While engaged in searching the data for 'potentialities of meaning' (Kvale, 1996, p. 4) and the 'essence' of individual experiences, I developed a metaphorical sense of the research process. I saw myself more like a bloodhound on a trail than an eagle sitting at a high point with clear vision and an intuitive perception for the slightest meaningful movement. With nose down to the ground and after having headed up numerous garden paths and blind alleys, I 'sniffed-out' specific meanings and understandings. However, the trail does not lead to any sort of closure because exploring musical lifeworlds leads to further questions and the need to find new trails toward new meanings. There isn't a destination to this metaphorical research journey but only meanings to be discovered 'on the way'.

The thesis does not develop truths, as the portraits, (like art works) are 'snapshot' images, frozen in time - of partial understandings of what music means to 'the tellers of the tales'. With the difficulties involved when striving to capture transient meanings, I have felt, to borrow the words of Denzin (1997), like 'a postmodern cultural phenomenologist with a mobile, moving mind (attempting) to record an unstable world' (p. 139 and p. 161, n. 16). Viewed from this perspective of instability, in addition to being interpretations of musical lifeworld meanings, the portraits are phenomenological and narrative explorations of ways of thinking and being a teacher and researcher while seeking to interact effectively with students who live musical 'ways of being'.

The function of arts-based research texts is different from those of a scientific character. They operate in a Bakhtinian spirit of *novelness*, where they may...
‘inspire readers to enter into dialogue with them’ (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 75). The importance of this sense of novella is not ‘single, closed, convergent readings’ but the situation where readers ‘may contribute answers to the dilemmas posed within the texts’ (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 75). This function of novella seeks to avoid that of epic texts where the purpose is ‘to impart the final word, to shut out other voices, to close down interpretive options’ (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 75).

My hope for the portraits is that they meet the criteria of novella by offering interpretive options that encourage divergent perspectives about music and educational dilemmas and that they may inspire further dialogue about the subjective and the social nature of music and music teaching and learning. Conversation and research on these matters should continue in order to generate further dialogue, meanings and understandings. While ‘case study seems a poor basis for generalization’ (Stake, 1995, p. 7) there are further interpretive options for a case study with ‘a constructivist view’ may provide good raw material for readers to make their own generalizations (Stake, 1995, p. 102). Importantly, the portraits do not ‘seek to impart the final word’ - allowing the thesis to resolve in what Tanaka (1997) calls a postmodern spirit of ‘unfinalizability’ (p. 290; see also Moss, 2004, p. 328). This inconclusive sense also coheres with Tanaka’s (1997) assertion (based on his own study) where, rather than conclusions, ‘what mattered more was the dialogue between characters’ (p. 290).

Stake (1995) has argued that intrinsic case studies lead to ‘understandings’ (p. 4) and ‘not so much (to) findings as assertions’ (p. 42). Following this viewpoint, in this section I shall make several assertions and also present unfinalized, convergent understandings rather than a set of finalized statements and divergent findings (that would be more at home in a scientific and truth-seeking study). My aim then is to resolve the thesis without diverging toward conclusive statements - a process that would require a return to a technical-rational perspective, which would tend to close further interpretive options and also disaggregate the images I have built. Commenting further, therefore, is a delicate
task as the portraits, to a large degree, "speak for themselves". They are my understandings and the outcome of exploring the first research question (which sought to "explicate the essential meaning structures of how the lives of a sample of musically dedicated senior secondary school students are lived"). In this regard the portraits serve the case study 'obligation' which is to 'share the burden of clarifying descriptions and sophisticating interpretations' (Stake, 1995, p. 102). Also, while discussing how 'case study seems a poor basis for generalization', Stake (1995) mentions that from a collection of case studies we may make 'petite generalizations' (p. 7). In addition to assertions I shall make several 'petite generalizations'.

* O'Neil (2002) has suggested that 'there is increasing evidence to suggest that a gulf in meaning exists between ourselves as researchers and the young people we study when considering what it is to be a 'musician' (and) this is an area certainly worthy of further attention' (p. 93). Included within the broad aim of this thesis I have sought to close the 'gulf of meaning' while exploring what it might mean to be a senior secondary school music student in the 21st century climate of a Western cultural and social environment. Importantly, the inquiry has not sought to provide solutions to the complex issues of music education by uncovering 'the truth about music'. Rather its purpose has been to describe the qualities and meanings of experience in order to enhance understanding and contribute to the on-going discourse and dialogue about the effectiveness of music teaching.

The Western tradition in education has emphasised a conception of music as an objective, autonomous form. As a consequence of this process of reification, the effect has been a tendency to bypass individual experience, idiosyncratic musical perspectives, informal, vernacular learning processes and the social and subjective nature of individual musical lifeworlds. This process of objectification is an echo of the Western epistemological and ontological quest for objectivity where
the 'lifeworld' and 'everyday meaning' have been either forgotten or 'reduced to another order of things' (Fuller 1990, p. 240). If, as Merleau-Ponty (1962) has suggested - that the 'objective' and subjective' are 'two orders hastily constructed within a total experience' (p. 20), then we have leaned and still lean heavily toward objective constructs of the totality of experience. Sokolowski (2000) confirms the pervasiveness of objectivism. He states that the idea of an isolated consciousness 'still holds many of us captive, and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to dislodge people from this way of thinking once it has taken root, once they have become used to a certain set of problems and a certain way of reasoning' (p. 227).

As a teacher, I had felt the effect of an objectivist attitude within the school system and saw this research study as a pragmatic, reflexive opportunity to explore an alternative to an objectivist way of looking at music, music teaching and learning. I sought to take responsibility for my own part in "constructing an objective world" by seeking personal transformation to new ways of looking and being.

It has been the task of phenomenology to attempt to restore balance — to 'remember the lifeworld' and to take meanings 'just as they present themselves in everyday life' (Fuller, 1990, p. 24). In the sphere of phenomenological research, Van Manen's (1990) plan has been 'to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures of lived experience' (p. 10). Following this lead, I have 'returned to the lifeworld' to explore the lived experience and everyday meaning of being a secondary school music student. The journey began with the need to become more pedagogically 'attuned to subjectivity' (Van Manen, 1991, p. 154).

Whilst in the process of considering the subjective I sought to avoid the assumption that consciousness is isolated, 'a closed sphere of interiority completely cut off from everything belonging to the objective world external to it' (Fuller, 1990, p. 19). To do this I explored 'bridging the ontological chasm' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 93) with a phenomenological and constructivist stance that assumes we are more than isolated entities with a consciousness that simply represents an objective world. The intentional and social nature of consciousness
means that ‘we are in direct contact with the world (and) living our conscious life, we are ‘at’ the world, ‘at’ the things encountered in that world’ (Gurwitsch, 1974, p. 236, quoted in Fuller, 1990, p. 37). With this perspective in mind I have thought of subjectivity as a constructivist, non-solipsistic concept – one that simply refers to the features that are unique and idiosyncratic to each individual.

I ‘attuned’ to this constructivist concept of subjectivity by approaching the lived musical worlds of the participants with a focus on narrative life history and with a phenomenological ‘attitude’ to musical experience. With this approach I sought to ‘defuse the dualism’ (Bowman, 1998, p. 301) between music and musician. With phenomenological and narrative ways of thinking I set out to understand the musical lifeworlds of Polly, Mario, Jan, Kristin and Jeremiah. I listened to their stories and observed them in lifeworld contexts and then connected life events into narrative sequences. By looking for the essence of specific experiences, both formative and in their learning situations, I sought to interpret and illuminate how individual experiences were meaningful in their lives. The process of explicating meanings and restorying the data has revealed the intense and intimate nature of the personal relationship that each participant has forged with music, the individual and complex ways that musical identities were formed and the way they have evolved. The explicated meanings reveal how Polly, Mario, Jan, Kristin and Jeremiah each have developed a ‘profoundly intimate and inherently complex relationship between music and sense of self’ (Bowman, 2003, p. 2). With each participant, to use the words of Regelski (1986), ‘musical functioning...has become an inherent and intrinsic part of their total human functioning’ (p. 214). These assertions affirm an important implication for music educators. While the ‘outer’ function of music teaching is to present an organised curriculum, for musically enthusiastic and dedicated students, music will be much more than subject material to be learned. Their identities and music (concept of self and musicking) will be ‘joined at the hip’ (Bowman, 2003, p. 3). Awareness of and empathy with the nature of individual musical identity is a requisite to effective teaching. In our interactions with individual students we should strive, as far as
possible, to be phenomenologically 'present' to the nature of each individual musical lifeworld and identity, in order to understand the contextual effect that organised, formal musical experiences may have. As Van Manen (1982) reminds us, we should also be 'mindful of the ease with which we tend to rely on a reconstructed logic in our professional endeavours' (p. 296), in order to remain phenomenologically attuned.

The portraits reveal each participant's preferences - for vernacular, informal or formal music learning styles and also the contexts and circumstances that led to different musical paths and choices. The musical identities and lifeworlds of the participants began with different types of enculturation processes. In most cases, a love for music did not commence from formally structured experiences but as an integral part of informal, everyday, meaningful musical interactions - like singing with Dad, watching music videos, singing to cassette tapes and 'poking around on the piano'. Important formative experiences were varied and complex, sometimes social and sometimes private in essence. Specific interactive musical experiences during the childhood of each participant have been demonstrations of how an instant, powerful, phenomenologically intentional attraction to music experience occurs. From these initial experiences, it appears as though a phenomenological attraction gathers momentum and personal concepts of self become bound with concepts of music to form a large proportion of developing self-identity.

While the research questions focussed on these specific realms of the musical lifeworlds, other issues and dilemmas 'surfaced'. The reader may interpret the 'effects' and differences between the cultures experienced in private compared with those of public schooling. Comment and dialogue may also be opened about the levels of stress and the workloads that students are placed under. 'High achieving' students are often left to their own devices as we concentrate on those with learning difficulties. However, 'high achievers' and 'perfectionists' should not
simply be categorised as 'gifted and talented' but monitored closely, cared for and supported. The drive to achieve may be based in difficult emotional situations and may be a 'cry for help'. In the portraits the complexity of living a musical life is revealed when music engagement is seen as both cause and effect of life's dilemmas. Positively viewed, music is a source of joy, comfort and a necessary outlet for expressing inner meanings that need to surface in an alternative form.

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In this study I have also explored possibilities for the music educator/researcher to utilise narrative and phenomenological frameworks and modes of thought. I took the opportunity to pragmatically explore the self-transformability that these particular 'ways of thinking' present. As a pragmatic exercise, I explored my own lived experience of both narrative and phenomenological thinking while conducting the research, and sought a transformation of my own perspectives, values and relationship to music and most importantly to those I teach/research. The task required a connected and more grounded Kierkegaardian familiarity with 'what is immediately experienced' rather than attempting to formulate an objective 'Freudian technical formulation' of theoretical processes (May, 1969). Additionally my aim has been 'to capture the rich diversity of thought' (Bruner, 1986, p. 11) by demonstrating the different ways that we construct meaning with narrative and paradigmatic modes. My own 'transformation' during the study has involved a challenge to commit to a reflexive engagement with a constructivist and pragmatist approach. The constructivist approach has challenged me to uphold the subjective and social aspects of music engagement – above recognition of it as an autonomous, objective form. The pragmatist approach has required a pursuit of 'embodied' meanings rather than facts that attempt to state 'what the world, the one universal truth is really like'. With a pragmatist perspective I have sought to consider music 'as a process not an object
- a 'thing' but, indeed, a set of processes, and a set of processes that inevitably involves people' (Shepherd and Wicke, 1997, p. 95).

However, the thesis has not predominantly focussed on 'a sociology of music'. I have avoided reifying the social aspects of music, for like Shepherd and Wicke, I have not 'conceptualised music's social condition in terms of extrinsic forces which 'determine' music and thus render it as little more than an expression of 'the social'" (p. 95). By including social aspects, but not reifying them, I 'have assumed that music's social condition is intrinsically musical and thus not reducible to other forms of sociality' (Shepherd and Wicke, 1997, p. 95).

While developing new personal perceptions of the research process I resolved some of my own epistemological and ontological tensions. The incorporation of the Wittgensteinian concept, where 'essence' is uncovered metaphorically through a process of rearranging rather than digging, assisted further insights into interpretive procedures. I recognised how natural science 'digs' in order to seek the laws that determine the functioning of the physical universe and to 'verbally replicate structures of the real world' (Barone, 2001a, p. 174). In contrast, by 'rearranging' understandings and meanings I recognise how we may locate 'essences'. These are not in some 'beneath the world reality' but (if we choose to look) are 'already open to view' (Wittgenstein, 1968, p. 43, n. 92).

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Narrative and phenomenological approaches hold many possibilities for future research into music education. In addition to developing insight into the perspectives and experiences of musicians and students, the approaches, when engaged pragmatically, also challenge researchers and educators to explore their own ideological positioning in relationship to music and music students. Moreover, these research processes will help to promote a constructivist balance to the dominance of objectivist perspectives. As Van Manen has stated, the phenomenological attitude helps us 'attune to subjectivity' (1991, p. 154). By
developing more empathy to student musical lifeworlds and identities we may continue to challenge the dominant approach to curriculum that begins with objective and theoretical abstractions of music's inherent qualities, and then demands that teachers lead students towards these objective constructs. Alternatives are needed to this modernist view of curriculum, which seeks to discover a 'pre-existent world, not a method for dealing with an emergent evolutionary one' (Doll, 1993, p. 32). Additionally, the constructivist approach can help us to be more socially and contextually appropriate. As Elliot (1995) suggests, 'the best curricula arise when teachers focus on their own circumstance, rather than on the generic scripts of theorists and publishers who tend to see similarities across teaching situations that cannot be grouped together defensibly in reality' (p. 254).

Giroux and Simon (1989) have stated that '...the relationship between pedagogy and popular culture needs to be made theoretically visible and pedagogically operative in the language of schooling' (p. 221). I assert that the relationship between pedagogy and popular culture may be further understood by adopting phenomenological and narrative approaches, where these methods will help to illuminate the perspectives of the 'actors' in and of the culture. However, there is a mistrust of the perspectives of young students — evidenced in the following statement by Zillmann and Gan (1997), who researched 'adolescent musical taste', but who are sceptical of relying on personal reports from the adolescents themselves. They state:

The analysis of the exploration of the influence of adolescent music on adolescents' beliefs and dispositions, by openly asking adolescents about the possibility of such influence, reveals the limitations of this procedure. Clearly, what adolescents can report are their perceptions or opinions. These opinions are based on presumption rather than careful observation of causal connections between exposure to music and resultant behaviours. They are, additionally, subject to self-serving distortion. Moreover, the potential influence of familiarity with prevalent, mostly media-disseminated views about the issues cannot be ignored. All this is to
say that adolescents' perception may be insightful on occasion, but
cannot possibly be accepted as actual influences.

(p. 168)

The purpose of the research by Zillmann and Gan was to discover adolescent musical taste. However, while they have attempted a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of emic issues, by mistrusting subjectivity they end up with ‘complexities objectively described’ rather than discovering ‘the particular perceptions of the actors’ (Stake, 1995, p. 42). Additionally, by seeking the objective facts of ‘what happens in situations’ they avoid any notion of ‘fidelity’ where we seek to understand what music may mean ‘to the teller of the tale’ (Grumet, 1988). The assumption that music is an object apart from the people who create and have an opinion about it - and the need to find evidence of the object apart from those people is, I believe, ‘barking up the wrong tree’. It distances the practices of music pedagogy and research away from students and informants. Distance is created when the teacher and research academic is assumed to be a privileged expert rather than simply having expertise. As experts, we may feel justified in reporting our perceptions and opinions because we have based them on ‘careful observation of causal connections’ rather than on ‘presumption’. However, I suggest that when we adopt a narrative and phenomenological perspective of the lifeworlds of our students and research participants we may find several limitations in our observations. For example, by categorising the adolescent musicians as having ‘self-distorted opinions’ Zillmann and Gan do not ‘orientate to the subjectivity of the lifeworld’ and avoid ‘the intelligible forms they (the musicians) treat as real’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1998, p. 139). A move away from this objectivist approach means to explore, not what ‘music means’ but what ‘music means to people’.

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I would like to acknowledge the openness of Polly, Mario, Jan, Kristin and Jeremiah to share their stories. Their musical lives contain the seeds and the fruit of music teaching and learning. Through their ‘tellings’ they have invited us to listen and to understand – but in a way that is different from looking into a ‘one-way-mirror’ of inquiry. They have revealed how stories of experience contain more than self-serving distortions and ill-considered presumptions. ‘Open to view’ are gems of understanding that suggest the way forward for music education. I shall leave with a ‘gem’ offered by Mario, who while explaining the effect of a teacher on his musical lifeworld announced an important constructivist message. He described how, inadvertently his physical education teacher was a positive force because he

helped me to discover music. He didn’t teach me about music, he showed me music and there is a difference.

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Back in the classroom
I will test the ‘usefulness’
Of my research journey.
I won’t objectify my understanding -
But continue to look,
To find new meanings and understandings
Of what new experiences and contexts
Mean to ‘The Teller of the Tale’.

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