I began this research journey at the conclusion of two years as Director of Music in an Australian school for boys. In addition to twenty-five hours of classroom teaching, the busy weekly schedule had included the conducting of three separate after-school band rehearsals. Additional duties included the daily administration of the music department which included organising the private tutoring program, four band schedules, and carrying out daily instrument maintenance. There were regular band excursions to eisteddfods and competitions on weekends and I would conduct the choir and band at Mass in the local church one Sunday in every month. This full schedule had meant only moment-to-moment solutions to the educational problems I encountered in the music department and the deeper nature of most issues was often left undefined. Resolutions to problems had been mainly temporary for they required more time for thoughtful inquiry and planning than I was capable of giving. When deciding to take up full-time research I was able to retreat to a more reflective distance where, disengaged from a hectic schedule, I could more easily reflect on and review some of the teaching problems I had encountered in the school music department. The topic of this thesis evolved as an outcome of the opportunity to more clearly define the nature of some of the problematic ‘issues’. My main concern was about my effectiveness as a teacher operating in a complex learning climate that was reluctant ‘to let go of standardised and normative thinking’ or ‘tailor-make dynamic curricula to students rather than espousing a one-size-fits-all curricular approach’ (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 27). This concern led to thoughts about the effect this
climate had upon my former students and then to reflections on my part in their musical lives. If 'teaching requires a phenomenological sensitivity to students' realities and their lifeworlds' (Bresler, 1996, p. 12) I believe that to some degree the system, and I had failed. I began considering how I could be more effective and 'in tune' with the musical 'realities' of future students. This led to a consideration of more appropriate ways of building on the prior musical experience of students and additional ways of helping to enhance and support their existing musical identities. As most music students are already enculturated into music in some form or other prior to formal education (Green, 2001) I wanted to explore how I could more clearly “know where they are coming from” in order to build on the start they have gained (Gammon, 1996; Green, 2001). A study of this nature, I assumed could indicate ways that teachers may develop an enhanced awareness of and sensitivity to the music experience and lived musical worlds of their students.

I took note of Van Manen's (1991) comments about the 'essentials of good pedagogy' particularly where he states that tactfulness is revealed as being 'attuned to subjectivity' (p. 154). The direction of my explorations then turned into an interest in a particular aspect of teaching – the part where we are required to engage in 'pedagogical tact' (Van Manen, 1991). In this discussion Van Manen supports the case that the educator 'has to cross the street in order to go to the child's side' and 'has to know 'where the child is' and 'how the child sees things'. He calls for sensitivity to subjectivity where we 'try to treat the other as a subject rather than an object' (p. 154). I reflected on the importance of 'pedagogical tact' in the art and science of music teaching and how it requires the teacher to 'cross the street' to the musical lifeworlds of students. Van Manen’s comments led me to consider the ontological and epistemological implications of what it means to 'cross the street', both in the broad sense of human experience and in respect to music teaching. With these interests and beginnings the design of this study gradually emerged and I planned an investigation of individual musical lifeworlds. I began constructing
an investigative approach that would help me to 'cross the street in order to see how the music student sees things'. I sought research techniques that would lead to insights and understandings that I could share in the research writing. The task of illuminating musical lifeworlds, I hypothesised, could reveal how empathy and concern for the idiosyncratic perspectives and musical identities of students may enhance a teacher’s strengths in meeting the challenges and possibilities of each instructional situation (see Jorgensen, 2003, p. 132). The study evolved from these emerging ideas.

* On gaining access to schools, I was fortunate to meet Polly, Mario, Janice, Kristin and Jeremiah, five highly motivated and dedicated young musicians who volunteered to participate in the study. In semi-structured interviews, I listened to their stories, later observed and video or audio-taped them in music performance and interviewed their parents and music teachers. From this data I ‘painted’ a broad narrative portrait of their individual musical lifeworlds.

The metaphorical connection with the visual arts is useful for when we examine a painting there is a sense of ambiguity where we have interpretive options. We may attempt to see what the painter was ‘getting at’ or construct our own interpretations independent of the aims of the painter. Alternatively we may do both. Similarly, the interpretive options of these narrative portraits are left open in order that readers may make further interpretations. In the same way that a painted portrait is an interpretation that is open to further interpretations, my portraits are ‘re-presentations’ allowing readers to ‘make their own critical insights’ (Alvermann, 2000, p. 1).

Just as a painter may accentuate specific features, I have focused on two specific lifeworld realms of meaning. The first is the realm of meaning

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1 Throughout the thesis pseudonyms are used for all participants and schools.
structures generated from musical experiences that are described as deeply felt, formative, transformative or epiphanic. Interpretations of these experiences offer insight into the ways that each participant had become attracted to music and the value and significance that they ascribe to it. The second lifeworld realm is the participant's encounters with different types of music learning experiences. Foregrounding meaning structures from this realm draws attention to music teaching and learning processes from the perspective of each student. My interpretations and analyses of their perspectives aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue and discussion of music's place in formal institutional settings and informal, student initiated communities of practice.

While the study sets out to investigate the musical lifeworlds of students it is also concerned with a deeper understanding of the relationship between the teacher/researcher and the student/participant. It is concerned with teacher/researcher self-transformation through new visions and perspectives. I decided, at an early stage of the thesis, that an investigation of the lifeworlds of a sample of music students would be a research journey requiring new perspectives and new understandings of 'self and other'. I could not investigate the lives of others without considering my relationship to them; to learn more about others would require that I learn more about myself. Jorgensen (2003) believes that transformation is necessary for the future success of formal music education in schools. She calls for a complete change stating that '...whether they realize it or not, music teachers are engaged in the process of musical transformation' (p. 78). However, her prescription for effective transformation and the re-evaluation of practice does not suggest that teachers themselves may assist through the transformation of their own relationships to music and music students. Hence, I began with the proposition that change is possible when
music teachers themselves are transformed through interactions with the musical lifeworlds of others.

My own 'transformation' began in this study by exploring alternative perspectives of music and the musical lifeworlds of others. I saw possibilities and new 'realities' opening through a systematic study and application of Jerome Bruner's (1986) theories of different 'ways of thinking' or 'ways of construing reality' through 'narrative and paradigmatic modes of cognition' (p. 11). Additionally, I sought a transformed perspective by adopting a phenomenological stance to the experience of others. Van Manen's (1990) phenomenological approach to lived experience held possibilities for a new 'action sensitive pedagogy'.

Importantly, with this thesis I was not content to simply operate from objective descriptions and the application of paradigmatic theory. My initial explorations of narrative and phenomenological theory felt like studying a map of the terrain, whereas I sought the need, through self-transformation, to 'tread the ground'. I planned to become a narrative and a phenomenological thinker - to develop new 'ways of construing reality' (Bruner, 1986). Rather than simply understanding - I sought to live the modes. This would mean viewing the research process, music and the experiences of others from a newly constructed narrative 'self'. Through this pragmatic approach, applied during the study, I sought to ground myself in practice. Operating in this manner I strove not simply to theorise but to model the pragmatist recognition of 'embodied situated experience rather than relying on a priori principles' (Shusterman, 2000, p. 97). An 'embodied situated experience' of narrative research processes, I hypothesised, would entail becoming a narrative thinker rather than operating solely from abstract theoretical, technically-rational and objectively distanced experience (Schön, 1987, p. 36). In similar fashion with phenomenology - again I was not content to operate with theoretical understanding alone. I sought to practice and operate with a phenomenological attitude. This meant I would inquire with a direct connection to the 'lifeworld', the 'world of immediate
experience’, the world as ‘pregiven’ and ‘already there’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 182 – see also Husserl, 1970, pp. 103-186). Van Manen (1990) highlights this point by stating that we need to go beyond an intellectual understanding to ‘get inside’ phenomenology. He notes that ‘We tend to get a certain satisfaction out of grasping at a conceptual or “theoretical” level the basic ideas of phenomenology, even though a real understanding of phenomenology can only be accomplished by ‘actively doing it’ (p. 8). Adopting this pragmatist approach I believe was vital because I wanted to see a corresponding pragmatic (in the sense of useful) transformation in my own thinking and a developing ‘action sensitivity’ in my own teaching and researching of other lives. To make visible and monitor my ‘transformation’ to ‘new ways of thinking’ I have inserted vignettes at specific moments in the research text where I switch from a paradigmatically orientated discussion to offer a view of the ‘situation’ from a narrative or phenomenological perspective. This juxtaposing process of ‘switching modes’ has forged an active dialogue between my paradigmatic, narrative and phenomenological ‘selves’. Importantly it has helped me to pragmatically test the proposition – that narrative and phenomenological ways of looking can enhance awareness of and sensitivity to the musical lifeworlds of students.

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Research is not helped by making it appear value free. It is better to give the reader a good look at the researcher. (Stake, 1995, p. 95)

From the outset I planned to avoid an objectivist, ‘god’s-eye-view’ approach to research (Johnson, 1987) where the ‘posture of the knower must be one of objective detachment or value freedom in order to be able to discover how
"things really are" and "how things really work" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). The inclusion of my own experience reveals how preparatory arguments leading to the investigation of musical lifeworlds have a basis in the experiential, practical 'real world' of teaching situations. By removing the cloak of neutrality, this approach also offers readers insight into the biases that were developed in my prior experience as a teacher. The reader may then know something of "where I am coming from".

The concept of 'fidelity' has been an underlying principle during the course of this study. This means that the main concern while studying others is not a process of looking for pre-existing truth - of 'what happened in a situation', but 'what it means to the teller of the tale' (Grumet, 1988, p. 66 – see also Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, p. 26). This principle underpins my approach to the research of music experience where the purpose is not to uncover objective facts and truths about it, but to investigate what it means to musicians. This idea of 'fidelity' is also the spirit behind narrative and phenomenological inquiry, both of which seek to investigate what the experience of phenomena means to others. In the same spirit, the reader may enter open dialogue with 'what it means' to the teller of these tales - the participants and the researcher.

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I have used a research format suggested by Crotty (1998). He proposes that the design and clarity of the research is enhanced when four ‘elements’ - epistemology/ontology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods are presented in a hierarchical framework where each element is shown to support the next (p. 2). The design structure of the elements takes the following form
According to Crotty (1998, pp. 8-11), epistemological and ontological orientations should be discussed as it is important to reveal the knowledge claims and 'reality' that form the foundation of a research project. Our epistemological and ontological positioning, he states, will justify and provide support for the theoretical perspectives we adopt and these will inform the methodologies, which in turn provide 'a rationale for the methods used' (p. 7). I have adopted this four-element strategy but as it was necessary to orientate the reader early to theoretical aspects of narrative ways of looking and phenomenology, their workings are discussed early in the thesis and a discussion of epistemology and ontology has been postponed until Chapter Four. Importantly as Crotty (1998, p. 70) describes methodologies as 'research strategies', I have divided narrative inquiry and phenomenology into their 'theoretical principles' (Chapter Two) and their structuring as methodologies or 'research strategies' (Chapter Five).

In Chapter One I provide an autobiographical approach to the beginnings of this thesis. I commence by isolating and discussing specific problems
encountered within my school teaching experience. I then identify these not simply as "my problems" but ones that occur widely in Western formal music education. I argue that these are manifestations of the negative effects of a traditional and dominant objectivist focus in music education. I then argue for the need to research the musical lifeworlds of students because the traditional and dominant objectivist focus has masked important dimensions of individual musical experience. Despite alternative approaches suggested by postmodern and constructivist theory, little has changed and objectivism exists at the root level and still pervades our schooling (Small 1996). This critique of objectivism leads to a discussion of my emerging planning decisions and how I decided to combine a narrative and phenomenological approach. This leads to a presentation of the aims and objectives of the study, which are then framed as research questions.

In Chapter Two I present the theoretical aspects of narrative and phenomenology. While the main focus here is to describe narrative and phenomenological principles, I do so by exploring the concept that there are different ways of 'construing reality'. I introduce the theories of Jerome Bruner, which highlight 'narrative and paradigmatic ways of knowing'. Phenomenology is then presented through a discussion of its roots and its principles.

The aim of Chapter Three is to support the hypothesis that in formal music education we need to place more emphasis on the concept of 'music as experience'. The thrust of the discussion is a critique of the Western epistemological quest for objectivity and how it has led to the 'objectification' of music. Issues surrounding the nature of both 'music' and 'music meaning', when viewed from objectivist and anti-objectivist perspectives are explored. Discussion of these issues is vital to the aim of the thesis as objectivism has tended to mask important dimensions of musical experience including the social, subjective and the idiosyncratic nature of personal musical relationships.

In Chapter Four I discuss the epistemological and ontological foundations of the thesis. I cover topics that are important to the ontological authenticity of my
approach and I include my understanding of constructivist and also pragmatist and postmodern perspectives.

In Chapter Five a preliminary discussion of narrative, phenomenological and case study methodology leads to the important logistical matters where the specific methods and procedures used to conduct the research are described. The individual phenomenological narrative portraits of the five participants are then presented as Chapter Six.

Finally the Epilogue concludes the thesis with a discussion of understandings and assertions and reflections on the completed study.

The Tasmanian school system

In Tasmania, where this study was conducted, students attend kindergarten and then primary school, which is completed at the end of Year 6. They then move to 'the 'junior secondary' stage which lasts from Year 7 to Year 10. The final two years, which are pre-tertiary Years 11 and 12, are referred to as the 'senior secondary' stage.

In Australia there is a State government-funded public school system, and a 'private' or independent system. Private schools may be called 'colleges' or 'collegiates'. The name 'college' is also used in the Tasmanian State system but it generally refers to specialist senior secondary schools.

The student participants in this research project attended two Tasmanian schools, a State senior secondary high school (Riverside College), and a private college (St. Catherine's College). I refer to all the participants as senior secondary students as they were in Years 11 and 12.
bracing for the rigours ahead, we should prepare a defence in the form of a convincing philosophy and rationale for retaining music in schools.

The lecturer then added, “The ability to justify music in the curriculum must be part of the teacher’s professional equipment” (he was discussing and paraphrasing Gifford, 1988). We were warned that it was no longer suitable to promote music purely on its aesthetic merits for in the new age of utilitarianism, particularly in education, the aesthetic was being relegated to the backseat.

Later, as a graduate music teacher entering a professional career I quickly discovered that the suggestions were not cynical. Rather they offered practical advice. While I had been introduced theoretically, in lectures and research, to issues confronting the value of music in education, I soon encountered the ‘reality’ of practical experience. I had to rely on my “defensive rationale” sooner than expected.

One of my first public duties as Music Director was to speak at a Band and Music Elective Recruitment Evening held for new students and their parents. The Principal asked me to prepare a convincing speech and primed me with directives. “Tell them about the benefits of music” he said. “Really sell it. Describe how it assists many other areas of education and you could also mention how last year’s School Captain and the School Dux were both members of the Concert Band.” Although reluctant to promote the connection between being a musician and a ‘clever’ student, I complied by writing a speech that gave mention to topics such as ‘enhancing intelligence with music’ (see Raucher, Shaw and Ky, 1995) and other utilitarian benefits of music.

My “defensive rationale” was required again at parent-teacher meetings when I would often explain to parents the benefits of undertaking music electives. On several occasions I had encountered parents who were worried because their sons had elected to do music, were now devoted to it and had dreams of a career in the music profession. Again I could refer to my “defensive rationale” and explain the benefits of music. However, these parents were concerned because
they believed music was not useful enough to guarantee employment security. From this I learned that, for many, the utilitarian usefulness of music is confined to its contribution to education during school years only.

In these and similar situations, as a 'greenhorn' teacher I enjoyed the challenge of providing convincing discussions in support of music. However, it was not long before I began to experience a hollow feeling when having to defend music in utilitarian terms and when being confronted by utilitarian attitudes to it. Having to explain that music — "makes you better at something else", "it is a socialising agent" or "it increases brain function", for example, masked my underlying principles. I needed no such support for music for I believed I was deeply in touch with the intrinsic nature and beauty of music and its value as an important manifestation of human expression. I assumed that the utilitarian reasons to justify it were offshoots and incongruent when it was simply a matter of feeling its "power" and observing its ubiquitous nature and fundamental importance to human life in general.

A further 'issue' confronted me in my two years as a graduate music teacher. I soon felt trapped by the imposition of a constraining and contextually unsuitable music curriculum that I could see was not "working". Through observations and discussions with students, I knew that many felt the same way. I thought about the geographical and political contexts of the school and the social, youth culture surrounding it. The school was located in a beachside suburb of Sydney and was permeated with the atmosphere of the local surfing culture (truancy was high when "surf was up"). I discovered that music theory sessions were like asking a surfer to remain on the beach in order to discuss the theory of wave motion. I knew that becoming "one with the board and the wave" is the satisfaction and pleasure of surfing and learning is achieved in the experiencing of it. As a new music teacher, I was discovering the importance of the contextual, the social and cultural relevance of curriculum content, and the need to 'fit the right instructional approaches to a set of demands in some measure unique to a particular situation' (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 92). Despite all my intentions to
strategically develop lesson plans based on research, reflection, and negotiation I could not move from a redundant and contextually mismatched curriculum content. An autocratic Principal retained strict control of the school-centred curriculum decision-making. He believed that accomplishment in classroom music (and also in satisfactory classroom management) was evidenced by a neatly written out exercise book full of music theory and notation. Other utilitarian off-shoots of music education were at the forefront of his mind - the literacy skills learnt while writing and copying out neatly, and the mathematical skills of computing note values, time signatures and scale relationships. He believed that the private tuition programs that catered for the select and talented few and also public performances of the Concert Band would always present the wonderful 'musical face' of the school.

In summary, the first issue of conflict was due to the complex nature of music, and varying opinions of its varied uses and functions at societal and individual levels. The second related to the way that it was structured in the curriculum. When able to stand back and explore the nature of these issues I recognised how they forged a rift between the values of the school, the administrators and parents, and those of the students.

Exploring the issues – finding a way in

When I commenced full-time research I began by locating the literature field that probed the issues I had encountered. I soon discovered that they were not just “my problems” but widespread and discussed within a vast pool of existing research and disseminated knowledge. The issues are connected to wider theories of music and music education philosophy, to aesthetic theory and discussions about music meaning, its benefits and role in society and education, why humans value it, and its part in the curriculum. I discovered that, from as long ago as Plato, the functions, benefits and purpose of music had been well argued and documented. Recently, the benefits of music have been theoretically ‘updated’,

As I continued to explore the literature I narrowed my focus to discussions that were closely related to the problems encountered in school and to those researchers who echoed my concerns about specific situations. I read about the concerns of researchers who express feelings of discontent about school music. Some focus on widening the appeal of music beyond any utilitarian purpose but also seek to expand appreciation of its value apart from aesthetic grounds alone (Coates, 1983, Phillips, 1993, Elliott, 1995, Stuber, 2000). Others promote the importance of music by explaining how it is embedded in human life, having developed as a natural process along with language, within the evolution of mind and consciousness (Tolbert, 2001, Cross, 2001). Looking closely into studies of music education and the contexts of learning, I saw how many writers paint a woeful picture. Discussions suggest that 'there is something wrong with school music' and students are dissatisfied and turning away in droves (Ross, 1995, Elliott, 1995). Also, music in schools has been deemed by some to be largely ineffective (Carlin, 1997, Spychiger, 2001). Many suggest that students are experiencing tension and conflict between the cultural worlds of pop music and school music and the contrasted processes of formal and informal learning (Zillmann and Gan, 1997, Green, 2001). Gammon (1996, p. 111) identifies this problem as a 'cultural dissonance' between music in school and music out of school. Durrant (2001) provides evidence of this situation by quoting a statement from a school music 'drop-out'

I gave up music at school when I was thirteen; there didn't seem any point to it. It just didn't bear any relation to the music I was interested in. I played and listened to music outside school. The teacher didn't care about my music. I was there with my mates
drumming and mixing but it was totally unrelated to the music at school. So I gave it up at thirteen. (p. 1)

The impact of this statement is increased when Durrant announces that it is the words of 'someone who has, since his school days, been involved in making professional recordings of music, held a lecturing post in performing arts in higher education and is currently involved in instigating and supporting musical enterprises and links around the globe' (2001, p. 1). In a recent study, Green (2001) also provides similar examples and testimonials from musicians who failed at school but, after following their own interests, had successful careers in music.

I realised from my literature survey that a broad expanse of knowledge and persuasive argument is needed in order to support claims that music is fundamental to human life and should be taught in schools. The range of issues confronting institutional music education continues despite many attempts to modernise and increase its effectiveness and relevancy. Historically, important reforms eventuated with the influence of constructivism. Musical knowledge was viewed as a personal construction developed from 'within' through experience and experimentation with activities such as composition and improvisation (Schafer, 1967; Paynter and Ashton, 1970). The influence included a more child-centred approach, and the imparting of critical thinking skills rather than information alone. The inclusion of 'popular' music into schools was a further radical reform (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976, 1982; Swanwick, 1979). Schools, it was decided should also reflect everyday life by bringing the outside culture of music in.

Later, some critics suggested that including popular music in the curriculum was purely patronising and an 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em type of strategic compromise' (Ross, 1995, p. 188). If popular music forms were included alongside 'classical' music they were often 'rendered implicitly inferior' (Green, 2001, p. 142). There seemed to be an ingrained opinion that popular music and art were not aesthetically genuine. The apparent gratifications, sensations, and experiences that popular art provides are dismissed as spurious and fraudulent,
while high art, in contrast, is held to supply something genuine” (Shusterman, 1992, pp. 177-178). Opinions remain divided as to the educational worth of vernacular or ‘common’ styles of music in schools.

An additional site of conflict developed from these issues for as music educators, we may recognise a duty not just to ‘give them what they want’ but to ‘extend horizons’ (Gammon, 1996, p. 111). Jorgensen (2003) for example, states that ‘education should be about that which students do not know rather than about what they already know’ and that as ‘students already know vernacular music, they ought to widen their musical perspectives in school by studying the elite music that they do not know. Sticking with vernacular music already known to students is a restrictive, non-educational approach.’ (p. 33). While we may focus on student interests and preferences, the role of music education, it is suggested, is also to contribute to the transformation of society. It ‘ought not to serve as an excuse for pandering to students’ present musical interests and capitulating to their immediate desires and preferences’ (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 80). On the other hand Ross (1995) has raised the point that the inclusion of ‘popular’ music styles will always pose problems as some pupils will see it as an ‘academic invasion of a highly personal musical space’ (p. 189) as it is often ‘a private passion’ and is ‘inflected with deep emotional identification or group politics’ (p. 190).

Despite these complexities and arguments, from my own experience, I had discovered that attempts to subtly and persuasively lead students to Beethoven (for example) from a staple diet of heavy metal, hip-hop and Eminem, was a process that required not just the development of an appreciation of another aesthetic world. It required students to transcend their cultural and social musical identities. In this regard I saw the issue not solely as a decision about which curriculum content was aesthetically suitable. Rather, the issue related to being appropriate to the contextual situation of the learner and having an understanding of existing cultural and social music identities and individual lifeworlds. With regard to curriculum appropriateness, Finney (2003) remarks that it should not be based on

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2 See also Frith, 1996, for a discussion of popular music and aesthetics.
official, non-negotiable knowledge’ but should ‘embrace existential concerns’, and insist on ‘personalising knowledge’ (p. 15). He reinforces this point stating that

Undue attention to what music is taught or even to how it is taught may be a misdirected enterprise, shrouding the complexity of how a climate of mutuality and reciprocity is achieved between teacher and learner, and where both the intentional and incidental flourish within the classroom.

(p. 15)

Gammon (1996) reminds us of the responsibility of music teachers in schools to be appropriate, to consider the musical background and identity of students. He sounds a warning stating that

Unless the school takes the child as presented, and builds from his or her experience as a starting point, a real point of contact, then the educational enterprise is likely to have very shaky foundations and the most probable outcome is the alienation of the child from the subject in particular and the educational experience in general.

(p. 111)

Appropriateness to background experience demands that music educators keep pace with the changing landscape where music identities are formed. Transformation in music education must be continual in order to match the dramatic social, cultural and technological changes taking place (Hargreaves, Marshall and North, 2003, p. 147). Located within an ‘evolve or die’ situation, school music education is always subject to new political and economic pressures. In order to understand how these complex forces effect students and teachers, a variety of research approaches must be adopted.

Taking into account the conclusion that music education needs to be appropriate to the contextual situation of the learner and the existing cultural and social music identities, I sought to more clearly understand how music is socially and subjectively significant in the lives of music students in the 21st Century. I
sought to explore how students themselves experience these social, cultural and technological effects and I began to gravitate toward a case study approach of individual musical lifeworlds. As my interest and research literature reading expanded I found support in the work of researchers who had investigated individual lives. I found rapport with Campbell (1998) who researched the nature of children’s music experience. She states that in her research

It is the individual person (rather than a sample of the population, a school, or a culture) that is the unit of analysis, and the lived experience of the individual as he or she tells it (that) is examined as much as a text or description might be analysed and interpreted.

(p. 73).

Campbell’s (1998) research develops insight into the experience of music in young peoples’ lives. Jorgensen (2003) suggests that Campbell’s research reveals insight into ‘what can be learned by listening to the young’ and ‘too often music education policy is derived in the absence of such listening, and I suggest that it would be helped by applying Campbell’s insight to include listening to other students, teachers, administrators, and the public at large’ (p. 164, n. 59).

Inspired toward the idiographic study of musical lives I sought recent research examples that have developed insight through observation and interpretation of individuals’ stories, experiences, opinions and perspectives. In addition to Campbell (1998) others have explored the ‘musical thinking and meaning-making’ of children (Barrett, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003; Burnard, 2000a, 2000b; Ståhlhammar, 2003; McGillen, 2000). DeNora (2000), with a socio-musical focus, explored how a group of women ‘use’ music in their ‘everyday lives’. The justification for her study included the assumption that we have an ‘opaque understanding of how music works’ and ‘little sense of how music features within social processes and next to no data on how real people actually press music into action in particular social spaces and temporal settings’ (p. x). In addition Green (2001) has focussed on the perspectives of a cross-section of musicians varying in age from adolescents to adults. Green’s participants relate and reflect on their
experiences with 'formal and informal' modes of learning. Fornäs et al (1995) studied the perceptions and opinions, and experiences of the adolescent members of 'garage bands' and Berger (1999) conducted a 'phenomenological ethnography' of adult heavy metal and jazz musicians.

Despite the comprehensiveness of these studies I saw a gap in the research arena. I recognised the need for further exploration of the perspectives of music students in relations to their musical environments and to music learning, particularly the study of the ways their 'musical lives are lived'. Research into musical lifeworlds contributes to the field of music education by developing understanding of what Van Manen (1991) calls 'being attuned to the subjectivity of students' (p. 154). This is important for Van Manen (1991) who recognises it as it is a requisite, an 'essential of good pedagogy' where educators 'cross the street in order to go to the child's side', to know 'where the child is' and 'how the child sees things'. There is a further need for research that focuses on musical worlds of 'everyday meaning' (Fuller, 1990, p. 11). While Fuller discusses 'everyday meaning' from the perspective of phenomenological psychology, I take his point that 'everyday meaning and meaning oriented behaviour, to be understood, must be taken seriously just as they present themselves, in terms of their own requirements and not in terms of their prior projection in objective space' (p. 21). I agreed with Fuller that objectivist approaches, rather than doing justice to everyday meaning, 'level the self and its meanings to the objective common denominator supposed in advance' (p. 21). Rather than turning observations of the everyday meanings of music students into objective fact I planned my investigation of musical lifeworlds to take everyday meanings as 'the very point of departure' (p. 21).

The need to focus on the experience of individuals

Concerned with the arena of student 'landscapes' Barone (2000, p. 20) suggests 'that by directing our focus on student experiences, we may become aware of the intricate interplay between students and the features within their
environment'. We need to consider, he suggests, that their landscapes are a 'changing and shifting environment' (p. 20). Music educators have particular reason to be aware of the intricate interplay and rapid rate of change within the landscapes of their students. If we look closely at the environment of popular music culture, the socially constructed meanings of music are being dramatically and rapidly re-shaped by the technological and communications 'revolution'. The 'legitimating forces of digital and electronic media culture (are powerful in) shaping the ways in which children understand their worlds' (Barrett, 2003, p. 196). Popular music culture has a wide range of associated effects upon musical identity formation and also youth issues such as class, sexuality, tradition and 'city and space' (McRobbie, 1999, p. 138). Popular culture and style, experienced through various media including audio and video recordings, computer games and the Internet, provide changing images and influential perspectives. According to Gee (2001) we need to consider 'the fast pace of change, thanks to modern science and technology, that keeps outdating some identities and offering ever more opportunities for the creation of new ones' (p. 114). Sensitive awareness of this shifting music and cultural landscape is the first step in grasping 'where students are coming from', how it plays upon identity construction, and how it potentially re-shapes attitudes and values, both consciously and unconsciously.

Listening to individual stories and reflections generates understanding of musical lives, relationships with music and features within 'changing landscapes'. Evidence of this is demonstrated in a case study project by Green (2001). In this study, a group of 'popular (music) musicians' reveal how they were enculturated into music. Their reflections of music learning both 'formally' in school and 'informally' outside the school environment are explored. The study suggests that the informal vernacular types of learning techniques used by the participants, if included in schools, would enhance the dimensions of music teaching and learning. Green concludes that being aware of student landscapes, informal musical beginnings and everyday enculturation processes means that we are less likely to
Planning decisions – An introduction to the narrative and phenomenological approach

My interest and intentions developed into a passionate ‘quest’ when I decided to investigate the individual musical worlds of students. I narrowed my focus on the idea of generating further understanding of the part music plays in students’ lives. I would do this by explicating the significant everyday meaning structures within their “musical ways of being”. This would require an idiographic study (Smith, Harré, and Van Langenhove, 1995) where with the help of a sample of volunteering, dedicated school music student participants, I could represent what is unique within their musical lifeworlds and research their everyday musical lifeworld meanings. The strategies I turned to, that would assist ‘crossing the street’ in order to grasp everyday meanings, were narrative inquiry and phenomenological research.

My interest in narrative inquiry and phenomenology developed together after discovering both Jerome Bruner’s (1986) work on narrative as a way of understanding experience and Max van Manen’s (1990) descriptions of accessing ‘lived experience’ through phenomenological research. While reading these texts I was intrigued by the possibilities they presented for ‘new ways of looking’ and ‘understanding other lives’ (Bruner, 1986) and for exploring ‘the meaning structures of lived experience’ (Van Manen, 1990). With these influences I decided on an approach that would combine narrative and phenomenological observations and interpretive procedures. Together, they would form the basis of a research