanings exercise are identical. In other words, musical meaning is power, and power is musical meaning. Herein lies the distinction between language and music. Although music can suggest objects, the suggestion is uniquely perceived by the listener. In writing on the evolution of consciousness through music, A. Palmer (2006) calls attention to the debate between two aesthetic positions: the formalist and the expressionist. The formalist claims that music cannot express emotion, so any emotion that is experienced by the perceiver is brought to the event by the person hearing it. By contrast, the expressionist advances that music activates the emotions because it contains structures that
potentially cause us to feel deeply. Clearly, Shepherd and Wicke (1997) side with the aesthetic viewpoint of the expressionist.

_Self-Actualization, Peak Experiences, and Music_

The theory of self-actualization creates the foundation for better understanding the concept of transcendence, a phenomenon that is closely linked to spirituality. Both transcendence and spirituality are explored later in this section. Maslow (1971) developed his theory of self-actualization after studying the characteristics that older, visibly successful people had in common. Describing these people as being “involved in a cause outside their own skin” (p. 43), Maslow found that self-actualizing humans are fully committed to a calling or vocation. He defines self-actualization as “experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption” (p. 45). Emphasizing that all people experience moments of self-actualization, Maslow believes that everyone’s goal should be to experience these moments more often. To do this requires making every decision in life, however small, a choice from which one will grow, rather than choosing the course of least resistance out of fear. Self-actualization is different from individuation, the concept discussed earlier in this chapter, because it always requires a conscious effort toward becoming more authentic, whereas individuation occurs whether humans are working on integrating their unconscious with their conscious selves or not. A common thread that self-actualization and individuation share is the requirement to look inward. About looking inward, Maslow (1971) writes, “One cannot choose wisely for a life unless he dares to listen to himself, his own self, at each moment in life, and to say calmly, ‘No, I don’t like such and such’” (p. 47). Self-actualization is also about recognizing one’s own potential and maximizing it by becoming as good at what one wants to do or be as is attainable (Maslow, 1971).
Additionally, Maslow (1971) enlightens readers about peak experiences which he defines as “transient moments of self-actualization” (p. 48). He continues to more specifically detail these moments as “just this total fascination with the matter-in-hand, this getting lost in the present, this detachment from time and place” (p. 62). His synonym for peak experiences is ecstasies that, according to his research, can be triggered by a wide variety of stimuli. Peak experiences are profound because they are among the most joyous, blissful moments in life. Because of this, self-actualizing people strive to set up conditions so that peak experiences are more likely. To do this requires knowing oneself – not only one’s persona, but also one’s shadow. In his study of peak experiences, Maslow found that the two most reliable stimuli to provoke these episodes are sex and music – but not just any music. Classical music has the capacity to propel some people to another level. In her book, *Essential Musical Intelligence*, Montello (2002) offers a listing of music imagery listening selections grouped by these categories: love, courage, light, creativity, peace, nurturing, longing, discontent, joy, healing, union, focusing, cleansing, releasing blocked energy, grieving, contemplation, flow, meditation, power, problem solving, anger, angels, transformation, feelings, and sensuality. This comprehensive listing demonstrates the diverse music listening repertoire that is available to anyone wishing to create potential for a peak listening experience in music.

Maslow (1971) adds that classical music is even more conducive to propelling some people to another level when the listening experiences spill over into dancing. He writes:

Love for the body, awareness of the body, and a reverence of the body . . . are clearly good paths to peak experiences . . . and in turn are good paths to the “cognition of being,” perceiving of the Platonic essences, the intrinsic values, the ultimate values of being.
which in turn is a therapeutic-like help . . . toward self-actualization, the growth toward full humanness (pp. 176-177).

In short, Maslow (1971) insists that music and art can be as effective as psychotherapy by developing spontaneity, courage, humor, and sensory and somatic sensitivity. Much of what persons can learn from their peak experiences can be applied to the understanding of the present. He also credits music, especially when it includes rhythmic response or dancing, with the ability to help humans discover their true identity. Because of how music affects the autonomic nervous system as explained earlier in this chapter, music opens people to their inner selves. Maslow (1971) is especially passionate about introducing “experientially empty people” (p. 177) to music with the intent of opening them to what is going on inside themselves. He is quick to point out that humans do not have to wait for the rapturous peak moments. Rather, moments of fascination, focus, or full occupation with anything can provide insight into what a truly peak experience feels like.

To summarize the value of peak experiences and the more down-to-earth ones, Maslow (1971) lists multiple benefits, some of which include an inclination to (1) give up the past, thereby giving the present our full attention; (2) give up the future, thereby forcing us to be totally mindful of the present; (3) be innocent, thereby being stripped of preconceptions and, thus receptive to the experience of the moment; (4) be more authentic, thereby less aware of other people and what they may be thinking; (5) be less self-conscious, thereby becoming a more individuated person; (6) be less fearful, thereby projecting courage and strength; (7) be positive, thereby letting the moment overtake us; (8) trust, thereby giving up the effort to control; (9) be totally spontaneous, thereby operating instinctively, and in an uninhibited way; (10) be fully
expressive, thereby projecting our inner radiance; and (11) be at one with the world, thereby affirming what often is experienced during moments of creativity.

*Transcendence, Spirituality, and Music*

There are multiple definitions of the term transcendence. When Atchley (1997) discusses transcendence, he speaks of it as a contemplative experience that extends awareness beyond the boundaries of thought, or consciousness. Although these transcendent experiences can be brought into consciousness, the author emphasizes that they do not originate in conscious thought. Atchley (1997) sees transcendence as a natural but imperative step in moving toward individuation, for it necessitates mindfulness and a focus on the world outside oneself. Maslow (1971) alone provides 35 definitions of the term in his book, *The Farthest Reaches of Human Nature*, before he condenses them into the following statement of its meaning:

> Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than as means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos (p. 279).

In the previous section, the concept of self-actualization was introduced. Maslow (1971) divides self-actualizing people into two groups: those who are healthy but with little or no experiences of transcendence and those in whom transcendent experiencing was important or even at the core of their being. The latter group he calls transenders and proceeds to characterize them in great detail. The author observes that they are often highly creative or talented, highly intelligent, and display strong character and leadership skills. Additionally, transenders understand and can communicate the language of poets, mystics, symbol and the arts. They perceive the sacred within the secular and the sacredness within all things. They are more responsive to beauty,
holistic in their worldview, and strive to live in the moment while moving beyond their own self-interests to the welfare of others. Transcenders truly enjoy trying to understand what words cannot describe (Maslow, 1971; A. Palmer, 2006).

A developmental process, achieving transcendence necessitates humans’ relinquishing the past and its previous social roles and limited self-awareness. Moody (1990) points out that transcendence is a paradox, for it is putting aside the same past experiences as are used to make new meanings. A. Palmer (2006) suggests that along the path toward achieving transcendence, persons formulate answers to life’s fundamental questions, develop a passion to experience and broaden their world, and contribute to the further evolution of consciousness which is essential for the advancement of the human race. Insisting that a planet that has increasingly more transcenders will reduce the likelihood of future wars, human-induced diseases, and environmental decline, A. Palmer (2006) believes that music can contribute to the evolution of consciousness, and thus to accomplishing transcendence.

A. Palmer’s (2006) article on music and spirituality bridges transcendence and spiritual experience in that the author sees the two as interchangeable. Beginning his work with Maslow’s definition of transcendence that is replicated above, A. Palmer then quotes the physicist Fritjof Capra who, in describing spiritual experience, includes transcendence as key to that experience:

Spiritual experience is an experience of aliveness of mind and body as a unity. Moreover, this experience of unity transcends not only the separation of mind and body, but also the separation of self and world. The central awareness in these spiritual moments is a profound sense of oneness with all, a sense of belonging to the universe as a whole (p. 144).
Careful consideration of the definitions of spirituality and music helps to inform our understanding of the relationship between the two. A. Palmer uses Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary to trace the word spirituality to its Latin roots. He found this: “in + spirare” (Latin for “to breathe”). He also found the archaic definition of spirituality to be, “to breathe or blow into or upon; to infuse (as life) by breathing” (p. 144). This “blowing upon” can be visualized by reading the Bible’s Genesis account of God’s forming man which A. Palmer cites: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (p. 144). In contemplating the definition of music, Thielemann (2001) suggests that the dictionary definition is somewhat inadequate, for it characterizes music as an “art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion,” (Oxford Wordfinder cited in Thielemann, 2001, p. 11) without revealing its source. Thielemann avoids the physics of music as sound and goes right to its emotional origins. She believes that music emanates from the heart of the performer, and although heard by the ears of the listener, must find its way to the heart of the listener, as well, in order to initiate an emotional response. Tisdell (2006) shares this same belief in a work in which she explores how music helps to ground her own spirituality as she uses music to create a culturally responsive learning environment for her adult students. Consistent with Thielemann’s linking of the performer’s and listener’s hearts, Tisdell cites an anonymous author who wrote, “The secret in singing is found between the vibration in the singer’s voice, and the throb of the hearer’s heart” (p. 5). So, unless music enters the emotional sphere, the listener will not experience its power or its beauty.
Emotional response to music is subjective and reactions to it are as unique as the persons listening to it. What is heard as sound by the listener has been transformed from what was spiritual input for the musician into rational output. This rational output becomes music when it reaches the emotional realm of the perceiver (Thielemann, 2001). It is significant that music is a primary means to express spiritual experience while, at the same time, a prominent means of arousing spiritual experience. This duality reflects the reciprocity of music’s rational and transcendental characteristics. Thielemann (2001) explains that because humans are rational beings, they cannot proximate the wholeness and joy of spirituality without a medium such as music to function as a link between the two realms. Tisdell (2007) writes about music’s capacity to move people’s souls, hypothesizing that because of the “everywhere-ness” (p. 4) of it, music can move us in the present moment.

Music Opportunities for Older Adults

In this portion of the section, I first establish the rationale for older adults’ interest in performing music and the benefits that are inherent in music making for those who participate. Then, because narrators in this study all are bandsmen, I present literature that is relevant to the culture of bands. Many older adults are advantageously situated to be successful participants in performing music. This is because they have time to devote to what may be for some a continuing interest, and for others, a new interest. Additionally, older adults often have the monetary resources needed for instruction in voice or on an instrument and the financial wherewithal to purchase an instrument, if instrumental music is their pursuit. Older adults who are in good health want to be challenged and want to fill their waking hours with worthwhile, stimulating activities. Music satisfies these needs for some people. Many adults who participate in community choruses, bands, or orchestras are pursuing an interest that began in a school
music program years before. However, it is projected that most persons reach retirement without ever having had a substantive music education, or if they did, saw their involvement in music give way to life’s responsibilities (Bruhn, 2002; Ernst, 2001; Stacy, Brittain, & Kerr, 2002).

During the last quarter of the 20th century, a smattering of musical organizations were founded exclusively for older adults, perhaps in response to the call for lifelong learning in music education made by Mary Hoffman, President of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) at the time. Or perhaps these groups were organized because of what researchers and medical professionals were discovering about the value that performing music had in maintaining good emotional and physical health. Conscientious musical performance requires extending breathing capacity, exercising muscles, using good posture, and stimulating cognition. Musical performances also enrich the social dimension of life by encouraging self-identity and fostering relationships with others (Bruhn, 2002; Ernst, 2001; Stacy et. al, 2002). Examples of several groups that have gained national and international recognition include the Golden Tones and the Young@Heart, both choirs (Stroup, 2005), and the New Horizons Band project that falls under the umbrella of the larger Music for Life program (Bowean, 2005; SeniorJournal.Com, 2006).

*The Culture of Bands*

Although my search for literature on bands did not yield academic works that were written specifically about the culture of bands, I did uncover several sources that provide relevant insight which is applicable to the individual band musician or bandsman, the band ensemble as community, and the spiritual dimension of musical performance in a band. The words of Dr. Kenneth Laudermilch, Music Director of the New Holland Band, present bands in a light that elevates their significance to both American history and contemporary culture:
It has always seemed to me that orchestras have had a more clearly defined artistic road to follow than bands. All the major composers, the sophisticates of the music world, have traditionally preferred the orchestral sound than that of the band, largely, I suppose, because of the added color of the strings. Then too there is the spotted history of bands under the direction of semi-professionals and filled with amateur musicians that have made some skeptical. Whereas orchestras minister to the intellect and provide space in time for contemplation, bands seem to minister best to the emotion and to action. Bands through the ages have helped us remember the past, celebrate the present and bolster our courage for the future far more, I dare say, than orchestras. They have stirred our emotions in love and war, they have been at the center of the community and national celebrations, they have stimulated our patriotism and our holidays lest we forget their significance (Laudermilch cited in Rehrig, 2006, p. 142).

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey (1934) shares his philosophy of esthetics, or the arts. One thread that appears throughout the book is the parallel he draws between the arts and life itself. Dewey compares art as experience with life experience when it is lived with “heightened vitality” (p. 19). He also explains how the best art is congruent with daily life experience. Art such as this, according to Dewey, possesses the capacity to move communities toward a sense of unity, especially when they reflect life as community members know it to be (Dewey, 1934).

Laudermilch’s (cited in Rehrig, 2006, p. 142) reference to bands being the center of communities seems consistent with Dewey’s sentiment on the arts at their finest reflecting community life.

*Bandsman as Individual Musician*

Jordan (1999) devotes much of his book to the significance of self-knowledge to the music-making process. He explains that “if music is self-expression, then it should follow that
one must have a self to express” (Jordan, 1999, p. 9). The author contends that there is a direct relationship between a person’s capacity to perform well musically and the person’s understanding, acceptance, and love of self. Jordan writes convincingly about the necessity for musicians to integrate the outer self with the inner self, to find their center, and to make time in solitude to nurture the spirit. He emphasizes that the musician must have love and trust of self and a capacity to “just be” (Jordan, 1999, p. 10). Furthermore, Jordan indicates that “love of self is immediately magnified through music to love of others” (Jordan, 1999, p. 10).

Without mentioning striving for authenticity, self-actualization, or individuation, Jordan appears to understand these processes as integral to the musician’s spiritual development. It is striking how Jordan’s philosophy of the spiritual journey of musicians appears to have elements of them all. The aspect of authenticity that seems to ground his philosophy is that of having a strong self-awareness of who one is as a person (Cranton, 2006b). Jordan is especially insistent that conductors, or those who lead other musicians, invest time in knowing themselves, believing in, and loving themselves. Furthermore, the author sees self-knowledge as the key to finding one’s center which Jordan defines as “the total integration of life and soul; inner being and outer being become one” (Jordan, 1999, p. 10) – a meaning that touches on self-actualization (Maslow, 1971) and individuation (Jung, 1933). His description of center includes elements of spirituality: connection, interconnectedness of all things, and wholeness (Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006).

Jordan writes at length about the application of another aspect of authenticity, specifically, “developing a relationship with learners that fosters our own and their ability to be genuine and open” (Cranton, 2006b), that is relevant to his discussion on relationships between and among musicians. As individuals do their own work on self-awareness, they are more inclined to nourish each other when they are together to make music. This is because self-
knowledge opens lines of communication between and among people that would otherwise be blocked (Jordan, 1999). Another aspect of authenticity is “engaging in critical reflection and critical self-reflection on practice” (Cranton, 2006b). Although the author does not talk specifically about critical reflection, he does talk about meditation, finding one’s center, and understanding what it means to be fully alive. According to Jordan (1999), “deepening and opening requires of us that we stay the course; in essence, stay with the messes in our lives” (p. 56). He explains that through the painful process of not only exploring new things, but also revisiting the past and confronting it honestly, musicians can only then do justice to performing music (Jordan, 1999).

I discovered another interesting resource during the literature search on bands in Ehrlich’s (1997) Inside the Music: Conversations with Contemporary Musicians about Spirituality, Creativity, and Consciousness. The writer interviewed individual performers about the concept of center and spirituality in performance. Of all these accounts, I find the words of guitarist Vernon Reid especially relevant to this section on individual bandsmen. Reid who was raised Catholic but at the time of the interview with Ehrlich (1997) was unaffiliated with any particularly religion, talks about his spirituality-related experiences during performance, beginning with an intriguing analogy:

> It’s like you’re searching for something-say your hat-and you’re tearing the house apart and suddenly you look in a mirror and you see it sitting on top of your head. Music is where I’ve experienced that. I’m in a flow, I’m in the zone, there’s a definite shift in my consciousness, without desire, without my ego, without me thinking, oh wow, I’m playing great. Just experiencing it as a flowing, living moment. Once you’ve experienced it, you always know that’s a place to go to.
The thing is, you can’t make it happen. It’s not about how much you practice, it’s not about whether your record’s on the charts. It exists independently of those things, and it makes you aware that there are processes that are going on in playing music that are much deeper. The most difficult thing is to let go after you’ve felt it. You have to let go of the experience. Then gradually, by watching your mind work, by really being in the living moment, the experience becomes more common (Ehrlich, 1997, p. 240).

*The Band as Community*

Jordan (1999) describes the community for musicians – or for the purpose of this study, for bandsmen – as having several dimensions. One dimension exists between the conductor and the musicians. Another dimension is present between and among musicians. The third dimension is created whenever a band plays for an audience. To maximize the dimension of community between conductor and musicians requires a conductor who is centered and has what Jordan calls a “spiritual presence” (Jordan, 1999, p. 45). The conductor who has this presence creates an open line of communication between him or herself and the band. About this, Jordan says, “There is nothing more compelling than the human spirit when perceived by others” (Jordan, 1999, p. 45). As for the dimension of community between and among musicians, it is nurtured only when, according to Jordan (1999), musicians continue to do their own self work, thereby bringing with them to rehearsals and performances a capacity to nurture each other. As self-aware musicians perform together, their connectedness adds spiritual depth to themselves as individuals and to the band as an ensemble (Jordan, 1999; A. Palmer, 2006).

The dimension of community that is created when a band plays for an audience can be understood in the words of another contemporary musician who was interviewed by Ehrlich (1997). A singer whose career is still on the rise, Joan Osborne shared her thoughts on
transcendence of self and opening herself to something larger whenever she performs for an audience:

You’re given some kind of gift; it doesn’t come out of you, it only comes through you.

It’s not like you created yourself and made yourself into this beautiful talent. . . . Making music is not really for your own benefit, it is for the benefit of the people who are listening. It’s not about me and my personal emotion and struggle, it’s about trying to uplift the people who are hearing it. . . . It was more about becoming a part of the music, of leaving part of the self behind and just becoming the song (Ehrlich, 1997, pp. 42-43).

Looking to P. Palmer’s (1998) thoughts on community, I see parallels in his description of what self-work is required of a teacher that is prerequisite to creating community in the classroom and what the conductor of a band must do before his or her ensemble functions as community. P. Palmer (1999) indicates that the inner life of the teacher must be reconciled in order for the teacher to be “in community with others. Community is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace, the flowing of personal identity and integrity into the world of relationships” (P. Palmer, 1999, p. 90). Once the teacher is in communion with self, he or she is ready to create and nurture that same climate in the classroom. Jordan (1999) speaks of there being a spiritual tether between the members of the band and between the conductor and each individual musician, with the music functioning as the glue that holds everything together.

*The grace of great things.* In his writing on community, P. Palmer (1998) stresses that relationships between and among people are insufficient to sustain a vibrant learning environment unless students and teacher interact with something greater than themselves: the subject, or what P. Palmer calls “the grace of great things” (p.107). The author is not talking about text books or the theories that swirl around them, but rather about the things themselves. In
the case of band as community, the grace of great things is the music. As conductor of the New Holland Band, Kenneth Laudermilch has observed first hand how music, or the grace of great things within a band, fosters relationships within a specific band community. He explains:

Music is a powerful force in binding musicians together to work toward a common goal of outstanding musical performance. . . . Friendships and common interests are important to people of all generations. Friendships are never made without common interests. In the band’s case, the common interest is the music (Laudermilch, personal communication, February 17, 2007).

Consistent with P. Palmer’s (1998) concept of the grace of great things, music within the context of a band is far more powerful than any one conductor, any one bandsman, or the band as a whole. The role of the music itself in a band cannot be underestimated. It summons people to be a part of the band in the first place and it holds them there. Without it, relationships between and among musicians would diminish and ultimately disappear (Jordan, 1998; A. Palmer, 1999).

Mentoring: A band’s lifeline. Being a bandswoman myself, I understand how important mentoring is to the survival of bands as we know them today. It was disappointing to find that little has been written about this topic, with the exception of mentoring as it applies to the relationship between professional music teachers and student teachers. Therefore, I turn to authors in the field of adult education who articulate the significance of mentoring learners, after which I analyze key points for relevancy to bands.

In Daloz’s (1999) book on mentoring adult learners, he reminds the reader that education is developmental, requiring a broadening and a deepening of understanding on the part of the learner. A good education will encourage the learner’s being more open to the world while being more discriminating. Over time, the learner integrates what is meaningful and, if the learning
experience has been positive, the learner will continue to seek out more opportunities for growth. The author emphasizes that those who mentor learners are demonstrating an act of care. Learning is risky in that as learners grow, they dismantle what had been familiar and meaningful and replace it with the new and sometimes intimidating. Therefore, someone who has gone through it all before - a mentor - can be a source of tremendous strength and courage. Eventually, a learner can strike out on his or her own, but as Daloz indicates:

> We need other people to show us, to accompany us, to hold the hope and steady our faith that we will make it. And we also need people with whom to practice: parents, friends, children, teachers. For in relationship, we both form and heal what we come again and again to name our self. This is why mentors and mentoring environments play such a key role (p. 244).

A single published testimony to Daloz’s argument on the importance of mentoring from a musician’s perspective is from Stanton Davis, a professional trumpet player who attributes his successful international performing career to the guidance of several mentors. In commenting on mentoring for a music publication, he said, “They [The mentors] were just people who took an interest in me and thought there was more to me than I understood. They showed me how to get to the next place and made sure I was moving in the right direction” (“Mentoring,” 2002). Daloz also illuminates how mentors inspire young people by giving them a sense of purpose. About this, he says, “The mentor holds the promise of something greater, of a new, fuller, even wiser participation in the world” (p. 244). With their influence in mind, the author suggests mentors’ goals should be beyond content and focus on developing a young person’s imagination, integrity, and passion to change the world for the better (Daloz, 1999).
P. Palmer (1998) reflects on the mentors in his own life and has realized that mentors’ power lies in their ability to awaken the truth within their students – a truth that “we can reclaim years later by recalling [our mentors’] impact on our lives” (p. 21). He also discusses the mutuality of mentoring and feels strongly that in order for the experience to be fulfilling for both parties, the relationship must be right for not only the student, but also the mentor. The mentor–student relationship at its best is captured in the author’s metaphor of the dance:

Mentors and apprentices are partners in an ancient human dance, and one of teaching’s great rewards is the daily chance it gives us to get back on the dance floor. It is the dance of the spiraling generations, in which the old empower the young with their experience and the young empower the old with new life, reweaving the fabric of the human community as they touch and turn (P. Palmer, 1998, p. 25).

What then, does mentoring have to do with band as community? Marlin Houck, Musical Director Emeritus of the New Holland Band, knows from experience, having started with the band as a sixth grade boy. In the introduction to Rehrig’s (2006) history of the New Holland Band, Houck tells his personal story of feeling apprehensive in the midst of older veteran players and how that apprehension in time evolved into confidence. According to Houck, variations of his experience have been repeated hundreds of times over the years within the New Holland Band organization. He further asserts that “the present and future musicians of the New Holland Band must have a means by which they can attach themselves to [the band’s] rich heritage, not just physically and mentally, but emotionally and spiritually (Houck in Rehrig, 2006, p. x). It appears that the mentor-mentee relationships within a band have the potential to bridge the past with the present while ensuring continuity of the band community.
Learning to play a musical instrument requires time and patience far more than it requires innate musical ability. The physical, technical, theoretical, and musical aspects of playing are mastered developmentally. Without empathetic nurturing from a teacher or someone else who personally experienced the challenges of the instrument along the way, many young instrumentalists discontinue playing, especially during the young adolescent years. Just as young instrumentalists can benefit from the mentoring of seasoned musicians within the community of a band, so can a band benefit from the participation of young people who bring a fresh worldview, energy, and years to commit to music making if they are made to feel that they are indeed a part of the band community.

Section Summary

The final section of this chapter surveyed the work of authors who wrote on meaning making through music. Several of these works help to clarify what makes a musical experience meaningful. In this regard, music unfolds in the present and is perceived uniquely by each individual hearing it. Other literature in this section addressed the psychological dimension of meaning making through music. Authors lifted up music as one pathway toward achieving self-actualization, realizing peak experiences, undergoing transcendence, and developing spirituality. After providing the rationale for older adults’ interest in musical performance and summarizing the benefits of playing an instrument or singing in later life, this section presented literature relevant to the culture of bands that included exploring both the individual bandsman and the communal characteristics of bands.

Chapter Summary

This literature review examined books, conceptual articles, empirical studies and data-based literature within the broad range of the social sciences and the behavioral sciences.
Additionally, literature in adult education, music education, and related areas was studied carefully and used to provide a substantial contribution to the theoretical framing and grounding of this study.

The theoretical framework for this inquiry draws from the fields of adult education, social gerontology, and music. Specifically, adult education contributes experiential learning theory to this study’s framework; social gerontology, continuity theory. Both theories are closely aligned and complement each other in grounding this inquiry. Because of music’s capacity to influence the emotions, the spirit, and the unconscious, it effectively weaves experiential and continuity theories together, further anchoring this research.

The main foundational areas for this research include meaning making, meaning making in old age, and aging in contemporary society. One area more specific to this study is meaning making within the context of music, particularly band performance. Three conclusions can be drawn from the diverse literature that informs these foundational areas. First, meaning making is the interpretation of conscious and unconscious experience in an effort to discover the true self. Ultimate meaning in the second half of life requires looking inward in an effort to integrate the shadow, or unconscious self, with the persona, or self that humans present to the world. This process known as individuation can be facilitated for some persons through music. Second, how society views growing older has evolved from looking at it as a time of biological decline to one of personal agency and promise. This paradigm shift has been precipitated by improvements in health care, retirement plans, and overall economic status for many older citizens. Third, there is a profound absence of empirical studies on the older adult learner, how healthy older adults make meaning, and how musical performance affects the quality of life for older adults.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to determine the role that music played in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. Guiding the research inquiry were the following questions:

1. How do older performing musicians make meaning of life experiences?
2. What do performing music and listening to music mean to older performing musicians?
3. How do older performing musicians describe their aging process?

In this chapter, the research paradigm for the study is identified, and the rationale for choosing it is explored in depth. Additionally, the research methodology utilized for this study is described in detail. Then, data collection techniques that were used in the field are explained followed by a description of how data were analyzed and interpreted. Finally, how issues of credibility and confidentiality were handled are addressed.

Research Paradigm and Rationale

Although a variety of theoretical perspectives provide frameworks for organizing all that comprises qualitative research (Patton, 2002), there exists three significant distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research. First, unlike quantitative research that is designed to yield information about a large number of people, qualitative research is intended to yield copious, in depth information about a small number of people. Second, using a quantitative approach provides a broad set of findings that are generalizable to an even wider population. By contrast, conducting qualitative inquiry increases the intensity of understanding the focus of study but reduces generalizability of the research findings. Third, in quantitative inquiry, careful selection
or construction of the research instrument is essential, because validity of results is dependent upon the quality of that instrument. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher functions as the instrument; therefore, the researcher’s preparation and skill determine the credibility of results (Patton, 2002).

The Interpretive Paradigm

This was a qualitative research study conducted within the interpretive paradigm. In order for the rationale for my choosing this paradigm to be meaningful to the reader, I provide a brief history of its origin. Habermas, an influential thinker and social theorist during the last quarter century, developed a theory of knowledge based upon his belief that knowledge originates in human interests and means of social organization. His theory comprises three cognitive interests: the technical, the practical, and the emancipatory. Each of these interests requires different processes of knowing based upon different forms of rationality. Ewert (1991) presents the relationships that Habermas draws between the three cognitive interests and the knowledge to which each corresponds. He also presents the appropriate medium for attaining each type of knowledge and the science to which each kind of knowledge is most logically linked. Where this study fits into the Habermas theory of knowledge follows.

Habermas’ interest category for this study is practical. The corresponding knowledge category, therefore, is practical or, as Mezirow (1991) re-names it, communicative because its purpose is communication. Communicative knowledge describes learning that is derived from consensus among groups of people at the level of family, community, culture, or nation rather than from scientific investigation. Through communicative knowledge, we learn to understand others’ intentions and strive to make known our own intentions to others. This sharing can occur through speech, written word, media, and the arts. Communicative knowledge also includes the
norms that shape the common traditions and values that strengthen society (Ewert, 1991; Mezirow, 1991).

The interpretive and hermeneutic sciences are the scientific methodologies by which communicative knowledge is best acquired. The research paradigm for securing communicative knowledge is the interpretive paradigm, an approach that focuses on the development of intersubjective meaning based upon consensual norms and expectations. The interpretive approach focuses on persons’ meaning for their actions which are presumed to be intentional and goal-directed. Because individual action usually occurs in a social context, describing human action as meaningful requires that the action be meaningful to others within that context (Ewert, 1991).

**Rationale**

I chose the interpretive paradigm because this study is intended to contribute to the body of communicative knowledge. Research methods that comprise the interpretive paradigm include grounded theory, narrative inquiry, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology, among others. I determined that narrative inquiry had the greatest potential for yielding data that would address the research focus of this study: the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians.

**Research Methodology**

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to more thoroughly discuss narrative inquiry, the research methodology chosen for this study. Before doing this, I first define phenomenology, the philosophical framework in which this narrative inquiry is embedded. Next, I offer distinctions and connections between phenomenology and narrative inquiry that provide the rationale for utilizing narrative inquiry as the research methodology. Then, I introduce narrative
inquiry in its historical context, and define its unique features. Finally, I discuss how I approached this study as a narrative inquirer informed by phenomenological philosophy.

**Phenomenology**

The philosophical orientation which supports communicative knowledge is phenomenology because of its emphasis on understanding meaning and action (Ewert, 1991). Hegel provided the first technical definition of phenomenology, suggesting that it was the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows as a result of experience (Moustakas, 1994). Despite Hegel’s defining phenomenology as a science, it has generally become associated with the philosophy developed by one of Hegel’s students Edmund Husserl who insisted that the inquirer must set aside all presuppositions and reduce what is known to pure consciousness, or inner evidence. About this process Husserl said, “Ultimately, all genuine, and, in particular, all scientific knowledge, rests on inner evidence: as far as such evidence extends, the concept of knowledge extends also” (cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). It was this idea of inner evidence that developed into the system of transcendental phenomenology – the system and philosophy generally known as phenomenology today.

A serious student of Husserl, Heidegger defined phenomenological thinking as an attempt to “get beneath or behind subjective experience to reveal the genuine, objective nature of things, and as a critique of both taken-for-granted meanings and subjectivism” (Patton, 2002, p. 483). Distancing himself from his mentor, Heidegger espoused that all interpretation involves presupposition or, at the very least, a point of view.

Heidegger’s definition and interpretation of phenomenology was different from Husserl’s whose was different from Hegel’s. Over time, phenomenology has assumed still other meanings that have been further complicated by an abundance of interpretations. Gubrium and Holstein
(1999) offer a contemporary, straightforward, but generic explanation of phenomenology as a philosophy. According to these writers, phenomenology is based upon the opinion that the world of experience is a world comprised of meanings, not of things. Because meanings are potential things, things have no status apart from how meanings work in experience.

Phenomenology and Narrative Inquiry: Distinctions and Connections

An important distinction between phenomenology and narrative inquiry centers on Husserl’s concept of Epoche, a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment. Epoche requires the elimination of presuppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt. Everyday understandings are set aside, and the phenomenon of interest is studied from an aloof vantage point using a process known as transcendental-phenomenological reduction, or bracketing. In bracketing, the researcher removes the phenomenon of interest out of the world of personal experience and analyzes it on the phenomenon’s own terms (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Moustakas, 1995; Patton, 2002). Also, there are discrete differences in the interpretation of data for a phenomenological study as opposed to a narrative inquiry. Specifically, a phenomenological analysis requires interpreting the structure or essence of an experience (Moustakas, 1995). A narrative analysis instead requires an interpretation of the experience as lived and told in a person’s story (Bochner, 2001; Chase, 2005).

As a researcher studying music – a phenomenon that has been an integral part of my life since childhood – it would have been very difficult for me to bracket my understandings and knowledge about music and remain detached as meanings emerged from data collected in the field. By contrast, narrative inquiry as an approach to data gathering provided me with the flexibility to simply listen to narrators’ stories, not needing to be concerned about how much I already understood or knew about what they were sharing. A strong connection that bridges
phenomenology and narrative inquiry lies in the philosophy of Heidegger who claimed that what makes an interpretation accurate has more to do with whether the presuppositions are justifiable in light of the entire context of the explanation, more so than whether the interpretation extends out of presuppositions (Langan, 1966).

_Narrative Inquiry_

Narrative inquiry is grounded in both sociology and anthropology. Sociologists working out of the Chicago School during the 1920’s and 1930’s are believed to have been the first researchers to have collected life histories and other personal artifacts as a way to document people’s experience. _The Polish Peasant_ is frequently cited as being an early significant example of a written life history. Compiled between 1918 and 1927 by sociologists Thomas and Znaniecki, the work presents the life experiences of a Polish immigrant Wladek Wiszniewski. The anthropological beginnings of narrative inquiry are also the 1920’s, during which time practitioners recorded the experiences of several American Indian cultures thought to be near extinction. Their approach was to study persons whom they assumed were characteristic of the tribes of interest and generalize their findings to entire cultures. In the 1940’s, anthropologists first applied narrative techniques to the study of individuals – usually males. The social movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s generated much more interest in using life histories and narratives to study the life experiences of individuals, including African-Americans and women. It was Labov and Waletzky’s article [1967] “Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience” that first asserted that the common, everyday person’s story of day-to-day experience was worthy of study (Chase, 2005).
Narrative Inquiry as a Methodology

I defined narrative inquiry in Chapter 1 but by way of review, it is an approach to qualitative research that honors people’s stories as the only data needed to chronicle experience. The function of telling a story is to express the meaning of an experience or series of experiences. In order to elicit rich narrative, the researcher’s initial task is to facilitate narrators’ telling their stories by first establishing the context for the interview questions. Then, the narrative inquirer must carefully ask questions that will trigger thorough, detailed responses (Riessman, 1993). According to Bochner (2001), true narratives that address life’s meaning also contemplate what that meaning holds for the future. A narrative or story may be rendered in oral or written form during fieldwork, an interview, or ordinary conversation. One beauty of narrative as a research method lies in its flexibility. The researcher can collect short stories on a tightly defined topic or an extended narrative that spans someone’s entire life experience. For this reason, the final product of this approach to research may take the form of a narrative or short story, a life history, a life story, a testimonio, or a performance narrative (Chase, 2005).

Narrative Analysis and Interpretation

For narrative inquiry to be an effective methodology, the analysis and interpretation that follows data collection is extremely important. Riessman (1993) explains that because the story is the data, it must be carefully transcribed. For seasoned narrative inquirers, this usually means producing a rough transcription of the entire interview. Then, after reading the interview transcript several times, the researcher more precisely transcribes those sections of the interview that are seen to be most relevant. Being new to the role of both narrative analyst and transcriber, I hired someone who regularly transcribes graduate students’ interviews to do the rough transcriptions for me. Then, I went back to each audiotape to more precisely capture in a second
transcription the vocabulary and other nuances that are peculiar to music. Riessman (1993) suggests that the most tedious aspect of analysis is usually the process of “unpacking” (p. 58) what is essential to interpretation until categories or meanings emerge. Meanings eventually reveal themselves as the narrative inquirer lives with the audio-tapes and transcripts (Riessman, 1993).

Another consideration for the narrative inquirer is how best to project the narrator’s voice in the report of research findings. Chase (2005) proposed a typology of three narrative strategies or voices that researchers should consider in deciding how to use their own voice to interpret and present the narrator’s voice. The first of these is the authoritative voice, a narrative strategy that puts forward long sections of the narrator’s story followed by the researcher’s interpretation. This approach not only separates the two voices through alternation, but also connects them by inserting the researcher’s voice between stretches of narrator’s voice. The insertion of the researcher’s voice apart from the narrator’s voice lends the researcher authority by showing that their interest in the story is different from that of the narrator’s. Using the authoritative voice in interpretation requires looking beyond what the narrator is saying.

The second narrative strategy or voice to consider is the supportive voice. Often used in Latin American testimonios, oral or life histories, and performance narratives, this strategy pushes the narrator’s voice to the fore. The researcher’s priority is to accomplish getting the narrator’s story heard. To do this, the researcher determines how to translate, transcribe, organize, and edit the story into a text or performance. Following this approach to interpretation establishes a respectful distance between the researcher’s and narrator’s voices.

The third narrative strategy or voice that is plausible is the interactive voice. Using this approach showcases the intersubjectivity and interaction that flows between the researcher’s and
the narrator’s voices. Often seen in ethnographies as well as autoethnographies, this strategy necessitates that the researcher reflect on their own voice through the lens of the narrator’s voice, thereby exposing their own vulnerabilities (Chase, 2005).

Application of Narrative Methodology

For the purpose of this study, I collected narratives from nine older bandsmen to explore how music influenced their lives and to understand the meaning they derived from their intimate involvement with music. To do this, I conducted nine in-depth personal interviews and two focus group interviews that included all nine participants. I found Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) words reassuring as I tried throughout the data gathering and analysis processes to precisely identify the phenomenon of interest. These authors suggested that narrative inquiries often swirl around a problem that seems to defy being concisely pinned down. Often, the researcher experiences “shifting ground” when the research problem or phenomenon of interest identified prior to the start of data gathering changes during fieldwork. At the start of my research, I thought that I might be experiencing this shifting ground. I began fieldwork trying to elicit from participants how music had helped them make meaning of life experiences only to discover that music and life experiences were one and the same for every interviewee. Although all participants had successful careers and most of them, happy marriages and family lives, they did not discuss these for very long without linking their experiences or relationships to music. And so, my original research problem of determining the role that music played in meaning making of life experiences could be summed up in one word: everything. In each case, participants did not volunteer any significant life experiences that were not shaped by music. At first I thought that I would have to redefine the research problem. However, once I realized how much data had been collected, I decided to give themes and cross-themes an opportunity to emerge. They did.
Application of Narrative Analysis and Interpretation

To assist in my preparation for analyzing and interpreting the data gathered for this study, a professional transcriber completed rough transcriptions of each audio-tape. Then, I transcribed each audio-tape a second time to more precisely capture subtleties related to music that were missing in the initial transcriptions. After listening to the audio-tapes and reading the transcripts numerous times, I decided that presenting the narrators’ own words as data in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 would provide the richest description of the research findings. The reader, then, would have all that is needed from which to make meaning and find significance in the stories gathered during this inquiry (Bochner, 2001). Although I reorganized and edited the personal interview transcripts to shape the individual stories that comprise Chapter 4, I did so to ensure that narrators’ voices would be pushed forward. I followed each story with one interpretation of its meaning. For Chapter 5, my analysis crossed stories and pulled from each of them to advance four themes. Additionally, data were pulled in from both focus group interviews, analyzed, cross-analyzed, and cross-analyzed against the individual stories. I used the authoritative voice narrative strategy in writing Chapter 5 in that I presented long sections of two or more narrators’ voices followed by my interpretation of what they said. In analyzing the nine individual interview transcripts and the two focus group interview transcripts, my understanding of phenomenology as an approach to analysis and interpretation of data helped me to avoid rushing to any conclusions about what any of the overriding themes might be. After repeatedly listening to interview audiotapes and reading transcriptions, themes and cross-themes eventually emerged from the data that revealed how music had affected the meaning-making processes of participants.
Participants

The strength of qualitative study lies, in part, in the approach the researcher takes to sampling (Patton, 2002). For this study, an intensity sample of members of the New Holland was utilized. The individuals who were invited to participate in this inquiry manifested certain characteristics and experiences that potentially addressed the research questions which framed this inquiry. The following criteria were established to guide sample selection:

1. Participants had to be 70 years of age or older when the research process began. Although the New Holland Band also has a sizeable membership of persons whose ages range from 51 to 69, I selected narrators from those who were 70 and older. Traditionally, society has viewed the early 60’s as the age for withdrawing from all that comprises living. However, in the 21st century, adults entering their 60’s can expect to live an additional decade or probably two or three (McWhinney, 2003). I wanted to know how these lively older bandsmen viewed aging and what influence music was having on their own aging processes.

2. Participants had to be active members of the New Holland Band for five years or more. Since I did not know if a love of music or a love of the New Holland Band explained the commitment that I had seen in potential narrators for this study, I wanted to ensure that participants had shared at least five years together as active members of the band.

3. Participants must have been performing musicians for 60 years or longer. Since the research questions sought to uncover the role of music in meaning making throughout adult life, I set the performance criterion for a minimum of 60 years.
These three sample selection criteria ensured rich data that illuminated the phenomenon of interest in this study, specifically, the role that music played in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. The sample in this study can rightfully be called an intensity sample because of the specificity of sample selection criteria (Patton, 2002). Although I was also a longstanding member of the New Holland Band at the time of the study, I met only the second sampling criterion. Therefore, any consideration of doing heuristic research was short lived.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

I utilized both individual and focus group interviews to gather data for this study. The rationale for choosing to employ two kinds of interviewing strategies for data collection was my intent to enrich the data by accumulating information from private, personal interviews as well as from discussions in which all participants would engage. Each of these contexts necessitated employing a different interviewing strategy. For individual interviews, five participants chose to be interviewed in the band’s rehearsal hall; four participants chose to be interviewed in their homes. In Chapter 4, I introduce the narrators’ stories by briefly describing the circumstances that affected each of the nine individual interview contexts. The focus group interviews were conducted in two different contexts, as well. The first interview took place in a private room at a New Holland restaurant; the second interview, in the band’s rehearsal hall prior to a rehearsal of the band.

For a third source of data, I had also planned for participants to identify and share a symbol that represented what music had meant in their lives. Because participants either did not understand what I meant by this task or because those who did understand identified the instrument that they played, I decided not to utilize the identification of a symbol as a data
source. However, the fact that some narrators identified their instruments to symbolize the meaning of music to them implicitly strengthens at least one of the study’s findings.

According to Patton (2002), qualitative research is strengthened by using triangulation. To triangulate data, the researcher can either (a) mix data sources, (b) use additional researchers to assist with data gathering, (c) interpret data through the lens of multiple theories, or (d) employ more than one method to study a research question. I triangulated the data gathered for this study by utilizing two interviewing strategies to determine the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. Additionally, I interpreted data through the lens of both experiential learning theory and continuity theory. An explanation of each of the data-gathering techniques that I employed follows.

**Interviewing**

The purpose of interviewing “is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Qualitative interviewing assumes that what others have to say will be meaningful. It also assumes that those being interviewed will be able to articulate what it is the researcher wants to know. A professor of teacher education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Seidman (1991) writes about his passion for interviewing. He views stories as “a way of knowing” (p. 1) and thus interviews others to satisfy his own interest in others’ stories as well to assist narrators in what he sees as a “meaning-making process” (p. 1). By selecting specific experiences from among others, giving them order, and reflecting on them, narrators can make sense of life experiences by telling them as stories. Not only is interviewing a narrative research methodology, but also a social relationship that is created as a result of the interaction between the narrator and the researcher who conducts the interview (Seidman, 1991). Two kinds of
interviews were utilized for this study, specifically, a (a) combined approach for individual interviews and a (b) focus group interview.

**Combined Approach Interview**

There are three approaches to designing personal interviews, specifically, the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide, and the standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 2002). I chose several standardized open-ended questions as the basis for each interview and had others listed on my interview guide to increase the likelihood that what narrators shared would address the three research questions guiding this inquiry. I also wanted to make certain that all participants would be asked at least some of the same questions. As each interview progressed, I asked questions that were not on my interview guide if something the narrator said suggested that I should probe in another direction. Since there was always time at the end of each interview for additional questions, I always asked narrators if they had anything else that they wanted to share with me. Because I knew each interviewee, the interviews were more like conversations. It was the standardized open-ended questions and the narrators’ answers to them that were especially helpful during data analysis.

As indicated earlier in this section, I wanted to interview participants in the setting where they would feel most comfortable. Therefore, I allowed them to decide if they wanted me to interview them at home or in the New Holland Band rehearsal hall. Each interview lasted between one and two hours and was audiotape-recorded. Because participants needed to think and reminisce about their experiences in order to completely answer some of the questions, I gave them the standardized open-ended interview questions several days to a week before the interview. After transcribing the interviews, analyzing the data, identifying one theme that
emerged, and writing each narrator’s story, I gave each narrator a copy of his or her story and asked him or her for feedback on its accuracy in portraying personal experiences with music.

*Focus Group Interviews*

I scheduled two focus group interview sessions after all other data had been collected: the first in February 2007 and the second, in July 2007. To better ensure lively conversation at the first focus group interview, I sent the short list of questions to the more verbal participants a few days in advance of what ended up being a focus group breakfast. Charlie, one of the participants, graciously agreed to audiotape the dialogue so arrived early to get the equipment in place as I positioned a short list of discussion questions at each place setting. After most of the participants had arrived and breakfast had been ordered, I asked participants to think about a specific incident in their past when either playing or listening to music had profoundly overpowered them. The discussion on this point was considerable and ultimately segued to my asking if playing had ever been a spiritual experience for anyone. It was during this animated discourse that it first occurred to me that the narrators were confusing spirituality with religiosity, although several of them were unknowingly sharing spiritual experiences that occurred in conjunction with music. Although I tried to clarify the differences between the two, Service was especially slow that morning, but because of this, I had time to also ask about differences, if any, that narrators had made in their approach to life now that they were older. The conversation ended with narrators’ thoughts on why the New Holland Band was special to them. With a commitment to send each participant a draft of what would be Chapter 5, I thanked the narrators for their participation and alerted them that I might possibly ask them to meet once again as a group.

After keeping my commitment to send participants a draft of Chapter 5, I reconvened the group for a light picnic-style meal and conversation several hours prior to a Tuesday evening
summer band rehearsal. The purpose of the second and final focus group interview was for me to hear participants’ thoughts on the study’s findings and to verify what I identified to be major themes. I also probed more deeply into the relationship between music and emotions and music and spirituality in an effort to gather additional data to support one of the themes that emerged from the initial data analysis. Once again, Charlie agreed to serve as recording engineer. For this interview, all participants received the short list of questions in advance. I thought that asking for their thoughts on the adage that “wisdom comes with age” would be a good discussion starter, and it was. Participants also engaged in dialogue about what it was like to be older. Somehow the conversation strayed into a debate on illness and why so many older people discuss aches and pains so much; however, I managed to refocus their attention by asking them to talk about what playing in the New Holland Band was like for each of them. I also reintroduced the discussion on spirituality to see where it would lead. A few participants contributed new insight into the topic suggesting that they had been thinking about it since our meeting in February. With some prompting from me, the dialogue transitioned to a discussion on the purpose of living after the age of 70. As younger musicians began arriving for rehearsal, the insightful dialogue drew silent and participants found their seats among the younger bandsmen.

After transcribing the audiotape of the July focus group interview and after analyzing and cross-analyzing its transcript, I prepared a new draft of Chapter 5. I mailed each participant a copy and requested their input on its accuracy and also their insight on the legitimacy of the four findings that had emerged more strongly after data from the second focus group interview was integrated with data collected in February.
Data Analysis

Data gathered using narrative methodology necessitates not only analysis, but also interpretation in order for analysis to be meaningful. While analysis converts data into findings, interpretation attempts to attach meaning to those findings. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the transition from transcribing field notes or interviews to writing the research report or findings begins with asking general questions of meaning and significance not just once, but repeatedly. Both analysis and interpretation are guided by the answers to questions such as, “What does the narrator mean by these words?” or “What is the significance of this part of the narrator’s story?”. When more than one participant is involved, these same questions must be asked across stories. Narrative analysis is a search for “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience…” (Riessman, 1993, p. 132). There is no one method of narrative analysis because narratives are presented in a variety of ways (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). In this study, narrators shared topic-centered narratives that provided snapshots of life events that were linked thematically by music. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize that narrative analysis cannot be captured in a series of steps. Rather, the research text is shaped as narrators are consulted about interim findings and as stories are added to and meshed together differently. Lieblish, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilbwer (1998) suggest that interpretation occurs much earlier than after data are transcribed. They believe that researchers make interpretative choices as soon as they sit down with the study’s narrators, introduce the context of the study, and begin to pose questions and respond to narrators’ answers. It is important for the narrative inquirer to proceed with sensitivity and awareness of the interpretations she is making.
Chase (2005) writes specifically about interpreting narratives that are heard during interviews. She emphasizes the importance of attending to “the voices within each narrative” (p. 663) before combing for themes that cross interviews. Doing this, according to the author, actually extends the active listening exercised by the researcher at the individual interviews into the interpretive process. This study yielded audiotapes that were transcribed twice into what were lengthy transcriptions that invited careful analysis and interpretation. It was during this time of searching for meaning when my advisor was an especially valuable source of encouragement and insight. In response to the overwhelming task of what to do with unwieldy quantities of information, Patton (2002) suggests three options for organizing and reporting qualitative data. These options include storytelling approaches, case study approaches, and analytical framework approaches. In carefully reviewing the processes involved in each of these options, I chose a storytelling approach using narrators’ own words for Chapter 4 and a modification of this approach for Chapter 5, allowing more of my own voice to be heard in the interpretation of findings. In the sections that follow, I comment on relevant organizational and reporting strategies as I address how I analyzed the data that were collected. Since this was a basic qualitative research study, analysis of data was guided by the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 1.

Individual Interview Analysis

Because it was critical that data gathered from individual interviews would offer insight into research questions shaping this investigation, I spent considerable time listening to interview audiotapes, transcribing interview audiotapes, and reading each interview transcript. Because I found the stories to be so colorful and informative, I decided that Chapter 4 would comprise nine narratives, each preceded by a profile of its respective narrator and followed by my interpretation
of one theme that was embedded in each story. To ensure accuracy of data and interpretation as well as narrators’ ongoing interest in the study, I shared a draft of each narrative with its respective narrator for reaction and feedback. How this study’s theoretical framework shaped my interpretation of data gathered through individual interviews is illuminated in Chapter 6.

Focus Group Interview Analysis

After I completed all individual interviews and transcriptions and had begun analysis, I scheduled and conducted the first focus group interview. Following transcription and analysis of the first focus group audiotape and cross-analysis of the individual stories, individual transcripts, and first focus group transcript, I determined that securing additional focus group data would strengthen the four themes that these multiple analyses had identified. Therefore, I gave each narrator a copy of the first draft of findings, or Chapter 5, and a new set of interview questions to consider in advance of the second focus group interview. The participants met again at the band rehearsal hall to discuss the draft and the new questions. Following the second focus group interview and subsequent transcribing and analyzing of the audiotape, I spent considerable time doing cross-analysis of all data. During the two focus group sessions, participants responded to (a) illuminations that surfaced during the personal interviews; (b) something that another participant said within the context of the focus groups; or in the case of the second focus group interview, or (c) the first draft of Chapter 5. The data derived from both these interviews were unique and as a result of their uniqueness, substantively informed and enriched themes that emerged from the personal narratives. Just as with the personal narratives and their corresponding themes, participants were able to read and comment on the findings of the study as written in two drafts of Chapter 5. Their input is reflected in the final version appearing in this thesis. Finally, how the theoretical framework influenced and shaped data gleaned from cross-
analysis of individual stories, individual transcripts, and focus group interview transcripts is thoroughly explored in Chapter 6.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

As the primary research instrument for data gathering in this study, I begin this section of the chapter by acknowledging that my involvement in the New Holland Band for nearly two decades contributed considerably to my understanding of the results of this study. As Peshkin points out in Merriam and Simpson (2000), being involved with those whom you are studying “can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers’ making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (p. 98).

Merriam and Simpson (2000) further elaborate that “it is the rich, thick descriptions, the words (not numbers) that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of . . . [the researcher’s] findings” (p. 101). These authors also explain that for qualitative research, internal validity hinges on the researcher’s understanding of another’s reality. Additionally, they recommend five ways to ensure that the researcher gets as close to this understanding as possible: (a) triangulation; (b) participant checks; (c) peer or colleague examination; (d) statement of researcher’s experiences, assumptions, biases; and (e) submersion or engagement in the research context by collecting data over a sufficiently extended period of time.

Earlier in this chapter, I explained that I planned to triangulate data collection methodology. This intent was compromised by the ineffective identification of a symbol by a sufficient number of participants to enter any viable data. I also explained how I provided personal stories from a draft of Chapter 4 and two drafts of Chapter 5 to participants for the purpose of their checking them for accuracy. I also have indicated that my relationship with
participants as a fellow musician contributed to the study results. My dissertation chair had full access to all data for the purpose of offering her opinion on the credibility of study findings. I frequently asked for and graciously received her guidance on data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In conclusion, by interviewing each participant face-to-face and conducting two focus group interviews in which all narrators participated, I believe that I was sufficiently immersed in the research context to thoroughly understand the phenomenon under investigation.

Ethics of Confidentiality

Consistent with the Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections, protection of this study’s participants was carried out in several ways. First, an informed consent form was explained, administered, and signed by each participant prior to the beginning of the study. Then, each participant received a signed copy of the consent form and a second copy was retained as part of the research records. Each participant was invited to select his or her own pseudonym but all preferred that I utilize their own first names in this thesis. In addition to emphasizing that each person’s confidentiality would be maintained throughout the data collection stage and when reporting results of the study, I explained that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Finally, all procedures were implemented in accordance with the institutional review process established by the Pennsylvania State University.

Summary

This chapter reintroduced the purpose of the study, the research paradigm that was utilized, and the rationale for selecting it. Additionally, the research method of narrative inquiry, nested in the philosophical framework of phenomenology, was discussed and its appropriateness for investigating the research questions, justified. Narrative inquiry purposefully showcases people’s stories to richly describe their experience in a manner that permits readers to interpret
data – the stories – for themselves. How participants were selected for the study was also
addressed. The approach to data gathering and analysis for this inquiry was influenced by an
awareness of phenomenology’s emphasis on understanding and perceptions of lived experience.
Finally, issues related to credibility and trustworthiness and participants’ confidentiality were
established.
CHAPTER 4
STORIES OF PARTICIPANTS

This chapter presents in storied form memorable episodes in the life journeys of the nine older performing musicians who participated in this study. To capture the uniqueness of each instrumentalist’s story, I chose to write the narratives using the participants’ own words. Each narrative is preceded by both a brief biographical sketch and an introduction to provide context. I follow each narrative with my interpretation of one of the implicit themes inherent in the story. To conclude, I summarize the chapter by showing relationships between and among individual themes, all of which help to clarify how music contributed to the meaning-making processes of the participants. I introduce the narrators and their stories in alphabetical order to facilitate the reader’s referring back to them in subsequent chapters.

A J

A J (Alice Jane) is a 72- year- old native of Lehighton, Pennsylvania, a picturesque mountain community located 30 miles north of the city of Allentown. A retired junior high school music teacher, A J lives with Tony her cat in a spacious home on the main street of New Holland where she teaches piano, serves as organist for a local church, and plays bass clarinet with several bands.

In appreciation for A J’s reluctantly agreeing to participate in my study, I offered to treat her to breakfast on the morning of her interview. We met at the Squireside, a cozy eating establishment in New Holland and sat in front of the fireplace that is functional only on the coldest of winter days. We chatted mostly about New Holland Band-related things. But, A J nervously talked a bit about the interview questions, too. I tried to assure her that the interview would be painless. After breakfast, we drove the short distance to the Eastern Lancaster County
Library where we decided to hold the interview in the basement. We sat on much-too-tiny chairs at one of the children’s round reading tables, plugged in and tested the tape recorder, and began.

A J’s Story

At the end of [a pre-piano] class, the teacher came to my house and said, “She’s mine! She has got [emphasis added] to take piano lessons.” And so my mom said, “We don’t have a piano.” At the time, we lived in the other half of the house [of] my grandmother, and my grandma did have a piano. I was over there in a flash to ask if I could practice on her piano. She said, “Of course.” So, [grandma] had the piano tuned, and I started piano lessons.

We moved to suburban Philadelphia because my dad worked at the Navy yard, and [we still] had no piano. I was devastated, . . . and I still wasn’t in school. When we had to have some [carpentry] work done in the house, I followed the carpenter around like a puppy. In the course of events, he discovered that I played the piano. He saw that we obviously didn’t have one, and he also saw that we didn’t have any money…[to] go out and buy a piano. He came back a couple weeks later and knocked at the door, and said, “Where is Skeezix?” That is what he called me. . . . Mom said, “She is at Sunday school. Why?” “I have a piano for her. All you have to do is get it moved.” . . . It was a really old upright piano, and it cost five dollars to get it moved. . . . That [piano] saw me all the way through elementary school, high school, and college. Then, after I got my own piano and started to teach, [my parents] gave it to somebody else up the street for the same price: just move it!

I always liked music. . . . When I was in fifth grade, the band director had a clarinet floating around. He wanted somebody to start to play it. But, he didn’t want to
have to teach anybody to read music. [Because it was] a small school and I already played piano, I was a likely prospect. I went home that day for lunch, and my piano teacher was there. I didn’t appreciate her very much at the time, but I grew to appreciate her more after that day. I told Mom about the clarinet and the band director [wanting] me to learn it. She said, “No, I don’t think so. You have enough to do with your piano.” The teacher said, “Oh, why don’t you let her? One will help the other.” So Mom said, “Okay. I’ll think about it.” . . . She decided it would be okay, but if the piano [started] to slide, then the clarinet [would] go, also. Well, I loved band so much when I started playing clarinet that there was no way the piano would have [slid], because I didn’t want to have to stop [band].

When I was in high school trying to decide what I wanted to do for college, . . . I had multiple things that I was interested in. I thought, “I would enjoy journalism or music or home [economics] or library science.” My parents sat me down and said, “Listen, if you are going to college on our nickel, you are going to college for music after all the money we spent for music lessons.” And I thought, “Oh. Okay. If I don’t like it, I can go on my nickel for something else.” It’s perfectly obvious how much I didn’t like it. . . . My parents were always very encouraging and supportive. They went to all of my programs through school, college, and even when I taught in New Holland. In her last years, my mom would say, “When is the band playing again?”

I always wanted to be a band director until my student teaching. Then, I liked classroom music, so I switched over. Am I ever glad, [because] I don’t like being in front of a group. I love being in a group now, but I don’t like being in front of [one]. When I was teaching [classroom music], I would have kids . . . fill out a little paper saying what
they liked best that they heard in class that quarter and why, . . . and what they didn’t
like and why. . . . And, every once in awhile, I would have kids attack me and say, “Well,
you are trying to change my likes. I don’t like this kind of music, and I like that kind of
music.” [I would say], “I’m not trying to change your likes. I am trying
to add to them. . . . You will find that when you can listen to and enjoy many different
kinds of music, it’s a lot more fun than if you just have to keep hunting for just one little
kind all the time.” Some of them I actually convinced, and some of them, I didn’t.

One of my chorus accompanists . . . played a really neat piece [on organ in] . . .
some kind of a show at school. I thought, “If she can learn to do it, I can, too.” But we
didn’t have an organ. Her father, also a teacher at the school, came to me shortly after
that and said, “A J, I think we can probably get an organ for the school through . . .
Title I, . . . [but] we’d need somebody that would play it.” . . . I said, “Oh, yes, I will
learn.” So we got [an] Allen Organ at school, and I started to take organ lessons from Reg
Lunt in Lancaster who was God as far as local organists were concerned at the time. . . .
Eventually, I started teaching organ lessons to kids at school. . . . At church in March of
1980 . . . they asked me to help out [by playing organ] for a month. March is a long
month this year – I’m still the organist at that church.

[I became involved with] the New Holland Band [after it] played for the PMEA
[Pennsylvania Music Educators Association] convention. . . . I was assigned to introduce
the [band] . . . since I [was] from New Holland . . . and had a lot of friends in the band.
. . . [The band was], of course, wonderful, and . . . got a standing ovation. Now, you know
music teachers rarely give standing ovations, and I’m very reluctant to do that myself. I
thought to myself, “You dummy. Why are you sitting out here instead of up there?” I
asked Director Houck . . . what I had to do to get in the band. . . . He said, “Well, if you
want to play first clarinet, you have to try out. If you want to just come in and sit [at] the
end of the [line], . . . just come in and sit [at] the end of the line.” . . . So I went and sat
[at] the end of the line.

I listen [to music] all the time. I always did listen a lot. I’m sure when I was a kid,
I listened to music that was popular, but I also listened to classical music at that time. The
popular music . . . was a lot more listenable than it is now . . . . There are record
companies that have come out with copies of “Your Hit Parade” from those years . . . the
‘50’s, . . . and I have all of those. . . . I still enjoy them. It’s still listenable and singable.
. . . Whatever I’m listening to at the time I like. Even though I . . . appreciate instrumental
music more than choral, there are some vocal compositions I really like. . . . I just love
most [music].

I retired [from public school teaching] in 1993. . . . I didn’t even realize I was
retired for a long time. Summer just went on and on. Eventually, I went to Shady Maple -
the grocery store. . . . When I came home, I had to stop at the light there at the high
school, and there were all those cars in the parking lot. I looked at them, smiled, and said,
“Oh, yeah. They’re in there, and I’m not.” [ I] smiled the rest of the day, . . . and that was
the end of September. So, it hadn’t even hit me [until] then that I . . . didn’t have to go
there any more. Of course, I’m really busy now, but most of the stuff I’m doing now is
non-profit as opposed to bringing in a regular pay check.

[Music] is my life. . . . I went to college for music [education], then I taught music
. . . for many years, and even though I’m not teaching in school now, I’m certainly
involved with music. I accompany, teach privately, and play in several groups. If I’m not
doing any of those things, I probably am listening to some kind of music for my own enjoyment. I don’t know what I’d do without it.

A J’s Theme: Initiative

A J’s story is one of self-confidence and assurance that manifests in her showing initiative time after time. But, she has been selective, setting in motion only those people and events that would yield an opportunity for her either to explore or develop her awesome musical talent. Of all of the instances A J cited that illustrate the initiative theme, the two that strike me most are the ones that occurred when she was pre-school age. The first of these was her approaching her grandmother to use her piano for piano lessons. The second was her expressing her love of the piano to a Philadelphia carpenter so convincingly that he found a piano for her. It is unusual for pre-school children to be passionate about doing anything that requires sitting still for drill and practice on a daily basis. And this is what playing piano – or any instrument - requires.

What motivated A J when she was so young to want to devote so much of her attention to playing the piano? Some children are motivated by what they hear or see others do on an instrument. Others are motivated by hearing or singing music. Still others are motivated by adults who are close to them: a teacher or a parent. In A J’s case, I believe that her positive experiences in the pre-piano classes were just enough to sufficiently whet her musical appetite. Add to those experiences the pre-piano class teacher’s comments to her mother, and music was forever thereafter an integral part of A J’s life.

The last incident of self-assertiveness which led to a new performing experience for A J was her pursuit of learning to play organ. At 72, she may very well initiate still another musical
endeavor. Perhaps a student of hers will introduce her to a digital keyboard. Although at first she may say, “No way,” I predict that, based upon her history, she ultimately will give it a try.

Bob

A 79-year-old native of West Lawn who grew up in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, Bob is a former high school principal and a veteran of World War II. Since his retirement from both educational administration and a second career as the CEO of his own computer company, Bob and his wife live in a retirement community in New Holland, where their active life style revolves around the New Holland Band.

Bob’s interview was the first of this study, so on my way to meet him, I was somewhat apprehensive. Will the recording equipment work? What if the rehearsal hall is locked, and Bob no longer has a key? Are the questions ones about which he will like to talk? We met at the Eastern Lancaster County Library at 8 AM. The recording equipment worked, Bob still had a key, and he shared his story for more than 90 minutes.

Bob’s Story

Now my mother really wasn’t a musician. She played piano some, and we had a big old upright piano. . . . She would play this occasionally, but she just loved music. . . . She dragged me and all of us kids to every Ringgold Band concert that ever took place in the summer time at church festivals, and all over. We went to every one, and there was no question that I had to either enjoy it, or else. [My dad] knew how to work with people, and he knew how to organize. I learned organization from him, I learned promptness, getting things done, being involved. So I’d say he was influential a great deal, but not with music. I would sit next to him when I was a kid at church and listen to him sing. And I’ll tell you, that was one of the worst things you could ever hear.
My mother wanted us [kids] to play instruments. So my older brother was brought up on violin. Then, I played clarinet, and my younger brother played cornet, and my sister played piano. So we all became musical. . . . My older brother, the violinist . . . was 7 years older than I, and I can still hear him practicing the Mendelsohn “Concerto in E for Violin.” . . . We weren’t really close, but I looked up to him. I think that competition with him had a lot to do with how I made out.

I guess I started [lessons] in fourth grade. . . . [I played] clarinet in the Wilson High School Band. . . . I remember jumping off the stage . . . with my brand new clarinet. . . . The clarinet case opened, and the clarinet fell out. What a time that was. In the eighth grade, the family moved to Wyomissing. . . . I was really upset about that. . . . But, we moved . . . and that was one of the better moves that I ever made in my life. . . . Every boy had to be involved in everything because it was a much smaller school [than Wilson High School]. . . . I was active in sports. I ran the 100-yard dash and, believe it or not, had the record in speed for 20 years after I graduated. I played basketball four years and made varsity.

I got involved with a teacher by the name of H. Y. Brubaker who was a math teacher. He determined I was going to work. . . . He was just a great teacher. I can remember many times [that] we had to go up to the blackboard and do our problems up there in algebra. . . . And many a time that eraser would go whistling past my ear. There were blackboards all around the room, except for the window side, and he would have us doing these problems, and so he could check sitting in his chair. . . . He adopted me and insisted I was going to be a math student. . . . Many times, he would just want to talk. He was [the] basketball coach. . . . We would talk about basketball . . . and math and some of
the things I should be doing with my life. . . . [I] ended up majoring in mathematics. I got the math award in high school because of him. I [also] got some awards in music and . . . in some of my work in the school itself. I got what they call the High Y Award which was the big award for a senior.

The War was still on, and because they were taking people for pilot training. . . . I joined the Air Force in ’44 but wasn’t taken until’45. . . . I was called up one week after I graduated from high school. . . . I wanted to be a pilot. . . . And because I had played so much, when I went in the Air Force, I didn’t even tell them I played an instrument. I just was not interested in playing anymore. But when the War ended, pilot training stopped. So we . . . went into navigation school. Finally, they signed me because I had apparently some good credentials. They put me in charge of a separation center at Chanute Field, Illinois. People were being discharged right and left. . . . I got bored doing that. . . . The base band at Chanute Field was advertising for players. . . . And so, I tried out for the band . . . and, of course, got a position playing [baritone] sax with the dance band.

This dance band was a great dance band. It was called the Dance Band of the West - the Midwest. We played from Denver, Colorado, to as far east as Pittsburgh. And we’d fly to these jobs, and we played a lot of them. We had a very good band. I guess I connected well with the bari sax because I thought I played pretty well. . . . Finally it came to my turn to be discharged. . . . [I] got home and got a call in a week from the piano player of the band who was starting his own band. He wanted me to come out and play. . . . I had been out of high school about three years, and I had to decide, “Do I want to go and play with this band, or do I want to go to college?” My dad said, “You’re going to college.” So, I turned [the band] down and went on to college.
When I got back from the service, I played with Whitey Meiskey who had a five-piece sax section, one trumpet, one trombone and rhythm. That was his band, and we played all the country clubs. It was the main band in Reading in those days. . . . Sam [Correnti] and I were great buddies and great friends, and whenever a Big Band would come into the Rajah in Reading, some of them would need players. . . . So, I got to play with Stan Kenton on a one night stand. I got to play with Claude Thornhill, Tony Pastor and the Clooney Sisters, oh four, five, or six of the others because [Sam] would always recommend me. So . . . I would get to play with these bands and [got] some experience. I really loved that. I really loved playing. . . . I had by that time started college, and I thought, “Oh, did I make the wrong decision? . . . I love playing with these bands.”

I continued in college . . . and met my wife. . . . That is another thing that probably wouldn’t have happened if I had joined that band and went out to play. . . . She does everything I do, and we’re just together all the time. She is an amazing lady. When I became . . . assistant high school principal, I had to give [up playing] because[being in administration] was a twelve-month job, and I no longer played with the bands in Reading that I was playing with. So, I just didn’t play for about 25 years, except once a year when I played with the dance band at school. When I went to be high school principal, I determined I wanted to have a band because I was interested in music that much…We had three high schools that came together that had to be united as one. And, it was tough. . . . I felt [a band ] tied things together. It was a community activity. . . . Having been in music, I [knew] that to have a good band, you have to rehearse, and that meant I put music in the curriculum as a scheduled class. We built . . . an excellent program.
[Music has] influenced every aspect of [my life]. Even the 25 years that I was sort of out of it, I was in it, because I wanted the [Octorara High School] Band to be something. . . . I just loved my music. . . . When I retired, I formed my own computer company and taught computers for a number of different companies . . . until about 1992. It was about two years after [I retired] when Jere Fridy [the band director at Octorara] came to me and said, “Well Bob, now why don’t you learn to do something really important for a change, and join the New Holland Band?” So, that is when I joined the New Holland Band – about 1986 – and that was a turning point, too, because I don’t think I’d have gone back to music. From the day I joined this band, it’s been band. . . . I guess after about two years of playing with the band and maybe even less than that, I was nominated to be vice president, so that became my life, in a sense. . . . Now that I am fully retired from not having my computer company any more, everything is band. Everything is the New Holland Band. . . . I love the performances with the New Holland Band and the Dance Band because they [bring] back memories. . . . Music has been part of my life. I mean, [I] just can’t get away from it. . . . The opportunity to solo is, I think, important to me. . . . It just amazes me the way this band can play when there’s an audience. . . . I think it’s the feeling of wanting to be good and the best that we can be.

Now, one of my hobbies is making recordings, mostly copying recordings . . . from LP’s or from tapes to CD’s. I have a possibility of recording DVD’s now. . . . So, I do a lot of that kind of thing. It sort of brings my computer and music together. . . . I just love listening to Big Band styles: the Glenn Miller style, the Jimmy Dorsey style, the Tommy Dorsey style. . . . Stan Kenton - he was before his time. He really was. And Jimmy Dorsey. I still have a lot of his solos. . . . You know my teacher - I would mimic
him. He had a terrific sound. And as a result, that’s what I was noted for: my sound that I got out of an alto sax. The different styles . . . were always interesting to me, and I just loved them all. Of course, when my wife and I were going together, Big Bands were still sort of important. They were beginning to drop out though and vocalists were beginning to take over, . . . like Frank Sinatra. I remember hearing him when he sang with Harry James. We went to Allentown to hear him. We would follow all the Big Bands.

Music. . . . I just can’t get over how much music has been a part of my life. . . . It’s for the betterment of the soul, or the beauty of it. . . . I just can’t believe how my life could have existed without it. I don’t know what in the world – how I would’ve lived. I just can’t picture it. I really just can’t. . . . I think I learned a lot [from] being able to learn to practice and do things well and being self-critical. I think when I come home from a band job, I’m really down sometimes because I think I just didn’t play well. Everyone goes, “You did well. You did well.” But to me, I am my harshest critic, believe me. I say, “Oh, I got a ‘C’ today.”

_Bob’s Theme: Perfectionism_

Bob’s story is one of accomplishment in several diverse arenas: academics, athletics, musical performance, educational administration, and technology. Perhaps he is one of those human beings who were born with multiple gifts. Or, perhaps he is simply someone with many interests who is an overachiever. Or perhaps a fierce, competitive streak drives him to excel in everything that he has chosen to do. I propose that Bob does have multiple gifts, and because of the high expectations that he holds for himself and his motivation to excel, he has developed his gifts to their fullest.
I was struck that Bob identified his family’s move from West Lawn to Wyomissing – a distance of about three miles - as a turning point in his life. But it was this context of a new high school environment that encouraged him to channel what to that point had been sibling rivalry into excelling in athletics, academics, and music. It is one thing to compete, but quite another to excel. Bob’s tendency to be self-critical and reflective of his own performance that is so characteristic of someone who is a perfectionist, I believe, contributed a great deal to his personal success throughout his life. Certainly, the perseverance and self-discipline that Bob faithfully applied to learning the saxophone and his first-hand knowledge that music can build a sense of community also positively shaped the leadership qualities that he brought to the role of high school principal. Although being a perfectionist in contemporary society is often construed to be a negative, Bob’s life is testimony to how setting excellence as the only possible outcome can yield long-term benefits for not only self, but others.

Charlie

An 80- year-old lifetime resident of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, Charlie is retired from his own metal finishing company but still works part-time as a valued chemist at a plating shop in York. A veteran of World War II, Charlie and his wife live in a home they designed and built in 1967. There he pursues his many interests that include recording, computers, and listening to his expansive record, tape, and CD collection. Charlie also plays in both the New Holland and Bainbridge Bands.

Charlie greeted me at the door that opens into the hall leading to his home office. And, what an office it is, with books on a variety of subjects arranged from floor to ceiling, state-of-the-art recording equipment, and desks, chairs, files, and computers – all in a tiny space. Following the interview, he took me on a walking tour of much of his spacious home to show me
how his interest in recorded music has taken over a considerable amount of wall and floor space. A detail-oriented person, Charlie has catalogued and shelved every recording, tape, and CD so that he can find any piece by either composer, performer, title, or genre in no time at all.

Charlie’s Story

When I was about five years old, we lived in a double house. . . . In the other side, this family had a teenage son [who] played the clarinet. . . . The greatest thing I could do was to go over to their house when he got out his instrument and look at this beautiful clarinet. . . . For my tenth birthday, my parents got me a clarinet. . . . I’ve always been interested in mechanical things. And I was always interested in the mechanics of the [clarinet]. That’s sort of bad. . . . rather than making music, although I did learn to make some music.

When we got the clarinet, we got twelve free lessons from a guy in Elizabethtown who was a violin player. Also, he worked with my dad [painting] cars. But, he was good because he directed the Sunday school orchestra where I went to church, and I played in that orchestra until – well even after I came home from the service….My main teacher was Amandus Stetler. . . . [who] lived in Lancaster. He used to come up to the house. . . . He directed the military band in Lancaster back before the War, and he also played in all the pits . . . at the live shows . . . in Lancaster way back in World War I. . . . He was a very, very good musician.

When the War started. . . . I was drafted, but I took a test that said I was qualified to go into this electronics thing. . . . Just for fun . . . [we] guys [would] go around to recruiting stations and take tests . . . to be pilots and stuff like that. . . . .And this one [test] I took and passed. . . . The recruiting guy said, “Well, you can get in.” I’m partially color
blind. And he [said], “I don’t think that [matters]. Here’s the chart.” He said, “You memorize that chart.” And I did, and I had a little cheat sheet the whole time I was in the Navy every time I took the test.

When we were in boot camp, we started a dance band. . . . I was one of the guys that started this thing. So the powers that be . . . said, “Well, when [you] graduate, we will send [you] to [the] School of Music.” Well, I couldn’t go because I was in the art/science program, and during the War, that was more important than musicians. So these guys went down there, and unfortunately the whole group got put on a Navy cruiser in San Francisco near the end of the War. And, that ship was sunk. . . . The whole band was lost. [I was] very, very lucky.

A year . . . after I got out [of the service, I went to Lebanon Valley College to study] science: physics, math, and chemistry, and philosophy. . . . Professor Gamble . . . was head of the physics department. He was a [really] nice guy. . . . I learned a lot. . . . He was a mechanical guy like me. I’ll never forget [that] somebody came to see him one time. . . . He was inside the organ down at the church fixing [it]. That’s the kind of [thing] he liked to do [although he wasn’t a musician.] Physics – that was his [expertise.] He went to Columbia. And that’s why I went to Columbia [to] the graduate school. Of course, that was so far above me. The only thing [Columbia] looked for [were] guys who were [going to] get a Nobel Prize in physics. [There were] two guys [whom] I knew pretty well up there that got Nobel Prizes. So, I quit after [earning] the master’s.

I took [clarinet] lessons . . . from Frank Stachow . . . while I was going to college and studying physics. . . . In the 70’s, I’d go in to Clarinet Society, and he was one of the officers in it . . . He used to have regional meetings over at Lebanon Valley, and I always
went to them. . . . Always really, really interesting. . . . [Frank Stachow] was a recording expert, [too]. [Lebanon Valley] had a real nice studio which was his thing. He showed it to me one time. Boy, he was really proud of it. [I also studied with] Dewey Williamson from Harrisburg. He was an oboe player in the symphony in Harrisburg. . . . He taught all kinds of clarinet and sax. . . . I studied flute with another fellow, Dale Schafner from Middletown. . . . I [also] played all the saxes: soprano, alto, tenor, and [baritone].

[After Columbia], I worked for RCA for about two years, and I helped to develop the color picture tube. I was in the engineering department down in Lancaster. Then I had a dumb idea, quit, and . . . my buddy Harry Reese [and I] . . . started this business. . . .

One day in 1971 in July, [Harry] walked out and fell over dead. Forty years old. . . . That was a turning point, too.

Then, . . . in November of ’78, I hurt my hands. . . . It was deer hunting season and all my guys . . . were hunting. . . . I had to adjust this press that cut out plastic things that we were making. . . . I had my hands in this press, and it came down and crushed my hands. . . . This thing that came down weighed over 500 pounds, and it had knife blades on the bottom of it. There are still big scars on my hands. They had to get a fork lift on one side, and then pry bars on the other, and lift it up. . . . They pulled my hands out, and I looked and counted the fingers. . . . They were there.

After three years and twenty operations [with] over a hundred hours on the operating table, . . . I couldn’t play a soprano clarinet. . . . So I thought, “Well, the reason you can’t play a soprano clarinet [is that] you can’t close the holes.” Then I said, “How about a bass clarinet? No holes.” So, I bought a bass clarinet, and I played in the band.
... Finally, I got one of those kid’s clarinets with closed holes, and that was so terrible. That thing sounded so bad. One day I said, “Okay. You’re either going to play, or you’re going to quit. One or the other.” So I sat up there – upstairs – with a mirror on the music stand so I could see my fingers. [I] decided to keep going. “You can do it.”

Well, I can’t imagine my life without music. Listening and playing, you know. Has it affected my life? I guess it surely did. I like all [music to listen to] except rock n’ roll, hip hop. . . . I like jazz. . . . I like classical. Every week, I’ll play classical music. That’s my Saturday afternoon. . . . I’ll read maybe a little bit, but it has to be light so [I] don’t have to . . . turn off the music. . . . I work over in York. . . . I just do a part-time job at a plating shop where they didn’t have a chemist. . . . I can’t imagine going over there without having a CD in the player. I [play] jazz [CD’s].

We had a luncheon for our high school class on Tuesday. . . . And there were about 30 class members there. . . . All the guys – the most they do – is play golf. . . . And that’s it, generally speaking. I sort of feel bad . . . that I have a job. They probably thought, “Well, he doesn’t have any money. He has to work!” . . . [But my employer] appreciates. In fact, one day – it was about a year ago. I walked into the office, and the president was talking to a customer. He [said], “Here. I want to introduce you to this guy. This is our secret weapon.” See, those guys . . . have maybe 15 years of experience, and I have 40!

*Charlie’s Theme: Perseverance*

Charlie’s story suggests that from an early age, he had the inquiring mind of a scientist. Although his initial fascination with the clarinet was purely mechanical, the irresistibility of trying to figure out how the instrument worked led to a lifelong love of playing and listening to...
music. I believe that this same natural curiosity that was channeled and shaped by his later training in the sciences contributed to his capacity to persevere during two potentially devastating events in his life.

The first of these events was the untimely death of his partner in the early days of running a business that they had started together. Perhaps Charlie was able to work through that tragedy at least in part because of his analytical mind – his ability to objectively look at the situation, explore positives and negatives of the options, and make a decision to more forward based upon a plan. The second potentially devastating event was the accident in which both of his hands were crushed at the business he decided to run alone. This unfortunate event affected all aspects of his life. It certainly would have been understandable if Charlie had been content to undergo just enough surgical procedures and physical therapy to restore some mobility and be relatively free of discomfort. However, he was determined to regain sufficient dexterity in order to play clarinet again. When the surgeon had done everything possible, Charlie still could not cover the holes of his favorite clarinet with his scarred fingers. But, he never gave up. He practiced with a mirror on his music stand, analyzed what his fingers needed to do, and persevered until he could cover the holes of the instrument again.

Clarence

A native of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Clarence was born more than a decade before the Great Depression when Lancaster was rural – not the bustling city that it is today. An ambitious banker before his retirement, Clarence is now 93. A widower, he still maintains his own home while engaging in a variety of activities, many of which involve his helping and serving others far younger than himself. His favorite activity remains playing the clarinet.
I was eager to hear Clarence’s story. After all, he was the only study participant who was born before 1920. Clarence greeted me at the front door of his comfortable rancher that was wisely positioned on a hill well above a highly-traveled tourist route. Extremely well–prepared for the interview, he had carefully written out detailed answers to all of the questions that I had mailed to him. After the interview was over, Clarence offered me cookies and a cold drink. As we chatted, I realized that we had a mutual hobby in water gardening. I insisted upon seeing his koi. Having had koi at one time in my own pond, I was not prepared for what I saw: the biggest, fattest fish imaginable. Just as with all of his many interests, those fish get Clarence’s devoted attention - especially at meal time.

_Clarence’s Story_

I guess you could say [that] music is the spice of life. Life would become dull without it. Since I enjoy music so much, it has become a wonderful part of my life. And, I guess I can say [that music] comes naturally to me. Consequently, it gives me a well-rounded lifestyle. I liked the tone of the clarinet, and therefore, I asked my dad to purchase a clarinet for me, which [he] did [when I was] 10. I’ve been playing it ever since. I just love [it]. I’ve been playing the clarinet for 83 years now . . . I took lessons from Amandus Stetler [who] was quite a musician. He played a number of times with the Sousa Band. He had a reed band which played in the [Lancaster] YMCA . . . . We played concerts there every year. . . . I was selected to be the clarinet soloist. . . . I played some solos which I look at today, and I wonder how I ever played them. . . . [They were] filled with 64th notes. The one that I remember is “I Puritana” which is just black with 64th notes. . . . I had to memorize all these solos, and some of them were quite lengthy.
Later on, I joined the Lancaster Boys’ Municipal Band which rehearsed on the top floor of the Griest Building [in Lancaster]. [Then], I joined the Lancaster Military Band and the Lancaster Symphony Orchestra. I played with other bands, as well, as a fill in. This was while I was in school. I enjoyed playing with bands, and so that’s how I got my start.

The Little Symphony Orchestra . . . was developed by my brother [in the early 1930’s]. . . . We had about eight or nine people involved in this orchestra. . . . We played over at WKJC, a [radio] station that was located on West King Street, and we played every week [there] for about a year . . . . Then, we went to WGAL and played about another year. We played half-hour concerts every week, and that was a very interesting experience [that] helped to get me started in playing in groups. . . . We played a lot of classical music. . . . We had a violin, we had a harp, we had a flute; [a] trombone, trumpet, clarinet, and piano. . . . We had a drum, also. . . . We also played at the Colonial Theatre, and that was when I was in my teens. We [also] played in a number of churches [which] was an enjoyable experience. And [because] it was a small group, everybody had to play their part. . . . The pressure was on.

I started out from high school at the Armstrong Cork Company in the factory offices, and I worked there several years. But, I didn’t particularly enjoy my working career there. So, I thought [that] I’d like to work in a bank. . . . I was interviewed by the president of what was then National Central Bank. He hired me right on the spot. . . . I started out by working the book keeping machine, and later on, of course, I became a combined teller. . . . Then, in 1957 . . . I was made manager of [a branch east of the city]. . . . I had 50 people working under me at the main office. . . . That was a responsible job
in itself, let alone to be commercial lending officer, [too]. . . . I had to do the analytical work at home. My wife used to say, “Banker’s hours. You can have them!”

After I got out of the Navy in 1946, I was asked . . . if I would like to join the New Holland Band. So, I said, “Sure.” . . . I don’t know how I had time to do that. Yet, I put that as number one. [Playing] helped to relieve me of the pressures that I was under . . . and enabled me to continue my involvement in banking. That’s something that music has done for me. . . . I retired in 1976 from the bank because I didn’t want the pressure to get the best of me. And, I was just about 63 when I retired. So that was my banking career. . . . I’d say [that I had] a worthwhile career in banking.

Music was a hobby to me. . . . I forgot all about the work that I had to do. I just dismissed that, and I chose to make music a part-time career of mine. I don’t think there is anything that can replace music as a way of relieving the pressures that I was under. . . . I have no idea what else would be comparable to what music would be in my life. . . . If anybody plays an instrument, I advise them to continue on if they enjoy it, [and] not to drop it like some people do. After spending many hours in music and then just to drop it, it’s just a shame. I don’t like to see that happen.

One of the [highlights] in my involvement [with the band] was when the band went to France and played a number of concerts in France. . . . We . . . played under the Eiffel Tower, which was quite a privilege. We paraded over there and we paraded not only in France, but in Switzerland. We gave a concert in a pavilion in [a town] in Switzerland. . . . [We stayed] in the twin city of New Holland: Longvic.

[A favorite band work of mine] is the Unfinished Symphony by Franz Schubert. I like to listen, also, to operas – operatic music. . . . I have some CD’s, and I listen to those
in my home and like to listen to Lawrence Welk programs every Saturday. . . . They have a clarinet player . . . [who] is very proficient, but listening time is limited presently since my daughter is on disability and lives next door to me. I help her do her mowing. In fact, I do all her mowing and landscaping, in addition to [playing] in the band. I am still very active with my church, as well as attending weekly luncheons with the Christian Businessmen’s Committee . . . Every third Thursday of the month . . . I get a speaker and take charge of the meetings. . . . I am one of those that wonder how I had time to work. I keep so busy. My problem is that I can’t say “no.” I like to help wherever I can. So, that is one of my problems.

Actually, music is really very comforting to me because it relieves me of any worries or problems that I develop from time to time, and [music] keeps me young. Playing with young and old in the New Holland Band, I think, helps to keep me young . . . and to be an encouragement to the younger people. . . . I say, “I never get old. I am [93] years young.” . . . Some people when they retire say they are going to enjoy life, and take it easy. However, statistics reveal this does not help when it comes to health and longevity.

Clarence’s Theme: Refuge

How does someone who is clearly talented in music choose to make it his avocation rather than his career? From Clarence’s detailed description of the solos that he had played and the bands and orchestras in which he had performed the probability was indeed high that he could have made a successful career of music. Instead, Clarence was passionate about banking – so much so that he did the work of at least two people for most of his career. Why banking instead of music? Perhaps he did not want to risk music’s being reduced to the category of work
or job. He loved the clarinet, loved playing, and loved the synergy of group performance too much to let that happen.

Clarence chose to make music his refuge and distraction from banking. When he played his instrument, he could forget about paper work that was not done and block out problems at work that were awaiting his resolution. In fact, music was so effective a retreat for him that he credits it for sustaining him in the banking profession until his retirement at 63. Even now, Clarence knows that when he immerses himself in music, the sporadic worries that plague him disappear.

Jere

Jere is a 73- year- old native of Elizabethtown but spent much of his youth in Palmyra, a small rural community in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. Having retired from being both a high school band director and the director of the 553rd Air National Guard Air Force Band, Jere resides with his wife in a retirement community in Chester County. He remains the associate conductor of the New Holland Band and is the assistant conductor of the Arlington Military Band in Arlington, Virginia.

Of all of the musicians whom I invited to participate in this study, I thought that Jere would be one who would say “no.” Jere’s working life was supposed to slow down after his dual retirement. It has not. But despite his schedule, this fellow Penn Stater was eager to be interviewed. He chose to meet me at the rehearsal hall in New Holland. Unlike participants who preceded him earlier that September day, Jere sat facing a wall that sported several pictures of himself: one as a young boy with his father; another, in full-dress blues; and the others, with bands that he has conducted.
It was [Memorial Day] 1940, and my dad was playing with the [Elizabethtown Municipal] Band. They needed somebody to pull a bass drum. So, they pulled me out of the ranks to do this, because I used to go and just sit and listen to rehearsals. And then, it came to the matter of the uniform. Hat was no problem. Standard military wale hat. And, they wore capes. No problem. White shirt. No problem. Tie. No problem. And then, it came to the pants. My mother said, “No problem.” I was so small that she hemmed them all the way up to my knees . . . and going up the Cemetery Hill on South Market Street in Elizabethtown, the hem broke. But, I was bound and determined [that] I was not going to get out of step. Even pulling a bass drum, I was in step. As a result of it, I marched holes through those pants. I ruined a pair of pants, but I didn’t get out of step.

[My father] was president of the Elizabethtown Municipal Band [and] . . . a great trombone player. . . . I used to go to all the concerts in the [Elizabethtown] Park, and I wanted to learn trombone, but my dad thought I was too short in the seat of the pants to reach sixth position, so that’s how I got on trumpet. . . . I was a fairly good athlete, and I lived for sports and my grandmother’s farm. . . . [My parents] offered me piano when I was eight, and there was no way. I didn’t want to have anything to do with it. Then, when I was nine, my dad offered me a cornet. Nope. Grandma’s farm and football. For my tenth birthday, he brought home an old 25-dollar used trumpet and said, “Happy Birthday, boy. You are going to learn it.” And within three lessons, I was jamming the C scale…That 25-dollar trumpet was a definite turning point.

On my mother’s and father’s guidance, I tried out for district band, and I went to district band the first year I was eligible. . . . The guest conductor was this new, young,
big, mean-looking band director from Penn State by the name of Jim Dunlop. . . . When they introduced him and when he came up to the stage, he never seemed to stop growing. . . . I lived in mortal fear of this man for three days. . . . But the band. . . . I never knew what a band sounded like . . . It sounded so good, the blend – good players.

When I went to Penn State . . . , I think I was the only freshman to get a solo cornet part in the Blue Band. . . . That was largely because of the municipal band experience I had from the time I was eleven in the old Washington Cornet Band [which was] the old Annville Band. . . . It’s a funny story. . . . When I started taking trumpet lessons, it was fifty cents a lesson [and] five cents to ride the bus from Palmyra to Annville. . . . Even [though] as a junior . . . I was first chair first trumpet in Pennsylvania All-State Band, . . . Monday night [in the] Annville Band, I was sitting last chair third cornet . . . sitting below an old guy who didn’t have a tooth in his head but could read every note that you put in front of him. . . . I loved it. I just loved it, and I learned to play inner parts and [to] read. . . . When I finished the two-year agricultural engineering course, . . . I was playing with some jazz groups at Penn State. . . . I just went home and told my dad that I wanted to switch into music. . . . Many, many years later, my family admitted to me that when I made that decision, they all jumped in the air and clicked their heels.

The biggest influence on me at Penn State was Dr. Hummel Fishburn, fondly referred to as a “Renaissance Man.” . . . He could do anything . . . When I switched into music, . . . Dr. Fishburn . . . pulled me aside and said, “Jere, you play very well. There are a lot of good players starving. My advice is to take music ed instead of liberal arts. . . . My first [student teaching] experience was working with the State College High School
I got out there using the Blue Band hard-nosed techniques and everything and having kids respond. All of a sudden it dawned on me, “Hey, this isn’t bad. It’s sort of fun.” . . . The deciding moment was the beginning of my senior year when I met my wife, . . . and I thought I’d better settle down to music ed rather than be on the road. No regrets. I had the chance since to do both.

I enlisted in the [State College] Air National Guard Aircraft Control outfit . . . [in] 1957. . . . I was in my junior year of college, and a bunch of us…had the draft on our tail. . . . This way, I could fulfill the military obligation and finish college, and do everything all at one time. . . . The funny story was in my interview [when] they realized . . . that my name was Fridy. They put me in the air police because “Dragnet” was popular [on television] at the time. Joe Friday – Jack Webb. I thought they were joking. The next day, I was wearing an arm band, and I spent three years in the security force. . . . [Then], I transferred into the [Air Force Band, the 553rd at Harrisburg]. . . . A couple years later, they started talking about [my] taking a commission to take over the band, [which I did in] . . . the mid-70’s . . . It was fun, because the band was potentially very good. . . . It was like a full-time part-time job. . . . It was fun. I really enjoyed it. . . .

My work is my recreation. . . . A lot of times coming to a New Holland Band rehearsal or going home – which is a 45-minute drive- I’ll put on a band tape or CD, and it’s not always for study purposes. It’s just [that] I want to hear a good band. And, the other thing is, I listen not just to study a score. I constantly listen to band music in the car for ideas for programming. Like I was saying, the old and the new – the different styles. . . . I like almost any kind of music that is good.
I couldn’t imagine a life without music. . . . I hesitate to say that [music] is my whole life, because it is not, but it is such a big part of my life…Being a musician makes me feel good. That’s a good way to put it. Whether it’s working with [a score] – conducting. It’s what I do. When I’m doing well in music, I am doing what I do, and I feel good. But, when I’m messing up, I feel bad. I’m mean. But, it’s usually because of me.

Something I have experienced having the Air Force Band overseas [is] that the beauty of music is the international language of it. Going into foreign countries where they are looking at you in an Air Force uniform, you are sort of on the defensive. And, as soon as you play, they love you, and you can either play their music or yours, [or] some of both, and you are communicating. . . . I think they should let all the world’s problems to musicians and kids [to solve].

[Music is] almost a religion with me, because . . . I think what my parents always thought. When I am conducting [it’s] something like, . . . “This is what the good Lord wanted [me] to do. . . . This is what I am here for.” . . . It’s a very fulfilling thing. I had so many experiences in concerts. It sounds corny to say, but I know [that] I make a lot of people happy. . . . There is nothing like it. I have had so many people say I am so lucky in having [the] experience of communicating with people. . . . It has taken me a while, but I do feel fortunate.

I also enjoy the Big Band Swing very much. [Now] there is a good communicator! The fun of [this style] now is taking what I keep referring to as standards [and] seeing new arrangements of them. My first sergeant used to call it “an old tune with a new set of clothes.” . . . The New Holland Dance Band’s closing theme is traditionally
“Moonlight Serenade.” Just a couple weeks ago when we opened this new pavilion at Garden Spot Village, this one gentleman came up to me afterward. He grabbed . . . hold of [my arm] and said, “Boy, am I glad you played that Glenn Miller at the end. It just reminded me of the South Pacific when I was in the army in World War II.”

[The New Holland Band] serves my needs for playing good band music . . . You want to do your best and make a lot of people happy. I think that is the essence of the whole thing . . . It is almost a religion.

_Jere’s Theme: Calling_

Jere did not intend to make a career of music. Having grown up on his grandmother’s farm, farming was in his blood, so it was natural for him to pursue a degree in agricultural engineering. And yet, it was almost as if he were called out of farming to enter into music - a profession that would be a different kind of hard work and, like farming, without financial reward. Much has been written about persons being called to the priesthood or the pastorate. But, what is it like to be called to a life of making music? For Jere, I sense that he may have heard the call when he was immersed in playing jazz and happy doing it. It is now that he can look back on his life and see that because of his following that call, he has made many people from all walks of life happy.

To Jere, music is a passion that has almost spiritual underpinnings. Not only does he love music, but he loves how it makes him feel when he sees audiences respond to it. Unlike many musicians whose careers are all about what will make themselves happy, Jere wanted any music with his name attached to it to make others happy. Consistent with his calling of decades ago, as a conductor, Jere still researches his audience before selecting the musical repertoire that will best communicate what he believes people both want and need to hear.
Kenneth

A native of Reading, Pennsylvania, and a veteran of World War II, Kenneth is a percussionist who has been playing drums since he was six years old. He is now 84. Since his retirement from Wyeth Laboratories, Kenneth is especially proud of having been selected to play with the National Senior Symphony for eight concert seasons. He resides with his wife in Sinking Spring, a suburb of Reading, and continues as an active member of several area bands.

Kenneth was almost as enthusiastic about being interviewed for this study as he must have been on the Christmas morning when he got his first snare drum. Not only had he thought about the questions that I was going to ask, but also he brought artifacts to share: programs, memoirs, and pictures. We met in the rehearsal hall in New Holland, a place where he had regularly rendezvoused with his New Holland Band bass drummer-predecessor before the latter’s death. For most people his age, talking with me would have been enough activity for one day. However, Kenneth made it clear before the interview began that he was en route to a playing engagement and would have to change into his uniform before leaving.

Kenneth’s Story

I can still remember [that] Christmas Day when I got the snare drum. We had radiators in our house, and we went to my grandparents for Christmas dinner, and of course, Dad tended the fire in the basement before we left. . . . The house was always warm. But . . . I did not know [never to] put a drum [that] has skin heads by the radiator. Well, by the time we got back, the head was just stretched so far [that] it [broke].

After I got into junior high school, . . . my dad saw [that] I was interested in playing. So, he got me one of the best teachers . . . [in] the Berks area . . . His name was Carl Haller. . . . I took [from] him for eight or nine years. . . . I always knew my lesson.
My dad never had to tell me to practice. I knew what my challenge was. When I was in high school, I’d walk five miles home and five miles there with one drum underneath my [arm]. I always took my drum home – never left it in school. Some mornings, we’d have rehearsal at 7:30.

One of the biggest turning points in my life in music was that I started out getting to know conductors. I’ll never forget the first night I went to rehearsal of the Wyomissing Band. I walked from my house to Wyomissing across the Buttonwood Street Bridge with a set of bells in one hand and a drum case and everything in this hand with the stand and trying to hold an umbrella over myself because it was raining. Well, by the time I got to the hall in Wyomissing, I was a little bit drenched. The conductor said, “Do you have a way home?” I said, “No.” He said, “I’ll take you.” So, he brought me home, and then every week after that, he used to pick me up at Schuylkill Avenue and Buttonwood to take me to the [band] hall.

I did quite a few xylophone solos with the Norristown Concert Band. [Before age eighteen, I played with] the City Playground Band, Joseph Carl Borelli, conductor; Wyomissing Band, John Saul, conductor; Ringgold Band, Robert Mattern, conductor; Lowe’s Colonial Band and the Reading Philharmonic Orchestra, Augustus Myers, conductor. I had two or three cousins that were also musicians. We had an orchestra together, and we were booked every weekend for about a year and a half. We used to be called the Stardusters – a six-piece Big Dance Band.

I was at Lakehurst Naval Air Station for my recruit training – both my brother and myself. Every other base was filled up when we went [into the service] right after Pearl Harbor. We both left together, and we both got assigned to the same boot camp.
Lakehurst, New Jersey, [is] where the Hindenburg crashed. . . . [When] I got assigned to Lakehurst, . . . [I] had a big interview with a big doctor at the dispensary. . . . Three of us were picked to be put there after our recruit training. . . . I went to rehearsals [of] the Naval Air Station Band. . . . It was mostly Black musicians. How I got in with them [was that] on a Saturday night, . . . they would have a dance. . . . The percussionist . . . wanted to dance with his wife, and he knew I played drums. So, he asked me if I would come up and play while he danced with his wife. “Yeah, sure.” And, I would get up there and play. Well, it came that on the dedication of the new auditorium, . . . the percussion guy couldn’t make the job. He asked me to do it, so I played [the] rehearsal [and show] with Jack Benny, Dennis [Day, Rochester, and Mary].

I wanted to stay in the service and change my rate [to music], but by the time my enlistment was up, my wife had taken ill and asked me not to stay in the service. . . . When I first came home, . . . I had to find what I wanted to do. . . . I took a job with Pep Boys as a salesman . . . and then. . . Hutchinson Machine Shop. . . . Then, I heard about a position opening at Culligan Water Company . . . [where] I stayed . . . for fourteen years [when] I heard about Wyeth. . . . As soon as I finished my six [months’] schooling in Baltimore with Wyeth, I got . . . the Reading area.

Regardless if I was in [the service] or not, I still wanted to play. I didn’t want to be without playing someplace . . . I have to say it’s the music. It’s the music – particularly a march. [Bands I’ve played with over the years include] Norristown Municipal; Red Hill; Pottstown; Wyomissing; Ringgold; New Holland; Bainbridge; Keystone; Perseverance, Lukens Steel, Philharmonic Concert Band; and, Cadet Band of Reading. I still play with some of these bands.
[My listening library is] just full of any kind of music. . . . I even have those records from my grandparents . . . including Paul Whiteman when he had banjos in his orchestra. . . . And all the John Philip Sousa marches. I have [them] all. Arthur Pryor – I have his band. I have Edwin Franko Goldman 78’s – all from my grandparents….Plus skillions of tapes and CD’s. I just have . . . drawers full of tapes. [My dad] was no musician, but I have his 33 1/3 records. My dad always bought the greatest music: overtures and everything. . . . I [have] a cabinet with . . . 200 records. . . . There are hundreds of dollars worth of records. . . . All good stuff.

My favorite style is good, nice-type music that we play . . . right in New Holland. . . . Also, I like musicals. . . . I played a few months at Valley Forge Music Fair in the pit in the round. . . . I love musicals. . . . I love to play musicals. . . . I like Julie Andrews when she sings – just the way she was in “The Sound of Music.” I’ve played that so many times, and the beautiful bell part that’s in there, and “I go to the hills for the sound of music.” . . . Even when I go away, like I go hunting, if I go to deer camp, I like to hear it. . . . Understand, I like everything - particularly all the New Holland stuff. Anything that I have played in and I have tapes of, I like to hear that. And I like to listen for myself – for me. I like to hear me. Am I right on? Am I on? That’s what I like. . . . When I listen], I can do other things. In fact, a lot of thoughts go through my mind when I’m listening to music. Like, I can write some more memoirs.

I feel as long as I feel healthy, and I get the okay that I’m all right. . . . I don’t want to retire [as a musician]. I don’t even want to semi-retire. . . . I get commended for the way I am playing. . . . I know some elderly people – they lose the thought, they lose it. If you lose it, okay, then it’s time to say, “Okay, I’ve had it. . . . That’s it.” . . . I don’t
think this is . . . the time for me to say, “I’ve had it.” . . . I don’t think – even thinking
hard about it – I don’t know if I would survive without . . . music. . . . When I know that I
[have] to play a job someplace, [and] I get on that job, I wipe [troubles] off my mind. I
just wipe [them] off my mind. . . . I was told, “Don’t stop what you’re doing, because
then you’re going to run into problems.” So, I’m not going to stop. I want to play as often
as I can. . . . Red Hill [Band] always [asks] me, “Ken, are you coming back next year?”
. . . I say, “Okay, God willing, I’ll be back. God willing, you know. . . . That’s the whole
crux of the story. I think if God’s willing, I’m willing.

Kenneth’s Theme: Belonging

From the time Kenneth as a young adolescent of fourteen carried his set of orchestra
bells, snare drum case, and an umbrella on a rainy night from his home to the band hall in
Wyomissing, he has been driven to be a part of something larger than himself. Playing in bands
comprises much of Kenneth’s story. In the time that I spent with him, he talked about many,
many organizations of which he has been a part. Not all of those organizations have been within
reasonable walking or driving distance of his home. Nevertheless, he has been motivated to
attend rehearsals and to contribute to the percussion sections of each of these many groups. He is
especially enthusiastic about putting on the New Holland Band uniform because of the
musicianship within the organization and the quality of the literature that it plays.

Perhaps drummers more so than players of other instruments associate making music
with being a musician in a group, as opposed to playing as a soloist. Since most of the percussion
instruments cannot produce pitch and therefore are non-melodic, percussionists’ raison d’etre is
to provide rhythmic support to the rest of the orchestra or band. It is common knowledge in
music circles that wind and string players share the opinion that percussionists, most often called
drummers, are different from other musicians. They are stereotyped as being fun-loving and accident prone. As a result, wind players make percussionists the brunt of jokes - all in good fun, of course. Is the passion to belong that Kenneth exudes what makes drummers behave or misbehave as they do?

La Rue

La Rue is a 73-year-old native of Millersburg, a bicentennial community that is located 23 miles north of Harrisburg where the Wiconisco Creek meets the Susquehanna River. After teaching instrumental music and directing high school bands for twelve years, La Rue entered the field of music merchandising where he remained for 32 years. A veteran of both the army and air force, La Rue maintains an active lifestyle that includes practicing his euphonium daily. He and his wife reside in a retirement community in Manheim, Pennsylvania.

La Rue chose to meet me at the New Holland Band Museum where he is curator. He was the second interview of the morning, and he arrived early. We sat across from each other at a long table adjacent to the only wall with an outlet to plug in my tape recorder. Without hesitation, La Rue confidently shared his life story. Throughout what was one of the longer interviews that I conducted, I was struck by his memory for detail, his sense of humor, and his authenticity.

La Rue's Story

It was just one of those great times to grow up. . . . As I look back, it was lots of fun. My dad and mom didn’t [interact] that much with the kids because they were too busy working and earning a living, and I think it was that way with an awful lot of parents. . . . But I think I grew up to be okay. . . . Miss Lucille Lenker was the vocal teacher in Millersburg. . . . I think she went to Eastman [School of Music]. . . . Mean as [could] be!
In sixth grade – I’ll never forget this as long as I live – I can see it. This poor kid by the name of Ronnie Leizer had glasses that thick – could not see, would read like this. Awful. Because he could not answer a question, she went up to him one day and whacked him over the head, and he stood up and just socked her one. She flew ten feet across the floor and landed on her back. . . . I guess she wasn’t hurt too badly, because she got up and took him by the ear . . . and paraded him over to the principal. . . . Well anyway, she was great for me.

The first [person who] had a great effect in my life musically was a teacher by the name of Robert Smith. . . . He was the band director at Millersburg . . . right before the War [WWII] . . . and then came back after the War and was in Millersburg for . . . two or three years as the band director. In those days, you knew what you were going to do when you went into college. . . . I knew I was going to be in music. . . . Junior year 1950, I went to state forensics . . . and, I went to the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. . . . I got a superior rating . . . on baritone horn that year, and that again influenced me towards really going into music as my career. One of the [other] people who really influenced me was Bob Cooper who was my high school band director. I can’t say enough about him. He was just a tremendous person and a tremendous friend. He kind of guided me. I can honestly say, and this is no disrespect to my mom and dad, but I probably would not have gone [to] college if it wouldn’t have been for Bob Cooper [who] . . . had me out at Indiana [State Teachers’ College] before they even knew what was happening.

Now, you have to understand something. I goofed off in high school. . . . I was in every musical thing there, every singing group, every drama group, but boy, talking about
cracking a book – forget it. . . . I am ashamed of what I did in high school. . . . That’s the one thing I would do over again in my life, if I had to do it again. [I] would . . . work in high school. I tried the same thing my first semester at Indiana. . . . I ended up with almost all “D’s”. About the second day of the new semester, Dean Heigas . . . called me in and just laid into me. He was sitting there, and I’m sitting here, and he just let me know that [ I’d] better get myself under control, or I’m out . . . From that day on, I worked, and I worked very hard.

I met my wife second semester at Indiana, and she got me straightened out, went steady with her all through college, got married one month after we graduated. . . . [I was] drafted after I graduated from college, went in the army, and [completed] basic training. . . . I became the head platoon leader and eventually ended up out of basic training with the Trainee of the Battalion, and I was very proud of that. I really grew up. [The army] taught me discipline, and I really enjoyed it. Then, after that . . . I got into the 553rd Air Force Band, and I spent 34 years in there. . . . The great thing about that band was that when we worked, we worked very hard, and we did the best job we could. But, when we played – boy, did we play hard. We had a good time. It was a great experience.

I taught in Perry County, . . . Littlestown, Chambersburg [and then] . . . I went to Winston-Salem, North Carolina for three years. I was a band director at the Reynolds High School. This was the prestige high school in the city of Winston-Salem. . . . It’s a wonderful city. . . . I just had a wonderful experience with the people down there, and I was able to do a lot of things that I was never able to do in other public schools where I was. . . . I had a great band.
Then, we went up to Old Tappen, New Jersey which is way up in the northern part of New Jersey, close to New York state. That was at a time – ‘65, ‘66, ‘67 – when kids were no longer the kids that I knew, and I was having a tough time. I was raised through the Depression [to be] very strict, very disciplined, and I expected my kids to be the same way, and they had been up until that time. . . . I had some problems with trying to control the kids. So, I decided I’m either going to have to change and go with them, or I’m going to have to get out of it.

I had always had an inkling in the back of my mind that I would enjoy being in the business end of music. . . . I went to work with a music company called Dorn & Kirschner, a big, big band instrument company in Newark. [I] spent two years with them [and] went through the riots of ’67 in Newark where there was a tank in front of our store protecting the store. I mean, [those were] scary times. . . . So, I left Dorn & Kirschner and . . . became a district manager with the La Blanc Band Instrument Company. . . . [Next,] I went with the Victor’s House of Music which was right in Ridgewood, New Jersey. . . . This is where I really learned the business, and I spent several years – four or five years, I guess, and the more I was there, the more I knew I wanted to be in my own business.

There was a store open in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania . . . called Music Village. . . . I put my $5,000 together with my brother-in-law’s $10,000 that [he] loaned me, and I bought a business. . . . I expanded into a second store. I bought . . . Taylor Music in West Chester. Biggest mistake I ever made . . . I had terrible times with . . . collection of money with rentals. . . . [People] just would not pay their bills, and I would spend my evenings going around knocking on doors either picking up horns or collecting money, getting poked at a few times. . . . So, I got rid of that one and went down to
Wilmington and opened up another store. In the meantime, I still had my very profitable [store] in Newtown Square. The one in Wilmington . . . had the same problem: deadbeats were just killing me – just killing me.

You’re in the music business, but there’s no music in the music business. Absolutely no music at all. The only playing that I had was with the air force band - and that was once a month, or maybe on special occasions. So, I got away from music because it was all business. It was making a living, and instead of selling ball bearings and screwdrivers, I was selling band instruments, but there was no music involved. . . . It was that way for 32 years. I had very little music in my life. . . . [I ultimately] went back to Victor’s House of Music in New Jersey and had the best ten years of my life, [managing] the whole instrumental music department – the whole school division.

[I] came back to Pennsylvania, spent a couple of years in Palmyra, got involved in the New Holland Band, left – which was a terrible mistake. [Next, I] went up to New York State, thinking that this was where we were going to retire, because both of my kids are up there. . . . But, you know something? . . . After two years up there, we left, and my kids have never forgiven us, but we’re still talking. [We] moved back to [Pennsylvania into] Brookshire which is a retirement community where people [all are] over 55, and it’s okay. We enjoy it, and of course, I’m back involved with the New Holland Band, and that’s my life.

I have never really listened to music that much. . . . Every once in a while, I will put a record on, and I’ll listen to it, and I enjoy it. I’ll read a book. I like to read a lot. . . . But, what happens when I start listening is I get so involved in the music, that I can’t read. So, I close the book, and I listen. But, I don’t do it very much. I genuinely enjoy Big
Band music: 30’s, ‘40’s – Glenn Miller – that era. I’ll listen to it, even on the radio in the car. . . . Isn’t it funny? I have never really been involved in Big Bands. I mean, I play a very bad trombone . . . I play a very bad second trombone in the New Holland Dance Band, but I love to listen to [Big Band music].

Retirement has been great because it’s been the first time in my life that I really can now fully enjoy music because I have the time to do it. . . . When I retired and came back to Pennsylvania, I really got serious about it, and that’s when I think at this time of my life, music really, really means a lot to me. It has greatly influenced what I do. I practice every day. . . . My wife gets sick and tired of it. My dog howls and moans, but I do it anyway. I enjoy playing with the New Holland Band. I enjoy playing with the small groups that I am with. . . . For me now, it’s true enjoyment. I really enjoy it . . . I love to play solos. I love to play in a band. . . . Music has definitely kept me sharp. It’s kept me alive. I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t have it. You know, you can only dig so many holes and put plants in, and you can only mow your grass so many times.

La Rue’s Theme: Change

It seems ironic that someone who grew up in the structured, predictable home and tightly-knit community that La Rue described would initiate change so often during his working career. What characterizes someone who thrives on change? The people whom I have known who enjoy starting anew are highly motivated and very involved in all aspects of life. Sometimes, they are perfectionists and are not happy in situations characterized by ambiguity. They also have something or someone to ground them, serving as a constant as other things in their lives turn upside down.
La Rue impressed me as a disciplined person who needs order in his life. In some situations in which La Rue found himself both in his first career as a teacher and later in business, change for him was probably his only option. He was fortunate to have two constants in his life: his wife and his music. Although what he did as a performing musician was impacted by the nuances of his job at the time, he easily and vividly could describe to me what role performing music played during each phase of his career journey.

Thomas

A native of Stillwater, Oklahoma, Thomas is an 81-year-old clarinetist whose passion is playing chamber music. A retired economist and veteran of World War II, Thomas performs with the New Holland Band and plays chamber music at every opportunity. He and his wife live in a quiet neighborhood in suburban Lancaster where they both enjoy listening to music, particularly in the evenings.

I interviewed Thomas in the glass-enclosed sitting room of his beautifully furnished and decorated home. He spent a few moments searching for his glasses and then asked for his wife to assist in locating them. I was wondering why he needed them, but once the interview began, it was clear that he had prepared for my visit by writing on each of the questions in advance and needed his glasses to read what he had scribed. Not knowing Thomas quite as well as the other narrators, I was immediately impressed by his intellect and detailed memory of his past.

Thomas’s Story

My dad was a college professor. . . . After [my parents] had been married . . . almost eighteen years, [my mother] decided to go back to college. [She] was able to do that because that was in the ‘30’s, and we actually had a girl who roomed with us [who] took care of [us] kids. [My mother] went full-time to college . . . and got a degree in music.
But, she had always been interested in music. We had a grand piano which my dad had bought for her even before I was born . . . Every Saturday, we listened to the Metropolitan Opera [on the radio]. . . . I thought it was terrible. . . . Well, my mother listened to it, and if you were around, you heard it.

Fifth grade . . . was when I actually picked up the clarinet. . . . And then, we moved to Dallas for one year and then moved back [to Stillwater]. In the seventh grade, . . . I really got serious about the clarinet and found out that I [could] do it pretty [well], and that I liked it. . . . In Stillwater, I played in the band, was in the orchestra, played football, and was going out for wrestling. . . . I can still remember in ninth grade, after we moved to Washington, D.C., that there was a music appreciation course which [everyone] had to take, and I hated it. I really did. . . . On the other hand, [my interest in music was] stimulated by watching the Washington Symphony play. . . . The high school band in Washington, D.C., was so terrible that I . . . refused to play in it. But, I played in a Civic Orchestra and the Agricultural Symphony – the Department of Agriculture had a symphony. I [also] played in the boys’ band, and I played in the Catholic University Band.

I took lessons from Paul Garret, a gentleman who really helped me on the clarinet . . . for about two or three years. He taught German in high school, and he was director of the Greenbelt Band – a high school band, played in the Washington Symphony in the summer time, and also gave lessons on the clarinet on Saturday. . . . I asked him if I should be a clarinetist. He said, “Well, do you like to eat?,” which I took as an indication [that] he thought I didn’t have the capability. . . . I was in the eleventh grade. . . . My greatest interest at that point in time was the clarinet.
I went to the University of Maryland before I went into the Army. . . . My 2 ½ years in the army and specifically, in combat, was an interesting turning point. . . . I enjoyed the honesty of the average person, and I learned that I was as brave as they were. . . . When I came back [to the States], I went to Maryland for one year. And then, I went to the School of Foreign Service in Georgetown. . . . The only reason I picked up the clarinet [again was] this other kid that I was rooming with . . . [who] was a former clarinetist. So, he picked up the clarinet. . . . When he did it, I did it. And that’s how that started. So, from the time I was 17 [until I was] 25, I never touched [the clarinet].

Coming home from . . . a music lesson, I had the clarinet in my hand and was on a street car, and [Staunton Calvert] struck up a conversation with me. He said, “Oh, you play the clarinet? And I said, “Yes.” He said, “Well, why don’t you come over, and we can play some sonatas?” I said, “Okay,” and it blossomed into a full friendship. . . . Once a week we would get together, and we would struggle with Brahms. . . . That’s all we played. We worked and worked and worked. Of course for a few of us, Brahms is almost impossible. But he was good. He actually was excellent. I never realized until I started to get with other pianists to play Brahms that very few of them [could]. . . . [Staunton] was extremely active in the musical scene in Washington, D.C.

When I graduated [from Georgetown], I took the foreign service exam and passed it, but I flunked the French [and] the Spanish. I never could pass the Spanish. I wasn’t that good at it. . . . [Although] I took two years of college Spanish and also worked in an office of international trade for two years and read Spanish every day, . . . I couldn’t pass their exam. . . . Having a very high grade in [the] economics section of the foreign service exam persuaded me to become an economist. . . . The U. S. government puts out numbers
that are called the gross national product, and I worked in that department for . . . a few years.

Then, I lost my job with the government and went to work for U. S. Steel [Pittsburgh] in the market research department. I was in the forecasting section. . . . That’s where I met my wife. . . . But after five years in U. S. Steel, it was too much. It was worse bureaucracy than the U.S. government, really. So, I went to work for Youngstown [Ohio] Sheet and Tube. . . . U. S. Steel had 50 people in their market research. Youngstown Sheet and Tube had two. So, there was certainly a lot more responsibility and a lot more fun.

When I moved to Pittsburgh the first time around, I really didn’t find any outlet for the clarinet. . . . For five years, I didn’t do very much. We moved to Youngstown, and there was kind of a second rate band there, and I played in that. And, I also played in the Youngstown University Orchestra. . . . We moved back to Pittsburgh, and I found an orchestra there that . . . gave me some outlet. . . . We also played in musicals, . . . so that was fun. Then, I moved to Cleveland, and there was a band, a Tri-C Band, which was a community college band. Let’s put it this way, it had five clarinets, and four of them couldn’t play.

Since I retired, playing is a good chunk of what I do. . . . Music’s very important to me. I enjoy it, and listening to beautiful choral music or something at night time . . . is just a joy. It’s even more enjoyable than actually going to a concert. Many times when you’re sitting there, and you’re being quiet so you hear. You have to listen [emphasis added] to music. [Music] symbolizes . . . beauty to me. . . . I appreciate the beauty of music much more than the beauty of a painting. . . . Beautiful choral music is something
else. . . . I love good symphonies. Beethoven – I think [his symphonies] have more feeling in [them] than Mozart. Now on the other hand, the Mozart clarinet sonata to me is fabulous.

**Thomas’s Theme: Challenge**

As Thomas read his answers, and as he gradually moved away from his script, I was struck by his intellect. Perhaps he inherited his intelligence from his college-professor father and college-educated mother. I am not certain. But, I am fairly confident in suggesting that he and his siblings grew up in an intellectually stimulating home environment. I was also struck by what at first seemed to be a condescending attitude toward others with whom Thomas had interacted over the course of his life. Some of these others were musicians; some were not. Upon studying his interview transcript, I believe that the attitude I perceived initially is actually Thomas’s expressing a need for challenge in all aspects of his life.

Thomas’s story suggests that he relishes both demanding work and demanding play. His reluctance to be a part of many performance ensembles may have had more to do with his concern that his musicianship would not be challenged than his being judgmental or condescending toward musicians with lesser ability. His preference to be a chamber musician over a member of a section of a band further reinforces the challenge theme. When Thomas plays chamber music, only he is responsible for the clarinet part. In a band, he shares that responsibility with several other clarinetists. So for Thomas, playing chamber music satisfies his need for challenge more so than playing in a band.

Tom

A native of Coatesville, Pennsylvania, 83-year-old Tom remembers what it was like to grow up during the Depression as if it were yesterday. Retired from his lifelong career as an
Tom welcomed me into his sunny kitchen, a room just inside the front door to his small but lovely home in a quiet neighborhood of New Holland. Pictures of his children, grandchildren, and granddog were posted all over his refrigerator. We sat across from each other at the kitchen table by the window. The room was clean but just a bit cluttered—perhaps a symptom that Tom has been widowed for eight years. Perhaps to fill that void in his life, Tom plays Dixieland, German, dance, and concert band jobs whenever he is can.

**Tom’s Story**

In 1938, we were poor. I mean we were poor, very poor. Dad was on welfare, and my . . . grandmother [offered us] a clarinet. . . . Boy, we [were] poor; we had nothing. We didn’t have any toys—nothing to play with. Just clothes to put on and eating what we could eat—maybe soup and bread and water for supper. . . . [My brother Bill and I] got the clarinet, and that’s how we started. . . . There’re many times [that Bill and I] would be playing up in the attic. We always went up to the attic. After awhile, we got [into] some arguments, boy. So my mother went out and bought boxing gloves. Now this is the truth. She said, “Now rather than hit anybody in the face with a fist, when you get disturbed . . . put these on.” [We fought because] I wanted to play it this way and said, “No Bill, it’s not like that, not like that.” Then the argument started. But, [there were] never any grudges, you know what I mean?

[Bill and I] were called to the service in 1942. . . . We graduated in 1943. . . . We knew Walter Prough . . . at the Community Store in Lancaster, and he knew Glenn

Some doctor . . . rejected me on account of my back. . . . After [basic training, Bill] never saw a gun. He was going around the United States with different dance bands.

I started out playing with The Kreitz in West Chester – a stage band. . . . After I left The Kreitz in about 1947, . . . I went on the road playing [professionally] six nights a week . . . until about 1949. My last check was from the Virginia Beach Cavalier Beach Club. . . . My horns felt like sledge hammers. So then I got really disgusted with it at that time. . . . Not much sleep, and we [were] always on the go.

I [came] back, and I met . . . Oscar Moore. . . . Oscar had just [come] back from piano tuning school. . . . He said, “Tom, why don’t you take a year off, and write to the repair school?” So, I wrote to the T. G. Conn people. I got a commission back for an examination. . . . I passed. . . . I spent . . . a full year studying and working with instruments. [It was] very thorough. I had four hours of class in the morning and four hours of shop in the afternoon. The instructor saw I was very interested, and he took me on with him and did outside work every Saturday from 8 to 12. . . . I had to play all the instruments at play off time in order to get my degree. . . . I made out all right. I played them all. . . . I graduated in 1949 from the school . . . [and] came back home.

I [will] always remember that New Year’s [that] I didn’t work. That was the first New Year’s [that] I didn’t work in a long time. I went out, I bought a bottle of beer, a paper, and I had 00.00. I had nothing. And this is the God’s truth. So then, in January – no money. There wasn’t any work coming in. I went to my grandfather and asked him,
“Would you give me 500 dollars? I want to . . . get started.” He knew I [had gone] to school and made out well. . . . You know he said, “Here’s the 500.” And I paid him back. I paid him every cent back. But, that’s how it was. I started from nothing. [I] bought a few tools. . . . It was rough when I first started. . . . When you have nothing, it’s discouraging sometimes. But, you [have to] keep going forward. Think ahead. Think ahead.

I had to have a place to start, so I went to an elderly man . . . who had a photo shop in Coatesville. . . . He said, “Tom, here. Would you mind where you . . . start?” I said, “I’ll start any place. Any place.” . . . So, he called me and said, “Tom, I have a place. . . . It’s in the basement [of the Cogin Korean Hotel], beside the boiler room. They’re only going to charge you 25 dollars a month.” I took it, and that’s how I started. . . . After that, . . . I went down to First Avenue [to] a little hole in the wall. . . . Everything I made, I turned over and doubled. So, a box of reeds I sold. Then, I’d take that money and buy two boxes. . . . Again, . . . I started to play [again] three or four nights a week around Philly, Chester, anywhere.

I married in 1947, and [my] wife went with me. And then, children started to come along. I had to feed them, I had to work. So I worked like you know what. With the help of the Good Lord, I came through it. I had to sacrifice. . . . [Next], . . . I went up to Third Avenue – another hole in the wall. And from there, I went down to Main Street on Fourth and Main and worked until 1974 on Main Street. But then, I was hit with fourteen robberies in Coatesville. . . . [So,] I took the store down to Thorndale Shopping Center. . . . I watched the money like crazy, because I didn’t touch the store money. My plan was doing my pay off.
I met influential people [in the store] who liked me and recommended me. . . . In 1970, Mr. Terry [from the Philadelphia Orchestra] came into the store. I didn’t know this man from Adam and Eve. He said, “Mr. Donohue?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I’d like to buy a flute for my granddaughter. . . . Pick me out three of your flutes, and I’ll be back, and I’ll try them out.” So, I went back to my flutes [and] picked out three. I numbered the best “1” and “2” and “3”. So, he came [back] and said, “Where can I go?” I said, “You can go back in the studio . . . and try [them].” Again, I didn’t know this man, but I heard the kind of flute he was playing. He was pretty good. [Later,] he came out [and said,] “[I’ll take] this one.” That’s the same one that I [had] picked.

I said, “Would there be any possibilities of taking private lessons from you?” . . . He said, “Now Tom, let me tell you, if you’re really interested, you give me a call. If you’re not really really interested, I don’t want to waste my time.” After that, I started to think, “I’m going to go.” I called him up. “All right, Tom. You come in here, give me a time, and I want to go over a few things with you.” He didn’t tell me what. So I went. . . . And did he put me through the riggumoroll. Wow. And when I came out of there, I felt like getting my flute and throwing it away. I was really discouraged. Very much so.

But, he said, “Now Tom, you go home, and you think this over now. If you really think you want private lessons, could you give me a call back?” So, I did. I said, “Mr. Terry, after you talked to me, I went back to the store, and I thought that over. I really want to play.” He said, “All right. I don’t teach much, but you come around to my place. I want to talk to you anyway again.” I went again up to his home...and he said, “I owe you an apology. . . . I did that purposely – put you through that [gristmill], to see if you were really going to think it over and come back. Now since you came back, you have
shown me that you are really interested. There is only one thing I want to tell you. If you can’t practice six hours a week, I don’t want you.” . . . So, I was with him for seven and a half years.

[Music’s] all I have ever done. I play my horns and listen to music, and go to concerts when [I’m] not playing. . . . See, music – that’s God’s gift. I have no [qualms] about it. I enjoy it, and always did enjoy it. [I’m still playing], so the Lord must be with me. . . . I like to listen to good music, and even if I detect something that’s not right, I don’t go around telling people what I don’t like. I keep it to myself. . . . Live [music’s] the best. Records – they’re all dubbed up. They’re dubbed up with [what] sounds good, but to hear it as it is, that’s what [really] happens. I [like] concert band music and dance music. . . . I . . . like name bands. . . . There [are] too many hard rockers, and they just blast away. No conception of intonation or [anything]. So, I don’t go for that. . . . I still have my own group. I have five to seven men. . . . I used to practice. Yes, I practiced up until – oh Lord, maybe three or four years ago . . . I mean, really digging into it. . . . But now, I’m just playing jobs boom boom boom.

[Music] comes from within. That’s all I can tell you. The way I look at it, if the Good Lord didn’t want me to play this long, He’d of [taken] it away from me years back. So, He must be with me yet. . . . My work’s not done.

*Tom’s Theme: Resilience*

Tom’s story is one of struggle, sacrifice, and determination. It is also one of taking what life sends a person’s way and making the best of it. What gives someone the wherewithal to not only survive, but also bounce back to ultimately succeed when nothing in life comes easily? Tom’s resilience appears to result from his strong sense of spirituality that manifests itself in his
performing music and his authentic personality. Although he was unable to strictly play to make a living, he chose a related profession that would facilitate others’ making music.

Tom believes that music is a gift that was given to him by God. His story illustrates how applying careful planning and hard work to one’s gift can yield financial stability and more importantly, happiness. His story also reveals his willingness to ask for help and support when he needed it and the wisdom in doing so. In turn, he treats those he encounters with respect and empathy.

Chapter Epilogue

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to determine the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of nine older performing musicians. In this chapter, nine narrators told their personal stories in their own words. Each narrative was followed by an interpretation of one theme that emerged from it. In viewing and reflecting upon the stories holistically, it is striking how performing music has functioned as a primary source of continuity for each narrator as each has coped with and adapted to life’s changes and challenges. It also appears that as each narrator proceeds through the lifelong process of individuation (Jung, 1933), every one has embraced being a performing musician as a dominant aspect of whom they truly are.

This chapter’s profiling of individual musicians helps to define the meaning of music in their lives. By comparing and contrasting the nine themes, interesting connections come to light. With A J whose theme is Initiative and Charlie whose theme is Perseverance, music served as motivation. Music has motivated A J to excel in performance, especially on piano, since childhood. It was also a force that propelled her to initiate opportunities to learn and to be a part of musical performance throughout her adulthood. For Charlie, music and his love for
performing motivated him to undergo countless operations on his hands and fingers in order for him to play clarinet again.

Charlie’s theme of Perseverance is strongly linked to Tom’s theme of Resilience. Both men’s stories portray challenges that they faced during their lives that required enormous determination to overcome. According to Tom, music is God’s gift to him. His story reveals how he used that gift throughout his adult life, perhaps in a different way from what would have been his own preference. The spiritual underpinnings of Tom’s story strongly connect it to Jere’s story, the theme of which is Calling. Looking back on his career, Jere saw God’s hand in summoning him to focus his talent on conducting bands that, through his own careful programming, would make others’ lives happier. Kenneth also references God in his story, but in his case, he looks to God for confirmation that indeed he should continue to perform at age 84. Like Jere, Kenneth’s frame of performing reference throughout his adult life has been almost exclusively with bands.

For Clarence and La Rue, music has been a constant in their working lives prior to retirement. Clarence’s theme of Refuge represents his dependence on music to balance his work life. Playing his clarinet helped him not only to achieve that balance, but also to participate in an activity that was totally different from anything that he did at work. Unlike Clarence, La Rue’s career path was always tied to music, but for the 32 years in which he was in music merchandising, performing for him was sporadic. And yet, knowing that he could perform and would perform at least occasionally sustained La Rue through what was a career path punctuated by change.

Finally, Bob’s and Thomas’ stories are connected in their acknowledgement of the hard work and challenge that mastering a musical instrument presents. Although Bob explicitly
described how learning to play taught him that practice was required to do anything well in life, Thomas implicitly referred to the challenge that playing provides him and how much he enjoys that challenge. For both men, performing well has always been important. Each of these narrators also talked about the beauty of music and the joy that it continues to bring to their lives.
CHAPTER 5
PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to determine the role that music played in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. The previous chapter identified and interpreted one theme that emerged from each of the nine narratives. It also illustrated how performing music may contribute both to successful aging (Rowe & Kahn, 1998) and to continuity of thinking and lifestyle throughout adulthood (Atchley, 1999). I concluded the chapter by showing connections between and among stories. This chapter identifies and interprets themes that cross narrators – themes that were discovered as a result of comparison and analysis of the nine individual interview transcripts, the nine stories, and the two focus group interview transcripts. The voices of participants are used to support each cross theme that is presented.

During the cross-analysis of data, four findings became apparent. This chapter takes a broad look at each of these findings or cross-themes prior to analyzing them for meaning, implications, and connections to the literature in Chapter 6. The four cross-themes are (a) Early Mentors and Experiences with Music; (b) The Older Musician and Spirituality; (c) Bandsmanship; and (d) Aging and Musical Performance. Before presenting this study’s findings, I provide a participant group profile in both narrative and table form.

Participant Group Profile

The nine musicians who participated in this study range in age from 72 to 93 years. The mean age of the participants is 79.8 years. One woman and eight men, all active members of the New Holland Band, contributed to this inquiry. The age at which the participants began to study their respective instrument ranges from nine to twelve years. The mean age of when participants began the study of either a wind or percussion instrument is 10.1 years. All nine participants are
retired from full-time employment. Four of the nine narrators retired from a career in a music-related occupation.

Table 1

**Participant Profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation Before Retirement</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Age When Began Music Lessons</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A J</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Junior high school music teacher</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>High school principal</td>
<td>Alto Saxophone</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Owner/CEO metal finishing company</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Bank vice president/commercial lending officer</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Refuge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jere</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>High school band director; Air force air national guard band commander</td>
<td>Trumpet</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Calling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation Before Retirement</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Age When Began Music Lessons</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Sales representative, pharmaceutical company</td>
<td>Percussion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Rue</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Music merchandising</td>
<td>Euphonium</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Economist</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Musical instrument repair technician</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early Mentors and Experiences with Music

The first cross-theme concerns how participants began their pursuit of music. It also describes the role that not only individual teachers, but also groups of musicians played in mentoring each of the musicians along the way. Data that contribute to this cross-theme inform how musicians in this study make meaning of life experience. As narrators shared their stories in individual interviews, they often highlighted experiences that involved other people. When asked to name the most influential people in their life experiences, each of them included the name of at least one music teacher. Although most of the music teachers recalled by participants were those who gave them private instruction on their instruments, others were public school teachers.
whose care to take a keen interest in them shaped the degree to which they became involved in musical performance. Early experiences with community bands and Sunday school orchestras were also cited as having an ongoing, positive influence on some participants’ development as instrumentalists.

The Significance of an Early Start

Three of the nine participants, A J, Kenneth, and La Rue, described their participatory experiences with music as five-year olds with sufficient clarity and enthusiasm to support their belief that it was those early music classes that were foundational to their initiating the study of a specific musical instrument. The context of A J’s early experience was a pre-piano class. She said:

There was a piano teacher in town who had a pre-piano class. Since we didn’t have kindergarten, my parents decided to send me to that, which I loved. We played games, colored, marched, and did all things like that.

Kenneth, a percussionist, attended a regular kindergarten. He reminisced about his experience in the kindergarten band by saying, “When I went to kindergarten, guess what I played in the kindergarten band? I played the snare drum and triangle. Yes, that's what. That helped to get me started.” La Rue described a different kindergarten experience:

When I was five years old, my mother sent me to what was called a music kindergarten. Now this was 1939. . . . Her name was Miss Attic. . . . Typical, old-fashioned, . . . hair in a bun, but she was so nice. There were five of us in that class. . . . [Miss Attic] would do song and dance things with us. It was wonderful. I’ll never, ever forget that. . . . I really honestly believe that that was one of the first influences for music for me.
These three musicians could clearly remember their initial group encounters with music, although the encounters occurred more than 65 years ago for A J, more than 68 years ago for La Rue, and more than 78 years ago for Kenneth. There is no way to know if it was the individual teacher or the musical activities with other children or the combination of the two that had such a profound impact on them. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that positive, early interaction with music can engage some individuals in a relationship with music that will last a lifetime.

*The Significance of Teachers and Groups as Mentors*

When I asked each narrator to identify persons who were influential in their lives, six of them, without hesitation, named a music teacher. Bob fondly recalled his saxophone teacher Sam Correnti:

Sam was a great teacher. . . . He taught [me] by playing with [me], and as a result, [I] learned to mimic him. He had a lot of Big Band experience, and he would write these little tunes out for [me] every time [I] had a lesson. . . . They were not original compositions. They were written motives of the day. Then, [the tunes] would be something [I] would practice for the next week. . . . I would consider him a very great turning point [in my life] for two reasons. First, he taught me to play – really play. Second, he insisted that I was going to be a musician in bands in Reading. He gave me contacts, and I started playing with bands. . . . Sammy was one of the greatest, greatest influences I had, and until the day he died, he and I were great friends.

La Rue talked gratefully of a band director who convinced him to switch instruments:

I was a struggling cornet player. I started in third grade. I could read anything on the page, my technique was superb, but I couldn’t get above a “C” because my lips were so
big, and the mouthpiece on the cornet was so small. It was so frustrating. Bob Smith came to me in eighth grade one day. He said, “La Rue, I have to tell you something. . . . You’re never going to make it as a musician unless you change your instrument. I have the perfect instrument for you.” So, he [brought] up this old, beat-up 1929 Conn baritone horn, and he said, “This is for you.” I took it home. . . . I took to it right away, and immediately it just changed my whole outlook on music.

Thomas’ response to identifying influential people in his life was unique in that he credited teachers with whom he studied later in life:

Picking up the clarinet [again] at the age of 25 and taking lessons from Bob Marcellus [of the Washington Symphony] . . . led to meeting a fellow by the name of Staunton Calvert [who] fueled my interest in chamber music. He and I played Brahms’ two-clarinet sonatas every week. . . . Much later, I had a contact with Ted Johnson [who] stimulated me to improve my clarinet capabilities.

Like Thomas, Charlie talked most about a clarinet teacher whom he encountered at Lebanon Valley College upon returning from serving in the Navy during World War II:

I’ve always been interested in mechanical things, and I was always interested in the mechanics of the [clarinet]. . . . Frank Stachow was really one [teacher] I guess [who was influential] because we studied things like the Brahms Sonatas. He’d break them down into little sections – “We gotta do this,” you know. I liked him.

Unlike the other participants, Tom was self-taught at first. He explained:

My grandmother . . . had a son who had a clarinet. . . . She brought it [to my house] and said, “My son [doesn’t] want anything to do with this music business. Would you like to
take it?” . . . We decided [that my brother Bill and I] would like to have it. . . . We used to practice that clarinet . . . an hour every day and four hours on Sunday.

Jere talked about his trumpet teacher who also facilitated his sitting in with a community band at a very young age:

My teacher was the director of the Annville Band. . . . What he would do is when you got good enough – at whatever age – [he] gave you . . . your own Martin brass instrument. [I received] a Martin trumpet. It was an old one, but it was a good playing [instrument]. . . . This is how they built up the old Annville Band. . . . They gave you [an instrument] when you got good enough to get into the band.

Three participants reminisced about their early experiences related to Sunday school orchestras. A common phenomenon in Protestant churches during the 1930’s and 1940’s, these groups were comprised of volunteer instrumentalists within a church congregation. Many of the orchestras performed quite regularly on Sunday mornings as well as on special occasions. Jere talked about his experience in one of them:

Where I was raised in the Dutch country, every Sunday school had an orchestra. That is because they had one violin in it! . . . These orchestras by musical standards weren’t too pure, but they did have enough good players that they could get through the [music], and it was fun. I used to come home from Penn State on Christmas and Easter, and sometimes in between, to play for a country church back near my grandmother’s farm. . . . They had this good Sunday school orchestra, and . . . I’d come home and play in an orchestra that was fun, and the food was good, too. . . . What I got out of the Sunday school orchestra [experience] was sort of a beginning for my appreciation for . . . band arrangements of religious music. . . . [I ] also learned to transpose . . . there, too.
Clarence attributed his getting involved in instrumental music to a Sunday school orchestra:

My church [where] I have been a member for all 93 years of my life . . . had an orchestra which played in the Sunday school. They played a selection at the start of the Sunday school [service and] a concert every last Sunday of the month. . . . I was inspired because I noticed the clarinet players, and I thought, “Well, Gee, I’d like to play a clarinet, also.” . . . Later on, I became the leader of the Sunday school orchestra . . . for over 30 years.

Although Tom grew up in a Catholic family, he recalled playing in a Lutheran Sunday school orchestra:

When I was fourteen and going to mass on Sundays, I was walking with my mother about a mile to church. . . . We’d have an 8 o’clock mass [and would get] home about 9:20 [AM]. I’d run down to the Lutheran Church and [play] with the Sunday school orchestra. That went on for years. I enjoyed that very much.

Cross-Theme Summary

The first research question that guided this study was how older performing musicians make meaning of life experiences. Like everyone’s life journey, the life journeys of the participants in this study have been shaped by influential people and circumstances. As I conducted each personal interview, I was struck by how readily most interviewees shared at least one story about either an early experience with music or a music teacher who had a profound impact upon them. In fact, six of the participants named at least one teacher or conductor whose early influence made a difference in their life-long commitment to performing. Most of the musicians began the study of an instrument in a traditional manner by taking private lessons
from someone with expertise in playing that same instrument. Tom’s unique story of teaching himself to play, and Thomas’ and Charlie’s naming teachers who made an impact on their playing in adulthood affirm that there are alternative ways to learn instrumental music. Sunday school orchestras, a mainstay of many Protestant churches when this study’s participants were young, provided another form of mentoring to five of the musicians in this inquiry. It seems clearly evident that the influence of formally trained music teachers and other adult musicians within the context of performing groups shaped the musical pursuits of the participants in this inquiry. These same teachers and adult musicians demonstrate how continuity applies not only to individuals but also groups of musicians such as community bands. Just as the nine musicians in this study were mentored on their instruments, they also were mentored and initiated into membership in community bands and other ensembles along the way, thus perpetuating their own musicianship and the life of the organizations that welcomed them in as apprentice members.

The Older Musician and Spirituality

The second cross-theme that interweaves this study’s transcripts and stories is what comprises the spiritual dimension of participants. Data that contribute to this cross-theme inform what performing music and listening to music mean to musicians in this study. Data also begin to address how the musicians describe their aging process. Individuation is particularly important in the second half of life (Jung, 1933). Data that are relevant to this second cross-theme show how an expansion or maturing of the spiritual self can facilitate individuation. Going into this study, I predicted that at least some narrators would describe listening experiences that were meaningful – even spiritual to them. I was not certain how they would describe their performing experiences other than that they were enjoyable for a variety of reasons. I was also uncertain what
participants would say about their own aging, although I thought that at least some of them would refuse to acknowledge that they were older. Before considering the data that are relevant to the older musician and spirituality, it seems appropriate to review Tolliver and Tisdell’s (2006) definition of spirituality that was cited earlier in this thesis:

Spirituality is about a connection to what is referred to by various names, such as the Life Force, God, a higher power or purpose, Great Spirit, or Buddha Nature. It is about meaning making and a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things. . . . Spirituality is also about developing a more authentic identity (p. 2).

It was obvious to me during the first focus group interview that my use of the term spirituality was going to be confusing to all participants. But, it was also evident that some of the musicians were talking about events, usually involving music, which had profoundly affected them, causing me to wonder if the experiences that they were describing were spiritual ones. In order to hear more from these musicians about the connection between music and spirituality, I decided to ask some questions at the second focus group interview that targeted aspects of meaning making without my referencing spirituality.

Data from personal interviews reveal that all but two of the interviewees regularly listened to music and could vividly describe their listening preferences. At the initial focus group interview, when asked to share a moment when a listening experience struck them in an especially profound way, three participants described peak listening experiences that impacted upon them emotionally; however, the participants did not call the experiences spiritual. What I did not anticipate was participants’ citing playing experiences that struck them spiritually. This section begins with data that evidences powerful performing episodes that narrators deemed to
be spiritual for them. Then, I share data on the interviewees’ thoughts on time, life purpose, and legacy, all of which provide a glimpse into the spiritual facet of nine musicians’ lives.

*Playing as a Spiritual Experience*

Good ensemble performers are acutely aware of the musical sounds that surround them during performance. Therefore, it is difficult to know if it is more what musicians hear as they play than it is their actual participation in music making that makes them feel more connected to others, the world around them, and their higher power. However, several of the participants cited specific performances that were distinctly different from other emotionally-moving ones. They described where the performances were held, who attended, what music was played, and how they felt.

During the second focus group interview, La Rue explained that his definition of spirituality was “strictly with religion: a religious feeling.” His spiraling back to a playing episode that occurred in Winston-Salem many years ago to illustrate his definition of spirituality suggests that the occasion exceeded a peak listening or playing experience for him. He recalled:

[There are] 25 Moravian churches, and every church has a band. Every Easter morning, they start at midnight. All 25 bands will get into [buses]. It’s just like Christmas caroling, except they go Easter caroling. They end up down at Home Moravian Church in Old Salem at 4 o’clock in the morning, and they have eggs and bacon – big breakfast – and at 6 o’clock, all these 25 bands are all around the cemetery. There [must] be maybe a quarter of a mile separating all of these bands. They start playing antiphonally. After each number, they keep moving in closer and closer and closer. Finally, at the end, they’re in the center of the cemetery. Now, we’re talking about 600 to 700 people playing band
La Rue grew up in a religious tradition; therefore, the symbolism and ritual associated with Easter most certainly enhanced the already powerful impact of performing music with hundreds of other musicians in a large cemetery early that particular Easter morning. Although La Rue refers to the experience as being “probably the closest I’ve ever come to a religious experience in playing,” I sensed when I heard him talk about the experience that he remembered it as an occasion that triggered in him a feeling of interconnectedness to the other musicians who were a part of the morning as well as a stronger than usual feeling of connection to his God.

Jere reminisced about a performance at Mount Gretna Tabernacle, a rustic chapel in-the-round that is located in the heart of historic Mount Gretna’s old camp meeting ground. Although the concert was religious in part because of some of the repertoire that was programmed, Jere who conducted the concert still alluded to what was a spiritual experience for him:

That night [we played] a combination sacred and secular concert. For an encore even after “Stars and Stripes,” I got the idea to use “How Great Thou Art.” We called it our musical benediction. It was a Sunday evening concert. It was very moving to me and for a lot of family there. My parents were still living; they were there. . . . It wasn’t a concert. It was a happening.

Music can be the intersection for spirituality and religiosity. In this instance, Jere’s growing up in a Protestant church that most certainly included “How Great Thou Art” as a congregational hymn positioned the band’s performance of the hymn tune to evoke special meaning for him.
Additionally, the attendance of his elderly parents at the concert seemed to give Jere a sense of wholeness and coming full circle, which is how some people define spirituality.

Jere described another occasion when he conducted the band that struck A J as a spiritual experience, also. Jere recalled:

The band played in this beautiful church, and again [it] . . . was a happening. “The Light Eternal” . . . was sort of a musical parody on “God of Our Fathers.” It was written to honor the legend of four chaplains who went down with the USS Dorchester in early 1943. The thing that was spiritual about it was that right before the number started, General Harris, former commander of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, . . . whispered to me, “Jere, there is a survivor in the audience tonight from the USS Dorchester.” . . . Homer Bixler – I’d known his name all my life, and here we [were] playing this [work]. . . . That’s the night the preacher told me, “Jere, the Lord moves in mysterious ways.”

Playing in the band that evening was A J who remembered, “Doc was sitting beside me, and we looked at each other, and we both were tearing. He said, “Well, we’re a good pair sitting beside each other.” . . . Just thinking about it, I [get] goose bumps.”

This occasion illustrates the element of surprise that often accompanies a spiritual experience. In this instance, a survivor of the doomed World War II vessel came to a band concert more than 50 years after the tragedy. He had no idea that a programmatic band work had been composed based upon the legend that emerged surrounding the fate of the doomed ship’s crew. Nor did he know that the work would be performed that evening. Jere who selected, rehearsed, and programmed the piece certainly did not anticipate a USS Dorchester survivor to be in the audience. Members of the band like A J and the musician seated beside her felt the
interconnectedness of people sharing the occasion – an interconnectedness that was intensified by the beauty of the music and the sanctuary context.

Circumstances that surround the death of someone special to us or unexplainable phenomena that occur shortly before or after a death can strengthen our faith in a higher power and contribute to our spiritual development. Bob recalled the funeral of Art Futer, the bass drummer emeritus of the New Holland Band as being one such incident for him. Art, who died at 82 years of age, was the historian of the band and knew more about its history than any member, living or deceased. He had planned his own funeral, which included the band’s accompanying his coffin to its final resting place.

About Art’s final journey, Bob said, “I think one of the spiritual things that I recall is Art Futers’ funeral. I think marching in that little parade we did down toward the cemetery and playing there by the graveside – That was a spiritual thing.” A J who was a part of the occasion added, “I had trouble keeping my mouth on the horn that time, too. And then when [the graveside service] was all over, there was one loud clap of thunder. . . . Like [Art] was saying, ‘You done good.’”

This example of a spiritual experience for two participants emerged from the music performed at a funeral. It illustrates the circle of life and the significance of music to those left behind when someone close to them dies. It also reveals something about the capacity of the music someone made in life with others to live on. Finally, it suggests how natural phenomenon such as thunder sometimes takes on a new meaning – if only symbolic - immediately before or after a death.
**Individuation and Spirituality**

During the second half of life, many people grow closer to authenticity as they integrate their shadow with their persona, their past with their present, and who they are with whom they want to become. This process of individuation is closely informed by spirituality. Literature that specifically addresses meaning making in old age suggests that spirituality in the second half of life undergoes maturity commensurate with the degree to which individuals focus inward (Atchley, 1999; Erikson cited in P. Kolb, 2002; Jung, 1933; King, 2004; Tisdell, 2003).

Narrators in this study shared manifestations of the symbiotic relationship between individuation and spirituality in their discussions on a number of topics, including how their view of time had evolved since young adulthood.

Tom spoke philosophically about time when he said:

I think living one day at a time and doing it the very best you can [shows] as you go on [that] each day takes care of itself. As you go through the years, there are a lot of challenges. . . . You can either do the wrong thing or use your head, and do the right thing. If you choose to do the right [thing], you may think it’s wrong. But in the long run, you come out ahead of the game.

La Rue also talked about staying in the present but offered insight as to why it is now easier to do so than when he was younger:

I think that everyone as they grow older thinks about the good old days. I think we all do. I try to live each day. I don’t think that much in the future any more. My future’s pretty much stated. I think I know pretty well where I’m going. I do try to keep apprised of what’s going on. I get very involved in current events. I like to know what’s going on in the world. Musically, I try to keep up with it. When I can find people to talk to, I do that.
But, I don’t think ten years down the road any more like I did when I was 35. I guess part of it is because when you’re 35 or 25, you [have] the pressure on you to succeed, and you’re always trying to get a step ahead. Now, you’ve pretty much gotten where you’re going to get.

Like La Rue, Bob talked about the pressure to succeed earlier in adulthood and how that pressure has lifted for him. He also discussed the wisdom of trying new things:

I think when you’re 35 or younger, you’re thinking, “What am I going to do? How am I going to be successful? I have to be successful in people’s eyes.” And now, that’s over with. You don’t have to worry about that any more. You’re more in the present. . . .

You’re not thinking about succeeding anymore as much. . . . I think the important thing . . . is to keep your options open to experiences. I think those new experiences are how you grow.

Thomas added:

At 52, I was in a company that was going bankrupt. I was going to lose my job – walked the streets. [I] had three kids in college. It was kind of a sweaty time. Now, I have no worries. It’s really much more comfortable.

These four participants’ thoughts on time show an evolution from focusing on being successful, or in Thomas’ case, survival for his family and himself, to living more in the present. As La Rue implied, however, living for today requires conscious, purposeful effort. And as Bob pointed out, mindfulness also necessitates being open to new opportunities that foster ongoing learning. Just as appreciating the present moment evidences a maturing spirituality, so does thinking about and acting upon what one believes is his or her life purpose. During the first focus group interview, I asked narrators to share any changes that they had observed in their current
approach to life compared to their approach when they were younger. In follow-up to that earlier discussion, I wanted to know at the second focus group interview what the musicians thought was the purpose for living after the age of 70 and what consideration they had given to their own legacies.

Concerning life purpose, Clarence, the oldest participant, was first to comment. He said, “I think it’s our job to be encouragers. The Bible will tell you that we should encourage people.” Concerning changes in life approach, three participants chose to comment, beginning with Thomas who said:

When I retired, I didn’t know what I was going to be doing. How [am I] going to fill up [my] time? . . . My former minister and I [were] having lunch, and he said, “You ought to go into Stephen Ministry.” And I said, “What [is that]?” . . . You get trained to go out and sit with people that are under some sort of pressure. I thought it was the last thing in the world I could do. But, I found out [that] I could. . . . Giving is really important. At the age of 40, I couldn’t have done it. No. I was still centered on myself and my worries.

Bob called the shift from receiving to giving that Thomas shared a demarcation:

You hope that life is going to be an evolution from something to something higher. Sometimes it’s not. I’m sure for a lot of people it’s not, but for me, I think it’s [been] an evolution. I think it’s from the time early in your life when you really are a receiver. You receive from everything. You become self-centered. You’re the person in the middle of everything. As you move on, you realize that that’s not true. There are a lot of other people that live besides you and are just as important as you are. As a result, you become more of a giver. I would say that the demarcation between two stages of life . . . is when you become the giver rather than the receiver. . . . To give is the evolution – the ultimate
evolution – and I think that’s the way [that] I would like to see my life becoming: more of a giver than a receiver.

Jere gave the shift from receiver to giver a musical application:

The first half of your life as a musician, you get a call for a job, [and] the first question is, “How much does it pay?” As you get older, you say, “How good is the group, and [whom] are we playing for?” It’s almost like a give-back time.

Bob explained how being a giver defines the purpose of old age, at least for him:

I think God has put us on earth and allowed us to live as long as we have because He wants us to help other people. That means helping the young people, particularly [in my case], I have twelve grandchildren: helping them and seeing them off to better things.

Thomas echoed Bob’s sentiments about grandchildren by saying:

I have a four-year-old granddaughter. I think at the top of her day is when she comes to see her grandmother – not necessarily me! Really. You can tell it. My daughter says [that my granddaughter] talks [the whole way] here and is looking forward to seeing Granny all the way from Sellersville to [Lancaster]. I think that’s part of it. I remember my grandmother as being a wise old lady [whom] I admired tremendously. I think if you can fill that particular position, it’s fine.

Jere’s thoughts on purpose for living into old age and legacy are consistent with Thomas’ and Bob’s:

I think your legacy in growing old is your family. Your grandchildren. The image that you’re passing down to them that they can pass on to their kids. In other words, you should enjoy life, and be a happy person. That sounds corny, but be as good of an image as you can to your family the older you get, because this is the way they’ll remember
[you]. They learn from it. I learned from [my grandparents]. I had a good childhood from my father and mother and my grandparents. I always looked up to them, and now this is the way I hope maybe my grandkids look up to me. It’s that same way. I think this is a legacy.

A J was quick to point out that not all people have grandchildren, but they can still make their mark on the younger generation. She said, “Those of us who don’t have children and grandchildren have to [help] other young people.” Bob added, “The New Holland Band gives you an opportunity to help [young people] and [see] them off to better things.” Jere made the connection for everyone that whether the contribution is mentoring your own grandchildren or others’ children or grandchildren, “the whole thing ties into our legacy.”

**Cross-Theme Summary**

Spirituality is intrinsically personal and is a lens through which many people interpret the meaning of life events. This section provided evidence that contributes to answering what performing music and listening to music mean to the musicians in this study as well as how the musicians describe their aging process.

Data suggest that four participants recalled specific times when, as musicians, the interplay of context, repertoire, performers, and audience created an unforgettable, and to some degree, ineffable phenomenon that they deemed to have been spiritual. The experience always transpired in a church or an outdoor chapel venue, which may have fostered any feeling of connection with God they may have experienced and most certainly contributed to the powerful impact of the music. Two participants linked the music performed upon the death of someone whom they knew as triggering a spiritual experience for them.
Finally, data in this section characterize narrators’ maturing spirituality and their progress toward the transformative stage of individuation. Narrators’ views on time, life purpose, and legacy have evolved through adulthood to the point where they appear to be motivated out of concern for others rather than out of concern for themselves. This shift from focus on self to focus on others is consistent with literature on meaning making in old age that was presented earlier in this thesis.

**Bandsmanship**

The third cross-theme that interweaves this study’s individual narratives and focus group transcripts is Bandsmanship. Although the word bandsmanship appears to be gender biased, I follow tradition in the use of the term here. A brief history of the word’s origin is included in the definition of terms section of Chapter 1. I chose the word bandsmanship to capture this cross-theme because the term embodies the meaning of belonging to a band, including the responsibilities and privileges of membership.

Data that contribute to the theme of Bandsmanship add more clarity to information that already has established what performing and listening to music mean to the nine narrators in this study. During both personal and group interaction with narrators within the context of interviews, I quickly learned that performing in the New Holland Band means a great deal more to them than a hobby or other leisure activity might mean. Data imply that the sense of community which they feel as members and the common aspiration to be musically excellent accounts for the high value they place on performing. I also sensed that the listening that they did as they played served as ongoing incentive to do their very best because they liked what they were hearing.
Being a Bandsman

The average amount of time that each participant in this study has played with the New Holland Band is 29.3 years. I was curious to learn what motivated these musicians to attend weekly rehearsals and play countless concerts for little or no remuneration for so many years. Their motivation seemed to fall into two categories: the sense of community that exists within the band; and the quality of the band’s musical performance. I begin this section with Jere’s comparison of what it feels like to play in a band versus playing in an orchestra. I follow Jere’s comments with participants’ thoughts on band as community and the significance of quality musical performance. Jere said:

I have looked upon myself as sort of a blue collar musician. . . . I’ve done a lot of orchestra playing. But being a brass player, . . . there is just something about band that I’ve always really enjoyed. It’s always been very lifting, and I think maybe it is a crusade that I [carried] most of my professional life. . . . A lot of musicians think that band is a dirty four-letter word. It’s not sophisticated enough. I don’t agree with them at all. If it’s blue collar, then it’s blue collar. I just love band music. . . . I think [band music] moves people. . . . I just find it very exciting – especially marches.

Band as Community

The first thing that struck me about participants’ thoughts on band membership was the recurrence of references to the mutual support and friendly conversation that exists within the New Holland Band. About this important social aspect of any community, A J said, “I love it! It’s wonderful. . . . I don’t know what it is about it. . . . It’s fun. I like being with the other people.” Kenneth added:
[The band] is a great experience for me because when you come to rehearsal, it’s like one big family. Everybody talks to me. We all talk together. We’re friendly. . . . [I am often asked], “Why do you do all these things?” I [answer], “Because I love to do it. And I love to be there.” . . . It’s just been a really marvelous experience. . . . It’s a big [cooperative effort.]

La Rue pointed out that, like all communities, people share common interests:

[The New Holland Band] is the only opportunity that we have to come together and make beautiful music. That’s really what it amounts to. . . . There are, I suppose, other bands in the area that I can go to, but this is the one I prefer, because it’s a great band. I think that’s why we’re all here. It’s a time that we can share our same interests. You can’t always do that with your next door neighbor.

The second thing that struck me was the commitment of these bandsmen to nurturing the younger members of the band. Bob said, “That is why the New Holland Band is what it is. We have worked with young people. We haven’t gotten old like some other bands have.” Jere added:

Our legacy in old age . . . is the young people in the New Holland Band. It’s a kick to see some of these young people come up here and [watch] them develop. . . . I’ve been in the band long enough [to] see middle-aged people still hanging in there. Now maybe they’ll bring their kids in.

Like all healthy communities, members teach one another. Bob pointed out that orienting new members to playing stylistically is not limited to the youngest of members. He recalled being coached by A J when he was a new member of about 60 years of age:

I thought that I had learned music, but I found [that] I [knew] more about dance band music than about concert band music. When I [began] with the New Holland Band, we
were playing at the Church of the Apostles, and I was sitting right next to A J. I was playing my bari sax. She said, “Bob, that’s short!” . . . She told me, and I learned right there.”

Another characteristic of a healthy community is the evidence of cooperation and teamwork among its members. Bob emphasized the importance of teamwork within the band. His story about learning about teamwork from his father is humorous but applicable to younger musicians who forget that being a bandsman is very different from being a solo musician:

When I was about 12, I was playing for about three or four years. I thought I was God’s gift. I played with the Sunday school orchestra. I was making a real pest of myself. I hated the conductor. I thought he was a nit. But, my dad laid into me and taught me right there and then that there’s such a thing as teamwork. There’s such a thing as being part of a group. . . . You don’t stand alone. You’re part of a group, and you’ve got to act as part of a group. I’ll never forget that, because that was one of the wildest times that I ever had with my dad. I still have the marks to prove it!

The Matter of Excellence

Jere expressed his belief that bands only become truly special when balanced repertoire and excellence in musical performance is priority. He explained:

[The New Holland Band] is a very with-it band. I think musically the band is always looking for something that might be new and good without forgetting what is old and proven. In other words, the standards, the marches - the basis of band literature. No band around here plays marches better than this band, but by the same token, [we’re] always looking for something fresh. This has to do with the leadership of the band. And that’s what keeps the band fresh.
Excellence. Yes. It’s sort of like competing in athletics. You never play to lose. I never played a horn [and] I never conducted to be bad. You always do your best. You have got to know regardless of what you are playing and what your conductor is doing to do your best.

Bob extends the concept of excellence by suggesting that it is all musicians striving for excellence simultaneously that elevated playing to a near spiritual experience, at least for him:

I think that the quality of the band to me is the thing that I appreciate. We can play the worst rehearsal you ever came about, and we play a performance [that’s] just completely different. It’s the way that the musicians put their heart and soul into what they’re doing. I appreciate that. I feel that we accomplish something, and we accomplish something because of that. People want to perform to the best of their abilities, and they do, for the most part, as physically able as we can do. It’s just a wonderful experience.

To me, it’s the unity you feel with a group that you’re playing with [that is special]. I think when you’re playing with the New Holland Band, the oneness that you have playing together to make the music as fine as you can possibly do it. . . . That’s as close as I can get to the spiritual part the New Holland Band plays with me.

Thomas mentioned the responsibility that accompanies bandmanship:

With music, I found out that if you want to get to do something, you’ve got to work at it. You have to work hard if you’re going to accomplish anything, and of course, discipline is part of that. Otherwise, you’ll never achieve [mastery].

Tom adds the learning dimension to Thomas’ observation of the work involved in playing well:

In playing music, every time I sit down to play a concert, . . . I learn something. . . .

Playing with the New Holland Band to me has been very educational. You go in there,
and you listen. A few friends tell me, “You learn to play music the way you have to learn it.” . . . Different conductors . . . want it differently. So, you learn it both ways. You have to use your ears at all times. It puts you on your toes. That’s all there is to it. I have no problems with that. That’s what I like! It’s a challenge, and I’ve enjoyed it.

Cross-Theme Summary

This section introduced additional data that further explain what performing music and listening to music mean to the nine musicians in this study. All members of the New Holland Band, the narrators in this inquiry described those things about playing in the band that were meaningful to them. Data suggest that one major factor in these musicians’ being bandsmen for so long is that the band functions as a community of which they feel a part. Like other healthy communities, the New Holland Band fosters friendship and mutual support, nurtures its youngest members, and maintains high standards that require continual learning by everyone, regardless of age or experience. Another factor that clearly emerged was participants’ respect for excellence and their desire to be a part of an organization that perpetuated music of the highest quality. What weaves these two factors together, of course, is the music: the musicians’ love for it and their desire to perform it together as a band.

Aging and Musical Performance

The fourth cross-theme that interconnects this study’s personal interview transcripts and focus group interview transcripts is Aging and Musical Performance. Data that inform this cross-theme further address how the musicians describe their aging process. Narrators’ accounts of what it feels like to be growing older and how they counteract the physical symptoms of aging further imply their progression toward individuation. This section of the chapter presents data on
how the participants interpreted their own aging and the aging of others. It concludes with additional data that reveal a striking paradox which musicians experience as they age.

*Thoughts on Aging: What It Feels Like to Grow Older*

Most of the participants were quite candid about growing older, although the only female participant was reluctant to say too much about it. A J said only, “How did I get this old? I can’t be this old. . . . When I feel like I should be taking a nap instead of being out running around, I realize that I’m getting older.” Charlie questioned the positive spin that the media places on aging by commenting:

I don’t think [these are] “The Golden Years,” as they say. When you see an advertisement for some aging thing, and you see the people, and they’re only about 40 or so (chuckle). . . . [Older] people aren’t kept busy. . . . They don’t have anything to do. I think that’s one of the [problems]. You see so many people like that, and then when you go and play in [retirement] homes, you see them, too. And when [I] realize that I myself am as old as these people.

Like Charlie, several other participants do not feel as old as their chronological years and clarified why they believed this to be so. Tom said:

I feel young at heart. I really do. . . . I don’t sit down in the chair and mope and grope and listen to TV all day long and all night long. No, I’d rather be on the move. . . . I am motivated. I’m doing something.

Clarence agreed and said:

Being a couch potato, in my opinion, is not the way to go. I keep very busy . . . especially with the New Holland Band [which] helps to keep me young. [Playing in the band] helps in my continued association with the young and old. . . . There is never a dull moment for
me. I sometimes wonder how I had time to work and do all the other chores I [had] to do. . . . I’ve always maintained that I like to keep enough on my schedule that I can’t do everything that I want to do, but I have a desire to attain a lot of different things in my retirement. . . . You never get old. Whenever anybody asks me how old I am, I say, “I don’t know. I’m just 93 years young.” You just have to [use] positive thinking.

Kenneth explained:

I always read, “Keep yourself happy, and you keep your health.” I try to do that. . . . I don’t think I’m doing anything any differently. . . . I’m doing just as much now as I did in [my] 30’s, 40’s, 50’s, and so forth. . . . And really, I don’t feel any stress over [getting older]. I feel great about it.

Thomas added:

I don’t feel that much different [from] when I was 30. . . . It’s fun to be able to do whatever you want. . . . But, the lack of challenge. One of the problems is – well- what do you do with the day? You tend to get into a rut. . . . I work with Hospice. I visit a gentleman in the local nursing home, and I’m struck by how people just sit around and look at each other. . . . It’s just sad to see. That last part of living is not very much fun. They have nothing to talk about. . . . [I] keep active. [I] volunteer. I exercise. That really comes in handy so [I] don’t fall apart completely. . . . If you keep active and [maintain] contact with other people, then life’s not quite such a bore.

Bob offered:

I think it’s important for people to have another interest other than [work]. I think in that way, [aging] is different for me because I did that, and a lot of people don’t plan for retirement. It’s all work and nothing else. . . . The [discussion] when you get out of the
music field is [about] a lot of aches and pains. . . . There’ve been operations and sickness. . . . “Oh, I was in the hospital last week.” “I had to go to the doctor today.” Or, “I had an X-ray,” or something like this. There’s a lot of discussion . . . [having] to do with physical situations.

Thomas shared insight on why he believed older people discuss their aches and pains so much:

When you worked, you had your work to talk about and what was going on. Now, you don’t have that. You don’t have kids. The kids are elsewhere. You’ll talk about them for five minutes. So, aches and pains . . . is a favorite subject. Doctors’ visits, etc., etc.

Of all of the participants, La Rue was most emphatic about resisting the symptoms of aging. He said:

I am 73 years old, and I don’t feel 73. I think it’s mostly because I don’t let myself feel like I’m 73. . . . I just don’t let myself get old. I just don’t. . . . You only make of your old age what you want to, and I’ve decided that I am not going to end up in a nursing home in a wheelchair, sitting out in the hallway outside my room waiting to die. I am not going to do that. I’m just not going to do that. I’m going to fight to the bitter end. If the Good Lord strikes me down today, I’ll die. But, I’m just not going to give up. . . . I have a responsibility to try to keep physically and mentally fit so that I don’t have to be cared for by somebody else. That is a big aim in my life. I want to be as healthy as I can and keep my mind alert so that the day I go, it’s not because I’m lying in a hospital.

In dialoguing about what it feels like to grow older, a majority of participants convinced me of their intent to maintain a vibrant life. In fact, the initial response to my follow-up on this topic at the second focus group interview was a successful attempt by Jere to elicit a laugh from his fellow musicians. I asked, “What’s it like [to be getting older]? What’s it feel
like?” He said, “None of us really know.” A J added, “As my mom always used to say, old was ten years older than she was. However old she was, she wasn’t old yet. Ten years later, she’d be old. So, [in answer to your question], none of us are old yet!” On a more serious note, several musicians shared their opinion that many older people do not have enough interests, activities, or responsibilities to remain actively engaged in society. I sensed that participants’ observation of people in their own families, neighborhoods, or others whom they encountered in other contexts who fit into this category of the elderly was troubling to them. I also sensed a determination on the part of most interviewees to maintain their current level of activity as long as possible.

Music’s Positive Effect on Aging

Four participants saw that performing music influenced their aging process in a positive way. Clarence who is 93 suggested:

Music is the spice of life. Life would become dull without it. . . . [Music] gives me a well-rounded lifestyle. Everything put together helps to keep me young and healthy. The time to me is not boring and passes quickly. The older you get, the faster the time goes.

Kenneth added, “I don’t think [life] would have meant as much as it does to me this present day at my age [without music]. . . . I think music is a great encouragement.” Thomas talked about the positive influence that music has had on both his physical and mental health:

Playing the clarinet [is] . . . an exercise of sorts. Certainly, your stomach [muscles are] stronger than [they] would be otherwise. I suppose the challenge of continuing to read the music keeps your mind – at least one part of it – active. I don’t know if [music] slows down aging or not. . . . [But] it gives me a pleasant outlook and some challenge to keep working at it.
La Rue specifically articulated how music keeps him mentally fit and his arthritis, in check:

[Music] keeps me mentally alert. Every day, I sight read. Every day, I’ll open up something that I didn’t read, and I’ll sight read it. I might do that for ten to fifteen minutes. And every day, I’ll go over the two solos that I’m working on. And every day, I’ll open up my Arbans book, and I’ll read scales, and I’ll read characteristic studies. . . . Every day. It keeps me sharp. And besides that, the one thing I do have is arthritis in my fingers, and it’s not getting any better. I think I am helping because I keep my fingers moving [when I play].

Three of the participants specified how playing their instruments improved one or more aspects of their personal health. Two of them cited music’s contribution to their physical well being; two, their mental acumen; and three, their emotional outlook on life.

_Aging’s Impact on Musical Performance_

This section introduces data that show both the positive and negative impact that aging has on participants’ abilities to perform on their instruments. Thomas who is 81 described obstacles that aging has presented to him as a musician by saying, “I don’t think my mind works as well as it used to….And my tongue doesn’t [work as well] for sure because of that stroke I had. . . .” Bob who is 79 added:

Breathing is a problem. I am having real problems doing four-measure phrases on the bari sax, which is too bad. That is one of the reasons I am thinking of retiring, because it’s just getting too tough. And the weight of the horn is another thing. Carrying that thing up the steps all the time. It’s about 40 pounds. . . . The ear I think [is a problem]. . . . Once the hearing goes, your intonation is going to go. So you have to watch that, and that’s another thing I think I concern myself with, because I used to feel [that I had] very
good pitch. I am beginning to wonder now. . . . And of course the eye sight. I am having my first cataract operation next week.

La Rue who is 73 recalled a specific incident when aging caught up with him as he played a solo and further explained decline in certain technical playing skills:

   The last time I played . . . right before I left to go up to New York, I got cotton mouth and did not do a very good job on that solo. I don’t know why that happened, other than age. . . . It takes me a little longer to catch a tricky rhythm than it did at one time, and I know it’s because of my age. I’m not quite as fast. I notice in my tonguing, I’m not as fast, and I know that’s because I’m 73 years old. But in my everyday life, I’m not 73.

   Two participants could identify advantages that aging brings to musicianship. In contrast to the playing difficulties that he has been experiencing, Bob stated:

   I think your abilities change. Marlin [Houck, Musical Director Emeritus of the New Holland Band,] said it best once [when] he said that, “You know the young players can play: fingers work great. Oh, they just move over those keys . . . but, they don’t know style. It is the veteran player that understands how something should be played.”

   Jere agreed with Bob by adding:

   Maybe long phrasing - the physical end of playing- can be effected. . . . Maybe the fingers don’t move as fast, but one thing that I think . . . can’t help but come with aging is an understanding [of musical] interpretation. You don’t have to explain a lot about style to a senior musician or an older musician. It’s like they’ve been there and done it. Just tell them what you want, and it’s done.

   Conducting, believe it or not - if you can still stand on the podium - chances are you will get better with age like a rare wine. Your insight into scores can’t help but get
better. You hope that your people skills get better. You can identify with the band a little bit better. Your conducting techniques, especially rehearsal techniques get better, especially if you have been a player and you’ve been in the trenches. . . . I think you get a better insight the older you get.

The assertion that with age comes an understanding of musical style and a capacity to interpret that style so that musical performance is consistent with the genre and the composer’s intent sets up a cruel paradox: As music reading, articulation, finger dexterity, and breathing succumb to the physical symptoms of aging, an instrumentalist’s musicianship is at its peak. This paradox is certainly unfortunate, but with regular – preferably daily practice, the playing challenges such as those that were identified by Thomas, Bob, and La Rue can be contained.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this research was to determine the role that music played in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. Three research questions guided this inquiry: How do older performing musicians make meaning of life experiences? What do performing music and listening to music mean to older performing musicians? And, how do older performing musicians describe their aging process? This chapter both identified and interpreted four findings or cross-themes that emerged in the cross-analysis of research data; it also linked these findings to the aforementioned research questions. Voices of participants were used to support each of the cross-themes as they were explained and interpreted. Preceding the reporting of findings was a participant group profile, appearing in both narrative and table form.

The first cross-theme that arose from analysis was Early Mentors and Experiences with Music. Data that suggested this cross-theme contributed to answering how the older musicians in this study make meaning of life experiences. Six participants attributed their life-long
commitment to performing to at least one teacher or conductor who was a significant influence on them when they were young. Three participants identified the mentorship that they had received playing in a Sunday school orchestra and/or a community band while growing up as an additional positive learning experience. Of the four cross-themes, perhaps this finding best illustrates how music provided continuity in the lives of the narrators. The narrators, in turn, provided continuity to the community bands and ensembles of which they were a part as young apprentice musicians.

The second cross-theme that emerged was The Older Musician and Spirituality. Data that pointed to this finding contributed to answering both what performing music and listening to music mean to the participants and how the participants describe their aging process. Several narrators cited occasions when, as performers, they experienced the link between music and the spiritual in a profound way. Additionally, data were presented that illuminated how participants’ thoughts on time, life purpose, and legacy have evolved during their adult years. These data suggest a maturing spirituality and progress toward the transformative stage of individuation.

The third cross-theme that arose was Bandsmanship. Data that suggested this finding further contributed to answering what performing music and listening to music mean to this study’s nine participants. The musicians shared their interpretation of band culture by discussing those things about being in a band which they valued. Data revealed that participants’ longstanding membership in the New Holland Band could be attributed to the sense of community which the band generates and the organization’s commitment to excellence in musical performance.

The fourth cross-theme that emerged was Aging and Musical Performance. Data that advanced this theme further clarified how the older instrumentalists in this study describe their
aging process. The majority of participants insisted that they do not feel as old as their chronological age indicated them to be. Therefore, they intend to maintain their current life style as long as possible. Other data showed interviewees’ acknowledging that the symptoms of aging were having adverse effects on their performing ability. However, data also indicated that the routine of practicing and performing was helping participants to maintain their physical, mental, and emotional health. Clearly, data supporting this cross-theme suggest that the continuity of performing contributes to the narrators’ vitality and engagement in life. And, their obvious passion for what is personally relevant – performing music – further suggests progress toward individuation.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to determine the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of older performing musicians. To guide this qualitative investigation, three research questions functioned as parameters and focus for the study:

1. How do older performing musicians make meaning of life experiences?
2. What do performing music and listening to music mean to older performing musicians?
3. How do older performing musicians describe their aging process?

Earlier in this thesis, I drew attention to the paucity of research on (a) meaning making in general, (b) the relationship between music making and meaning making, and (c) meaning making in old age. This qualitative study is unique in that it focused strictly on how music influenced meaning making. It is also unique in that the participant sample was adults over 70 years of age who were generally in good health. Because all participants are members of the same community band, data provided an unusual glimpse into the culture of bands from the perspective of musicians whose average membership in the group is just short of 30 years.

The design for this inquiry resulted from my lifelong passion for music and my interest in studying whether or not lifelong involvement in performing music can help to ensure a happier, healthier old age. Data analysis revealed that music was integral in shaping the lives of the participants and the meaning they now assign to life events, including the phenomenon of growing older. The findings generated by this study suggest implications for practitioners who work in not only adult education, but also gerontology and music education.
In this final chapter, I first relate the research themes and findings to relevant literature. Then, I draw connections between this study’s findings and the theoretical framework. I follow this by addressing how the study results suggest implications for both theory and practice in the fields of adult education, gerontology, and music education. Next, I explore implications for future research that emerged from this inquiry. I conclude the chapter with a short summary of how this research project has broadened my understanding and knowledge of not only the focus of this study, but also the role of qualitative researcher.

Discussion of Themes

In this section, I explore the themes that emerged from participants’ stories in light of relevant literature. I organize this discussion around the connections between and among themes that were identified in the epilogue to Chapter 4.

Bob’s theme is Perfectionism. Thomas’ theme is Challenge. Their stories speak to the duality of music by elaborating on both the challenge music presents in performance and the beauty of music when it is performed well, whether live or in a recording studio. Thielemann (2001) writes about music’s duality when she discusses both its rational and transcendental characteristics. She further explains that these characteristics are reciprocal. Both Bob and Thomas describe in their stories the challenges that performing music presents; this is the rational side of music about which Thielemann (2001) writes. For Bob, he sometimes feels that he does not play well enough and grades himself a “C.” For Thomas, he thrives on difficult music and, as a result, seeks out opportunities to play chamber music. Both musicians also describe the beauty of music: Bob in band performance that goes well and Thomas in beautiful choral music. This is what Thielemann (2001) refers to as the transcendental side of music.
A J whose theme is Initiative and Charlie whose theme is Perseverance lived very different life stories but share a great love of music. In fact, their love of music is so strong that it served as motivation for A J to become an accomplished pianist in spite of her parents’ financial limitations and Charlie to overcome what most people would call insurmountable injuries to his hands and fingers. Both musicians have experienced what P. Palmer (1998) calls the “grace of great things” (p. 107). A J’s and Charlie’s experiences with music suggest to all of us that we can experience this “grace . . . ” if we are open to receiving and internalizing it.

Like Charlie’s experience with physical challenges that followed his injury, Tom whose theme is Resilience was born with a spinal defect that forced him as a young adult to adapt his goal of playing in the Glenn Miller Orchestra. When he was rejected for military service, Tom chose to become a musical instrument repair technician. Clarence whose theme is Refuge relied on music to balance his work life. Even now at age 93, he uses music to help him keep problems in perspective. La Rue whose theme is Change was involved in music to some degree throughout his career in music merchandising. However, performing for him for 32 years was sporadic at best. These four musicians’ experiences are congruent with Atchley’s (1999) assertion that continuity of thinking and lifestyle can be a coping strategy when adults of any age, but especially older adults, are faced with change. Loving and performing music inspired Charlie to undergo surgeries and to practice until he could cover the holes of a soprano clarinet again. Tom learned a music-related, important trade to support his family but was resolved that he would continue to perform whenever and wherever he could. Music helped Clarence to cope with pressures he experienced in a stressful banking career. And, knowing that he could perform and would perform from time to time carried La Rue through several career changes. These
musicians’ stories are testimony that continuity of thinking and activity is a powerful coping mechanism that can sustain humans through change and difficult times.

Like Tom, both Jere whose theme is Calling and Kenneth whose theme is Belonging told stories that were grounded in spirituality. These three musicians seem to share Missine’s (2004) observation that “real life is meeting other people, helping fellow human beings, sharing what we have and what we think by loving and working” (p. 116). Tom at 83 and Kenneth at 84 both work by playing music at every opportunity. Tom said, “Music – That’s God’s gift. . . . If the good Lord didn’t want me to play this long, He’d of [taken] it away from me years back.” Kenneth looks to God for affirmation that he should continue to work as a musician. What he values perhaps more than the music making is the relationships that he has forged with fellow musicians. About the relationships, Kenneth said, . . . “It’s like one big family.” Consistent with the theme of Calling, Jere believes that God called him to be a conductor. He explains, “This is what the good Lord wanted [me] to do. . . . This is what I am here for.”

Jung (1933), whose writing has informed contemporary writers (Atchley, 1997; King, 2004; Missine, 2006) on the topic of spirituality in old age, advances the idea that the second half of life should be devoted to attending to the self, particularly the spiritual self. Atchley (1997) proposes that our youth-oriented culture makes it possible for older people to live a slower life, thereby freeing them to focus within. With the nine participants as my frame of reference, I disagree to some extent with Atchley. I did not observe that any study participants have an obligation-free, slower-paced life because they are older. Instead, I saw nine people who were actively engaged in music activities about which they feel passionate. I also saw people who seem to have made a lot of progress toward self-knowledge and an ageless sense of self that
Kaufman (1986) describes. So, despite their active lifestyles and full schedules, these participants, I believe, are attending to self, including the spiritual dimension.

**Discussion of Cross-Themes**

Four cross-themes or findings emerged from this study’s data that add to current understanding of how music influences meaning making for older performing musicians. First, mentors and early encounters with music shaped the lives of the participants in this study. Second, the commingling of context, repertoire, performers, and audience created musical experiences for participants that were profound, and for some of them, spiritual. Third, band is viewed by participants as a community in which they feel valued for their contribution to excellence. Fourth, participants either do not feel as old as their chronological age, or they manage symptoms of aging so as not to have them interfere with the continuity of their preferred lifestyle.

*Mentors and Early Encounters With Music*

The nine narrators all were influenced by either individual teachers, ensemble playing experiences with older musicians when they were growing up, or a combination of these. Three narrators also had positive encounters with music prior to attending first grade. As shown in Table 2, each narrator named one or more music teachers in partial response to my question about the people who were most influential in their lives. Interview data suggest that the relationships that unfolded years ago between this study’s participants and their teachers is what each of them remembers more so than their teachers’ pedagogical skills.

How teachers functioned as mentors to shape the development of this study’s participants as instrumentalists is validated by both Daloz (1999) and P. Palmer (1998) who draw attention to
### Table 2

*Participants’ Mentors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Individual Mentors</th>
<th>Ensemble Mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A J</td>
<td>Piano teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Math teacher</td>
<td>Miscellaneous dance bands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saxophone teacher</td>
<td>Sunday school orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Clarinet teacher (2)</td>
<td>Sunday school orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College professor (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence</td>
<td>Clarinet teacher</td>
<td>Lancaster Military Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Little Symphony Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lancaster Symphony Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jere</td>
<td>Trumpet teacher</td>
<td>Annville Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College professor (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth</td>
<td>Drum teacher</td>
<td>Wyomissing Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conductor (5)</td>
<td>Miscellaneous bands/orchestras (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Rue</td>
<td>Music kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>Lykens Liberty Hose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocal music teacher</td>
<td>Firemen’s Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior-senior high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>instrumental music instructor (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Individual Mentors</th>
<th>Ensemble Mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Clarinet teacher (3)</td>
<td>Civic Orchestra, Washington, DC Agricultural Symphony, Washington, DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Clarinet teacher Flute teacher</td>
<td>Sunday school orchestra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the significance of the relationship between mentor and mentee. Daloz (1999) writes that “in relationship, we both form and heal what we come again and again to name our self” (p. 244). P. Palmer (1998) implicitly suggests that relationship means more than whatever content bonds mentor and student when he advances that a mentor’s influence lies in the capacity to arouse the truth within the mentee.

To complement the nurturing of individual teachers, group mentoring is fundamental to young musicians’ performing successfully in ensembles, including both orchestras and bands. Bringing young musicians into adult bands has always been critical to bands’ survival. But, the benefits are reciprocal, for playing one’s instrument with others requires additional skills that can only be learned in a group context. As shown in Table 2, all but one narrator as a young, apprentice instrumentalist was mentored by older musicians in one or more adult instrumental ensembles.

The tradition of bandsmen’s mentoring younger musicians is documented by Rehrig (2006) in his book on the first 150 years of the New Holland Band and was described by Houck (cited in Rehrig, p. x) who, like the narrators in this study, was encouraged as a young musician by those much older than himself. Rehrig (2006) punctuates his text with an abundance of
figures, many of which are reproductions of photographs of early bands. These figures suggest that mentoring of young musicians by seasoned adult musicians has been an ongoing practice in individual band communities for more than a century. Rehrig (2006) includes a picture of an 1880 band that clearly shows that one of the group’s fifteen members was a mere boy.

A young musician embedded in a mature ensemble observing, listening to, and emulating the experienced players epitomizes the participation perspective on experiential learning that is defined by Fenwick (2000). In this perspective, there is no other avenue that would impart similar knowledge and skill other than participating within the context that must be learned and ultimately mastered. All narrators in this study but A J as youth were embedded in a mature ensemble and thus learned the nuances of ensemble playing through participation with veteran musicians. In addition to illustrating the participation perspective of experiential learning, a band provides a meaningful model of social constructivism at its best: young people interacting with older people who understand the language of making music in an ensemble. These social processes are mediated by each band’s unique history and the culture that has unfolded within the group (Stage, 1998). Some of the eight narrators who as young musicians played in mature ensembles volunteered interesting anecdotes about what it was like to be an adolescent performing with musicians who were old enough to be their parents or grandparents. Several of these anecdotes are included in the two previous chapters. The fact that narrators remembered these interactions after so many decades further elevates the importance of mentoring to the ongoing learning process of performing musicians.
The Older Musician and Spirituality

During the course of this study, participants unveiled their spiritual dimension by sharing their peak music listening experiences, their philosophies of time, and their thoughts on the purpose of life in old age. Three interviewees were able to reconstruct performance episodes that they deemed to have been spiritual experiences.

Seven of the narrators regularly listen to music. Three of them vividly described how hearing music at one time in their adult lives had affected them so profoundly that the experience will forever be a part of them. Their listening experiences are validated by Maslow (1971) and Bogdan (2003) who state that hearing music can initiate peak experiences for some people that are characterized by total absorption in the present and thus, a detachment from time and place. Although not specifically addressing music’s effect on older listeners, three authors affirm the significance of music and how powerful it is when we hear it again after a period of time has passed. According to Saliers and Saliers (2005) and Tisdell (2006), the temporal characteristic of music assists humans in spiraling back and making new meaning of the old. Jere, more than any other participant, discussed the temporal characteristic of music and old songs coming back in new arrangements when he referenced how much he enjoyed performing new arrangements of standards, calling each one, as did one of his former mentors, an “old tune with a new set of clothes.”

Participants’ thoughts on time insinuated a gradual shift from worrying about the future to a capacity to live more in the present, appreciating what each day affords. Jung (1933) writes about this change in priorities when he stresses that old age must “have a significance of its own” (p. 122) that emanates from looking inward and striving toward individuation. Furthermore, narrators revealed a self-acknowledged shift over the span of their adulthood from being
obsessed with achieving success to focusing more on others and their needs. This evolution in worldview seems to be consistent with the transition from the third stage of individuation, or education, in which humans find their place in the world, to the fourth stage of individuation which is transformation. In this final stage of individuation, persons purposefully work on a relationship with self and concentrate on what is personally relevant, which ranges from family and friends to social justice issues, depending upon the individual (Jung, 1933). Missine (2004) builds on Jung’s (1933) writing on the meaning of old age by advancing that its significance is found in relationships, especially those in which older persons help others. Narrators in this study embraced the concept of the significance of relationships as evidenced in their reference to their feelings about belonging to the New Holland Band. A J, Bob, and Jere all consider their mentoring and helping younger players in the band as part of their legacy.

Before moving to the next finding, I reiterate that the term spirituality was confusing for participants. Still, several stories that narrators told about occasions when they performed that were unique and, to some extent ineffable, bore characteristics that are consistent with those of a spiritual experience as described by Tisdell (2005): symbol, the element of surprise, the awesome feeling of wholeness, and the sense of connectedness with others and a higher power. La Rue’s playing experience on Easter morning in Winston-Salem, Jere’s conducting of a programmatic band work based on the sinking of a World War II vessel, and A J’s description of the significance of one clap of thunder after playing at a graveside service of a fellow bandsman are the most poignant illustrations of narrators’ spiritual experiences. Thielemann (2001), A. Palmer (2006), and Tisdell (2006) all write about music as a conduit to the spiritual. Thielemann (2001) focuses on the spiritual reciprocity of music: it can express the spiritual and it can also serve to arouse the spiritual. A. Palmer (2006) asserts that music can contribute to the evolution
of consciousness, an idea grounded in Jung and advanced by Maslow (1971). Tisdell (2006) writes about music’s ability to move people’s souls in the present, often by triggering a spiraling back to an earlier experience.

**Bandsmanship**

Each narrator in this study has played in the New Holland Band for an average of more than 29 years. Data attribute participants’ longevity as bandsmen to the sense of community and commitment to excellence that have been generated within the organization over time. The spirit of community and sense of identity that these musicians have enjoyed as band members validates Dewey’s (1934) assertion that the best art reflects the life experience of community members. Although Dewey writes about the arts in general, his words are applicable to just music or in this case, band music, specifically. He writes that “works of art . . . that are widely enjoyed in a community are signs of a unified collective life. . . . [Works of art] are also marvelous aids in the creation of such a life . . .” (p. 81). In keeping with Dewey’s view of the relationship between community arts-makers and the community that supports them, Olson (2005), whose art of choice is music, explains that although music is a way to perceive the world, it is unusual in today’s society to discover anyone who actually views the world through the lens of music. The participants in this study are unique, for they appear to do that. But, how influential they and their fellow bandsmen have been in bringing the community of New Holland along with them in embracing music either as a way of knowing or, as Dewey (1934) advances, a means to achieving community unity is a subject that is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

A few authors suggest that self-knowledge and acceptance are prerequisite to generating a sense of community. Jordan (1999) explains that because music is self-expression even in ensemble performance, the individual musician is obliged to have a self to express. P. Palmer
(1998) adds that the individual must be in communion with self before he or she can foster a spirit of community within a classroom, or in this case, within a community band. Participants in this study confirm what both Jordan and P. Palmer espouse in that they appeared to be grounded in a clear sense of self, exhibiting characteristics of self-actualization and authenticity as evidenced by themes that emerged from their individual stories – themes such as initiative, challenge, and resilience.

Atchley’s (1999) continuity theory, specifically the element of external patterns, is clearly at work, too, in helping to understand the reasons for participants’ membership longevity with the New Holland Band. By way of review, the external patterns component of continuity theory addresses activities, relationships, and living environments that define a person’s uniqueness. As persons age, it is the continuity of familiar activities that counteract the negative symptoms that all people experience to some degree as they grow older. For narrators in this study, performing in a band has been the activity that has defined them and, to a large extent, has helped them to compensate for any adverse obstacles brought on by the symptoms of normal aging.

Fenwick (2000) writes about the co-emergence perspective of experiential learning theory which centers on relationships, especially within systems in which context and people are inseparable, just as they are within a band. The older musicians in this study exemplify this perspective in their commitment to mentor the younger generation of bandsmen within the context of the New Holland Band just as they learned individual and group performance techniques from mature ensemble musicians years ago.
Aging and Musical Performance

Narrators openly discussed what it feels like to be growing older. After one participant quipped that none of them really knew what it was like, a majority of the narrators talked about the importance of balancing work with other interests throughout adulthood to ensure meaning and purpose in life after the world of work. In considering the data which each participant contributed during both personal and focus group interviews, it seems logical to conclude that all nine musicians meet the three characteristics that Rowe and Kahn (1998) use to define successful aging. In general, all participants seem to manifest the first characteristic, in that they appear at low risk of disease and disease-related disability. This is not to say that all participants are free of chronic ailments that are common as people get older. Narrators also meet the second characteristic of high mental and physical function by virtue of living independently and managing their own affairs. As was explained in Chapter 2, the characteristics of successful aging are hierarchical. Therefore, because participants are free of disease and disease-related disability and function well mentally and physically, they can be actively engaged in life – the third characteristic of successful aging. What sets participants in this study apart from some other older adults who are equally healthy mentally and physically is that they choose to engage in life. According to Rowe and Kahn (1998), being active is not the choice of all healthy older people. In fact, the authors write that “many older people, for many reasons, do much less than they are capable of doing. Successful aging goes beyond potential; it involves activity” (p. 40).

Missinne (2006) joins Rowe and Kahn (1998) in stating that the best activities for older people are those that revolve around relationships. Bands are all about relationships that emerge from a shared passion for the great thing of music. Coffman’s (2002) literature review of seniors’ participation in bands reveals that subjects in numerous studies defined quality of life by social
interactions, sense of personal accomplishment, and rewarding activities. Therefore, it can be concluded that the social interaction that band participation provides was very important to those subjects’ quality of life. Similarly, by choosing to continue New Holland Band membership, an activity that has been a constant source of challenge and enjoyment for many years, the older musicians in this study confirm the findings of Rowe and Kahn (1998) in the MacArthur study, the findings in studies reviewed by Coffman (2002), and the recommendations of Missinne (2006) that successful aging is an outcome of relationships that are shaped within productive social interactions. Results of this inquiry suggest that the added dimension of music makes relationships formed within bands especially long-lasting and rewarding.

Continuity theory advances that the pursuit of the same meaningful activities throughout the life span provides a grounding that helps to sustain adults when they encounter particularly difficult life circumstances (Atchley, 1999). With performing music being the meaningful activity, this dimension of the continuity theory is evident in Charlie’s overcoming his hand injuries, Clarence’s and La Rue’s meeting their career challenges, and Tom’s surviving the early years of launching his own business.

Finally, data that shaped this cross-theme present both the positive and negative realities of performing music after the age of 70. Although musicianship is at its peak for a mature musician, symptoms of aging such as arthritis negatively impact upon technique. Barton’s (2004) study, though conducted with only one participant, found that age-related changes may create challenges for a performer. Her finding is confirmed by Bob, Jere, La Rue, and Thomas, all of whom shared physical symptoms of aging that were negatively affecting their playing technique, thereby necessitating adaptations on their part.
Findings and the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical grounding for this inquiry is composed of experiential learning theory from the field of adult education and continuity theory from the gerontological subfield of social gerontology. Music was also included in the framework because of its capacity to influence the human emotions, human spirit, and the unconscious self. The purpose of this section is to show and discuss the connection between this study’s findings and the theoretical framework. Since the four findings represent a synthesis of data, I refer to specific data rather than findings to ensure that linkage to the framework is clear. Because music is an integral aspect of this study’s results, it is mentioned in that context, only, and not addressed as a separate part of the theoretical framework.

Experiential Learning Theory

Data gathered in this study either parallel or illustrate four of the five contemporary perspectives on experiential learning theory that comprise Fenwick’s (2000) typology that was summarized in Chapter 2. The first parallel is evident between data and the reflection perspective (Fenwick, 2000), the crux of which is the assimilation of a new experience to the old and the accommodation of the old experience to the new. Tom described his own experience with this perspective when he said, “Every time I sit down to play a concert, . . . I learn something. . . . You learn to play music the way you have to learn it. . . . Different conductors want it differently.” At 83, Tom has been playing with bands since he was in high school. Like the other bandsmen in this study, he brings prior learning of specific repertoire to rehearsal and, depending upon the conductor’s interpretation, assimilates and applies new learning to what he had learned before about specific pieces. This same process occurs whenever a musician or an ensemble performs an arrangement more than once. Because music flows through time never to be
replicated precisely the same way, those making the music mesh their prior performing experience with the new, thereby giving each performance its own unique nuance and energy.

A second parallel is apparent between data and the interference perspective (Fenwick, 2000). Essentially, this mode of experiential learning is much like the process of individuation (Jung, 1933), or reconciling the outer and inner worlds. Learning occurs in this perspective when the person attends to conflicts that arise when someone’s outer world and their inner world collide. An obvious clue that this important learning is transpiring is evidenced when people exhibit more concern for others than they do for themselves. Bob provides an example of this kind of experiential learning in describing the change in his worldview at midlife:

You hope that life is going to be an evolution from something to something higher. . . . Early in your life . . . you [are] self-centered. You’re the person in the middle of everything. As you move on, you realize . . . there are a lot of other people that live besides you and are just as important as you are. As a result, you become more of a giver.

The interference perspective is further illustrated in participants’ commitment to young family members and young band members that was advanced as data in the previous chapter.

Of all of the perspectives in Fenwick’s (2000) typology, data from this study most strongly exemplify the participation perspective. In this perspective, learning is grounded in the situation in which the person is participating. Therefore, learning is channeled into working on improving those skills needed to meaningfully contribute to the activity in which that particular learning community is engaged (Fenwick, 2000). All nine individual stories that comprise Chapter 4 explicitly show individual dedication to developing musical performance skills over time. The Bandsmanship cross-theme that is explored in Chapter 5 demonstrates how individual learning powerfully becomes synergistic when combined with that of others in a learning
community of common interests and goals. La Rue summarizes this phenomenon well by saying that the New Holland Band “is the only opportunity that we have to come together and make beautiful music. That’s really what it amounts to. . . . I think that’s why we’re all here. It’s a time that we can share our same interests. . . .” Jere adds the dimension of ongoing learning for excellence when he says, “Excellence. Yes. It’s sort of like competing in athletics. You never play to lose. I never played a horn, [and] I never conducted to be bad. You always do your best.” Thomas emphasizes the significance of work ethic by saying that “you have to work hard if you’re going to accomplish anything. . . . Otherwise, you’ll never achieve [mastery].”

Finally, when the context is performing music as an ensemble, the fifth perspective of Fenwick’s (2000) typology, co-emergence, nicely integrates with the participation perspective just discussed. This is because the co-emergence perspective addresses relationships that unfold in a learning environment in which the learner and context cannot be separated. Additionally, each learner’s knowledge and skills co-emerge with other learners’ knowledge and skills (Fenwick, 2000). A band rehearsal or performance demonstrates this perspective well, for individual musicians combine their performance skills with others’ to create music that will be meaningful to them as performers and to those people who may one day listen as an audience.

Continuity Theory

Continuity theory (Atchley, 1999) is based upon the premise that both adult development and adaptation to life circumstances are continuous. The alignment of this study’s findings with continuity theory begins with this premise, for musical development has been continuous in the lives of this study’s narrators since childhood.

Atchley (1999) wanted his theory to demonstrate both that (a) a continuity of thinking and lifestyle is essential to adult development in midlife and thereafter, and (b) continuity is a
coping strategy that older adults employ to weather change. In discussing growing older, many of this study’s narrators shared that they are always doing rather than sitting. Clarence who is 93 expressed his secret to longevity in this way: “I keep very busy. . . . I like to keep enough on my schedule that I can’t do everything that I want to do. . . .” Both Clarence’s and La Rue’s personal stories confirm Atchley’s assertion that continuity is a coping strategy. Clarence used the activity of playing clarinet in the New Holland Band to help him cope with stresses at work. For La Rue, music was a constant in his life during those stressful times when he chose to make job changes that required relocating his family.

Another underlying assumption of continuity theory is that people learn continuously from life experiences and at some point make deliberate choices as to the knowledge, skills, and activities that they intend to pursue developing further through ongoing learning (Atchley, 1999). In the case of the participants in this study, all of them chose to continue in performing music. Doing so required ongoing study and practice, and thus, a lifelong commitment of time and resources. Furthermore, this choice for many of the participants led to still other music-related activities, two of which are teaching private lessons on their instrument of choice and becoming avid listeners and collectors of recorded music.

Continuity theory is comprised of four elements that were defined in Chapter 2: internal patterns, external patterns, developmental goals, and adaptive capacity (Atchley, 1999). The element of internal patterns speaks to the uniqueness of each person, for it encompasses self-concept, personal goals, moral framework, attitudes, values, beliefs, and preferences. The element of external patterns addresses social roles, relationships, activities, and living environments. Taking a holistic view of an individual’s internal and external patterns provides a fairly comprehensive picture of what a person is like and what makes that person unique.
Through their stories, narrators gave us a glimpse of the traits that make them unique individuals. Additionally, most narrators discussed their career aspirations as young adults by spiraling back to that time. By doing this, they were sharing information on their developmental goals. All narrators strove to be successful in their careers and successful as instrumentalists. The fourth element, adaptive capacity, describes the learning process for making good decisions, often based upon experiences that bring the highest degree of satisfaction in life. For all narrators, making music is high on their list of activities that bring joy, challenge, and fulfilling relationships.

Implications for Theory and Practice

In this section, I address how the results present implications for both theory and practice in the three fields that informed this inquiry. I begin with implications for experiential learning theory and continuity theory, the study’s theoretical framework. I follow that discussion with implications for theory and practice in adult education. Then, I propose implications that are interdisciplinary.

Implications for Experiential Learning Theory

According to Fenwick (2006) and D. Kolb (1984), the ideal experiential learning experience evidences a synthesis of cognition, behavior, and perception. Experiences in music fit this definition of the ideal, for music elicits human potential that exceeds the cognitive domain. But, before explaining how music stretches human learning beyond cognition, it is important to realize that making music effectively engages higher order thinking every time musicians perform. Specifically, musicians apply previously-acquired musical knowledge and technique to learning new repertoire. As they perform, they analyze and interpret the symbol system and language of music. Furthermore, they synthesize what they are hearing from other
musicians to determine how to play their own part in a manner that will contribute positively to the overall effect of the music. Finally, they evaluate what they did well and what requires further practice on their part. Beyond activating the cognitive domain to its fullest capacity, music powerfully stimulates the affective domain, potentially triggering the imagination or nurturing spirituality. Out of these often unconscious perceptions emerge creative behaviors that are expressed in singing, playing, dancing, or composing. These expressions are appropriate for giving voice to what we are perceiving emotionally and spiritually, because spoken words often fall short as a means for communicating our perceptions (Dirkx, 2006).

Perhaps the concept of artistic ways of knowing that was discussed in Chapter 2 (Lawrence, 2005) is a first step in adult educators’ realizing what music and other arts can accomplish when made the focus of a learning activity. Although Fenwick’s (2000) contemporary typology forces educators beyond the traditional understanding of experiential learning theory, it leaves making the connection between the five perspectives and arts experiences to chance. My earlier analysis of this study’s results in light of Fenwick’s typology shows a compelling congruence between four of the five perspectives within the typology and study findings. Therefore, it seems appropriate to deduce from this that music is a way of knowing and therefore, worthy of consideration by adult educators who want to make their practice relevant to all students. Works that build upon Artistic Ways of Knowing: Expanded Opportunities for Teaching and Learning (Lawrence, 2005) by connecting each art to adult education theory may be the best next step in garnering more interest in integrating arts experiences into the adult education classroom.
Implications for Continuity Theory

I now move to continuity theory, focusing in this section on the limitations of the theory as it applies to research in general. First, continuity theory was designed to be a theory applicable to longitudinal data. It worked well in helping to frame my study because the activity of study – instrumental music – was clearly one in which participants had engaged over time. It would be more difficult to apply the theory to studying the effects of music listening and even singing because these activities are more likely to be sporadic and ones that people can more easily stop for a time and then pick up again with relative ease.

Second, as Atchley (1999) concedes, “Continuity is not a magic prescription for ‘successful aging’” (p. 155). This is especially true for older people who try to remain engaged in work or an activity when they have functional limitations. People who balance their pre-retirement years with several hobbies and interests ensure that they will have meaningful choices of how to spend their time when they finally do retire. During this study, Bob shared his observation that older people who do not purposefully engage in activities other than career during their working adulthood find themselves isolated from anything meaningful.

Third, just as most people strive to preserve links to their past activities to maintain lifestyle, others choose to discontinue past activity patterns for the same reason. Although Atchley (1999) provides a comprehensive explanation of discontinuity as it relates to data analyzed from the Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Adaptation (OLSAA) in his book, discontinuity understandably is not an element of continuity theory. Perhaps this is because discontinuity was addressed in two earlier social gerontological theories, specifically, activity theory developed by Havighurst and Roscow during the 1960’s and disengagement theory developed by Cumming and Henry during the 1950’s. Atchley (2004) presents thorough
explanations of both theories in his newer book, *Social Forces & Aging*. However, OLSAA data did reveal 30 patterns of discontinuity, the prevalent pattern being one in which participants reduced their participation level but did not totally drop out of the activity. It may be useful to future researchers to have discontinuity addressed somehow within the same theory as continuity since it, too, is an adaptation that persons choose to employ when faced with change.

*Implications Specific to Adult Education Theory and Practice*

The demographical trend that was highlighted in Chapter 1, when combined with the reality that older adults do not participate in mainstream adult education commensurate with their percentage of the population (Findsen, 2005; Kim & Merriam, 2004), presents a challenging opportunity for the field of adult education. A few participants in this study expressed how band rehearsals are always a learning experience for them, while other implied this to be so. How participants viewed band rehearsals warrants revisiting Kim and Merriam’s (2004) study that was highlighted in Chapter 2. The authors examined what motivated older adults to participate in formal learning activities and found that the primary reason for participation was cognitive interest in the subject. The secondary reason was social interaction. Although some educators may take issue with categorizing rehearsals of a band as formal learning opportunities, it is undeniable that participants in this study have been choosing to attend weekly rehearsals for decades. During these rehearsals, they learn more about music – a discipline about which they are passionate - within a social context from which they derive great satisfaction and joy. For them, rehearsals meet Kim and Merriam’s (2004) two strongest incentives for participation in formal learning experiences: cognitive interest in the subject and socialization with others.
But, what about the older adult population in general? Can adult educators capitalize on the reality that music is everywhere and that most people emotionally respond to it (Dirkx, 2006; Tisdell, 2006) to build interest in formal learning for non-musicians in later adulthood? A few studies that were highlighted in Chapter 2 indicated that everyone, including older persons, has a lifelong preference for music that was popular when they were young adults (Cohen & Bailey, 2002; Halpern & Barlett, 2002). This finding is confirmed by narrators in this study who overwhelmingly prefer music of the Big Band Era. Any affective experience, but especially a musical one, potentially enables learners to access their past, to connect new learning to past learning, and to re-invent it for application in the present (Dirkx, 2006; Tisdell, 2006). In the words of Lems (2005), “music works” (p. 13) and is a powerful vehicle for adult educators to increase the likelihood for an affective experience. Music also facilitates communication, particularly in diverse settings. As Olson (2005) discussed, music has potential to “create awareness, empathy, and interaction among individuals of disparate cultural, social, and religious backgrounds” (p. 57). Both Lems (2005) and Olson (2003) write about how music creates bridges between and among people who would otherwise be separated by language. In his personal interview, Jere noted how music eased tensions when his military band performed for less-than-friendly audiences abroad. He observed that anyone’s music - theirs, ours, or someone else’s – was always an icebreaker and a unifier.

The adult educators cited in this study who encourage the use of music in the formal adult education classroom all do so and do so comfortably (Lems, 2005; Olson, 2005; Tisdell, 2003). What about those educators who either have no musical training or who are uncomfortable with their own musicianship? First, it is important for adult educators to differentiate between listening to music or music making in the classroom and music making of the more formal,
highbrow type that is the first to come to mind when using music in the classroom is proposed. Sound reasons for integrating music into the adult education curriculum include providing (a) a pathway for participation that may work better for some learners than traditional discussion; (b) a backdrop for critical reflection; (c) a window to the inner self, and thus a deeper understanding of self; (d) a better understanding of and empathy for the culture and life experience of others; (e) a quickening of the spiritual persona; and (f) social awareness, and ultimately, empowerment (Olson, 2005). Although there are probably additional valid reasons for integrating music into the adult education classroom, words are inadequate to describe the value and effectiveness of music as a teaching strategy. Music’s effect on adult learners is understood best when its power can be observed in real time with real students. Doing this requires that adult educators take risks by trying techniques that may be uncomfortable for them, at least at first. As Lems (2005) emphasizes, what adult learners bring to the classroom is just as important as what the instructor offers them. Because music is an integral part of all cultures and because music is everywhere, all adult learners possess some affinity for music and bring that affinity to class. As Jere emphasized, anyone’s music will do. Melody, rhythm, and the instruments and voices that interpret them can get everyone involved, loosened up, and thus more receptive to more cognitive learning activities.

Interdisciplinary Implications

Participants in this study explained how performing music helps to keep them physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially healthy. This finding suggests to all practitioners who work with older adults that establishing activities in which seniors can create music has the potential to contribute to the overall well-being of more of the older population. Choruses comprised of older people or bands and orchestras that welcome seniors who are playing instruments after a long
hiatus have this same potential. Beginning bands and string orchestras or groups such as hand bell choirs also have the capacity to engage older adults more meaningfully in the second half of life. Although conducting ensembles such as these requires expertise in music and music pedagogy, doing so additionally requires an understanding of adult education theory and how to translate that theory into best practice for older adult learners.

The finding that instrumentalists in this study attribute their success, in part, to either early participatory music experiences, a music teacher, or both, has implications for both adult educators, music educators, and gerontologists alike. For adult educators, a recognition that early experiences inform adult perspectives may encourage their advocacy for school arts programs at the local level, should those programs ever be threatened. For gerontologists, realization that older people age more successfully when they are engaged in an activity that they have enjoyed throughout their lives should give them a reason to be advocates for school arts education programs, arts offerings within continuing education programs, and community arts councils. For music educators, awareness that music can truly be a lifelong activity should inspire them to ensure that all preschool and primary age children have meaningful experiences with music. After all, musicians such as A J, Kenneth, and La Rue ascribe their continuing involvement in music, at least in part, to pre-school and kindergarten teachers and early musical experiences. Furthermore, this finding implies that all music experiences for children, regardless of their year in school, should offer forms of music making and listening genre that reflect multiple diverse cultures in addition to the traditional forms that were positive influences on this study’s participants. The 1997 Population Profile, published by the United States Department of Economics and Statistics Administration, projects that after 2020, the people of Hispanic origin will add more persons to the United States every year than will all other racial and ethnic groups
combined. Additionally, it is likely that in just two years – in 2010 – the Hispanic population may become the second largest racial or ethnic group in this country (cited in Feldstein, 2002). Therefore, to make sure that music becomes a lifelong activity for all people, a broader view of what music is and what music-making experiences are meaningful is essential (Carter, 2002; Jellison, 2002).

Many of the study’s participants were highly motivated as young instrumentalists by playing along side mature musicians in an ensemble setting. This finding has significant implications for all present-day community performing groups of any variety. Adult performing music ensembles - whether professional, semi-professional, or amateur - are well-advised to collaborate with school music programs to blur the current separation between adult performing music and school performing music. One way to do this is to establish apprenticeship programs that approach mentoring young musicians in a systematic, developmentally appropriate manner. Just as eight of the narrators in this study were mentored in adult performing groups and still perform today, so will today’s young instrumentalists be more inclined to remain lifelong performers if they are nurtured by effective, caring mentors.

Finally, this study suggests that a sense of self and purpose and an openness to meaningful, emotional, and spiritual experiences with music are likely to evolve as people age. What King (2004) calls spiritual maturity can be facilitated through music. The implication for practitioners who work with older adults is to find out what music activities their clients enjoy and build on them to maximize opportunities for peak, transcendental, and spiritual encounters through music. The value of these encounters lies in their potential to facilitate individuation, particularly toward the end of life.
Implications for Future Research

This study affirms and documents what most musicians already know about the power of music to enrich their lives as individuals and their relationships within communities of musicians. It also suggests that continuity as a performing musician throughout life enhances self-knowledge and a sense of purpose, thereby facilitating individuation. Conducted on a small, nearly homogeneous sample of older bandsmen, this inquiry could be expanded by comparing its findings to those from a similar study utilizing bandsmen of other age cohorts. Three ways to extend this study are to (a) conduct the research using either orchestral musicians or singers as narrators, (b) design a study that compares older bandsmen who dropped out of performing at some point in life to those who continue to perform throughout their adulthood, and (c) investigate how bands impact upon the communities in which they are situated. Of these three potential extensions of this study, the third one is particularly intriguing. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey (1934) writes about the capacity of the arts to unify entire communities. At a moment in history that is reminiscent of the challenges people faced in Dewey’s day, testing his assertion in a community such as New Holland could potentially answer a number of questions that this study has raised in my own mind, especially the question of reciprocity. How much does the greater community in which a band is embedded motivate performers to continue to make excellent music? And, how much does having a community band unify, inspire, and lift the spirits of non-musicians in the community, particularly during difficult days?

Furthermore, the results of this study invite additional research on alternative ways of knowing, specifically, arts as a way of knowing. I share Lems’ (2005) frustration which she expresses by writing about how much her adult English language learning (ELL) students love making music, but no one who writes ELL curriculum is willing to place music in the center of
that curriculum. Thus, there is no data to support her claim that music helps adults learn English. There is also little data on how music helps develop the affective domain. But, how much research has been done to date? If conference programs are indicative of research activity on a specific topic, there is much work to be done. In reviewing conference proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) from 2000 to 2007, I found only 12 proceedings or roundtables that touched on the arts and an additional three sessions that included ways of knowing (adulterc.org, 2007).

Making research on artistic ways of knowing a priority seems more credible upon viewing traditional adult education pedagogy through the lens of an ever-changing demographic and the technology-driven lifestyle that comprises contemporary society. What appears to be missing in adult daily life is regular opportunity to be introspective and also collaborative in a way that is more personal than e-mailing or text-messaging. When adults enter a classroom and can finally shut out the daily routine, they may not be able to do so without assistance from something non-verbal like music. Similarly, a participatory arts activity, particularly one that is centered on music, can assist adults in getting to know other adults, especially those whose cultures are different from their own. Lawrence (2005) explains the value of arts experiences in the adult education classroom in this way: “Educators need to take risks by venturing out of their comfort zone and in turn encouraging their [adult] students to take similar risks. The payoff for such risk taking is that more of our human potential is activated as we continue to learn how to learn” (p. 10).

Earlier in this chapter, I revisited the paucity of studies on aging, older adults, music and meaning making, and older musicians and meaning making. Although I believe that arts as a way of knowing should take priority in future adult education research, there are other needs that are
relevant to the gaps in research that I initially identified. I generated this short potential research agenda as an adult educator who values music and who also believes that the field of adult education should be paying more attention to the learning needs and interests of older adults.

1. How and to what degree are adult educators integrating arts experiences into their classrooms? What have been their experiences? A study such as this would clarify whether educators view the arts as alternative ways of knowing or see them as curricular gimmicks to be used sporadically for variety. If data reveal that the concept of arts as a way of knowing is gathering momentum, there may be more adult educators willing to take risks with the arts in their own classrooms.

2. How do older adults define spirituality, and how do they nurture their own spirituality? Is there a relationship between spirituality and continuity theory? Literature suggests that old age is conducive to spiritual development (Atchley, 1997; Jung, 1933). However, my experience confirms that Atchley (1999) is correct when he states that “we are still struggling to find meaningful language that can be used to collect data in this area” (p. 157). Therefore, the first step in a study such as this would be to find the vocabulary that older adults would understand and not confuse with religiosity.

3. What impact does listening to music have on healthy older adults? As indicated earlier in this thesis, multiple studies on the effects of listening to music have been completed as they pertain to older adults who are ill, especially those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. Very limited research has been conducted on healthy older people and whether or not listening to music contributes to their healthy state. Results from this study would be especially useful to practitioners in
gerontology, although they would have valuable implications for music education and adult education as well.

4. What arts activities do older adults enjoy? Data from a study such as this would be helpful to practitioners in gerontology and adult education who develop and implement both formal and informal learning opportunities for older adults. By incorporating arts activities that are familiar into educational experiences for older adults, practitioners not only would reinforce positive continuity, but also would create an environment that is conducive to the occurrence of peak, transcendental, and spiritual experiences that facilitate individuation.

5. What do older adults recall about their earlier education in the arts? The results of this research would have implications for those who are planning arts education programs for children and adolescents presently in school. This kind of research is relevant to adult education, also, because the young people of today are the older adult learners of tomorrow.

All items on this potential research agenda could be designed with consideration for multiple diversity issues, with participants and research teams reflecting those same diversities.

Summary and Conclusions

This narrative inquiry aspired to uncover the role that music played in the meaning-making processes of nine older performing musicians. For A J, Bob, Charlie, Clarence, Jere, Kenneth, La Rue, Thomas, and Tom, playing a musical instrument throughout life has provided continuity during times of stress and change. During the data-gathering process for this study, each narrator projected a clear sense of self and life purpose. This self-knowledge appears to be strongly connected to narrators’ positive, ongoing music making with others who share common
interests and goals. Additionally, each narrator accepted responsibility for encouraging young apprentice musicians, thus continuing the cycle of the old mentoring the young within a community of bandsmen.

This research project has broadened my own understanding and knowledge of not only the focus of this study, but also the role of qualitative researcher. Although it is impossible to articulate everything of significance that I have learned in my first venture as a qualitative researcher, I conclude this chapter and this dissertation in adult education with some learning highlights.

First, I gained a tremendous respect for older adults as a result of the hours that I spent interviewing the nine musicians in this study. Having participated in rehearsals and having played concerts with them, I entered this research project thinking that I knew a lot about them when in reality, I knew very little. I am still struck by their energy and enthusiasm for life. Their intelligence, self-discipline, and commitment to family and to musical excellence will remain an inspiration to me as I grow older. If these musicians are indicative of the caliber of the older generation, society would benefit from giving them more voice and more responsibility in determining how to make this world better.

Second, I learned the answer to the problem that was the focus of this inquiry, specifically, the role that music plays in the meaning-making processes of the nine older performing musicians in this study. Music has influenced every aspect of each of their lives and, with the possible exception of family, means everything to each one of them. Also, learned what it is about the culture of at least one band that makes it special. In the case of the New Holland Band, it is members’ focus on excellence that manifests itself in fulfilling relationships and a strong sense of community that makes its culture especially unique. But,
without the music, or the “grace of great things” (P. Palmer, 1998, p. 107), there would be no New Holland Band and thus, no musicians striving for excellence, and thus, no long-lasting, rewarding relationships or band community.

Third, as a result of conducting both personal and focus group interviews for this narrative inquiry, I discovered how fascinating it is to hear others’ stories. I also observed how much narrators enjoyed telling me their stories. I was especially struck by the specificity with which each of them could recall life events that occurred so many years ago. I find it encouraging that more adult educators are investigating ways to incorporate storytelling in their pedagogical repertoire.

Fourth, I have been struck by the alignment of the literature that crossed the three foundational areas of this study: adult education, social gerontology, and music. This alignment did not surface immediately, but became more and more apparent as I did in-depth reading and writing. The first profound connection that comes to mind is individuation which informs self-actualization which informs transcendence which informs spirituality. I was also struck by how easily the theories that served as the theoretical framework, specifically, experiential learning theory and continuity theory could be integrated, providing a substantive foundation on which to build the study. It was fascinating as well to see how effectively the adult education literature could enrich the limited music literature on mentoring and the culture of bands. All of these connections add further argument to the wisdom of using interdisciplinary research teams for further study of aging, meaning making, and music.
EPILOGUE

It is mid-winter of 2008, and there is snow on the ground. More snow is in the forecast. So, when spring flowers are in bloom, the fragrance of lilacs is in the air, and the days are longer and warmer, I will invite A J, Bob, Charlie, Clarence, Jere, Kenneth, La Rue, Thomas, and Tom to celebrate with me the completion of this project. Although I am not completely sure what that celebration will look like, I am confident that it will include our singing “Happy Birthday” to Clarence who is now 94. Also, I am interested in learning if my friends’ participation in this study has changed them in any way. Hearing and interpreting their stories has certainly changed me for the better. The picture that is Figure 1 was taken in February 2008 at a New Holland Band rehearsal. I know that the reader will enjoy seeing the faces behind the stories.
Figure 1. Study participants during rehearsal break, February 10, 2008.

From left to right:

Clarence, Thomas, Charlie, Tom, Jere, Kenneth,

Jim (not in study but an octogenarian!), LaRue, Bob, and A J
REFERENCES

Bowean, L. (2005, February 11). Beat goes on, for all ages: In this band, seniors are learning to play instruments, students are learning to teach. *Chicago Tribune*, p. 1.


http://www.seniorjournal.com/NEWS/Entertainment/3-04-15band.htm

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwmhtml/cwmpres01.html


Tolliver, D. & Tisdell, E (Spring 2006). Engaging spirituality in the transformative higher education classroom [Electronic version], *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (109), 37-47.


Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Letter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator: Sandra Reed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSU User ID: 913163105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title: Sentimental Journey: A Phenomenological Study of Greatest Generation Musicians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

July 2006

Dear

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in my research study that will enable me to finish my dissertation and graduate from Penn State Harrisburg with a D.Ed. in Adult Education.

My study is entitled Sentimental Journey: A Phenomenological Study of Greatest Generation Musicians. As a member of the Greatest Generation and a musician, you are someone that I believe will contribute a great deal to my study. By interviewing you and others in the New Holland Band who are of your generation, I hope to find out what role, if any, music has played in helping you make meaning of life experiences.

Included with this letter is an “Informed Consent Form” that more thoroughly explains my study. Item 2 of the form details what I will be asking you to do as a study participant. Item 5 of the form explains how much of your time may be required. Please read all items on the consent form because they are designed to answer most questions that you may have about your involvement.

I hope to begin to interview study participants in July and finish all aspects of the research by mid-fall of 2006. I will provide you with a transcript of your personal interview. Also, you may choose to have the audiotape of your interview included in the New Holland Band archives if you so desire.

I appreciate any consideration you give to being a part of my study. If upon reading the Informed Consent Form you have questions that the information on the form does not adequately address, please feel free to call me at 717-656-9718. Your participation is certainly voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. However, I really do hope that you will be eager to participate.

If you choose to participate, please return your signed consent form to me at the next New Holland Band rehearsal.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Sandy Reed
Title of Project: Sentimental Journey: A Phenomenological Study of Greatest Generation Musicians

Principal Investigator: Sandra Reed, Graduate Student
150 Pinetown Rd.
Leola, PA 17540
(717) 656-9718; smr30@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Patricia Cranton
W-331-B, Olmsted Building
Penn State Harrisburg
Middletown, PA 17557
(717) 948-6405; pac23@psu.edu

Other Investigator(s): N/A

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to find out what role music plays, if any, in how performing musicians over the age of 70 make meaning of life experiences. Eight to ten musicians from the New Holland Band who are at least 70 years of age, including yourself, will be invited to participate in the study.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to participate in a personal interview that will be conducted either in your home or at the New Holland Band Rehearsal Hall. You will receive a list of most of the questions that will be the basis of the interview in advance of the interview. Other questions may be asked during the interview that are prompted by something you share that the interviewer wishes to know more about. The interview will last between one and one-half to two hours and will be audio-taped. Additionally, you will be invited to share at your individual interview one or more symbols that you believe help to explain the influence music has had during your life. Examples of symbols include, but are not limited to photographs, recordings, sheet music, or an instrument. Finally, you will be invited to participate in a focus group interview that will include all participants in the study. This interview will be conducted in the New Holland Band Rehearsal Hall. The group interview will probably take about two hours and will be audio-taped. Since the interviewees will know one another, they may decide to make music together as part of the group interview or at another time. If this decision is made, you will be asked to bring your instrument to the group interview or a follow-up to the group interview.
3. **Discomforts and Risks:**

It is possible that reminiscing about past experiences in your life during the interview may cause sadness or feelings of nostalgia. It is also possible that some interview questions may seem too personal for you to answer.

**Benefits:** The benefits of participation in this study to you include the opportunity to share how music has impacted upon your life. Because very little research has been done about the influence music has had on older relatively healthy adults, you will be participating in research that may be of interest to several fields of study including adult education, musicology, and gerontology.

The benefits of your participation in this study to society include adding to existing research evidence that music can assist people in feeling and being productive during the second half of life.

4. **Duration/Time:**

Your personal interview will take an hour and a half to two hours. Your selecting and sharing one or more symbols will require forethought but not much time after you decide on a symbol or symbols to share. Your participation in the focus group interview will require about two hours. However, this interview may take longer, or there may be a follow-up session to the focus group interview, if the participants agree that they want to spend time performing music together. Your personal interview will be conducted during mid or late summer of 2006. The focus group interview will take place during September or October 2006.

5. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. You will have the option of using your real name for the study or selecting a pseudonym prior to your personal interview. During the months that participants will be interviewed, only the principal investigator and her advisor will know your identity, unless you choose to share your participation with other members of the New Holland Band. Interview tapes will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who will know only your first name or your pseudonym, depending upon your preference. After transcribing your tape, she will return the tape to me via U.S. mail. I will store your audio-tape in a locked file in my home office and keep the tape for three years. At the end of the three years, I will destroy the tape (fall 2009). Your identity will be known to other participants in the study when all participants meet for the focus group interview. The data gathered from your individual interview and the focus group interview will be stored and secured in my home in a password-protected computer file. My advisor will be the only other person having access to the data collected for this study, including the audio-tapes. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. The following may review and copy records related to this research: The Office of Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Penn State University’s Social Science Institutional Review Board, and Penn State University’s Office for Research Protections.

6. **Right to Ask Questions:** You can ask questions about this research. Contact Sandy Reed, principal investigator, at (717) 656-9718 with your questions. You can also call this number if you have complaints or concerns about this research. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have concerns or general questions about the research, contact Penn
State University’s Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775. You may also call this number if you cannot reach me or wish to talk to someone else.

7. **Payment for participation:**

Although I cannot pay you for your participation in the study, should you want to be interviewed at the New Holland Band Rehearsal Hall in lieu of in your home, I will reimburse you for mileage at $0.445/mile. Travel to and from the focus group interview will be reimbursed at the same rate. Either breakfast or light lunch will be provided before or after the focus group interview, depending upon the time of day.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusing to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below on both copies of this consent form. You will be given one copy of this signed and dated consent form for your records.

_____________________________________________  _____________________
Participant Signature       Date

_____________________________________________  _____________________
Person Obtaining Consent      Date
Appendix C

Individual and First Focus Group Interview Guide

Principal Investigator: Sandra Reed
PSU User ID: 913163105
Project Title: Sentimental Journey: A Phenomenological Study of Greatest Generation Musicians

Sample Individual Interview Questions

1. What have been the significant turning points or influential events in your life?

2. Do you associate specific music or specific performances with any of these turning points or events?

3. Who have been the most influential people in your life?

4. How has being a musician affected your life?

5. How and when do you listen to music? Have your listening habits changed throughout your life?

6. What insights can you offer on the aging process?

7. What role does music play in your aging?

Sample Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What is it about making music with others that is meaningful to all of you?

2. How important is playing with the New Holland Band to you in relation to the other activities in your lives and why?

3. How does playing in the band affect each of you physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually? (Each of these will be asked as separate questions.)

4. What would your lives have been like if you had never been a part of a musical ensemble and only been solo musicians?

5. Of these two things, which do you think has had a more profound effect on each of you and why: (a) Understanding and appreciating music; (b) Being performing musicians in a band or bands.
Appendix D
Participant Letter and Interview Questions for Second Focus Group Interview

July 7, 2007

Hi, Everybody –

Below is a short list of questions that I will draw from when we meet on Tuesday. I will have others in the event we need them. There’s no need for you to prepare other than to read these questions and just start thinking about each one as it applies to you.

I am so glad that all nine of you are able to commit to this second interview. THANK YOU! And, thank you Charlie for agreeing to record. I’ll have the picnic lunch “stuff” as organized as possible at four, so bring your appetites!

See you at the rehearsal hall on Tuesday, July 10, at 4 PM.

Sincerely,

Sandy Reed

1) Do you think that wisdom comes with age? If so, why do you think this way?

2) What is playing in the New Holland Band like for you? Why do you do it?

3) What is your definition of spirituality? Do you do anything special to nurture the spiritual part of who you are?

4) What do you believe the purpose and meaning is for living into our 70’s, 80’, or 90’s?

5) What non-musical things has being a musician either taught you or contributed to your life?
VITA

Sandra Marlene Reed

Prior to pursuing doctoral studies in Adult Education, Sandra earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from Lebanon Valley College and a Master of Education in Music Education from The Pennsylvania State University. Additionally, she has earned numerous supervisory and administrative certificates from Penn State and a superintendent’s certificate from Temple University.

After teaching music in the State College Area and Lower Dauphin School Districts, Sandra worked as a program coordinator of performing arts in the School District of Lancaster before serving as a school administrator in the Shenandoah Valley, Northern Lebanon, and Lower Dauphin School Districts. Currently, Sandra is the coordinator of student teaching for Penn State Harrisburg where she also teaches two courses for pre-service teachers.