

CALLED TO THE CONVERSATION: A DIGITAL ETHNODRAMA
EXPLORING COLLISIONS OF CALLING AND SHADOW
ACROSS A COHORT OF HERO'S JOURNEYS
INTO PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANHOOD

by

TARA S. SIEVERS-HUNT

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Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Deborah VanderLinde, Ph.D., Chair
Lauri A. Hogle, Ph.D.
Robert Martin, Ph.D.

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To all the learner-musicians and students I have met on my journey who were bold enough to impel us to reevaluate our truth simply by asking the unanticipated “why?”

To the next generation of a/r/tographical bricoleurs: May you embrace the patience to take the long path, determination to pursue an unending wide-awakeness, vulnerability to embody the creative spirit, and audacity to complicate the conversation.

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In Memory of Marygrove College—Detroit, Michigan

1905-2019

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Tara S. Sievers-Hunt

PREFACE

In order to engage in effective action
you must put your life into the service of what you value.
Through engagement, things happen.
It is action that forges meaning and significance.

The concept of an open society is based on the recognition
that nobody is in possession of the ultimate truth.
If we fail to recognize that we may be wrong,
we can only undermine any action done in the world.

The artist's job is to stay alive and awake
in the space between convictions and certainties;
The truth in art exists in the tension between contrasting realities.

To me, the world often feels unjust, vicious, and even unbearable.
And yet, I know my development as a person
is directly proportional to my capacity for discomfort.
This research has given me hope and courage in the day-to-day reality.

Leonard Bernstein suggested that a musician's response to violence
should be to "make the music more intense."¹
I want to make the music more intense—
eloquent, expressive, magnetic, and powerful.

I look around at higher music education²
and see it mostly steeped in an old-fashioned aesthetic.
I want it strengthened, emboldened, wild, persuasive,
and relevant to the issues of our time.

Each chapter in this book considers and examines tools for action—
for making the music more intense:
Context, Articulation, Intention, Attention, Magnetism, Attitude, Content, Time.

A poetic transcription from Bogart's (2007)
And Then, You Act (pp. 1-6)

¹ Bernstein's statement was in response to the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy. Bogart quotes him in response to the events of 9/11. I now use it in response to the ongoing violence and oppression perpetuated against those who identify as Black, Asian-American, Native American, 2SLGBTQIA+, women, and/or other marginalized identity groups.

² Substituted for original phrase "the American theatre."

ABSTRACT

CALLED TO THE CONVERSATION: A DIGITAL ETHNODRAMA EXPLORING COLLISIONS OF CALLING AND SHADOW ACROSS A COHORT OF HERO'S JOURNEYS INTO PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANHOOD

BY

Tara S. Sievers-Hunt

Adviser: Deborah VanderLinde, Ph.D.

Called to the Conversation is a digital ethnodrama in three movements. It is the final research product resulting from a series of interviews with nine graduates of a small liberal arts college in Detroit as conducted by their former professor. This dissertation study arose from the question: *How might the curriculum of a college music department be meaningfully informed by examining the musicianship journeys of its alumni?*

While transcribing and exploring the nuclear episodes (McAdams, 1997), stop moments (Fels, 2019), and narrative and resonant threads (Clandinin, 2013) from these participants' interviews, I discovered that a calling to professional musicianhood (Ansdell, 2016) leading to the pursuit of an undergraduate voice performance degree enkindled a narrative structure similar to a hero's journey (Vogler, 2020; also Campbell, 1949/2008; Ford, 2000; Frankel, 2010). Specifically, I focused on how the interaction between the Call to Adventure (crossing the Threshold into the Otherworld of higher music education) and their Shadow fear culminated in an Ordeal to be faced before leaving the Otherworld.

Methodological, structural, and artistic-theatrical influences behind this work have created a bricolage (Kincheloe, 2005; Berry, 2015) of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008), performative ethnography (Denzin, 2003), currere (Pinar, 2019), a/r/tography (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Leavy, 2009, 2013), verbatim rhythmic transcription, ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2005, 2011a), digital storytelling (Lambert & Hessler, 2020), digital performance (Dixon & Smith, 2007), and narrative monologue—all grounded in a paradigm of critical constructivism (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Claxton, 1996; Fosnot, 2005; Freire, 1970/2018; Gay, 2018; Kincheloe, 2003, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McLaren, 2017), a philosophy of musicking (Small, 1990/2016, 1998), and a sense of relational ethics (Clandinin et al., 2018; Ellis, 2007).

Engaging the processes of research and artistic creation as an a/r/tographical bricoleur (Irwin et al., 2018; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Pinar, 2004a) revealed new understandings of lifelong learning as a self-authoring process (Baxter Magolda, 2004, 2009)—a *life curriculum* into professional musicianhood. This work poses a number of questions to spark *reflective conversations* (Renshaw, 2007) about making space for student-musicians' *theories of musicking* (Small, 1990/2016, 1998) and their subjective experience within official and operational curricula (Mayes, 2010).

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT: WELCOME TO MARYGROVE

*It is the artist's job to live in dialectical uncertainty.
A context...always juxtaposed to a particular event in space and time
further complicates the tensions.
Art reimagines time and space,
and its success can be measured by the extent to which
an audience can not only access that world
but becomes engaged to the point
where they understand something about themselves
that they did not know before.*

A poetic transcription from Bogart's (2007)
And Then, You Act (p. 12)³

Landmark: A Poetic Transcription

*I stand alone at the center of the darkened chapel.
A vast space of polished wood,
soaring stacks of stone,
and pious marble figures
banded by streaks of sunlight and shadow.*

*How many have given and received
in this nonagenarial space?
The worshipping faithful,
enraptured audiences,
college stakeholders...
Thousands connected by history and ritual.*

³ Throughout this dissertation, I have shared a number of poetic transcriptions that I created from scholarly literature and other sources. Their construction is based on the poetic inquiry process developed by Laurel Richardson (1994) and Corinne Glesne (1997). Prendergast (2006) created such poems as part of her dissertation literature review in theatre and curriculum because they helped her to “reflect on, play against, and perform with” central topics (p. 369). She placed her poems throughout her dissertation just as I have done. Prendergast called it both an “aesthetic and intellectual choice” because “research poetry used in this context offers an alternative method for understanding and representing key theories and texts in inquiry” (p. 369). James O. Richardson (2013) agrees saying that poetic transcriptions “may provide new ways of perceiving...knowledge from a different standpoint” (p. 20). Butler-Kisber (2002) and Cahnmann (2003) have also created similar poems “to discover and communicate findings in multidimensional, penetrating, and more accessible ways” (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 29). In these literature review poetic transcriptions, my objective is to honor the author's original intention and bring a focused insight through my research lens.

I pull a thin line of breath through my tense throat.

*My senses fill with the smell of time and tradition—
their burden heavy in my nostrils.
I clutch the air around my heart for a moment
as if to comfort its thudding pain.
Then shakily expel the air
displacing shimmering particles that hang in the stillness.*

*I'd been waiting to be called out on my curricular crusade.
At least something was finally said aloud.*

*Funny.
It was nothing different than what I say to myself:
“...no respect for tradition or method.”
“...ruining the quality and respectability of the program.”
“...neglecting rigor and standards.”*

*Conservatory born and bred
taught to adhere to,
protect the system—
not break it!*

*But I grapple with “what should be” and “what could be”—
both feeling as “what must.”
To whom am I responsible
and for what?*

*Far down the aisle, the doors are closed.
Performers and audience long since gone from the day's recital.
The low autumn sun illuminates a stained glass chronical
of storied trust, faith, promise, and purpose.*

*I know silence surrounds me
but all I can hear is my own inner chaos
of the established conservatorial professorate
pronouncing weighty wisdom
into the stubborn smirking face
of an anarchical alchemist
drunk on the potential
of “what if.”*

A poetic transcription from
Tara Sievers-Hunt's personal journal entry
November 12th, 2012

Coming into the Context

In fall 2011, I had the honor to join the music faculty at Marygrove College,⁴ a small Catholic liberal arts PBI located within the city of Detroit as a tenure-track assistant professor.⁵ As the curriculum of the department (and of the voice area, specifically) aligned closely with my own formal training and performance experiences in classical music and bel canto singing, I entered the position with familiarity and confidence. Midway through this first year, I became aware of a stark disconnect between our standard conservatory-based music curriculum and the prior knowledge and career goals of many members of the student population. For example: The voice students, whom I advised as Director of Vocal Activities, were only allowed to study and perform Western Euro-centric classical music and legit musical theatre within their degree program.⁶ *Contemporary commercial musics*, or CCM (Lovetri, 2008),⁷ were not welcome as music of serious study in our academic setting, nor were the musical practices or vocal techniques of feasible use as co-curricular experiences. Some students were discouraged from engaging at all with contemporary genres outside of school. I was quietly approached by one student who admitted that although the students may be “training as

⁴ A letter granting permission from the Marygrove College administration and Board of Trustees to use the name of the institution within this dissertation may be found in Appendix D.

⁵ Predominantly Black Institution (PBI). The definition of “Predominantly Black Institutions” may be found in Section 318(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 1059e. Eligibility requirements for this designation include:

- a) Undergraduate enrollment reflects at least 40 percent Black American students;
- b) of which not less than 50 percent are low-income individuals or first-generation college students.

⁶ The term *classical* in this dissertation will refer to sacred and secular art music produced or rooted in the traditions of Western European art music; *Legit* traditionally refers to musical theatre works heavily influenced by classical voice styles and training.

⁷ The term *contemporary commercial music* or CCM is commonly used to denote “nonclassical” music, covering genres such as pop, rock, R&B, gospel, hip-hop, rap, country, etc. Not to be confused with Contemporary Christian Music which also uses the CCM acronym.

opera singers” on the weekdays, they were continuing to perform as gospel and R&B singers over the weekends.

LANYCK

We didn't have the option
to broaden that horizon.
It was just classical, classical, classical, classical, classical, classical.
So we get in trouble
because we would
classically train all week.
Leave.
And Friday, Saturday, Sunday,
the majority of the students would go to church,
sing,
and go back to the old techniques.
So Monday morning
after singing in church,
you would try to go back to the classical training
and it causes a problem
with your vocal cords
fighting with the muscles in the larynx.
So now it's an issue.

Instead of these dual-musical identities and activities operating as a productive type of artistic *cross-training* (Spivery & Barton, 2018)—in which elements of knowledge, technique and experience in one vocal-musical *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998) may be directly employed, compared, or transformed for utilization in the other—the students’ different musical worlds did not seem to relate to one another at all. I have now come to view this separation between music experiences as a form of disconnected *code-switching* (DeBose, 1992).

As a new faculty member with a long history of teaching in diverse secondary music settings, I became curious about this phenomenon and sought to help bridge the gap between in-school and out-of-school *musicking* (Small, 1990/2016, 1998) within my private voice studio. I continued the emphasis on training in classical and legit musical

theatre, but I invited my students to speak of (and if comfortable, demonstrate) their CCM praise and worship repertoire within the lesson. I would ask questions to encourage the students to think more mindfully about the vocal techniques they used and to experiment on their own with different approaches to breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation. Eventually, these types of conversations began to spill over into my classroom settings of Introduction to Diction, Vocal Literature, and Lyric Theatre, which broadened the conversation with voice students beyond my studio.

I approached a few of my music colleagues to learn more about their perspectives and the recent history of our music program. By the late 1990's, there had been an observable shift in musical demographics for incoming students. Prior to 2000, the majority of incoming students were arriving with strong experience in reading/writing Western music notation, taking private lessons, participating in classically-based ensembles, and engaging in Euro-American classical repertoire. Therefore, the traditional Euro-centric conservatory model commonly used for American collegiate music programs had been effective and efficient for the backgrounds and needs of the Marygrove students. To support any talented incoming students who may be lacking some of the expected formal skills, knowledge, or experience, the music faculty had developed a First-Year Initiative program. Advisors could require a student to complete a select number of courses from this grouping to strengthen required knowledge and skills prior to starting the core curriculum.

However, over the next decade, prospective students with music backgrounds that would be considered *non-traditional* by the majority of higher music education institutions—proficiency in aural-based music literacy, experience with

autodidactic/informal apprenticeship models and in nonformal music settings, and strong knowledge in contemporary commercial music repertoire—continued to increase. By the time I entered Marygrove as a professor, the majority of incoming, first year music students were completing all 17 remedial music credits before entering the core curriculum. Combined with college-required courses and additional life responsibilities limiting their credit loads, students might have to wait three semesters before beginning the core music curriculum coursework and require six or seven years until graduation.

As a constructivist educator, I embrace a learner-centered approach that values and builds from the students' backgrounds, interests, and points-of-view (Dewey, 1902/1981). Each learner brings significantly different experiences, perspectives, and dispositions into the learning setting, which directly influences their ability and desire to work practically and reflectively, and generates ownership and responsibility in the process of their own meaning-making (Claxton, 1996). The pluralistic nature of knowing and known creates a *transactional subjectivism* to what constitutes reality, and value is mediated by the knower herself (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In conjunction with this individuality, learners are deeply influenced and guided by social-cultural interactions (Cobb, 2005). It is a combination of reflection upon prior experience and support from *more knowledgeable others* which provides the most dynamic environment for the process of learning (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1979).

From my observations and conversations with department stakeholders, I began to wonder if our music degree program could be better oriented to the prior experiences and career goals of our student population.

In the fall of 2012, I received permission from the dean and the department chair to design and lead a series of roundtable discussions with current students to ask about their experiences within Marygrove's music degree program. Participation was completely voluntary, but the majority of the students were happy to gather and share their insights, concerns, and suggestions in the roundtable discussions.⁸

JERIEL

I got to my junior year,
and after getting all the good information,
the walls are still black and white.
I felt the arts was going to be this breakthrough opportunity
to get some color in my life.
Be expressive and be free.
Sometimes I just felt like
we were confined.
I felt like if I didn't say something,
I was going to walk out of here with a void in myself as an artist.
I came here for a specific goal
and that's not being met.

LANYCK

Our music family [at Marygrove]
would always have conversations about what we wanted to do,
where we wanted to get to,
and goals we set for purposes in life.
I wanted to have a sit-down with one of the professors
and actually say something.
It's not about what you want for me.
It's what I want for me.

MELODY

Everybody has a right to what they think.
It's important to be open.
What makes a great leader is a great servant.
To be concerned about the needs of the people
and what they need to be the best that they can be.

⁸ These transcribed statements come from the 2017 focus group I conducted with the participants as part of this study. They were asked to reflect on their involvement with the curriculum changes during their time in school. The procedural methods of this focus group may be found in Chapter Five. These statements above are also in the style of verbatim rhythmic transcription, described as a method in Chapter Six and utilized in the ethnodrama in Chapter Seven.

Professors are not just leaders.
They should have the servant mentality.

SHERRY

I'd asked a question one time.
I didn't understand the purpose behind some stuff.
And it wasn't that I was trying to question it or combat it.
I was really seeking understanding.
But it was like a:
"Well-it's-just-because-that's-the-way-it-is-and-we-haven't-changed-it"
kind of answer.
You know?

LANYCK

We're trapped in this one-minded area,
this one-minded atmosphere where we can't get past the start of it all.
There's more,
but you're only giving this classical.
They gave it to us in a Spirituals aspect because of African-American culture.
Just because we are African-Americans
does not mean you have to feed into who we are based off the color of my skin.
Like,
you're giving me what I want based off the color of my skin—
not my knowledge
and my brain
and what I want to do.

Following the roundtables, I shared the de-identified notes from the roundtables with the music faculty and staff. The students' (sometimes brutally honest) commentary sparked a number of conversations across the next semester as we began to consider the "whys" behind our pedagogical and musical practices, departmental policies, and degree curricula.

As a result, this process also challenged us, as individuals, to examine our own *scholastic folklore* and to consider our approaches to various aspects of teaching and learning that might better serve *this* particular context. Garman (1985, cited in Piantanida & Garman, 2009) defines *scholastic folklore* as tacit understandings of the way formal

teaching and learning should be, based on one's own experiences. If an educator becomes "encapsulated by their own scholastic folklore, their level of learning is impoverished," then these understandings may "block personal inquiry and the self as instrument of learning" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 15). We also found ourselves struggling with understanding our *partisan musicianship* (Woody, 2012) and the ways we may have been actively or passively disparaging CCM genres and styles in an effort to promote our particular preference for classical musics. To move forward with a new approach in our department, we would all need to be brave enough to challenge our rigid and safe understandings. Only by exploring the ways in which we were blocking ourselves would we begin to see new possibilities within our teaching and learning practices and to consider the potential offerings of our curriculum.

During the process, we acknowledged how our current curriculum treated many of our incoming students as musical *cultural deficit models* (Song & Pyon, 2011) because they lacked the desired *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1997) and did not enter the educational setting in the preferred manner or with the expected tools. We did not wish to view our incoming students as *remedial students* any longer, especially with their rich skills, experiences, and interests. Therefore, we began looking towards new, better ways to welcome and prepare our students towards becoming knowledgeable, expressive, and successful musicians in their career aspirations.

Across that summer, we gathered to develop a five-year initiative for continuing to examine the exchange of reflections and ideas between faculty and students and begin

to develop a process moving toward radical curricular change.⁹ Our next student roundtable presented the faculty's work on the new initiative and to gather student responses and new proposals. After this point, it became an on-going curricular dialogue among music students, faculty, and staff, wherein I served as the primary facilitator and translator. Our department soon developed a curricular culture of sharing between students and faculty—with all stakeholders giving feedback on the new courses, policies, performance and assessment initiatives, and audition practices. The students saw curricular elements changed and/or adjusted due to their suggestions, which empowered students' agency for continued sharing. The students' feedback became richer and more thoughtful over time, as did the music faculty's willingness to listen and respond in kind. The students did not always get what they wanted—no curriculum may be fully student-controlled—but the community of conversation enabled faculty to share why and how decisions had been made (as appropriate), and strengthened both the students' understanding of their own undergraduate degree program and their general problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Although our curriculum work was not a formal study, the project could be considered both non-formal *evaluation research* which “systematically examines people, programs, organizations, and/or policies to assess their quality, merit, and effectiveness” (Saldaña, 2011b, p. 17) and non-formal *action research* with a “shared goal of social

⁹ The initiative was informed by the College's urban leadership mission, NASM guidelines, a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, and the roundtable data reflecting the backgrounds, needs and career interests of our student population. The College Music Society's (2014) *Transforming Music Study from its Foundations: A Manifesto for Progressive Change in the Undergraduate Preparation of Music Majors* was also released during the first year of the initiative. It presented a number of talking points for our curricular discussions and in many ways, gave us a sense of permission to think outside of the box.

activism and change” as we worked together to make the curriculum more relevant and beneficial to their needs (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 51). Both approaches also involve, value, and empower the insights and ideas of immediate stakeholders, since their “personal investment, ownership, and stakes in the matter are more likely to generate significant outcomes” (Saldaña, 2011b, p. 18). This type of engagement with participants before the formal dissertation study began would eventually prove highly valuable for the data collection and arts-based methodology process.

In winter 2017, we completed and publicly unveiled our new mission and curricular vision of a learner-centered, inquiry-based, genre-diverse music curriculum. After reviewing the courses, policies, and degree requirements of the completed curriculum at our July 2017 focus group, the participants of this study were asked to share their thoughts on the journey and the final product:

TI

My freshman year
I came to the school,
still reserved,
but very appreciative.
By sophomore year, it was like:
"When is it going to start changing?"
By junior year, I started to voice my opinion.
I understand the main curriculum is classical,
but can we do it in a way
that me and my peers can communicate on a personal level?
Everything just started to work out,
especially the coffeehouses and recitals.
It really was for a positive change.
It wasn't just for my change,
but for the generation after me.

REI

Music,
especially music performance,
is one of the most personal academic disciplines.

Most of us came here
getting more exposure to classical music
and we were expected to take that.
Then we felt some kind of responsibility
to ourselves to say:
"This is what we want to see,
this is what we want to be working on,
and let's do that."
I came in under a [private voice] teacher
who really encouraged me to think about learning holistically.
I think that we wanted to see that more in our program.
A more holistic program.
And we did.

JERIEL

To get the change to come
on paper,
I felt really good about that because,
I knew someone would be able to get the opportunity to do it their way a little bit.
Still follow the leadership and instruction,
but get the goal they came for.

NORA

Being a student in a really small,
really personal college
gave us the right to say what should have been implemented.
Even with all of us having different focuses
and working toward personal goals after graduation,
all agreed on versatility in music.
So I have to say,
the curriculum reinforces the "coming into the conversation."

Crafting a Participant-Centered Study

In summer 2016, as we were bringing our curriculum-design work into fruition, I wanted to engage more with some of the recent voice alumni who had figured so predominantly in my first five years teaching at the College. I was curious to learn how and what they were doing beyond our occasional texts and their social media updates. We had made such a powerful journey together. I yearned to hear more of their stories in depth and wondered if these stories could continue to inform the *living inquiry* (Irwin &

Springgay, 2008) of our curriculum. As a researcher, the inspiration for this study began with a group of participants whom I wished to know more about based on the prior engagement we had had together. The study was then designed to facilitate a further exploration of their experiences.

All nine of the participants in this study received an undergraduate music degree from Marygrove College within three years of the start of data collection (2013-2016).¹⁰ Each participant also played a critical role in both the roundtables and curriculum design process sometime between 2011 and 2016. I was curious to learn more about their progress towards professional musicianship and also how they were now using the sum of their experiences as graduates and professional musicians.

Each participant is an incredibly unique individual with a powerful, personal journey which readers will discover within the dissertation ethnodrama and supporting sections. However, I have found the participants also share a large number of similarities in their backgrounds and experiences which further unify them into a cohort:

1. All participants were born, raised, and/or have resided for over 15 years in Detroit, Michigan.¹¹ Several currently still reside within the city.
2. All participants began listening to, learning, and performing music from a very young age. The majority began their musical engagement listening to, singing, and/or playing gospel music in their family's Protestant Christian

¹⁰ i.e., BM in Voice Performance, BM in Music Education with a choral/vocal emphasis, BA in Music with a voice performance emphasis, BA in Performing Arts with a music emphasis.

¹¹ There is a distinct difference between living within the city of Detroit and within the suburbs that comprise the Metro-Detroit area. It is an important distinction, especially for Detroit residents.

church, followed by secondary experiences through their K-12 school music classes.¹²

3. All participants worked with me in a variety of settings throughout college. I may have served as their private voice teacher, vocal coach, ensemble director, and/or classroom instructor for vocal diction, vocal literature, music history, music literature, and/or performance practice-related courses.
4. All participants pursued voice as their primary instrument in college, with aspirations of working as a professional singer in some capacity.
5. All participants are actively engaged in professional *musicking* (e.g., performing, composing, conducting) (Small, 1990/2016, 1998) and/or related professional activities (e.g., music business, music teaching, music ministry) in some way. Not all participants have been able to apply themselves as full-time musicians, but each has been pursuing various musical projects and gigs.

It is also important to note the strong longitudinal relationship (8-10 years) between me as researcher and each of the participants, as well as among the participants themselves. Participants have maintained communication with me post-graduation, occasionally being in contact for professional advice or support, to share the excitement of recent accomplishments, or simply to say hello and reconnect. Participants are also in contact with other participants, both as friends and as professionals who share information about potential gigs and professional advice with one another.

¹² The structures of these K-12 music classes span a range from classically traditioned (e.g., eurythmy, elementary orchestras) to gospel-centered parochial schools.

Throughout this study, when we (the participants and I) refer to musicking, we will be speaking primarily of the *voice as instrument* and of *song as musical structure*—which are the primary instrument and predominant medium of both the researcher and the participants respectively. Also, when we speak of musical works or engagement, we will be referring to the musical structures, performance practices, audience practices, and compositional elements of Western musical genres (both classical and CCM).

For further interest, the researcher and participants all identify as singers and performers—especially as soloists, but all are comfortable in vocal ensemble work as well. All of the participants also identify with one or more additional artistic roles outside of vocal music (e.g., dancer, model, producer, actor, instrumentalist). Many of the participants have also connected into fields outside of the arts or in conjunction with artistic work (e.g., social justice, ministry, business, administration).

I have shared the story of our work at Marygrove to provide the context and situation to the origins of the study, prior non-formal research interactions between researcher and participants, and the relationship among researcher, participants, and the institution where we worked together. Stake (2010) notes that awareness of this type of background is important to the story, but it is not what the research is about. Indeed, the research of this study is not about the students' attendance at Marygrove College specifically, or even their work with me as their professor and mentor—but rather their storied journeys toward professional *musicianhood* (Ansdell, 2016).

Having stated the shared context of Marygrove, Detroit, and our connection as researcher and participants, I am looking specifically at the process of reflective interviewing and types of episodes shared as the foreground content for the study, with

everything else as background situation to the episodes. Stake (2010) clarifies the difference between *context* (“rather stable, something that does not change much day to day”) and *situation* (“a more immediate background, the things that are going on right now behind the main activities”) (p. 52). Stake (2010) believes that *situationality* is highly important for qualitative research because it draws attention to the various backgrounds (e.g., particular times, places, social backdrop, communication styles) for the activities, events, and relationships being studied. Situation, as well as context, contributes to the meaning of qualitative phenomena. This is an important clarification for this study because I see context and background as functioning separately, but also in unity to generate meaning.

The idea for this dissertation study arose from the question: *How might the curriculum of a college music department be meaningfully informed by examining the musicianship journeys of its alumni?* Originally, I was interested in how informal and formal musicking practices utilized from childhood through their current work, examining the possible effect of college study.

In September 2016, I received IRB approval for my dissertation study, “Journeys toward Professional Musicianship.” I then invited nine of my former students from Marygrove College to participate in my study. The initial *research puzzle* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was: “What has been the journey towards professional musicianship (from childhood, through college, to present day) for nine graduates of a small, urban, liberal arts music program?” I planned to interview these individuals to gain insight into their experiences in their initial communities of musical practice, to explore their perceptions of the process of transition both into and out of a community of musical

practice in a collegiate setting, and to examine how, as college graduates and professionals, they continue to engage in music within various musical practices and communities. I would then seek emergent themes reflective of commonalities in essential or foundational elements of these journeys towards musical expertise, as well as key transitional moments in thought, approach, identity, personal connections, and/or goals. I was most interested in examining the curricular implications of the data: not only of what content is taught and how, but also who is being taught. I sought to identify common themes in these journeys through different musical practices and communities into professional musicianship and to understand how awareness of these themes/elements/understandings might better inform music curriculum development in higher education.

Although the research puzzle itself did not change through the course of the data collection and analysis, the content of the participants' responses during the interview process was quite unexpected. Initially, I was expecting to examine the learning and performing practices of the participants from childhood, through college, to present day. Believing I knew the backgrounds of my former students fairly comprehensively, I expected that before college, they were predominately learning repertoire informally, developing technique autodidactically or through informal apprenticeships through church and/or family, and performing commercial contemporary music for CCM audience culture. Then, during college, these students were predominately learning repertoire formally, developing technique through applied study, and performing classical and musical theater for a diverse audience culture. Based on these informed assumptions, I was curious how my participants, now alumni of our college program, were utilizing the

musical practices from these varied communities as professional musicians. I designed my interview guide with these specific types of responses in mind. Instead, I found that my participants were more interested in sharing stories that outlined aspects of success and failure, risk and change, the rollercoaster of self-confidence, the significance of purpose, and the importance of the people (e.g., family, mentors, cohort) who helped (and sometimes hurt) them along the way. Perhaps I should have expected that, exactly as they had always done as students, my participants would take my well-laid plans in a completely unanticipated direction.

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. In Chapter Two, I introduce the critical constructivist approach to teaching and learning underpinning this study. Chapter Three explores aspects of *theory of musicking* (Small, 1990/2016, 1998) and professional musicianhood as they relate to the theoretical frame and methodology. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I delineate the methodology and research design of the study with a review of qualitative and narrative approaches, a description of connections to performance ethnography, and an outline of the narrative analysis methods used leading into the construction of the final research form, respectively. The script for the digital ethnodrama, *Called to the Conversation*, may be found in Chapter Seven. I share reflections on the work and implications of the study in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARTICULATION OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Words are powerful.
Specific words and combinations of words are the keys that will unlock realms
that seem closed off.
Find your words that accurately describe what you are attempting.
If you don't find the right words at first, keep trying new ones.
Find the words that can communicate to others
the feats that you are trying to realize.
It will alter the way you frame the world
and it will help to define and describe what could be.
All words are defined relative to frames.

A poetic transcription from Bogart's (2007)
And Then, You Act (pp. 18, 25)

Constructivism as Epistemological Approach

As an educator, musician-playwright, researcher, and dedicated life-long learner, I have come to embrace a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Grounded in the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, constructivism asserts that humans *construct* their own understandings of the world around them. The term describes both what it means to *know* as well as how one *comes to know* (Fosnot, 2005). As we experience our surroundings (e.g., people, places, events), we gain information through our senses, which we then interpret, organize, and store as new knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

The origins of constructivism as an epistemology may be traced back to Jean Piaget whose early studies in biology led him to believe that knowledge is grounded and formed through an individual's experience as she engages with her environment (von Glasersfeld, 2005). Living things exist because "the being of structures consists in their

coming to be”—and since humans are always “under construction,” then structure apart from construction cannot exist (Piaget, 1970, p. 140). The human mind, according to Piaget, consists of “a dynamic set of cognitive structures that help us make sense of what we perceive” which grow in intellectual complexity as we continue to interpret experiences by interacting with and reacting to the world around us (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 26). Since every person experiences environments and events differently, knowledge (as the product of process) is constructed individually by each learner.

Like Piaget, Lev Vygotsky also viewed learning as developmental and constructive (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). However, whereas Piaget placed an emphasis on the individual, Vygotsky determined that social and cultural factors play more of a crucial role in the development of individuals (Wertsch et al., 1984). In his observations, Vygotsky noted how functions in cultural development appeared twice: on a social level between people (*interpsychologically*) and on an individual level inside the child (*intrapsychologically*) (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978, p. 57). He concluded that the interpsychological processes needed to be experienced and explored before they could be carried out intrapsychologically within the individual (Rogoff, 1990).

The divide of these two perspectives would lead to two main branches of constructivism: *cognitive constructivism* (Piaget, 1970) and *social constructivism* (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978). My work is centered in *social constructivism*, which places a stronger emphasis on the role of socio-cultural engagement with other individuals in a cultural and environmental milieu. Specifically, I embrace an expansion to social constructivist thought called: *critical constructivism* (Kincheloe, 2003, 2005). Critical constructivism builds from a foundation of social constructivism but adds dimensions of

critical theory aimed at bringing the realities of institutional oppression and white supremacy to light within educational discourse. In the beginning of this chapter, I will explore general understandings of social constructivism followed by a discussion on critical pedagogy and critical constructivism. Between these sections, I will also make connections to *andragogy*, which is a transactional model that speaks to characteristics of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2020). Specifically, I am referencing their perspectives on prior knowledge, self-concept, and motivation which I find relevant for both college learners and the needs of this study. Critical constructivism and andragogy are both adaptive approaches grounded in pragmatic philosophy, which views knowledge as emerging from a learner's reflection upon personal experience rather than having been something transferred from a formal authority (Dewey, 1916/2008).

Deweyan Definition of Experience: A Poetic Transcription

*A continuous interaction of creature and environing—
the very process of living.*

*Life is no uniform-uninterrupted-march.
It is a thing of histories,
each with its own plot and rhythmic movement.*

*Under resistance and conflict,
aspects of self and the world implicate in interaction.*

*An experience demarcates in the general stream of experience,
and conscious intent emerges.*

*In such experiences,
every successive part flows freely as a river—
With pauses.
Places of rest.
Punctuating
and defining
successive phrases,
emphases of varied color.*

*Different episodes that melt and fuse,
yet do not lose their own character in conversation.
An experience is more than placing something
on the top of what was previously known.
It involves reconstruction
which may be painful or—*

JARRING.

*Joy, sorrow, hope, fear, anger, curiosity...
Qualities that move and change
as drama and understanding develop.*

*We act upon.
We do something with.
We undergo the consequences.
Undergoing becomes instruction.
A discovery of connection.
A change made by action
reflected into a change made in us.
And we learn something.*

*But all thinking involves a risk—
perplexity,
confusion,
doubt.*

*Invasion of the unknown is the nature of adventure
and certainty cannot be guaranteed in advance.*

*For we live not in a settled and finished world
but in one filled with the clang of contending armies.¹³
Fate hangs upon the course things are taking,
even for a neutral onlooker.*

Only gradually,

w i t h a w i d e n i n g o f v i s i o n ,

*through growth of social sympathies
does thinking develop to include:*

*what lies beyond
direct interests.*

¹³ In his 1916 text, Dewey was referencing the United States' debate in joining *The Great War* (World War I). I found it apt for the current state of national affairs in 2020-2021.

*A fact of great significance for education
and
the world.*

A poetic transcription from
John Dewey (1916/2008, pp. 124-134
and 1934/1980, pp. 35-50)

Relativistic, Pluralistic, Holistic

The foundational ontology of constructivism is *relativistic*—the world as we know it being a *construction of the human mind* (Stubley, 1992). Anything that can be known depends entirely on the individual people involved and the specific context in which they are located (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Our evolution and development as humans allow us to generate mental images of objects and actions. This, in turn, gives us the ability to “reflect on our actions, consider multiple perspectives simultaneously, and to even think about our thinking” (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 31). People make sense of any new experiences by using these abilities to reflect on “knowledge, beliefs, schemas and attitudes, derived from previous, culturally situated experiences,” which they then use to translate and understand a new event (Claxton, 1996, p. 10). This *transactional subjectivism* is mediated by the knower’s prior experiences, established knowledge, personal and social identities, personal and cultural values, and “by the knower’s interpretation (construction) of the contextual surround” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 40).

The nature of reality and “truth” then becomes *pluralistic*, depending fully upon the setting and any players in it. In other words, if the individuals involved in an experience or the context in which it occurs are changed, then reality will change as well. A person’s *knowing* only gains and holds relevance in the framework of time and space in which it is generated by that unique individual. Thus, knowledge is *created*, rather than

discovered (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). With each new life episode or occurrence, humans work (consciously or subconsciously) to transform lived experience into cognitive understandings (Stubley, 1992). There is neither one single truth, nor single view of reality to be discovered and understood by all. As a result, knowers cannot strive to attain a stable, comprehensive, and accurate picture of the pre-existing “real world,” because such a picture or representation does not exist (Greene, 2005; von Glasersfeld, 2005). Knowledge then, is recognized as a creative rather than fixed entity and exists “not as truths to be transmitted” but as “emergent, developmental, nonobjective, viable” explanations by humans engaging in meaning-making (Fosnot, 2005, p. ix). A learner must “see on his own behalf and in his own way” because no one else can make authentic meaning for him and “he can’t see just by being told” (Dewey, 1926/1974, p. 151).

In connection to relativism and pluralism, the significance and value of a *holistic* understanding of knowledge is a key element of constructivist teaching. Whereas traditional [behaviorist] education typically requires whole concepts to be broken into parts and students, as passive learners, are not allowed to see the whole until all individual parts are understood—constructivism advocates that students are most engaged when they can envision problems and ideas holistically (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Clustering new concepts into smaller comprehensive problems and structuring situations around big ideas provides a richer context for students as they learn relevant skills, gather information, and construct their knowledge. When students are able to engage with concepts as wholes, they can create their own smaller parts—ones they can see and understand. Not only does this help learners gain a deeper sense of the information by owning the process of deconstruction (rather than having it done for

them), it empowers higher-level thinking skills (Bloom, 1956) by inviting students to design their own problem-solving approaches.

The concept of a constructivist approach as relativistic, pluralistic, and holistic was beautifully illuminated by Dr. Jackie Wiggins in a metaphorical narrative during my first semester of doctoral seminar. In it, she compared the significance of multiple viewpoints to a group of people watching a large tree fall in the forest. I craft my own version of her words from my class notes and memory:

Walking through a great forest, a group of people suddenly hears a CRACK and a massive tree falls in the distance. Standing together, all of the individuals have observed the same event from the same spot. Later, they might share the story with others—and it is quite likely that each of them will recount significantly different versions of the same event. One person may comment on the angular displacement and increasing velocity of the heavy trunk as it repositioned from a vertical to a horizontal plane. Another may speak of the violent thrashing of limbs, branches, and leaves as they juddered and shuddered down to the forest floor. Still another may best remember the sounds of the wood and foliage creaking, squeaking, popping, and snapping as the tree protested its downfall. Others may have noted the type and number of birds and small animals fleeing the scene, or perhaps the shifting of the light as a sun-filled wound appeared in the dark canopy high above. Regardless of what they remember most vividly, each person's perspective on this event is no more wrong than right. These are all different yet equally true realities of the same event. This is a much different story than the tale of "The Blind Men and the Elephant" which also illustrates the effect of multiple perspectives.¹⁴ Unable to see the entire creature, each man must try to gain an understanding of "elephant" by touching only one part of the animal (e.g., one person grasping the tail believes the elephant is like a snake; another taking hold of an ear believes it to be like a ship's sail, a third wrapping his arms around a leg gasps it is like the trunk of a tree). In this story, each person must try to make a definition of the whole from one single prescribed piece. However, with the metaphor of the tree falling, each person has experienced the event holistically and engaged in responsive, holistic meaning-making based on the aspect(s) that resounded with them. This is how constructivism views the concepts of knowledge building, understanding, and knowing—as well as the process of learning and instruction.

¹⁴ An ancient Indian parable which has been told in countless versions across the world. The earliest printing may be found as "Tittha Sutta: Sectarians (1)" in the *Udana* 6.4 (c. 500 B.C.E.).

Deep Understanding Through Inquiry

*Knowing does not run a straight course from beginning to end.
It hunts
and in the hunting,
it sometimes worries the same raccoon in different trees,
or different raccoons in the same tree,
or even what turns out to be no raccoon in any tree.
It finds itself balking more than once at the same barrier
and taking off on other trails.
It drinks often from the same streams,
and stumbles over some cruel country.
And it counts not the kill
but what is learned of the territory explored.*

A poetic transcription created from Goodman's (1978)
Ways of Worldmaking (p. ix)¹⁵

Whether in the classroom or out in the world, constructivist educators believe that true thinking is effectively “the result of activity and self-organization and proceeds toward the development of structures” (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 34). Learning through authentic doing is a foundational component of how teachers ask their students to construct understanding. Any attempt to teach new skills or ideas—abstract concepts in particular—independently of authentic situations overlooks the ways understanding is developed through situated and continued use (Brown et. al 1989). Rogoff (1990) insists that learning activities must always be “goal directed (tacitly or explicitly)” with social and cultural definitions guiding goal setting, tool identification, and strategies of handling problems (p. 6). These types of activities should always be “coherent, meaningful, and purposeful” as well as having relevant meaning and purpose negotiated by members themselves to assume accessibility and authenticity (Brown et. al, 1989, p. 34). Posing a

¹⁵ Goodman opens *Ways of Worldmaking* with this description of his writing style. I have changed his opening phrase “My book” into “Knowing”—and find both ring true.

real-life problem followed by encouraging learners to craft a natural progression of inquiry-related questions (without the instructor telling students what they should be asking) will invoke authentic inquiry practice and a search for relevant information (Brooks & Brooks, 1999).

In constructivist settings, inquiry-related praxis may lead students to a deep understanding of new skills or information. Brooks and Brooks (1999) explain: “Deep understanding occurs when the presence of new information prompts the emergence or enhancement of cognitive structures that enable us to rethink our prior ideas” (p. 15). It is a comprehension of knowledge which moves beyond memorization of pre-organized information sets or of giving pre-determined answers to a given prompt. By encouraging conversation, debate, questions, research, and/or encouraging students to “use tools actively rather than just acquire them,” educators may help learners “build an increasingly rich implicit understanding” (Brown et. al, 1989, p. 33). Blais (1988) draws our attention to the significance of helping students discover deep understandings: “Novices feel they know what is important despite their not perceiving essence. They do not understand shallowness because they do not experience depth” (p. 40). Our students may arrive in our classrooms, studios, and rehearsal spaces without such a concept of depth, but the power of a constructivist approach is inspiring learners to open doors into the multifaceted complexities of knowing.

Learner-Centered Praxis

Above all, constructivism is a learner-centered approach that strives to value students’ backgrounds, experiences, interests, and points-of-view within teaching practices. Dewey introduced the idea of the child (learner) as “the starting-point, the

center, and the end” of any school curriculum (1902/1981, p. 471).¹⁶ It is her/their/his development and growth that establishes the ideal, the standard, and the goal for the classroom and curriculum. Claxton (1996) reminds us that each learner will bring significantly different elements to the process: disposition and initial interest, the nature and range of learning strategies, willingness and ability to take risks, complexity and availability of related knowledge and skills, and their ability and desire to work reflectively. Understanding these elements as “windows into their reasoning” enables educators to make in-class experiences “both contextual and meaningful” for their students (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 60). Dewey (1938/1997) concurred with the idea that teachers need to understand the current level of capabilities, past experiences, and needs of students so they may develop and guide strategic discussions and activities suited to needs and interests of students. Learner-centeredness also helps to keep educators accountable for empowering students to take ownership over their own educational journey so it remains an active, rather than passive process. Learning requires opportunities to search, question, model, interpret, and defend ideas and skills (Fosnot, 2005). Therefore, classrooms and studios must become communities where learners may actively engage in problem posing.

More Knowledgeable Others

Through the lens of a constructivist approach, the role of a teacher may appear to be a very different profession than that of the traditional authoritative, omniscient, master instructor (Bruner, 1996). Vygotsky (1930-1934/1978) spoke of teachers as tutors who

¹⁶ McDermott asserts that Dewey did not mean child-centered in the sense of “learning is subordinate to the whims of the child” (Dewey, 1902/1981, p. 468). A more apt phrase appears to be *learner-centered*, which is applicable to any individual with a specific mindset (as well as being applicable to adult stud

model actions and provide instruction for learners as a form of cooperative or collaborative dialogue which may be processed as a guide for experimentation and knowledge construction. Over time, Vygotsky's description of a "tutor" has more commonly come to be called: a *more knowledgeable other (MKO)* (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978). The concept of a more knowledgeable other works to expand the definition of one who is valued as a knowledge-holder and who may assume the role of knowledge-impartor. An MKO may be anyone who has a better understanding or a higher level of ability relating any skill, information set, project, event, genre, process, etc. In a traditional classroom setting, the assigned and assumed MKO is the teacher, but it does not need to be. She may be a different adult (e.g., parent, guest speaker, school alum), a student from the class (or a different class), or someone who is not even in the room or aware of their present MKO status (e.g., a YouTube tutorial, a professional musician on a recording). In particular, when peers are able to take on the role of more knowledgeable other for one another, a form of peer-mentorship flourishes and may strengthen a sense of cohort within the learning community.¹⁷

With this fluid understanding of who holds and imparts knowledge in a learning setting, a constructivist educator's primary job shifts into crafting and facilitating learning environments that enable students to assume ownership of their learning by encouraging self-initiated inquiry, initiating conversations, and mediating interactions (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Through this lens, the act of teaching is a form of guided participation rather than a "telling" or "giving" of facts. Rogoff (1990) defines *guided participation* as:

¹⁷ *Cohort* is of significance in this dissertation study as these participants spoke openly of the criticality of peer mentorship and demonstration. This will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

A form of guidance (either tacit or explicit) involving learners in a collaborative process of building bridges from (1) “present understanding and skills to reach new understanding and skills,” and (2) “arranging and structuring participation in activities” with dynamic shifts in the learner’s responsibility in the learning process (p. 8).

Toward this goal, she assumes a multitude of roles beyond being a designated authority upholding knowledge and rules. She must become a collaborator, a facilitator, a guide, and, perhaps most crucially, a learner alongside her students “alive to the opportunities that present themselves for pursuing valued goals; and free of any internal blocks and barriers that inhibit one from learning when it is appropriate to do so” (Claxton, 1996, p. 7). Brooks and Brooks (1999) refer to this type of teacher as a blend of *analyst*, *explorer*, and *weaver* (p. 98). Cobb (2005) characterizes the teacher’s role as a *mediator* negotiating students’ personal and culturally established meanings of the wider world. Knowles et al. (2020) suggest teachers are “releasing leaders” who work to release the energy of others and to help give that energy direction toward the learning goals (p. 142). Bruner (1996) utilizes more colorful titles, calling the constructivist teacher: *An orchestrator of a subcommittee of mutual learners* (p. 21) and a type of *cultural vicar* assisting in the “creation and negotiation of meaning in a larger culture” (p. 84).

Without doubt, this transition from authoritative leader into facilitator is no small ask for any teacher, but especially for those whose own schooling (or even professional training) has not been representative of this approach. It requires an educator to reflect deeply into her own understandings of teaching and learning, of the learning environments in which she has been a part, of the goals she has for herself as a professional and her students as future colleagues, and of the negotiations (or even

battles) she is willing to undergo with administration and tradition to accomplish what she feels called to do. Knowles et al. (2020) note that while teacher-as-facilitator may appear to be more casual, it requires increased attentiveness to what is happening both with individuals and within groups of learners. It also requires “being comfortable at sea” (Claxton, 1997, p. 9), finding some sense of stability in the discomfort of standing at the border of vulnerability and transparency while still somehow finding a way to maintain the required position of “being the adult in the room.” Finally, constructivist teachers must be not only attentive to the internal blocks and barriers of our students, but also of ourselves. It begins with a careful examination of the beliefs and assumptions one holds regarding the roles, abilities, and expectations has of both learners and teachers (Bruner, 1996). Self-reflective questions must be asked. For example: how will each learner’s personality, experiences, interests, and abilities be taken into account, known, and valued? Will they be viewed as wealth, as deficit, or simply as material and resources from which to construct? Further, what emotional resources does the teacher bring into this constructivist journey? Will she have the confidence and patience to embrace learners as the individuals they are, while still embracing the critical role of cultural identities? Will he find the trust and conviction required not only to concede, but to necessitate students’ ownership in the process of their own meaning-making?¹⁸ Will students also be allowed, or even better, *empowered* to take a more active role in the classroom, allowing expansion of their sense of agency and self-efficacy? Are they brave

¹⁸ I have found this to be a particularly significant question in regard to teaching voice.

enough to step aside and invite students to act as more knowledgeable others for their peers?

Meaning-Making as Social Process

The concept of personal *meaning-making* with a socio-cultural connection beyond self is significant in social constructivism. Bruner (1996) defines *meaning-making* as “situating encounters with the world in their appropriate cultural contexts” (p. 3). Similarly, Greene (2005) suggests it is an act of “sense-making by means of transactions with the impinging world” (p. 111). Constructing our reality then becomes “the product of meaning making shaped by traditions and by a culture’s toolkit of ways of thought” (Bruner, 1996, p. 20). While personal lived experience provides the foundations to understand our world in increasingly sophisticated ways, knowledge and its tools will always be situated in its social and historical dimensions (Bruner, 1996; Fosnot, 2005; Stuble, 1992). The realities that learners construct are *social* realities, which are negotiated between Self and with others who are also part of that social world (Bruner, 1990).

Meaning-making, however, is not just a one-way process from culture to individual as someone creates his own unique world. It moves in both directions. As we make connections from culture, we also connect back into culture when we represent and share our meanings with others. So much so that defining the boundaries between where an “individual” ends and the “group” begins is often much more difficult to maintain than we tend to assume (Wertsch et al., 1993, p. 340). The culture and the collective individuals co-create a “language of lived experience” such that the individuals become disequibrated, but reciprocally the culture is disequibrated by the individuals as they

construct their environment (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 30). The potential arises that as we grow and change collectively as individuals, so grows and changes our cultural society.

Crucially, Bruner (1990) also reminds us that our knowledge constructions are never fixed but continue to have malleability and subjectivity. If new and relevant experiential information is acquired, even long-established constructions may be “manipulated and modified (by interrelating, interpolating, extrapolating, or metaphoric leap) into new and unexpected configurations” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 48). Even a dictionary, which strives to present concrete definitions and examples of our language, is subject to continual evolution of meaning as the dominant society shifts and changes its perspectives (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; von Glasersfeld, 2005).¹⁹

When confronted with discrepancies between data/perceptions, learners face a choice: to immediately reject either the current or new data, to interpret new information in a way that conforms to a current set of rules, or to generate a new set of rules that better explains what is seen (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Learning is an ongoing “self-

¹⁹ An important example of particular significance to this dissertation, the time of its writing, and for English-speaking humanity. Merriam-Webster, prompted by a letter from recent college graduate Kennedy Mitchum, has revised its definition of *racism* to include a reference to systemic oppression.

Original (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a., 2020):

Racism: a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

2a: a doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute its principles

2b: a political or social system founded on racism

3: racial prejudice or discrimination

Revised (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a., 2021):

Racism: a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

2a: the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another. Specifically: WHITE SUPREMACY.

2b: a political or social system founded on racism and designed to execute its principles.

regulatory process” of conflict negotiation between existing understandings of the world and convincing new insights (Fosnot, 2005, p. ix). We utilize our culturally-developed tools and symbols to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct our representations and models “through cooperative social activities, discourse, and debate in communities of practice” (Fosnot, 2005, p. ix).

This capacity to engage in reflective practice also allows us to “turn around on the past and alter the present in its light, or to alter the past in the light of the present” (Bruner, 1990, p. 109). Bruner notes our “dazzling intellectual capacity to *envision alternatives*” and to find new ways to view, review and potentially revise understandings of prior experience and knowledge to “conceive of other ways of being, of acting, of striving” (p. 110). Through this ability to construct representations of our individual perspectives, we are empowered to “go beyond the immediacy of the concrete, to cross cultural barriers, to encounter multiple perspectives that generate new possibilities, to become conscious of our actions on the world in order to gain new knowledge with which to act” (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 31). This continued exchange of contextual perspectives and ideas intertwines and perpetuates throughout populations and generations and over time, has potential to spark change, both large and small, to our society and cultures.

As learners, each of us negotiates a dual identity in relation to our knowledge: a “creature of history” who stands as a “guardian of permanence” and an “autonomous agent” working as “a barometer responding to the local cultural weather” (Bruner, 1990, p. 110). It presents quite a challenge, as learners actively strive to “restor[e] coherence to the worlds of their personal experience” (Cobb, 2005, p. 39). Constructivist educators are

frequently called upon to help students mediate this duality as they enter the *Zone of Proximal Development*.

Zone of Proximal Development

Learning is a negotiation between what you have experienced, what you are told is true, what you discover to be true, and your ability to act or express through these understandings. It is further tempered by what you believe has value and what you perceive that you are able to do. Connecting with the unfamiliar always requires a decision to enter into the unknown, and to finding some kind of link between what you know and what you do not. The process of this journey is represented through Vygotsky's (1930-1934/1978) *Zone of Proximal Development* (or ZPD).

Vygotsky theorized that learners solve problems more easily with assistance from a more capable individual as compared to attempting to solve them alone (Forman & Cazden, 2013). This represents another key aspect in Vygotsky's focus on the importance of social interaction within the learning process. Specifically, he defined the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Cobb, 2005, p. 86). It is a place of transition where learners gain opportunity to move further into unfamiliar territory to construct new knowledge than they would be able to work without support, guidance, and encouragement from a more knowledgeable other.

As seen in Figure 1 below, the ZPD is flanked by two distinct areas of ability. The first, at the bottom, is an area that represents knowledge and skills that a learner already

What I cannot do regardless of the amount of support/scaffolding

Zone of Proximal Development

What I can do with support/scaffolding of MKO

What I can do easily and alone

Figure 1. Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978)

has well in hand. Any problem that falls comfortably within this area requires no outside support or assistance to solve—it is Known. The third area, at the top, represents the opposite extreme: Any problem falling into this range represents a lack of skills and knowledge required to solve a particular problem, even with a large amount of assistance (at least at the present time). There is additional experience and reflection upon that experience required before this can be accessed—a journey is required first. By themselves, these areas are static in the process of education: one represents that which has been perceived as achieved (past), and the others represents that which cannot yet be achieved (future). However, as a learner identifies and aspires to meet a new problem only slightly beyond her current abilities, she has a good chance at achieving success if she can secure motivation and support to: (a) identify and utilize related prior knowledge, and (b) create an action plan (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978). This scenario opens the opportunity to enter the middle ground of the present action: a journey into the Zone of Proximal Development.

The assistance in developing an action plan (as mentioned above) comes in the form of *scaffolding* as provided by the more knowledgeable other. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) first introduced the term *scaffolding* to represent the intellectual and emotional support, guidance, and tools provided by someone familiar with this piece of knowledge or skill. Metaphorical use of *scaffolding* in this educational sense is very similar to its physical form as temporary, supporting framework used to support people and material in the construction of structures. Scaffolding aims to provide a learner with “hints and props that allow him to begin a new climb” and guiding steps until he can proceed on his own (Bruner, 1986, p. 132). The result enables a novice learner to achieve a goal or solve a task that might otherwise have been beyond his solo efforts (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978).

A crucial element of this process is the prior knowledge that learners bring into the learning setting. *Prior knowledge* is any form of situated knowing constructed from reflection upon personal experience, which serves as a foundation or starting place from whence to build new understandings. Awareness of a learner’s prior knowledge enables a MKO to carefully plan and implement appropriate and effective scaffolding which will assist the learner in exploring, experimenting with, and experiencing a new idea. MKOs strategically identify and manage elements of the task that align with and support the learner's current capability. Scaffolding that focuses on a learner’s conceptions and needs extends challenges in a productive way, refocuses efforts through clarification, and redirects by offering new possibilities to consider (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). Teachers constantly seek more effective ways to facilitate learning by supporting “the various

dynamics of engagement,” and also by “attend[ing] to a positive process of *disinhibition,*” which will enable learners to overcome obstacles and find success (Claxton, 1996, p. 7).

Beyond this logic-centered description of the learning process, it is important for educators to remember that there is an inherent emotional element when entering the ZPD. As humans, the further we step away from the familiar, the more uncertain we become. The ZPD can be a risky, insecure place for learners of any age. However, it is also an essential place where learners may come to challenge current understandings, add new perspectives, and experiment with additional possibilities—in other words: learning. It is a “process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights” (Fosnot, 1989, p. ix). The hope in all learning activities is that the student will come to resolve this struggle or conflict by constructing new understandings, but it can sometimes be an extremely stressful process. Being in a constructivist classroom means willingly subjecting oneself to paradigm shifts and the “willing abandonment of familiar perspectives and practices and the adoption of new ones” (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 25). The experience of challenging these paradigm shifts may evoke anything from paralyzing fear to a thrilling sense of adventure.

There is a messy, creative element in constructivism, which must be taken into account as well as an unpredictability factor as learners participate in the self-evaluation of prior experience, question formation, and even curricular design. The Zone of Proximal Development is where we challenge the unknown: skills we do not yet possess, knowledge that is unfamiliar or contradicts prior understandings, and/or experience we have not yet embodied. These prior understandings may not only include facts and figures, but also values, beliefs, and perceptions of truth. The ZPD represents a

negotiation with “the new”—an inherent and embodied intellectual, emotional, social, and/or spiritual risk-taking. In this place where “what is known” and “what is unknown” meet, there arises a struggle for understanding and a yearning to find a sense of equilibrium once more (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). The Zone of Proximal Development represents a decision to cross the threshold into the unknown. It is being brave enough to walk through an open door, to assertively rattle a closed door until it opens, to work through your hesitation at even approaching the door because of an attachment to current place or the invitation has not been clear enough or facing a fear to step into the unknown.

This raises a key question within this internal debate for individuals and for educators as a whole: what motivates us to take and continue taking risks in order to “know?”

Extensions Through Andragogy

Although the term has come to represent the art, science, and general profession of teaching for all learners, *pedagogy* originally indicated the leading of children through the learning process (Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Barnhart, 1988b). *Andragogy*, as utilized by Malcolm Knowles, speaks specifically to key characteristics and considerations of the adult learning transaction. Knowles et al. (2020) note that “adult” may be defined in several ways: biologically, legally, socially (when the individual begins performing adult roles), and/or psychologically (when she arrives at a self-concept of being responsible for her own life)—all of which are applicable to these study participants.

Andragogy is not an ideology, but a process-centered, transactional model that presents alternative assumptions and characteristics of adult learners (Knowles et al.,

2020). Readers will note that many aspects of andragogy compliment, and often align with, the constructivist perspectives explored in the prior section. For example: both prioritize ownership of the learning process by learners themselves and encourage problem-solving and experiential approaches to learning.

I am not sharing the following section to contradict, challenge, or even to fill-in any perceived gaps in the critical constructivist approach previously outlined. This is an open recognition of the significance of these participants as adult learners during their time at Marygrove in relation to their storied interview texts and to this study in general. I have found the following insights about the characteristics, habits, and needs of adult learners to resonate closely with my own experiences teaching adult learners and in particular, these participants. As I conducted my study and have written these opening chapters, I have taken into strong consideration that much of the education philosophy and psychology literature addresses K-12 learners and learning settings. I have worked to assess if citations are appropriate to adult learners, especially in the developmentally-based literature. Although the educational psychology and philosophy utilized earlier in this chapter refers to learners of any age, it is important to emphasize the significant difference between a first-grade music student who is relatively new to schooling and has limited knowledge of the world and our adult learners at Marygrove, who had both a long history of learning, schooling, and musical experience, and came with a wealth of well-established opinions, ambitions, and interests.

Knowles' approach to andragogy is centered upon six learner characteristics, which he examines based on different assumptions regarding an adult learner's prior

knowledge and motivations, which are especially weighed and complex as compared to children (Knowles et al., 2020). In general, adult learners typically have:

1. A strong need to know what will be gained by learning something before undertaking it—specifically which gaps will be filled by the knowledge, skill, and/or experience between where they are now and where they wish to be.
2. A solid self-concept of responsibility for their own decisions and their own lives. They may look to be more independent and self-directed learners.
3. A greater volume and a different quality of experience than their younger selves. Having lived longer, adults have accumulated “a large reservoir of experiences” which may affect the learning process in any number of ways (p. 177). For example: In accumulating experience, we tend to develop habits, biases, and presuppositions that may close us to new ideas and alternate ways of approaching a problem.
4. An orientation to learning that is life-, task-, or problem-centered. They are often motivated to learn to the extent that they perceive the learning will help them perform tasks, deal with the problems, or achieve their goals.
5. An emotionally-complex web of motivators, such as having an internal sense of calling or unavoidable external pressures. In addition, Tough (1979) found that motivations can be affected by barriers as having developed a negative self-concept as a student during K-12 schooling, inaccessibility of opportunities or resources, and time constraints (p. 46).
6. A self-concept carefully defined by prior experiences had, because our experience is who we are. If adult learners’ experiences are ignored or

devalued, they may “perceive this as rejecting not only their experience, but rejecting themselves as persons” (Knowles et al., 2020, p. 45).

Claxton’s (1996) *Integrated Learning Theory* also outlines specific aspects of adult learning that may not need to be considered for younger students. Claxton notes the following points are critical for educators when speaking of and engaging with adult learners (p. 4):

1. Adult learners need to see learning as “an on-going decision-making process about whether to engage with the challenge presented, and if so, in what way.”
2. This decision-making process will most often resemble a type of “intuitive cost-benefit analysis,” which attempts to determine the best course of action related to “perceived opportunities, demands, costs, rewards and risks” as well as the learners’ view of themselves.
3. Adult learners already possess “a repertoire of learning strategies and processes” which they may use to determine the most appropriate way to approach the current learning challenge.
4. Adult learners have the ability to make choices about what and how to learn based on what will further their own values and goals. Critically, learning may be “impeded, blocked or abandoned” if not in the learner’s best interests or if they feel they have received bad information.
5. Weighing the rewards and risks of engaging in the learning process, adult learners will take into account “a host of views-of-the-world that are residues of past experiences and teachings.” This is especially true when connected to educational trauma stemming from *poisonous pedagogies* (Gray, 2015).

During our curriculum remapping at Marygrove, the faculty recognized that we needed to better acknowledge previous experience and professional goals of our student population. The Marygrove music students were adult learners who had made decisions to: (1) continue on or return to school, (2) study music in college, (3) specifically attend Marygrove College. We recognized the desperate need for better establishing an “openness for communication, and a degree of familiarity” within our department and the individual classroom environments so students and teachers could find a better common ground for communication, especially for understanding “the interests, goals, and skills that can be expected of each other” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 201). We sought to better scaffold and support the frequency of *double-loop learning* (Argyris, 1982), where new information and/or skills do not fit the learner’s prior experiences, immediate interests, or musical philosophy. In this instance, the “unlearning process becomes as important as the learning process when new learning significantly challenges existing schema” (Knowles et al., 2020, p. 177). Lewin (1951) calls this the “unfreezing stage” where learners must be unfrozen from their existing perceptions and beliefs before they could be expected to change them. We also recognized that most of our students wished to be “self-directing inquirers,” but had been conditioned to be highly dependent on teachers to teach them in their K-12 experience (Knowles et al., 2020, p. 52). Therefore, we also need to scaffold and support the “culture shock” being required of them to take a more proactive role in their own learning planning and engagement (pp. 52-53). In both instances, Schön’s (1987) process of *reflection-in-action* became a significant way for our students to reflect on whether an existing idea was the most appropriate and then changing schema accordingly.

Despite the study being conducted with adult participants about their college learning experiences, the term *pedagogy* will be used throughout this dissertation in its modern iteration. Andragogy has been introduced here to note the characteristics of adult learners, especially the increased complexity and significance of prior knowledge and of motivation. This complexity typically provides a stronger, more clearly defined self-identity (or personhood), can provide both a rich resource for learning and a source of inhibition toward new learning, and spark significant collisions between the safety of prior knowledge/assumptions and the calling toward exploring and learning new ideas. All of these ingredients are significant to the conduct and findings of this study, and through its methodologies and methods (as outlined in Chapters Four, Five, and Six), I have worked to both highlight and celebrate the breadth and depth of experience, life philosophies and habits, and motivational (and demotivational) factors that these participant adults share through their musical life stories.

Critical Constructivism Through a Critical Consciousness

Entering this section, I ask the reader to understand that everything stated in the first half of this document continues to hold true. The framework and components of social constructivism I outlined remain intact as an epistemological approach to teaching and learning. There is no way to enter into critical constructivism without these views and understandings of social constructivism as shared. For me, coming into critical constructivism was a long journey: beginning with the behaviorist and conservatory-based education of my youth, coming into a methodology-centered higher music education training in undergraduate, followed by six years of grappling, struggling, and negotiating between how I believed I should teach and what my secondary music

students needed, and arriving into a formal introduction to social constructivism in my master's program. When I discovered social constructivism, it aligned so perfectly with my teaching experiences and how I had always envisioned teaching that I could not imagine wanting anything more.

Discovering social constructivism after my own behaviorist-centered education was a revelation. It shifted and strengthened my educational philosophy and gave me permission to teach as I felt called to teach. However, as I continued to engage in educational settings where systemic inequalities pervaded policy, process, and good intentions, my understandings of constructivist practice began to feel as if something significant were lacking. I began to fear my philosophy represented an idealized view of pedagogical potential, heavily susceptible to well-meaning liberal (or pluralist) multiculturalism and colorblindness.²⁰ Bringing a critical lens to a constructivist approach filled in what I had found myself grasping for and added particular dimensions desperately needed for student populations, including the Marygrove students of this study.

Coming into my position as an assistant professor of music at Marygrove College in Detroit, I was suddenly grappling, struggling, and negotiating with my teaching philosophy all over again. Through their staggered time in the Marygrove Music Department, each participant in this study has gifted me with innumerable conversations

²⁰ *Liberal multiculturalism* believes that “individuals from diverse race, class and gender groups share a natural equality...a common humanity...[and] an intellectual sameness. However, this focus on “sameness” risks promoting a form of colorblindness within educational and socio-political goals” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 10); *Pluralist multiculturalism* calls for a “multicultural literacy” which sounds ideal but “confuses psychological affirmation with political empowerment” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 16). The curriculum of pluralist multiculturalism often results in a “cultural tourism that fails to address or understand the harsh realities of race, class and gender subjugation” (p. 18).

about discrimination, privilege, Blackness, Whiteness, Detroit, finding self and purpose, and their rich experiences in gospel, R&B, and neo-soul. These students' perspectives, wisdom, and knowledge were shared in many forms: anecdotes, questions, ideas, frustrated complaints, painful utterances, optimistic ponderings, even hilarious conversations about Thanksgiving food culture in vocal diction class. Sometimes their words were not easy or even polite, but always respectful and purposeful. Our dialogues challenged my abilities to see the world around me and to listen to the truths of people living in it. I found myself having fierce inner debates as I drove back and forth across the 8 Mile line each day. The axiology of my musical aesthetic lens and what constitutes a quality music education upended. My agency and self-efficacy as a professional and a pedagogue shaken. The tensions and discords of crossing between spaces and between narratives *positively disintegrated* (Mendalgio, 2008) so much of what I had been told and thought I knew.²¹

Just as the lived experience of my teaching brought me to constructivism in my younger years, I now found my entrance into critical pedagogy through a similar compelled serendipity. I found that this combination of “critical theory meets educational practice” answered many of my questions, drew my attention to previously unseen socio-cultural and historical concerns (especially my connection to and responsibility within them), and better served the needs of our student population. I was blessed to be in the right place at the right time for awakens and change.

²¹ Kazimierz Dabrowski's *Theory of Positive Disintegration* asserts that intelligence, academic achievement, and material success are not sufficient conditions for human development (Mendalgio, 2008). Rather, becoming “truly human” is accomplished by individuals who struggle through intense discomfort and negative emotions to “make sense of themselves and society” (p. 15) and transform (or “reintegrate”) themselves toward a multileveled, revolutionary perception of Self and Other in the world (p. 38).

Within this document, I connect social constructivism with critical perspectives of socio-cultural influence and identity so to directly address the roles that power, oppression, and privilege play in our lives. I then explore the role of a critical consciousness both in my teaching/mentoring of these participants and in the construction of this study.

The Critical Lens

The cultures that shape people are breathtakingly complex...Era, geographic location, language, level of education, ethnic heritage, race, gender, sexual orientation, income, wealth, religion, health, family personalities and professions, birth order, hobbies, and sports provide multiple variables that mix and match to create a unique culture in each and every family and each and every person. To further complicate matters, each element is a cultural carryover from prior generations. When it comes to culture, the only thing we all have in common is that we have one, and it shapes us. (Irving, 2014, p. 15)

Before moving into critical constructivism, it is important to define and explore further the system of power and hegemony we face in the United States, especially how it involves and affects us both individually and socio-culturally. It is impossible to speak of systemic oppression and power without first addressing identity and privilege.²²

Each of us have inherited our family, our nation, our race, and all that came with them—and these inheritances are “connected, intertwined,” and “far from inconsequential” (Wise, 2011, p. 2). Identity is not singular, nor does it function one-dimensionally because “one simultaneously inhabits a body that carries race, gender, and class (as well as sexual orientation and ableness)” (Leavy, 2017). We carry, embody, and/or story ourselves in/with/through multiple identities across our lifetimes. In an ideal

²² It is crucial to be conscious and sensitive with the language used in social justice, equity, and diversity conversations. However, this language is ever changing and anything written today risks becoming offensive in the future. I wish to express that in the following sections, my intent has been to utilize the most inclusive language and terminology available at this time of writing.

world, these socio-cultural identities and their combinations would each be celebrated by the larger community and offer equal opportunity regardless of designation or grouping. Unfortunately, the society in which we live carries a weighted system where some identities/groups receive more and others less—a system of privilege and oppression. This system is the result of a *master narrative* (Lyotard, 1979) which places those who align with certain identities within superior and privileged positions in key aspects of society, especially pertaining to knowledge, money, safety, and power.²³

W.E.B. Du Bois (1935/1998) was the first to comment upon this phenomenon of societal privilege with his observations of the “public and psychological wage” gained by White laborers over their Black co-workers (p. 700). Peggy McIntosh (1988/1997) later defined privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets” (p. 291) which contains assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, and blank checks that can be utilized and cashed-in every day for a position of “conferred dominance” over another group of Others (p. 297). Others are then subjugated to socio-cultural oppression and marginalization in the form of racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, classism, ageism, and/or xenophobia. McIntosh also emphasizes that the word “privilege” is misleading, because the word frames a favored state of being and therefore must be something everyone should want. However, the privilege of which we speak “simply confers dominance,” which is not beneficial to anyone in society because while power and benefits from unearned privilege might look like strength, it does in fact weaken us all (McIntosh, 1988/1997, p. 296).

²³ Lyotard’s (1979) concept of *master narrative* (also known as *meta-narratives* or *grands récits*) is the attempt to provide a universal truth story of how the world is, how it was, and how it should be for all.

Critical theory is “concerned with extending a human’s consciousness of himself or herself as a social being in light of the way the dominant power operates to manage knowledge” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 10). Despite the use of the term ‘theory,’ critical theory is “an iterative methodology for helping investigators remain attentive to equity while carrying out research, scholarship, and practice” and which encourages a transformation of hierarchies identified through research (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010, p. 30).²⁴ It represents a commitment toward understanding how a person’s identities, beliefs, values, self-concept, role-views, and goals have been influenced by both the dominant culture and subcultures (Kincheloe, 2005). Critical theory begins with a premise that people are “essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege ” (McLaren, 2017, p. 56). As McLaren (2017) continues, it is important for us to recognize the problems of society as more than choices of individuals or isolated deficiencies in the social structure. Through a broader social constructivist view, individuals form part of a larger interactive context where “a social actor, both creates and is created by the social universe of which he/she is a part” (p. 56).

Henry Giroux (1997) speaks of a *culture of positivism* which functions as the dominant ideology in America. This ideology not only asserts a positivist rationality within politics and society, but also represents a form of cultural *hegemony* that has been

²⁴ Critical theory has branched into movements with attention paid to particular focuses. Of particular note: *Critical Race Theory* (scholars include: Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Mari Matsuda, Jean Stefancic, Patricia Williams); *Feminist Theory* (historic origins include: the Navajo creation myth of Asdzáá Naadleehee, the Changing Woman (N.D.), Mary Wollstonecraft’s (1792) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and Sojourner Truth’s (1851) *Ain’t I a Woman*; Modern scholars include: Audra Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, Toni Morrison, Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Betty Frieden, Trinh Minh-Ha, and bell hooks; and *Queer/Quere Theory* (scholars include: Deborah P. Britzman, Mary Bryson, Suzanne de Castell, E. Patrick Johnson, Kevin Kumashiro, Susanne Luhmann, and the Combahee River Collective).

“undermining the dialectic of human potential and will” (p. 8). Even more significantly, this culture of positivism “is not just a set of ideas, disseminated by the culture industry; it is also a material force, a set of material practices that are embedded in the routines and experiences of our daily lives” (Giroux, 1997, p. 12). Hegemony refers to “a process of social control that is carried out through the moral and intellectual leadership of a dominant sociocultural class over subordinate groups” (Darder et al., 2017, p. 13; citing Gramsci, 1971). Darder et al. (2017) speak of hegemony’s pervasive nature and its relation to maintaining the power of the dominant culture:

Hegemony is never static or absolute...[but] must be fought for constantly in order to retain its privileged position as the status quo...Each time a radical form threatens the integrity of the status quo, generally this element is appropriated, stripped of its transformative intent, and reified into a palatable form. This process serves to preserve intact the existing power relations. Hence, understanding how hegemony functions in society provides critical educators with the basis for understanding not only how the seeds of domination are produced, but also how they can be challenged and overcome through resistance, critique, and social action. (p. 12)

Power is dangerous and covert because it typically presents and operates as common sense (Kincheloe, 2005). Dominant ideological values and practice create “tacit rules” that regulate who can speak and who must listen, what can and cannot be said, and whose knowledge is deemed valid and whose is unlearned and unimportant (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 94). Power specifically resides within what Audre Lorde (1984/2007) deemed: a *mythical norm*. In the United States, this mythical norm is usually defined as a White, young, athletic, heterosexual, Christian, financially secure, American-born (cis)male. Each of these identities are situated as normalized within the dominant culture. In relation, everyone who does not fit that description stands outside of that power in varying degrees or “difference distortions” (p. 116). The normalization of certain

identities over others is accomplished and perpetuated primarily through *Othering*, *marginalization*, and oppressive systemic policy and practice within social institutions (e.g., government, health, law, education).

Othering or *Otherness* results when “a dominant in-group (“Us,” the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them,” the Other) by stigmatizing difference—real or imagined—presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination” (Staszak, 2020, p. 25). The dominant in-group is then able to maintain its power because it alone holds control of its own value, identity, and particularity as well as the ability to devalue Others (in their Otherness) through strategic discriminatory measures. For example: racial designations such as “White people” and “Black people” are invented phrases based on abstract formulations, not defined groups of people (Simon, 2017, para. 5). Racial categories are ever-present social constructions, and as with any social construction, the parameters of who may be included in any group can be “reinvented, lived, analyzed, modified, and discarded” over time and at will (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 8). However, people pre-designated as privileged are the ones given the privilege to decide who else might receive privilege (DiAngelo, 2018).

Through *marginalization*, “members of some segments of society find themselves out of the mainstream based on their membership in socially meaningful groups” (Given, 2008, p. 491). Marginalization based on social status or characteristics is solely based on the dominant group’s interpretation (stereotype) of their meaningfulness rather than on any true innate quality or meaning. Marginalized populations are then excluded or sidelined by the dominant group from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life and related opportunities.

As expressed above, individuals are a combination of a number of identities—each of which may be subject to this system of oppression and privilege, which further complicates the situation. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) used the term, *intersectionality* to describe how status identities of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ableness, age and/or religion *intersect* or overlap to create multiple forms of discrimination against individuals. The term originated in her (1989) paper built from writings in the seminal text, “*All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some Of Us are Brave*” (Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982) and arose from her analogy comparing discrimination against Black women to standing within traffic at an intersection. The woman constantly runs the risk of being harmed by cars flowing down one street of gender discrimination, the other street of race discrimination, or both simultaneously. Crenshaw’s initial aim was to provide a counter-narrative to white, middle-class feminism, which did not take into account the struggles of being both a Black person and a woman. Merriam-Webster (n.d., 2021) added her term *intersectionality* in 2017 defining it as: “The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.” In a 2020 interview, Crenshaw revisited her definition of intersectionality saying it is “a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other...how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts” (Steinmetz, 2020, para. 2).

Further complicating the concept of multiple-layered socio-cultural identity, LaTanya White (2019) speaks on how privilege, like oppression, exists on a complex

continuum, which can be understood by being “truly, deeply connected to each layer of identity” (6:28). In her recent interview, Crenshaw also appears to expand her definition of intersectionality to include privilege as well, because “certain aspects of who you are will increase your access to the good things or your exposure to the bad things in life (Steinmetz, 2020, para. 6). Having multiple identities shape our experiences means that some individuals may be negotiating varying forms and degrees of both oppression and privilege. Tatum (1997/2017) reveals that as an African American woman, she is “systematically disadvantaged” by race and by gender, but also systematically receives benefits being well-educated, heterosexual, and able-bodied (p. 92). Similarly, Boylorn (2017) notes that as a Black woman, she faces the “double jeopardy of race and sex oppression” while also enjoying the privileges of social class, educational attainment, ability, and sexual orientation (p. 8). The interconnections of identities will shape every person’s positioning in the social order throughout their lifetime and thus their experiences with privilege and oppression, but not always in equal measure depending upon the combination (Leavy, 2017).

The participants within this dissertation potentially navigate a unique intersectionality of two or more marginalized identities. Identity groups could include self-categorized designations such as: being an African American person, Black person, and/or Person of Color, a 2SLGBTQIA+ individual, a woman, and/or being socio-economically challenged during their formative years (where incomes and housing arrangements were not always ample for the full needs of the family).²⁵ The participants

²⁵ 2SLGBTQIA+ is a common abbreviation for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Genderqueer or Questioning, Intersex, Agender or Asexual individuals—the + sign keeps the door open for additional identities.

within this dissertation could also potentially navigate personal and social privileged identities as well. However, all identities are carried, embodied, and/or storied by the individuals themselves and must be self-designated, not a label bestowed by another. Each participant had opportunity to create a “character description” for their 2017 storied-selves in the digital ethnodrama. In these character descriptions, participants have indicated any personal and/or socio-cultural descriptors (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age, physical attributes, personality qualities) that they feel the audience-readers should know before receiving their stories and words. The only common factors I will note for all participants is that they are all graduates of a four-year bachelor’s degree program at an accredited higher education institution as well as being trained and highly expressive singers who have worked in professional settings.

Critical Pedagogy

First used in publication by Giroux (1983), *critical pedagogy* is the term used to describe what emerges when critical theory encounters education (Kincheloe & Steinburg, 1997). Critical pedagogy “represents both a philosophy of education and a social movement combining education with critical theory” (White, Cooper, & Mackey, 2014). It seeks to ask difficult questions about how and why knowledge is constructed the way it is with some constructions of reality being validated and cultivated by the dominant culture, while others are not (McLaren, 2017).

W.E.B. Du Bois is one of the most important architects of critical pedagogy, especially in relation to race and racism. Although his scholarly work was produced before development of critical theory scholarship, his became the foundational ideas behind much of critical theory and critical pedagogy, especially with his observations in

The Souls of Black Folk (1903/1989) on privilege, the *Veil* he saw hanging between Black citizens and opportunity, and the resulting *double-consciousness* (which I will address later in this chapter).

In the 1920's, Critical Theorists of Frankfurt School argued that schools promote dependency on a hierarchical authority and instruct a distorted view of history as truth which weakens any chance for a social consciousness required to bring about social transformation and change (Breuing, 2011, p. 4). John Dewey, too, was a major influence in his connections between individual and social/cooperative intelligence through democratic discourse. Dewey's view of democracy as "a force that breaks down barriers that separate people and creates community" would be foundational in the development of critical pedagogies (Ross, 2017, p. 609). However, critical pedagogy as we know it today came predominantly from Paulo Freire.

Like Dewey, Freire (1970/2018) did not see education as a neutral process. He fought passionately against what he referred to as the "banking" concept of education. In "banking," the teacher's job is to "fill" students with scholarly contents that are "detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance" (p. 71). Students are turned into containers or receptacles into which the teacher deposits knowledge gifts from more privileged betters who decide what has value and what is truth. Instead, Freire aspired to a form of *liberation education*, which consists of cognitive acts—not transfers of information—and empowers the student rather than diminishes him. *Conscientização* (or critical consciousness) was his "antidote" to the oppressive realities of a banking method in education. Through the work and process of critical consciousness, educators and learners could learn to "perceive social, political,

and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 1974, p. 4).

Critical education theorists regard school knowledge as historically- and socially-rooted and interest bound. Knowledge, especially that acquired in formal schooling, is never neutral nor objective (McLaren, 2017). Structured in particular ways, knowledge is a social construction “deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations” (p. 58). School cultures may have taken varied forms between locations and across time, but what remains constant is that “they are situated within a network of power relations from which they cannot escape” (White, Cooper, & Mackey, 2014, p. 132—also citing Giroux, 1983). Foucault (1980) viewed power as a multidirectional network, which produces, regulates and normalizes accepted knowledge and truths. For Foucault, “power comes from everywhere, from above and from below; it is ‘always already there’ and is inextricably implicated in the micro-relations of domination and resistance” (McLaren, 2017, p. 67). Lorde (1984/2007) points out the difficulty of creating any true change without seeking to address and alter the external of oppressive situations for all. We must come to see the “old structures...[and] blueprints of expectation and response” that are “planted deep within each of us” and carry on the oppressor’s knowledge, tactics, and relationships with or without our approval (Lorde, 1984/2007, p. 123; also citing Freire, 1970). In the education world, this means that schools may identify, albeit often unconsciously, what it means to be educated with strong expressions of upper/middle class white male culture being represented through textbooks, instructional methods, belief systems, definitions of citizenship, and views of success (Kincheloe, 2003, 2005). Therefore, “normative assumptions are seamlessly embedded in all levels of educational

practice” including pedagogy, policy, classroom engagement and assumptions about the purpose and goals of education (Mayo & Rodriguez, 2019, p. 2).

Fundamentally, critical pedagogy addresses the relationship between power and knowledge (McLaren, 2017). Educators and scholars in this paradigm work to expose cultural hegemony within educational practice and content, and seek to dismantle the power structures created by the dominant worldview within educational institutions (Ross, 2017). Critical pedagogy embraces a dialectical understanding of knowledge that functions to reveal connections between objective truths and the socio-cultural values, norms, and standards that created them (Darder et al., 2017). This dialectical view of education allows us to understand that schools are simultaneously sites of both liberation and empowerment as well as domination through the reproduction of dominant culture interests (McLaren, 2017; Montgomery, 2013). Schools can often create an uneven playing field that works against the most politically and economically vulnerable to support the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students (Darder et al., 2017).

Delpit (2006) speaks of five key aspects within the culture of power found in educational settings. The first is the enactment of power, which may be seen in the power of teacher over students, the power of textbook publishers and curriculum makers over the worldview presented, power of a group to determine another person’s intelligence or normalcy, and power of a school to support or hinder a student’s next steps in further education or profession. The second aspect connects to the culture of power enforced through social codes, linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and ways of speaking and writing. Third, we need to investigate the rules of the culture of power because

“success in institutions—schools, workplaces, and so on—is predicated on upon acquisition of the culture of those who are in power” (which is the culture of the White upper/middle class) (p. 25). The fourth aspect relates to the previous in that the rules and codes of dominant culture are rarely shared explicitly with other cultures. Delpit has found that “members of any culture transmit information implicitly to co-members,” but when an implicit mode of transmission is attempted, communication breaks down and the entry into the culture remains elusive (p. 25). Finally, and perhaps the most difficult to overcome, it has been shown that those who hold power are frequently the least aware of (or least willing to acknowledge) its existence and influence; while at the same time, individuals with less power are keenly aware and may be aggressively disparaged when trying to bring this system of power to light.

Greene (2009) states outright that “we cannot negate the fact of power;” however, what we can do is “undertake a resistance, a reaching out towards becoming *persons* among other persons, for all the talk of human resources, for all the orienting of education to the economy” (p. 95). Teachers may examine how their social and knowledge views are “mediated through the common-sense assumptions they employ to structure classroom experiences” (Darder et al., 2017, p.12). As a place to start, Shor (1992) suggests unpacking habits of thought, surface understandings, first impressions, dominant myths, traditional clichés, and simple opinions to take a second look at “deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences” of school policy, curriculum material, and pedagogy (p. 129). We can aspire “to provide schooling for everyone’s children” in a way that rejects maintenance of the status quo and superior position of the *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1997), of upper/middle-class values and

aspirations (Delpit, 2006, p. 28). We may teach our students “that identities are historically conferred...subjects are produced through multiple identifications” which are “subject to redefinition, resistance, and change” (Apple, 1998, p. xi). We must work to “interrogate and unmask” the ways in which the cultural narrative of school clashes and conflicts with the lived experiences and localized narrative of its students (Darder et al., 2017, p. 12). Educators must be careful to cultivate a “dialectical interplay among knowledge, power and ideology” to bring the beauty and strength of pluralism to light (Giroux, 1997, p. 19). Finally, we must acknowledge that critical pedagogy is not only the pedagogy of people of color, women, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, but that it is also the critical pedagogy of whiteness (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). Teachers must examine the “invisible power relations” and the “ways in which they shape human consciousness,” especially “whiteness as an ideological construction” (pp. 16-17).

Critical pedagogy as applied in classroom settings has been most powerfully influenced by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009), who introduced the term *culturally relevant teaching* in the 1990’s. Culturally relevant teaching calls for teachers to better engage with learners whose experiences and cultures have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education settings. It is a pedagogy that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 20). Through Ladson-Billings’ view, cultural referents are essential aspects of the curriculum in their own right, rather than one-dimensional cultural references that simply reinforce/contradict dominant culture or provide interesting, colorful field trips to the core curriculum. Through culturally relevant teaching, the goal for learners to feel that their sense of self-worth and self-concept is

being promoted, their humanity and dignity are honored, and their “complete personhood is never doubted” (p. 82).

New language and views of critical pedagogy influenced by and building forward from Ladson-Billings’ work continue to emerge. Alim and Paris (2017) believe that “promoting linguistic and cultural dexterity is no longer only about equally valuing communities” but also placing primary focus on “the skills, knowledges, and ways of being needed for success in the present and future” (p. 5). Their *culturally sustaining pedagogy* views “dynamic cultural dexterity” as essential to perpetuating and fostering linguistic and cultural pluralism, especially “wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling” (p. 1). Ladson-Billings (2014) herself encourages educators to “make the transition to the remix” (p. 77) of culturally sustaining pedagogy because this new iteration starts to “incorporate the multiplicities of identities and cultures” so to better acknowledge the “hybridity, fluidity, and complexity” within individuals and cultural groups (p. 82).

Geneva Gay’s (2018) *culturally responsive teaching* places a particular emphasis on the role of narratives in learning settings. She sees the stories we share as “powerful means for people to establish bridges...penetrate barriers to understanding, and create feelings of kindredness” (pp. 2-3). In other words, stories not only educate us about others, but also about ourselves because they “entice us to see, know, desire, imagine, construct, and become more than what we currently are” (p. 3). As will be explored extensively throughout Chapters Four and Five, stories and narratives are both “modes of thought and texts of discourse that give shape to the realities they convey” (Gay, 2018, p. 3). Connecting this to education, Gay sees the concept of stories also including teacher’s

“explanations of educational ideas, paradigms, and proposals” also constituting “meaningful tales of important happenings” that need to be explored and known (p. 4).

Critical Constructivism

In critical constructivism, the key elements of social constructivism (as stated in the opening section) remain the same. Critical constructivists take their understandings of social construction and “add critical theory to the mix” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 8). However, the critical constructivist approach brings a much stronger and overt focus on the unavoidable factors of socio-cultural-economic inequality and oppression. Critical constructivists are highly concerned with the role that power plays in the construction and validation of knowledge and how it privileges some people and marginalizes others (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 3). Social constructivists will likely find themselves agreeing with much that is shared under critical constructivism. It is not radically different, but rather brings critical issues to the foreground rather than implying them subtly and optimistically. Through critical constructivism, issues of inequality and systemic oppression are constantly in view; suppositions, content, and pedagogical practice (“normal,” “standard,” and “common sense”) are constantly under examination, and (as we will explore later), critical constructivists are constantly looking for ways to introduce counternarratives to a master narrative-dominated conversation and to make privileged identities “strange.” Social constructivism partners with critical theory to create critical constructivism because it views knowledge construction as an interpretative process that produces contextually specific, not universal or timeless, knowledge which is culturally negotiated and not produced by isolated individuals (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 14). Social

constructivism provides the essential framework and opens the door that critical constructivists walk through.

Critical constructivism demands an intense reflection on the production of self which helps educators to enter a higher state of critical consciousness (Kincheloe, 2005). Critical constructivists work to actively subvert the domination permeating teaching and knowledge of traditional objectivist education and is deeply committed to a “perspective of the oppressed” (p. 14). Educational purpose cannot be separated from issues of “social justice, human liberation, self-direction, resistance to regulation, community building, deeper forms of human interconnection and the fight for freedom” (p. 11).

Like social constructivism, critical constructivism is grounded in hermeneutics which is the methodology of interpretation. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines *hermeneutics* as “the methodology of interpretation concerned with problems that arise when dealing with meaningful human actions and the products of such actions, most importantly texts” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016, para. 1). However, *critical hermeneutics* is hermeneutics engaged in dialogue with the tradition of critical theory and involves understanding “how power inscribes the word and the world to shape the nature of how human beings make sense of it” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 20). Power is an influential force in social process—therefore, human identities are “shaped by entanglements in the webs that power weaves” (p. 22). Said another way, critical hermeneutics investigates how power enters the interpretative act and seeks to prevent dominant groups from putting their knowledge constructions forward as ultimate truths (p. 47—also citing Derrida, 1981). Critical hermeneutics “pushes interpretation to new

levels, moving beyond what is visible to the ethnographic eye to the exposure of concealed motives that move events and shape everyday life” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 22).

A foundational element of critical constructivism is embracing the understanding that all knowledge, regardless of origin, serves the specific interests of particular groups in distinctive ways. As Kincheloe (2005) states: “Cognition is always a political and ideological act...we cannot think about thinking without considering the power dimensions of the act—the empowerment of higher orders of thinking” (p. 60). To expose these power dimensions, Kincheloe suggests that educators consider the following whenever engaging in education-related questions (p. 4):

1. “How does the existence of socioeconomic inequality along the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion and language influence our answers?
2. What happens to our answers when we bring an understanding of power to our analytical table?
3. What is the effect of social theoretical insight on the subjectivity and context-dependency of knowledge production?”

The knowledge that emerges from asking these questions changes our approach to education-related questions in the moment and the educational act overall (p. 5).

Throughout American history, the educational system has functioned as a politically-contested entity which serves the needs of the dominant culture to “categorize, punish, restrict, and restrain those students who fail to fit the proper demographic” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 7). Put bluntly, critical constructivism drags deep, heavy, and often ugly socio-

political truth into the optimistic gentleness of the relativist, pluralistic, and holistic ambitions of social constructivism.²⁶

Dysconsciousness into Critical Consciousness

Northern Ireland was a profoundly unjust place to live in....[And] if you challenge injustice and you're not on the side of the status quo, therefore you have to be on the *other* side. A very rigid power system.

I remember a relative of mine saying: "Inez, you've no right to upset us like this!"

I said, "You've no right to live in a way that upsets others."

From the monologue "Seeing another country"
based on conversations with activist, Inez McCormack
in *Seven* (Cizmar et al., 2009, p. 87)

A Statement of Self

In my professional and personal life, it is significant that my nationalities are American and Canadian, that my ethnicity is immigrant-American (by origin of Germany and Denmark) and colonizer-Canadian (by origin of Scotland and England), and that, as a result, my society-assigned race is White. As a White, upper/middle class, straight, non-disabled, educated, American-born cis-woman, I am steeped in a variety of personal and social privileges. I have been afforded a multitude of unearned advantages and opportunities by the nature of these privileges that many are not. This privilege has also affected many of the assumptions, beliefs, values, and understandings I have developed about Truth and the nature of the world.

(Researcher's Personal Journal, July 2020)

Coming to a place where I may make this statement and to deeply grasp both its meaning and implications has been a journey in itself. When I was young, I did not "have" a race or ethnicity culture. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) emphasize that White people are usually not seen or named as a racialized category or culture beyond the

²⁶ Within the field of music education, Hess (2019) and Lind and McCoy (2016) have written extensively on critical pedagogies.

ticking of a box on an application form. Instead, they are centered as *normal* and race as a category is reserved for Others (DiAngelo, 2018; McIntosh, 1989; Tatum, 1997/2017). For many White people, their whiteness may be an “unspoken, uninterrogated norm, taken for granted, much as water can be taken for granted by a fish” (Wise, 2011, p. 2). It is an entity that is “unhyphenated, undepicted in no need of introduction and absent in most multicultural texts”—it is “one of the most powerful nothings we can conjure” (p. 218). As a result, White people may not even notice the “positive affirmation of whiteness” because to be White is to be individual and universal (Eddo-Lodge, 2017, p. xvii). Before coming to Marygrove College, I too was living within this phenomenon. I knew I was “White,” but I had not yet come to understand what that truly meant.

Dysconsciousness

Although the terms are often used interchangeably, there is a distinct difference between prejudice, discrimination, and racism. *Prejudice* is a preconceived judgment, opinion, or assumption usually based on limited information about the individual and/or the social groups to which that person belongs (Tatum, 1997/2017). *Discrimination* is an expression of prejudice through actions taken by an individual or organization based on prejudice felt (DiAngelo, 2018). Everyone has prejudice and discriminates based on their prejudices, but structures of oppression go well beyond individuals. Institutional power is what transforms prejudice and discrimination into structures of oppression (DiAngelo, 2018).

Racism is distinctive from prejudice because it goes beyond the beliefs and attitudes of individuals or even individual acts of discrimination (DiAngelo, 2018; Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Hill, 2017; Tatum, 1997/2017). When prejudice about race combines with

social, cultural, and economic access and power, this leads to “a system of advantage based on race” perpetuated and sustained by the institutionalization of racist policies and practices (Tatum, 1997/2017, p. 87). Systemic racism is deeply embedded in the fabric of American society and its systems of government, law, economy, healthcare, and education (DiAngelo, 2018; Eddo-Lodge, 2017).

In the United States, racism is intimately connected to whiteness, but the concept of whiteness is exceptionally tricky to unravel and define. Sociologist Michael Eric Dyson emphasizes that whiteness in America must be spoken of as three different components: whiteness as *identity*, whiteness as *ideology*, and whiteness as *institution* (Chennault, 1998, p. 300).

1. *Whiteness as identity* refers to self-understandings, social practices, and group beliefs. As stated earlier, whiteness is a socio-cultural creation to which individual people belong. For example, a teacher may identify as White just as her students might identify as Black, Brown, Asian, Native American, and/or White. It is a common designation of race among other designations of race.
2. *Whiteness as ideology* refers to the systemic domination of conceptions of whiteness as normative and natural. For example, in formal American education, classroom rules, policies, and behavioral/language expectations as well as instructional materials and exemplars of practice are often created or selected through the lens of White culture.
3. *Whiteness as institution* are the intellectual and ideological meanings inscribed in schools, government, churches, law enforcement, etc. For example, district-, state-, and nation-wide policy, curriculum, and assessment

for each school are predominately created or designed through the lens of White culture.

Across American history, all three of these elements of whiteness—identity, ideology, and institution—have been and continue to be articulated, enforced, combined, and reinforced to create a culture of white supremacy. White supremacy does not refer to white individuals and their singular intentions or actions (although these individual actions certainly do contribute to the issue) but to “an overarching political, economic, and social system of domination” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 28). In other words, there is “a fundamental difference between the *system* of white supremacy (which must be challenged and ultimately dismantled) and the personhood of white *individuals*” (Hill, 2017, p. 147). Systemic racism is not about “bad people,” but rather one racial group being in a position to maintain power and control by disseminating its own culture, worldview, and interests across an entire country (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 31; also Eddo-Lodge, 2017).

As a child, I was taught to believe that all people are equal and the ultimate goal is not to see color, but simply humans. When I thought of racism, I imagined “blatant, intentional acts of racial bigotry and discrimination” (Tatum, 1997/2017, p. 91). I have come to understand that racism is more pervasive and insidious than the more obvious types of active racism. There are two forms of racism which can remain elusive to the majority of White individuals: color-blind racism and silent racism. *Color-blind racism* is often stated openly and confidently in a statement similar to: “I don’t see color; I only see people.” On the surface, this statement appears loving, altruistic, inclusive, and progressive. The tenets of color-blindness sound ideal, because if racism requires the

existence of racial categories, then we simply will not acknowledge or utilize those categories anymore (Eddo-Lodge, 2017). In a 2014 interview, Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw clarified:

It's this idea that to eliminate race, you have to eliminate all discourse, including efforts to acknowledge racial structures and hierarchies and address them. It's those cosmopolitan-thinking, twenty-first century, "not trying to carry the burdens of the past and you shouldn't either" [people]. (Eddo-Lodge, 2017, p. 82)

Not speaking about a phenomenon because it is uncomfortable or painful—or makes you feel guilty or complicit, or even because it does not seem to affect you or appear relevant in your life—does not mean the phenomenon does not exist and does not have devastating consequences to a large number of the population. Boylorn (2017) shares an important perspective on this issue which, anecdotally, I have also heard echoed by several Black-identifying people in my life:

Being a Black woman colors and shapes my entire existence. To not see my color diminishes me, disappears me. And it is dishonest because my blackness is really all you see, the first thing you see when you look at me. To tell me you don't see my blackness means you don't see me. (p. 9)

As its name suggests, *silent racism* is so carefully woven into the fabric of society and our everyday lives, it can often remain undetected by even the most kind-hearted and well-meaning people. Two examples of silent racism identified by Trapagnier (2010) include:

- prevalent stereotypical images based on misinformation about Black people; and
- White paternalistic assumptions based on hierarchical relationships and a sense of superiority.

This form of racism has the most power in maintaining racial inequality because it is often not seen by those doing the damage.

The largest problem with silent racism is White people's inability to see it, or their *dysconsciousness*. Dysconsciousness is "an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as a given" (King & Akua, 2012, p. 724). As a form of impaired consciousness, dysconsciousness limits modes of thinking, shapes identity, and distorts consciousness, awareness, and sense of agency. For example, *dysconscious racism* is a form of tacit racism in which an individual accepts dominant White norms, privileges, assumptions, myths, and beliefs as truth whether they wish to or not (King, 1997). Dysconscious racism is an uncritical habit of mind that "lacks any ethical judgment regarding or critique of systemic racial inequity," which leads to "routine actions that go unquestioned by members of the dominant group" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 21). As a result of miseducation and misinformation, this mind-set unquestioningly accepts the status quo and "prevents teachers, for example, from questioning the existing racial order" or "to imagine practical possibilities for social change or their role as change agents" (King & Akua, 2012, p. 724).

The idea of silent and dysconscious racism can be difficult for White people to accept because it involves embracing the idea that racism "inhabits the minds of all white people whether or not they acknowledge it or are aware of it" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 6—also citing similar conclusions by Blumer, 1958). This is why most scholars of racism, including Crenshaw (1989), hooks (2003), Kendi (2019), and Tatum (1997/2017) encourage White people to work toward an anti-racist mindset, rather than non-racist.

Dysconsciousness makes dedication to developing a critical consciousness imperative for White educators. Without committing to a long journey of learning to see and accept tacit forms of systemic oppression and discrimination within our classrooms, our curriculum, and our practice, we can never achieve the true potential of social constructivist practice.

Developing a Critical Consciousness

As referenced in the opening section of this document, *conscientização* (also known in English as conscientization or critical consciousness) was developed by Paulo Freire (1970/2018, 1974) as a pedagogical resistance to his observations of the dehumanizing and oppressive educational practices in his country. Referencing the quote shared in that section, Freire had defined the term as: “Learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 1974, p. 4). Guzzo (2014) reveals that there is no true English translation for the word *conscientization*, but in Portuguese, *conscientização* means “the process of becoming aware of something” (p. 300).

Freire takes this a step further by proposing it is a means of “deepening the attitude of awareness” (Freire, 1970/2018, p. 109). This “becoming deeply aware” relates to an examination of the relationship between subject and object, where “the subject becomes able to perceive in critical terms, the dialectic unity between him [sic] and the object” (Freire, 1973 as translated by Montero, 2014, p. 296). It is a “path to liberation” that confidently seeks the elimination of oppression through “the humanization of life” (Guzzo, 2014, p. 301). Conscientization conveys the idea of “developing, strengthening, and changing consciousness,” but it is not only a form of thinking but *doing* as well (Montero, 2014, p. 296). Guzzo (2014) stresses that this process of awareness cannot

exist outside of or separate from praxis and therefore must contain both reflection and action. Freire's view of critical consciousness involved a cycle of actions which include: "gaining knowledge about the systems and structures that create and sustain inequity (critical analysis), developing a sense of power or capability (sense of agency), and ultimately committing to take action against oppressive conditions (critical action)" (El-Amin et al., 2017, para. 6). From Freire's intention, El-Amin et al. (2017) offer their own definition of *conscientization* as "the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and the commitment to take action against these systems" (para. 1).

Developing critical consciousness is an essential component of coming into critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005). Educators are theorists who have crafted and hold to particular views of reality and practice which then shape our actions in all the different roles we play. Critical constructivists believe that they must consciously address their social, cognitive, and educational theories to "explore their origins in our lives, change them when needed and consider how they may have unconsciously shaped our teaching and our actions in the world in general" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 7). Critical consciousness enables educators to learn how to question and challenge "structures of domination and states of hegemonic dominance" toward a goal of collective, large-scale change (Montgomery, 2013, p. 2). Critical consciousness also helps educators gain the ability to pause and scrutinize their own view of the world and to see the ways our perception is constructed via various codes, signs, ideologies, and other "often-hidden codes of power" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 11). This reflection can also lead to an ability to think critically about the process and praxis of teaching and engaging with learners

(Giroux, 1997). Do my actions and words within the classroom or studio align with what I assert as my educational philosophy and intent?

By doing the above, educators may begin to formulate questions that further expose the ways their theories and praxis may socially and educationally advantage or disadvantage their students (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 15—also citing Brosio, 1994, 2000). In *The Culture of Education*, Bruner (1996) stresses that education is an inherent part of the cultures of all stakeholders. His series of questions in relation to this view is an excellent example of the types of critically conscious questions (p. 11):

1. What function does ‘education’ serve in the culture and what role does it play in the lives who operate within it?
2. Why is education situated in the culture as it is, and how does this placement reflect the distribution of power, status, and other benefits?
3. What are the enabling resources made available to people to cope, and what portion of those resources is made available through ‘education’?
4. What are the constraints imposed on the process of education (e.g., the accessibility of symbolic systems and the distribution of genres)?

By formulating these types of questions, educators can come to understand that “the ways the world operates and how that operation shapes education, educational policy, curriculum, the lives of teachers and students, and who succeeds and who doesn’t in schooling” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 7).

Kendi (2019) and Kincheloe (2008) share an interesting perspective on how Du Bois’ concept of *double consciousness* may benefit White people who wish to challenge their dysconscious racism and enter a mindset of critical consciousness. Within the

experience of Black people in America, Du Bois (1903/1989) spoke of a *double-consciousness*,²⁷ or a sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others.

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's world by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness...two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body. (Du Bois, 1903/1989, p. 3)

Kendi (2019) interprets Du Bois' double-consciousness as having "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (pp. 28-29). Kincheloe (2008) understands Du Bois' words as "the ability to see oneself through the perceptions of others" and to gain both an etic and emic view of mainstream society (p. 62).

Kincheloe (2005) reflects that many educators come from privileged race, gender, or class positions and are therefore "insulated" from the benefits of a double consciousness (and, by proxy, "estranged from a visceral appreciation of suffering") (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 16). In a way, the privileged have less privilege when it comes to their ability to see and understand beyond their own scope—and the goal of critical consciousness is to help the privileged see better. For Kincheloe, a "pedagogy of second sight" is central to critical constructivism because it is grounded on the understanding that a critically educated person will come to know beyond just "the validated knowledge of the dominant culture" (p. 62). Kendi believes that White people do have their own double or dueling consciousness, but that unfortunately it negotiates between two points of view: the "segregationist" and the "assimilationist." On one hand, the segregationist mindset views Black people as incapable of reaching the White standard—and on the

²⁷ Beckham (2017) connects double-consciousness to *code-switching* as a related form of praxis. He defines *code-switching* succinctly as "the temporary adaptation of black customs to white spaces" (para. 1).

other, the assimilationist mindset believes if Black people try hard enough, they can become like White people. Neither view is supportive of individuals as they are, within their own culture, and truths, knowledge, and ways of being.

Related to developing a critical perspective, Kendi offers an alternative viewpoint for White people trapped in the dual-debate of segregationism and assimilationism: an *antiracist* consciousness. Antiracist ideas are based in the depoliticized truth that our socially-constructed racial grouping are truly “equals in all the ways they are different” (Kendi, 2019, p. 31). Being antiracist means emancipating oneself from her current dual-consciousness by doing battle with the assimilationist and the segregationist consciousnesses to find a new way of seeing.

As an educator, I have felt a responsibility to develop a dual-consciousness and critical consciousness which will allow me to cultivate an anti-racist mindset to combat the dysconscious views of my upbringing and of the surrounding American culture. For me, this aspiration began with a hard examination of identities, oppression, and privilege found in my classroom, studio, and rehearsal space.

Considerations of Knowledge

In social constructivism, knowers and knowledge are recognized as socially-, culturally-, and historically-situated. Through the perspective of critical constructivism, “contextually-situated” must also always acknowledge the systemic influence of the master narrative that privileges one group/identity and oppresses other groups/identities. The social, the cultural, and the historical are always hegemonically-situated, and this must be taken into account for all aspects of knowledge construction within the learning

process. There are two important considerations related to knowledge that are key to critical constructivism.

For the first consideration, students' prior knowledge is created in and influenced by local, state, national, and global contexts whether or not teachers acknowledge or understand them (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Giroux (1997) quotes Jean Paul Sartre as saying: "You become what you are in the context of what others have made of you" (p. 27). Giroux views this as a crucial idea linking socio-historical consciousness with praxis, because history helps us to understand the forces that have shaped our lives and our relationships with other human beings. Establishing a critical attentiveness to the process of "historical self-formation" indicates an essential first step in critically examining "taken-for-granted assumptions that legitimize existing institutional arrangements" (Giroux, 1997, p. 27). When considering knowledge, critical constructivists view the world as "a complicated, web-like configuration of interacting forces" which involves all social, cultural, and historical influences, even beyond our own (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 25). By understanding and voicing one's positionality within this web, we can start to "recognize our limited vantage points" (p. 25), explore the interconnective threads between our threads and those of others, and come to embrace our subjectivity (because no one has the ability to step outside of the web to gain a superior, subjective view of Truth). The individual is the only expert on her own life, and the individual is only an expert on her own life (Delpit, 2006). Perhaps there are aspects of the outside world of which someone is not aware which affects their interpretations, or perhaps we might not understand his rationale, but still he remains "the only authentic chronicler" of his own experience (p. 47). Educators must develop "an awareness, an acceptance, and a respect"

for each student's cultural influence as well as the teacher's own suppositions (or prejudices) of that culture—a transparent, face-effacing *cultural literacy* that guides her understandings of the student's prior knowledge and knowledge construction (Hancock, 2006, p. 102). Educators cannot assume everyone has the same *cultural toolkit* (Swidler, 1986), nor should they hold belief there are any “ideal” or “deficit” toolkits to be had. They must work to expand their own awareness and understandings of the values, benefits, and limitations of a variety of cultural toolkits—including their own, the dominant culture, and cultures of their learning community. Toward this, educators must assume responsibility for developing familiarity and understandings of community (localized) narratives and perspectives. As a *culturally relevant* pedagogue, the teacher conceives of themselves as “an artist, who is a part of the community and gives back to the community” and strives to help all learners (including themselves) “make connections between their community, national, and global identities” for deeper, authentic understandings (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 38).

Finally, it is essential for educators to become aware of any socio-economic or socio-political factors that may make it difficult for a student to enter the risk-requiring zone of proximal development. There may be impediments affecting student agency, self-efficacy, and feelings of ownership, including lower-level needs of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, or *education-induced trauma* stemming from *poisonous pedagogies* (Gray, 2015) of discriminatory and/or political practice.²⁸ Learning is the process of risk-taking,

²⁸ White (2019) asks: “How can you become your very best self if you don't get the time and space to explore who your Self is? How can you perform at a relatively high level if you don't have the food and shelter that your body needs? And how on earth can you engage in class, if you don't have the safety and security that you need to feel safe?” (5:10).

of traveling into the discomfort of the unfamiliar. If a learner is perpetually in a state of need, anxiety or discomfort, how does this affect the learning process?

In the second consideration, power produces knowledge and knowledge perpetuates power (Foucault, 1977/1995). These “power-knowledge relations” contain a number of elements, such as: the learner-author who knows, the objects known, and the modalities of knowledge utilized (pp. 27-28). Critical pedagogy contends that knowledge is birthed within a historical context that bestows life and meaning to human experience (Darder et al., 2017). Educational practice also exists within the boundaries of social practice and historical events as well as students and the knowledge they bring into the classroom. If knowledge is gained through vision, then “the visible is privileged” (Scott, 1991, p. 776). The critical constructivist’s challenge is to disrupt normative history through “an enlargement of the picture” which could contribute to a long overdue correction to historical oversights resulting from the limited cultural view under systemic oppression (p. 776). We could look to historicize experience and make subject-positions visible so that we might “understand the operations of the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced” (p. 792).

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment have historically been primarily influenced by and responsive to one group (upper/middle-class White students) (Howard, 2010). The epistemological and methodological origins of school knowledge are “heavily steeped in a Eurocentric worldview and ideology that largely omit the experiences, histories, contributions, and cultures of people of color, the poor, and women” (p. 71). A heavy charge then falls upon the educator to investigate the *hidden curriculum* (McLaren, 2017) of tacit constructions and unintended outcomes, to expand perspectives and

exemplars to represent the broader population (especially members of groups connected to student population), and to develop skills/languages/understandings to best scaffold the cultural needs of students.

In addition, when curriculum and instruction does introduce the cultures of those Othered, they can be represented as static or one-dimensional. However, all cultures, “like any other social or biological organism” are “dynamic, complex, interactive, and changing” and must be exemplified as such (Gay, 2018, p. 10). As critical constructivists, we have a responsibility for the cultural identity and history that we perpetuate as Truth within all content and pedagogical dissemination. Educators must become diligent, ruthless, and sensitive as historians and researchers within subject-matter and related knowledges and products (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 18). Also essential is to cultivate a sense of *cultural humility* within pedagogical work. The term was first coined by Tervalon and Murray-García (1998), who illustrated *cultural humility* as a way to educate American physicians to work with culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse populations. Later, psychologists Hook et al. (2013) would define *cultural humility* as “the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [individual]” (p. 354). They suggest that practitioners who are culturally humble approach individuals “with respectful openness” and work collaboratively with individuals to understand “the unique intersection of [their] various aspects of identities” (p. 354). Rather than assuming a *cultural competence* (Cross et al., 1989) which may lead to overconfidence due to prior experience working with a particular group, *cultural humility* implies an ongoing expression of respect and lack of superiority when it comes to cultural differences. While

both cultural competence and cultural humility strive to address *cultural encapsulation* (“when an individual is not able to see outside his/her own cultural ‘lens’ in order to truly grasp cultural diversity”), cultural competency tends to focus more on knowledge gathering and developing prescribed approaches, whereas cultural humility is viewed as a “dispositional trait” of taking on “an other-oriented stance (open to the ‘other’) when interacting with persons from a different cultural background” (Haynes-Mendez & Engelsmeier, 2020, p. 24).²⁹ It is a “commitment and active engagement in a lifelong process” of “self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners...that requires humility to develop and maintain mutually respectful and dynamic partnerships with communities” (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998, p. 118).

To be able to engage in this work, educators first have a responsibility to learn where they are socially located both in society and in any organization they are affiliated with—as well as being able to “articulate the dynamics” that come with it (Hill, 2017, p. 177). This includes learning to listen with an open heart to truths different than one’s own, authentically and honestly asking/answering questions, and newly observing how their social location affects self, others, and the world. We cannot separate our perceptions from where we stand in the “web of reality” and as educators, we desperately need to know our own *positionality* so we can understand “differing ways individuals from diverse social backgrounds construct knowledge and make meaning” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 206). Landsman (2001) clarifies an important distinction between this type of *understanding* verses *knowing*, which I have found keenly relevant for this

²⁹ Hearing me speak of *cultural competence*, my husband, David Hunt (personal conversation, Feb 2021) noted concern that the term appeared to have a “pedigreed finality” to it—as if an appropriate level of competence about someone’s culture could be attained and proven.

journey. I cannot *know* what it is like to be any other color than my own. Having lived under a particular socio-economic class, I cannot *know* what it is like to be poor. However, through listening and empathy, I might be able to come to *understand*, “to perceive meanings, grasp ideas, and truly comprehend what others say” (pp. 12-13).

Coming Into This Study

Through my critical consciousness journey and coming into *wide-awakeness* (Greene, 1978/2018) about my privilege and dysconsciousness, I have found it crucial to catalogue and become aware of the primary voices that have informed me as a person and shape my thoughts and values; this includes seeking more encounters which allow my viewpoints “to be challenged by those on different points on the ideological spectrum” so I can sharpen my critical-thinking skills and “unearth blind spots” (Hill, 2017, p. 162). I have sought to become aware of my *positionality* in the *web of reality* in regard to my race, gender, class, sexuality, and non-disabled status (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). I will embrace that I do have a race culture and that this culture directly affects my teaching and my scholarship (Hancock, 2006). As appropriate and useful, I will be transparent in how my own perspectives came to be constructed and how the social values, ideologies and information I have encountered have shaped my pedagogy and my worldview (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 4). When I make a mistake, I will face it and make needed repairs (hooks, 2003). I work not to be paralyzed by shame for the past which I cannot control but embrace any guilt I feel as a positive motivation and constructive tool in my quest for transformation and growth (Brown, 2015). Since I cannot opt out of my privilege even if I wanted to (Boylorn, 2017), I will recognize that social capital to which

I have access gives me opportunities to ask: “In what ways can I spend that social capital for the sake of justice?” (Hill, 2017, p. 168).

In her 2019 TED talk, LaTanya White entreats educators to consider using privilege to inspire those that they serve to explore the world more deeply and their role in it, to influence their students to think more innovatively, to take more calculated and informed risks, and to empower them to become the very best versions of themselves (8:01). Because, as Joseph Campbell (1949-1978/1991) declares: “The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are” (p. 15). Everyone deserves to aspire to this privilege—unhindered, unconstrained, and meaningfully supported in their journey toward, pursuit within, and reflection upon—which is the intent of both my work in education and this digital ethnodramatic study.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTENTION OF MUSICKING

*The intentions that motivate an act are contained within the action itself.
Even though the “why” of any work can be disguised or hidden,
it is always present in its essential DNA.
For example, listen to a song...
The singer’s intentions are “visible” in the singing.
If a singer means, “listen to me,” the singing is about the singer.
If the song springs from a genuine devotion to and interest in the music,
the singing will be about the song.
“Listen to this!” the song will sing.*

A poetic transcription created from Bogart’s (2007)
And Then, You Act (pp. 30-31)

Music: A Universal Language with No Common Tongue

The more I grew in my knowledge of music,
the more confidence that gave me to engage in conversations
with musical people.
Even with people from different genres,
I understand if you're talking about the feeling in it,
or how much you love it,
or what it’s done in your life.
All that is universal in music.

Without music,
maybe I wouldn't have been able to engage with that person
because their life or their background is so much different than mine.
But because of our passion for music, it opened up a conversation.
The humanity of music helped us to connect.

Sherry, study participant

“Music is a universal language” can be a contentious phrase to utter in a room of
music philosophers and scholars.³⁰ If it does not immediately rouse an impassioned

³⁰ Although the phrase, “music is the universal language” is often attributed to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow from his *Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea* (1835), its first known published use may

debate, the statement may at least evoke what Patricia Shehan Campbell (1997) describes as “a bit of a shiver, a moderate shock, a wave of disbelief, [and/or] a sense of angst” (p. 32). Yet even a quick Google search proves the enduring popularity of this sentiment among the masses. The idea of music’s power to transcend boundaries and unify humanity is beautiful and enticing, but debate continues as to its merit.

An expansive quantitative study at Harvard recently explored whether there are universals which exist within music as a human phenomenon (Mehr et al., 2019). Examining musical ethnographies of 315 societies, these researchers found that not only is music being produced worldwide in diverse behavioral contexts (varying in formality, arousal, and religiosity), but that music appears to be tied to common perceptual, cognitive, and affective faculties between these contexts—including the connection of words to song, the incorporation of movement/dance, the development of “signatures of tonality,” and a localized sense of aesthetic (p. 15). Generally, the Harvard study determined that “music is universal but clearly takes on different forms in different cultures” (p. 15).

Many world music scholars were quick to respond to this study, especially noting that none of the 19 researchers involved are ethnomusicologists or music scholars of any type (Berger, 2021). When asked about the Harvard study, Patricia Shehan Campbell agreed that “the idea of music as a universal human activity is accepted,” but warned that placing a universal stamp on music obscures the variety and nuances of “its sonic elements, its social and individual uses” across the world (Berger, 2021, para. 14). As

be found in volume 24 of *The Lady's Monthly Museum* (1826, p. 1) as written by one of the unattributed “Ladies of established Reputation in the literary Circles” who contributed to the magazine.

Mans (2009) reminds us, “Just as there is no language that is universal, there is no music that is universal—and most definitely not one that is universally interpretable” (Mans, 2009, p. 2). However, Patrick Savage, a musicologist whose work expands Nettl and Bohlman’s (1991) *comparative musicology*, suggested perhaps it is better to think of the cultural relativity and universality of music as a continuum rather than an “either/or.” He emphasizes that “getting to understand a specific style of music and its nuances doesn’t mean we can’t use music to connect with people from other cultures...even if it’s not 100 percent universal” (para. 25). Essentially, music is a shared human phenomenon—but how this phenomenon is made manifest and with what meanings and to what purposes, is unshared. This idea aligns with the understandings of many musical scholars including Cook (1998), Elliott (1995), Elliott and Silverman (2015), Kerchner and Abril (2009), and Nettl (2005). Still, scholars across the sciences (e.g., musicology, anthropology, biology, psychology, sociology, philosophy) continue to be entranced by the potential of finding and naming any universal musical threads that bind us—the tug-of-war of universality verses particularity continuing in a tensile balance. As Small (1998) reminds us: individual traditions of musicking are small parts of “the great restless ocean of human musicking”—viewed from the outside, these traditions are much “less isolated from that great ocean than those who only look from the inside might think” (p. 11).

In her senior year, study participant Ti approached me with an interesting idea for an independent study project. Having observed and experienced challenges in musical conversations between the predominantly classically-centered professors and the predominantly CCM-centered students, Ti was inspired to help facilitate better dialogue among members of our music department. She proposed the creation of a nonformal

genre-diverse dictionary which would clearly define and cross-reference key music vocabulary commonly utilized both in our music department (e.g., courses, private lessons, ensembles) and in the students' vernacular musical settings outside of our institution.³¹ Over the next two semesters, Ti and I gathered terminology from published literature and informally interviewed faculty, staff, and students. We crafted wording for definitions of classical terms through the lens of CCM-centered individuals and wording for definitions of CCM terms through the lens of classical-centered individuals. We also sought to highlight any parallels in music terminology (different terms with a similar meaning, such as *sforzando* in classical and *hit and swell* in gospel) as well as differences (same term with different connotations within different genres, such as *falsestto*) as commonly used by stakeholders in the department. Finally, we added a small section for urban slang that students were actively using within classes and rehearsals.³² Strongly connected to the localized narrative of the Marygrove Music Department, this dictionary was designed to act as a living resource, which could be expanded or revised per recommendations from department stakeholders.

Walking into a room of country singers,
I have no knowledge of what they're talking about musically.
The thing we have in common is music.
However, their lingo of music may be different from neo-soul or gospel.
So be aware of the way you talk musically with people.

Ti, study participant

³¹ For our work at Marygrove, *genre-diverse* refers to a diversity of genres within Western musics. Informal, nonformal, and formal musicking will be explored later in this chapter.

³² At that time, *#teamtoomuch* was a popular phrase with the students. As a professor, I could reference the dictionary and learn their general meaning was: "To overdo or over-exaggerate a musical idea, which results in less-expressive and less-authentic musicking." The speed with which slang changes within urban, Black communities (McWhorter, 2017; Smitherman, 2000) would require this section of the dictionary to be especially malleable and nimble.

In winter 2017, Ti and I were invited to co-present about our genre-diverse music dictionary project in a college-wide symposium.³³ We named our session “Music: A Universal Language with No Common Tongue” to introduce another level of complexity to an expression well-known by the faculty, staff, and student attendees. Within our presentation, Ti and I noted how although the project had begun as a way to bring clarity to the differences in our language, we had also realized the magnitude of the similarities as a starting place for conversation. Throughout our musical world, there exists a plurality of musical expressions—ways in which we construct, share, value, and define music—but there is importance in celebrating any commonalities as well. Music is at once both universal and particular. To focus only on its particulars denies music as a common human experience. However, to focus solely only on its universality negates the significance of the particulars generated by time, place, community, and individual. In our closing statements to the presentation, Ti and I posed the question: “By focusing predominately on the differences between our musical languages and practices, how might our conversations be keeping us even further apart?” Through the underlying epistemology of this study as well as the methodology and methods undertaken toward the creation of the digital ethnodrama, I have strived to embrace this duality and co-existence of sameness and difference between musical experiences of individuals and cohorts.³⁴

In this opening to Chapter Three, I am not making a declarative statement that “music is a universal language with no common tongue”—but rather, highlighting how

³³ The first distribution of this dictionary was scheduled to occur in fall 2017.

³⁴ This concept is not dissimilar to Jackie Wiggins’ falling tree analogy (*see Chapter Two*)—the experience being at once universal and particular to everyone standing in the forest.

“music as a universal language with no common tongue” represented our approach to conversations about a higher music education curriculum at Marygrove College. Whether or not music itself is an actual language may never be settled (Dahl, 2017), but I can attest that in the context of this study, music is undoubtedly a “fundamental channel of communication” through which we engaged in conversation both with and about music in collaboration with other music-doers and listener-audiences (Hargreaves, Miell, & Macdonald, 2002). Music has conversational elements, both in sound and word, which needed to be negotiated to ensure comprehension and meaningfulness between members of the community. Within this chapter, I will explore several key aspects of these conversational elements which are critical for understanding our shared experience at Marygrove College as well as deeper meanings within the monologues and spoken word choruses in the digital ethnodrama (Chapter Seven).

MUSIC as a Shared Understanding³⁵

Music, as a human phenomenon, is a direct response to the experience of being human through the expression of that experience through sound (Wiggins, 2015). Similar to social constructivism as described in Chapter Two, the phenomenon of music is socially-influenced, personally meaningful, and relativistic, pluralistic, and holistic in nature. Music is a “socially-created generative idea” where the production and interpretation of sound into something known as *music* is connected to things seen, heard, felt, pondered, measured, and valued by an individual situated within a social reality (Regelski, 2009, p. 66; also Regelski, 2016). Therefore, individual music practices are

³⁵ Elliott and Silverman (2015) use “MUSIC” to refer to “all musics of the world past and present” (p. 105) and I use it in this heading to prepare readers for thinking of music as human phenomenon.

“fulcrums of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style and through the very act of participating together in performance” (Turino, 2008, p. 2).

Elliott and Silverman (2015) note that within the phenomenon of music, there are four components that come together to make a musical experience:

- musical doers, who are the music-makers and listeners;
- musical processes or doings, which includes musicking,³⁶ listening, experiencing, responding, valuing, and evaluating;
- musical products or outcomes, including the more tangible constructions of musicking (e.g., performance events, worship gatherings, jam sessions, recordings, scores); and
- musical contexts, which encompasses all spaces and places of musicking.

An important aspect of this collection of components is that all work together to be music. Music is a social practice that goes beyond works and products (Elliot & Silverman, 2015; Small, 1998; Wiggins, 2015). Music exists as combinations of sound and silence moving through time and space. Music is something that is tangibly there, but isn't. As Nicholas Cook (1998) illuminates: “You can't point to the music, or grasp hold of it, because as soon as it has come into being it has already disappeared, swallowed up into silence, leaving no trace” (p. 52).

³⁶ Throughout the dissertation, I have chosen to predominately reference Small's term *musicking* because of how its critical ethnographic origins as well as how his “theory of musicking” relates to this study. Here I have referenced Elliott's term, *musicing* in deference to Elliott & Silverman's citation. Although there are different nuances between them, both terms, *musicking* and *musicing* seek to transform “music” from a noun into an active verb form.

So, why is this hard?
A score is like a recipe, right?
A recipe is like...
a blueprint for food.
But it's not food! (*laughs*)
Same with this sheet music, right?
It's a blueprint for music, but it ain't music.
Wait.
Hold on... (*holds it up to ear*)
Nope, I don't hear anything.

From a de-identified criminal justice major
in a 2016 GenEd music class at Marygrove
during a discussion on whether a score is music

Similar to how a recipe is not a meal and a blueprint is not a building, a written score is not music. It is musical potential, symbolically transcribed onto paper or into a digital display—impotent without humans who can decode its technical and expressive symbolism and translate it into a musical experience for humans. Similarly, Christopher Small (1998) sees a score not as a musical work, but as a “set of coded instructions, that, when properly carried out, will enable performers not only to make sounds in a specific combination” but that this action itself is the “musical work” (p. 112). For him, there is no such *thing* as music. Instead, it is an activity, something we do, which he calls: *musicking*. The act of musicking covers all participation in a musical performance, whether active or passive, whether we like it or not, and does not place a value judgement on what is *music* and what is *musicking*. Musicking (or “to music”) is any activity or encounter “between human beings that takes place through the medium of sounds organized in specific ways” (p. 10). Small’s definition links directly to his background in ethnomusicology and the idea of participatory music (as discussed later in this chapter).

Whether engaging in playing, singing, or listening, we experience music as a “multidimensional structured whole” consisting of various architectural dimensions related to combinations of time, space, pitch, tone, duration, pulse, pattern, speed, and volume happening in simultaneous action (Wiggins, 2015, p. 32). These dimensions function as integral parts of the whole musical experience as they overlap and interact with one another (Wiggins, 2015; also citing Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Importantly, there are “broader, more encompassing, overarching musical concepts” that inform these structural dimensions, such as the cultural, historical, dramatic, and stylistic components of the work—the *meta-dimensions* (p. 32). As a musician or listener learns more about the contexts provided by the meta-dimensions, he is able to return to the dimensions with greater insight (e.g., choices made by a composer or performer) and a better understanding of his own perspective of intentionality. These two spheres of dimensions and meta-dimensions are “interrelated and interconnected” in such a way within a musical work that altering any aspect of the work will affect the ways the others are produced or perceived (Wiggins, 2015, p. 34; also Wiggins, 2009).

Musics in Praxis³⁷

According to Elliott and Silverman (2015), Aristotle originally defined *praxis* as an “active reflection and reflective action for the positive transformation of people’s everyday lives and situations” (p. 43). Similarly, Freire (1970/2018) emphasizes that *praxis* transcends the idea of simply *doing* or *making* to become a balance of reflection

³⁷ David Elliott (1995—also Elliott & Silverman, 2015) recommended the pluralistic term *Musics* to emphasize the “many (many!) musical practices” across the world as well as their resulting products or outcomes (p. 43).

and action directed at transforming structures and understandings of those structures. Praxis is guided by what Aristotle called *phronesis*, which Elliott and Silverman relate to music as “a disposition and a process that enables teachers and students to make wise decisions that will benefit everyone musically and personally” (p. 46). It is both individualized and situated emerging from a person’s reflective experiences. Expanding praxis into music education, Regelski (2009, 2016) noted that music itself is an action guided by intention—it is “what an action plans, envisions, or deliberately seeks to accomplish” (p. 11; see also Bowman, 1998; Elliot, 2005; Elliott & Silverman, 2015; Hess, 2019). Critically, this intentionality is both individualized and situated because it emerges from the person’s reflective experiences within socio-cultural context(s) (Elliott & Silverman, 2015).

Several key moments sparked our curriculum remapping at Marygrove, but one of significance was an impromptu conversation I had with the co-chair of the Marygrove dance department. She casually observed: “The art students spend most of their day making art. The dance students spend most of their day dancing. Why do the music students spend most of their day sitting around talking about music instead of making it?” Bringing this question back to the music department ignited a series of intra-departmental conversations about how we might take inspiration from division colleagues to shift our emphasis toward the praxis of music—persistently making space and creating expectation for musicking in classrooms as well as in rehearsal halls and studios.³⁸

³⁸ Christopher Small (1998): “Words are literal and propositional where musicking is metaphorical and allusive, and they insist on a single meaning where musicking has many meanings, all at once...The best one can hope to do with words is suggest ways in which we might begin to understand the experience. The understanding itself can come only from the musicking itself” (pp. 184-185).

Elliott and Silverman (2015) outline a praxial philosophy in music education that resonates with this aspiration for our new higher music education curriculum at Marygrove. They note that music should be conceived as something people do (rather than predominately dissect and discuss) as a distinctive and widely diverse form of creative and ethical human doing, making, and valuing that combines and depends on the integration of a complex web of people, processes, products, and contexts (Elliott & Silverman, 2015, p. 51). We, too, placed a strong focus on approaches that would infuse our new curriculum with “the why-what-how-where-when of effective, democratic, and civic education in, about, and through music performing, improvising, composing, arranging and conducting/leading music *musically*” as well as seeking to empower our students “to make and listen to music for their own and others’ experiences of meaningfulness, happiness, self-worth, and musical satisfaction” (p. 44). Intellectual analysis and discussion were still a crucial part of courses, but always toward an immediate action of musical implementation. We worked to shift from subconsciously endorsing a *knowing to know* into a knowing that leads into exploration through application.

Classical and CCM

As noted in Chapter One, the musical experiences of these participants span a wide range of Western genres and styles, especially classical, gospel, musical theatre, contemporary Christian, R&B, neo-soul, and pop. In this section, I will briefly frame these genres and their relation to the individuals involved in this study.

Framing Genres

Within this document, the term *classical* refers to Western-influenced art music from the Medieval era to modern day and refers to the compositional conventions of periods and locations (e.g., French Baroque, German Romanticism, American Minimalism), specific works (e.g., symphonies, operas, art songs), and their active performance practice by trained musicians. Classical concerts are typically *presentational* music events in which the artists “prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music” (Turino, 2008, p. 26). Audiences are expected to sit “in silent contemplation while the music is being played, only to comment on it through applause after a piece has been completed” (p. 52). Classical music tends to rely on Western musical notation as its primary form of transmission, which has led to a value tradition of developing, preserving, and carefully re-creating musical works through the guided interpretation of printed scores—also known as a *closed form* (Allsup, 2013). Closed forms “typically begin, progress, and end in the same way every time the piece is played” (Turino, 2008, p. 37). As a result, composers are given a primary role in the creation of master works, while performers and conductors work in service as interpreters to the established score (Nettl, 1995). For example: consider the word “by” in the phrase: “*The Negro Speaks of Rivers* by Margaret Bonds.” In classical music, the use of *by* indicates the composer of the work and stands by itself not needing a reference to any particular performer.

In this document, the term *Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM)* refers to Western-influenced popular music beginning in the 20th century to modern day.³⁹ This term is commonly used to denote “nonclassical” music, covering genres such as gospel, R&B, neo-soul, contemporary Christian, musical theatre, hip-hop, rap, and country. CCM events are typically *presentational* as well, but with much less stringent expectations in audience culture. Audiences are expected to engage with the music through more verbal (e.g., hollering, singing along) and physical (e.g., waving, dancing, livestreaming) responses. CCM tends to focus more on aural transmission of music, which has led to a more fluid understanding of musical works. CCM selections are still predominately closed forms, but with slightly more flexibility for performers to bring their own interpretations to the piece, especially if it is the cover of a previously produced song. Because of this, original performers (or most memorable performers) are often given more recognition than the songwriter(s). For example: consider the word “by” in the phrase “*I Will Always Love You* by Whitney Houston.” In CCM, the use of *by* typically indicates a notable performer of the song rather than the composers/songwriters.⁴⁰

Of the CCM genres listed above, gospel holds a predominant place in the experiences of the majority of participants.⁴¹ In this study, *gospel* refers to traditional and contemporary Christian genres which have their roots in African American spirituals built from West African musical culture and are descended from the hymnody of musicians such as Reverend Charles Tindley, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Thomas Dorsey, and

³⁹ This use of CCM is not to be confused with Contemporary Christian Music which also uses the same acronym and has been listed under the CCM umbrella.

⁴⁰ “I Will Always Love You” was written and originally recorded in 1973 by Dolly Parton (RLG/Legacy).

⁴¹ Participant Sherry is familiar with gospel, but her experiences lean more toward contemporary Christian musics.

Mahalia Jackson (Clency, 2018). However, gospel music is more than just a musical genre or style. Not only does it represent a particular musical and cultural aesthetic connected to the practices of Black American sacred music, but it reflects “the emotional, spiritual, physical, and historical journey of those who participate, and testifies to the contribution religion has made towards that journey” (Robinson-Martin, 2014, p. 336). Further, gospel singing is bigger than vocalization and expression of the individual vocalist. To fully understand “the sanctified experience of song” in this context, the singer must “understand—and ultimately feel—the power of the [Holy] Spirit” (Hinson, 2000, p. 2). As a form of energized worship, gospel represents the presence and power of the Holy Spirit both for the musicians themselves as well as the congregants (Simmons, 1998, p. 47). The Holy Spirit provides a ministerial foundation to a gospel music performance, which is often considered the most important aspect of praise and worship by those in the community (Robinson-Martin, 2017). This religious dynamic is what separates gospel music as ministering the Word of God to the masses from gospel music as entertainment for an audience (Robinson-Martin, 2014). Hinson (2000) proclaims that the power of gospel song is its ability to help focus one’s thoughts by encouraging singers and listeners to “link lyrics with life experience” which leads into praise that in turn “initiates the supernatural conversation, thus opening the mind’s doors to transcendence” (p. 3).

The traditional way to learn gospel is not through formal instruction, but through “imitation, participation, and constant exposure to gospel music and culture” in the church itself (p. 337). The musical aesthetics associated with most gospel music includes combinations of dotted rhythms, call and response, improvisation, handclapping,

instrumentation (e.g., organ, piano/keyboard, drums, bass guitar), verse and refrain forms, and vocal techniques (e.g., squalls, growls, falsetto) (Clency, 2018). Gospel music events can begin to edge toward *participatory music-making*, where there is an expectation for listeners to be “actively contributing to the sound and motion of a musical event” through swaying, dancing, singing, soft commenting, clapping, etc. (Turino, 2008, p. 28). As “interactive social occasions,” there can be “a subtle and sometimes not so subtle pressure to participate” in gospel music gatherings (p. 29).⁴²

Similarly, gospel music can sometimes appear more as *open texts* (Allsup, 2013) as musicians may alter some musical dimensions of the song in the moment (e.g., form, key, melody, instrumentation) to fulfill the purpose of evoking the Holy Spirit and engaging the congregation. Turino (2008) says this type of open-ended approach may include elements such as loosely delineated “feathered endings” and a “heightened degree of repetition” (p. 38).

Unique Combinations of Experiences

By the time of the interviews for this study, all participants and the researcher had had numerous experiences with all the genres listed above, but in the interviews, I was fascinated with the music of childhood. What did these participants hold as their earliest musical influences?

Angel says her childhood was gospel and “a genre of Whitney.”⁴³ Angela’s childhood was gospel as well as classical music through piano lessons and PBS. Jeriel remembers gospel and movie musicals at home and R&B in the back of his father’s

⁴² I am reminded of study participant Ti inviting me to one of her gospel jams for the first time—sternly warning me beforehand: “And Tara...you can’t come to a gospel service and just sit there!”

⁴³ Whitney Houston

Buick. LaNyck sang a lot of gospel at church as well as on her grandfather's karaoke machine at home. Melody referenced classical at school and in dance classes, alongside hip-hop on her own time. Nora recollects hearing and singing gospel at church with R&B and hip-hop at home. Rei's childhood had classical and gospel at church, classical at school, and pop, rock, and R&B at home. Sherry's childhood music was centered in contemporary Christian music because secular music would "irk her to her to soul." Ti's earliest experiences were in gospel, but soon expanded to R&B, Soul Train with her grandfather, and Disney's *High School Musical*. Music referenced in the one-on-one interviews will be featured as an element within the digital ethnodrama.

As researcher, my earliest musical experiences were centered in classical music, which was made familiar through recordings, concerts, church, cartoons, and my piano lessons. CCM (e.g., pop, rock, alternative, and suburban-friendly hip-hop and R&B) did not become a regular part of my life until middle school. I was not introduced to gospel until my mid-twenties as a teacher at an urban school in Maryland.

Expanding a Narrow Focus

A significant aspiration of our curriculum re-mapping was to craft a genre-diverse undergraduate music curriculum. Again, we looked to our visual and performing arts division colleagues for inspiration. In the dance department, students received training and experience in a wide variety of genres (e.g., ballet, tap, modern, jazz, hip-hop, African dance). In the art department, students were required to work within a wide variety of media, including painting, drawing, ceramics, printmaking, photography, graphic design, and digital 3-D work. Both departments introduced their students to and prepared them for a comprehensive array of artistic engagement and employment

opportunities. Noting this, the question was raised: “Why was our music department so narrowly focused on classical repertoire and classically-oriented instrument training?” Posing this question to the music department again sparked a series of intra-departmental conversations about how we might embrace the diversity of musics already walking through our hallways, embodied by the experiences of our student body, by strategically making space and creating expectation for CCM musicking in classrooms as well as in rehearsal halls and studios.

From my longitudinal relationship with these participants, I knew each individual had a unique combination of experiences with classical and contemporary commercial musics (e.g., gospel, R&B, neo-soul, Christian contemporary, pop). However, the interviews conducted for this study brought a fascinating clarity to their stories and revealed additional details/insights I wish had known as their professor at Marygrove.

For example, I knew Rei had had strong experiences with many genres before entering our program. I did not know that when he was growing up, he had attended (and sometimes sang) in both his mother’s classical-centered church and his father’s girlfriend’s gospel-centered church—often in the same day. I suddenly understood how Rei had developed such fluidity and ease with shifting between genres in music listening and performance.

As another example, Nora had been so successful with classical theory at Marygrove, I was shocked to learn that she essentially had had no experience with Western music notation or piano before she arrived. In a similar example, I knew Melody had received extensive ballet training from a young age, but I did not realize how extensively she had translated her understandings of the formalized practice of ballet and

its classical music accompaniment into finding success in formal, collegiate, classical music study.

Collectively, I knew that almost all of the participants had deeply engaged in singing both gospel/contemporary Christian at their respective churches throughout childhood as well as a range of genres in choirs at their secondary schools—but I was surprised by their collective abundance of childhood instrumental experiences as well: Angela and Ti play piano, Sherry plays guitar, Ti plays drums, Melody and LaNyck both played violin in their school ensembles, and Rei had played violin, trombone, and drums in theirs.

Transcribing the one-on-one interviews, I found myself wondering: “If I had engaged incoming students in a more in-depth, reflective exploration of their prior musical experiences, how might knowing these types of details have better informed my teaching? Further, how might this have helped students to build upon the richness of these acknowledged experiences?”

Voice As Instrument

As shared in Chapter 1, these study participants and I primarily identify as singer-musicians, especially having pursued voice as the primary instrument in our undergraduate programs. This commonality is significant in our journeys and in the telling of our stories. For readers who do not have much experience as singers and/or who have had more experience with other instruments, I have crafted two poetic transcriptions to introduce key aspects of the vocal instrument, vocal identity, and vocal performance. The first uses the words of renowned voice scientist, Ingo Titze (2008) and the second is

a blended found poem utilizing text from my own experience in combination with voice pedagogy and vocal music education literature.

The Vocal Instrument: A Poetic Transcription

*Our vocal cords,
among the smallest of mechanical music makers,
finding potential for orchestral sounds impressive.*

*A singer
blowing air across
two small bundles of specialized tissue
to generate fundamental frequency
as they contact,
separate,
and contact again.*

*Small changes result in disproportionately large effect.
Muscles shifting end points.
Length and tension in competition.
Soft, pliable surfaces oscillating.
Vibrational energy
responding to the airstream
generating waves akin to wind at the surface of the ocean
in buckling,
ribbonlike motion.
Radiating sound
outward
into the surrounding air.*

*Nature,
the instrument maker,
has developed the human voice
to perform beyond expectations.*

A poetic transcription created from Ingo Titze's (2008)
The Human Instrument (pp. 94-101)

A Singer's Experience: A Poetic Transcription

*Voice is the instrument with which we are born,
the first instrument we play.⁴⁴*

⁴⁴ Martin, 1996, p. 262

*Giving voice as and when necessary.⁴⁵
Never to be set down,
never replaced.*

*Our voice is our own
as unique to each of us as fingerprints.⁴⁶
An embodiment of our energy,
an emanation from a center;⁴⁷
bridging our internal and external worlds,⁴⁸
the audible manifestation our being-ness.⁴⁹*

*The two constellations, speech and singing,
both generated from the same structures
and shaped by biological maturation, experience,
cultural imperative, and tradition.⁵⁰*

*A complex inter-relationship—
a story in transition.⁵¹*

To a singer, music is a language entwined in language.

*Emotion, meaning, and empathic-relatedness through music and text.⁵²
Mixed-media blending in complex, multi-leveled ways.⁵³
Reflective, intuitive, embodied translations
of human experience in song.*

*For singers,
there is no separateness of musical agent and instrument.⁵⁴
A violin is played by a person.
A piano is played by a person.
But a voice is a person.⁵⁵*

*Constantly constructed as it is played,
singing requires an ever-internalized generation
of phonatory vibration, resonant space,*

⁴⁵ Cook, 2004, p. 19

⁴⁶ Martin, 1996, p. 265

⁴⁷ Bowman, 1998, p. 288

⁴⁸ Karpf, 2006, pp. 3-4

⁴⁹ Summers in Dosso, 2008, p. 37

⁵⁰ Welch, 2005, pp. 239, 241

⁵¹ O'Bryan, 2015, p. 135

⁵² O'Bryan, 2015, p. 124

⁵³ Godlovitch, 1998, p. 12

⁵⁴ Godlovitch, 1998, p. 12

⁵⁵ Pears, 1978

*and articulative shape.
You, singer are the instrument.
Therein lies much of mystery and folderol
that surrounds the art of singing.⁵⁶*

*Carrying it upon our person across decades,
your voice is affected by every moment of daily living.
It breaks with puberty,
changes with maturity,
richens and deepens with age and experience,
alters with illness, injury, and strife.*

*Everything you do, your voice does.
Everywhere you go, it goes.
How you treat yourself has a direct bearing on the voice.⁵⁷*

*Singers are exposed musicians.
With no tangible instrument on which to focus their attentions
or the attention of an audience,
singers cannot 'hide' behind an instrument that offers
a sense of stability or companionship in performance.
The singer's instrument is personal,
invisible,
and very complex.⁵⁸*

*In a performance,
it is the vocalist's personality that is presented,
together with any vocal defects
that are perceived as belonging directly to her.*

*Singers cannot project their problems onto
troublesome reeds,
sticking pads,
and other technological difficulties.⁵⁹*

*Vocally sounding oneself,
disseminating one's presence throughout one's surroundings,⁶⁰
the singer has to take ownership of everything that occurs.⁶¹
A being and a doing in simultaneity.*

⁵⁶ Miller, 1996, p. 88

⁵⁷ Arman, 2005, p. 139

⁵⁸ Kemp, 1996, p. 173

⁵⁹ Kemp, 1996, p. 173

⁶⁰ Bowman, 1998, p. 289

⁶¹ Kemp, 1996, p. 173

*A living instrument I must come to know,
to explore, to wrangle,
to map, to negotiate,
to befriend, to rediscover
again and again.*

*My voice is me,
is part of me,
and stands separate from me.*

*I am both its master and its servant.
An instrument I feel but will never touch,
envision but will never see,
and will always hear differently from the inside,
than others hear standing on the out.⁶²*

A blended poetic transcription created from
the researcher's self-reflections and
vocal pedagogy and music education literature

Informal, Formal, and Nonformal Music Learning

As shared earlier, I expanded my detailed knowledge of these participants' prior musical experiences by conducting this dissertation study. This knowledge also includes different types of music learning practices (and related settings) with which they had engaged throughout their lives. All nine of the participants spoke of a range of practices and settings—informal, nonformal, and formal—which were significant on their journeys to professional musicianhood.

Informal

In informal learning, the individual learner, directed by their motivations and needs, controls all aspects of learning process predominately through a trial-and-error exploration (e.g., what to learn, how to learn, and for how long) (Woody, 2013;

⁶² Kemp, 1996.

Mak, 2006; see also Allsup, 2003; Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2004). Most importantly, informal contexts are not connected to a formalized institution or a sequenced, pre-planned curriculum—instead participants choose their own path for interacting in their music-making (Folkestad, 2006). Learning goals tend to be broader with more flexible variability in what is learned (Mak, 2006). However, they can include moments of both “conscious, intentional and structured” learning as well as “nonconscious, unintentional and unstructured” (Smart & Green, 2017, p. 109; also Green, 2002, 2008; Folkestad, 2006; Smilde, 2018). The learning itself may be “highly intentional” (e.g., to master a particular technique or piece of music) or “incidental” (e.g., learning general samples of a particular style for familiarity) (Mak, 2006). Any assessment of progress is highly personal, collective, informal (either self-generated or based on feedback from community), and mostly product-related (Mak, 2006). Informal music learning generally takes place with some form of social interaction—encouragement or help from family/friends/peers and by watching/hearing/imitating established musicians around them or on recording (Andang’o, 2019; Green, 2002). Learners may make use of a wide variety of media, notation, alternate symbol systems, and/or aural elements to accomplish their goals (Veblen, 2018). Mak (2006) describes informal learning as “active, voluntary, self-discovering, self-determined, open-ended, non-threatening, enjoyable, and explorative” (p. 4). He notes the significance of spontaneity within the self-regulated processes, self-initiated learning, and self-monitored progress of informal learning. Veblen (2018) expresses that informal learning is “the synthesis of feeling, doing, and knowing in context, richly fusing visual, aural, and kinesthetic modalities, combining mental and physical processes” (p. 251).

Two examples of study participants engaging in informal music learning are Ti, who learned to play drums and piano; and Sherry, who learned to play guitar.

Ti had been given a drum set at 3 years old after starting to beat on every surface in their home. Her cousin, who was the drummer at their church, introduced her to some basics but then discontinued because he did not know what else to teach her (“She learns at a fast pace for a little kid”). Ti continued on her own, first imitating the beats she heard played at church and on the radio, and then later starting to experiment with her own ideas. As a teenager, she took over as drummer at her family’s church.

In sixth grade, Ti taught herself a song on her aunt’s old keyboard by listening to B.B. King’s “Stand by Me.” Through trial-and-error, she learned the melody with one finger, then added a bass line with one finger, then advanced into chords. This whole process took seven months. She reflected that she jumped into music when she realized she could “listen and interpret what I hear through my fingers and my hands.”

Sherry attended a church where singing and guitar playing were an intimate part of the worship experience. After being gifted a vintage guitar at 14 by the minister’s son, Sherry received mentorship from her uncle and cousin who also played. Soon she was playing, singing, and leading worship at church alongside her cousin. A couple years later, Sherry joined a band as lead singer and guitarist—and five years later was performing for large Christian conferences.

Formal

On the opposite approach, formal learning typically takes place in an institutional setting (e.g., schools, universities), under the direction of a professional instructor, and is often accompanied by a highly structured lesson plan, curriculum, and/or syllabus

(Folkestad, 2006; Smart & Green, 2017). In this “institutionalized, graded, and hierarchical” approach, the teacher decides upon activities, materials, pacing, and types of classroom interactions (Veblen, 2018, p. 247; see also Andang’o, 2019). This kind of learning is highly intentional—as the course begins, students know what they need to learn, how they will learn it, when they need to learn by, what will be assessed, and how they will be assessed (Mak, 2006). Notably, students are expected to complete requirements and remain on-task regardless of “the value they attach to the task, their motivation or interest” (p. 3). In formal musicking, written notation is often given precedence over aural learning because it allows for “the coordination of forces in complex ensembles...[and] the development of complex musical relationships” inherent in most classical music (Nettl, 1995, p. 36).

In Western music, the conventional example of a formal music learning setting is the conservatory or an institution/organization with a conservatory-based music curriculum. This may also include stand-alone private music lessons if they are linked to a formalized progression of literature, graded assessment measures, and/or accreditation (Smart & Green, 2017; Veblen, 2018). Like most formal institutions, a conservatory aims for the acquisition of relevant musical competencies that are instrument-specific and grounded in classical performance. Even in the 21st century, the ways of thinking about music built into American schools and universities continue to predominantly reflect that of 19th century Europe and its conservatories (Cook, 1998, p. v). Students are expected to demonstrate specific competencies prior to entry and progression through the program leads to a formal recognition (e.g., diploma, degree, certificate) (Mak, 2006). There are established canons of repertoire, customary approaches to technique and practice, clear

divisions of music activities (e.g., performance, composition, conducting, musicology) and standard professional goals toward which and through which each student is guided (Nettl, 1995; Odam & Bannon, 2005). Order, rigor, and “upward movement through a series of relatively distinct steps” are hallmarks of a formal learning mindset (p. 42). Perhaps most significantly, these formal structures “do not alter when new participants join in” (Veblen, 2018, p. 247).

One example of a study participant engaging in formal music during childhood is Angela, who took formal private piano lessons for seven years. In her interview, she noted her careful progression through the six books of the John Thompson piano series. In another example, LaNyck, Ti, and Sherry all referenced the challenge of entering a more formal approach to singing during high school choir—specifically, having to rely on written notation for music learning as opposed to aural means, the shift of repertoire into secular/classical works, and the increased structural standards of rehearsals.

Additionally, each of the participants spoke of the challenges of crossing the threshold into our conservatory-based music curriculum at Marygrove. Many of these stories may be found in the participant-character monologues in the ethnodrama and collectively inspired its primary theme of collision between calling and shadow.

Nonformal

In nonformal learning settings, learning lives in the “in-between” of informal and formal practice.⁶³ It may be both intentional and incidental, an equal emphasis is placed on both process and product, and learning from fellow students/participants can just as

⁶³ Coombs and Ahmed (1974) were the first to use the term *nonformal education*.

important as learning from a designated teacher or mentor (Mak, 2006). The transmission of music may be aural, visual (musical notation), or a combination of both (Green, 2002).

Although it often takes place outside of accredited institutions/organizations, non-formal learning may still relatively systematic, structured, and pre-planned toward accomplishing learning goals (Mak, 2006; Mok, 2011; Smart & Green, 2017; Veblen, 2018). However, unlike formal learning with its highly structured curriculum, sequential learning plan, and assessment reports, nonformal learning tends to be more flexible, especially in intended learning outcomes in relation to the assessment of true outcomes (Mok, 2011). Assessment is focused as much on the product (what was learned) as on the process (how was it learned)—and might feature formalized elements (e.g., tests, demonstration) alongside self-and peer-assessment (Mak, 2006).

Perhaps most significantly as compared to formal learning, nonformal learning activities are “chosen, designed, and created for a specific learning community” even if that community only consists of one individual (Veblen, 2018, p. 24). Because nonformal learning is highly contextualized so it may best serve the identified learning community and its objectives, the bottom-up curriculum is tailor-made, flexible, and non-linear (Mak, 2006). It is also characterized by active engagement and relies strongly on reflection (both ‘in’ and ‘on’ action) so to help learners “transform experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and convictions” (p. 5). Community, church, and youth music programs as well as private lessons not linked to accreditation/curricula may usually be considered nonformal (Andang’o, 2019; Green, 2002; Mok, 2011; Smart & Green, 2017; Veblen, 2012).

There are many examples of study participants engaging in nonformal music learning settings prior to Marygrove. Rei spoke of their membership in both a community youth touring chorus from 7th-9th grade and an extra-curricular college acapella group during high school. Both ensembles were auditioned with rehearsals specifically aimed at preparation for their rigorous performance schedules, but the ensembles occurred outside of any formal institutional structure.

Collectively, Angel, Angela, Jeriel, LaNyck, Nora, and Ti all referenced their participation in gospel choirs at their respective churches. Rehearsals were rigorous and structured in preparation for pieces to be performed at each Sunday service. Music was taught aurally, both through live demonstration and recording. Assessment, especially for soloists, was based on ability to perform the songs to a particular standard by the service.

A Range of Practices

As noted above, these participants brought a range of music learning practices into Marygrove as students—predominately nonformal and informal with some examples of formal. My prior experience with music learning practices was the inverse of theirs. I entered a formally-structured, notation-focused, and Western classical-centered understanding of music when I began formal piano lessons at four (which included participating in regular recitals and federation festival competitions by early elementary school). Growing up, additional music learning experiences were also formal (i.e., secondary school band, secondary school choir, private voice lessons) or highly structured nonformal (i.e., church choir, summer fine arts camp). My formal training cumulated in a double major bachelor's degree in voice performance and music education at an American conservatory, where I was trained as a professional classical singer as

well as a formally accredited K-12 vocal music teacher. Upon graduation, I entered my first teaching position in rural Ohio expecting to be able to create a strong formalized learning environment there. However, I soon learned that I would need to create a good deal of space and flexibility in my curriculum for the prior experiences and interests of my students. This student-centered approach would develop over time as my teaching, coaching, and directing experiences took me from public/magnet schools to community choirs, private lessons to youth musical theatre programs—from children to adults within rural, urban, and suburban settings—from singer-musicians looking for community and enjoyment, to those who wished to pursue a serious performance career, to individuals who simply wanted to be able to match pitch. By the start of my master's studies, I learned that the music philosophy (social constructivism) which grounded my work had generated an extremely permeable boundary between my identities as a music educator, voice pedagogue, choral pedagogue/conductor, and professional singer. I found myself bringing private lesson practices into my community choirs, constructivist classroom approaches into my private lessons, and nonformal community peer-mentoring and reflective practices into my formal courses. My biggest challenge to my philosophy, however, would come with my work at Marygrove College.

Smart and Green (2017) state that the use and conceptualization of “informal,” “formal” and “nonformal” requires educators be aware of the complexities of where, why, and how learning is taking place, who is involved, and how each of these elements are perceived and received by the learners. In general, educators need to examine the broad differences in situation, learning philosophies, ownership and control, and intentionality that exist among these learning practices (Folkestad, 2006; Mak, 2006). When I arrived at

Marygrove, the music program was extremely formal and conservatory-centered—where prior experiences in formal settings were privileged and prioritized over nonformal or informal, the study and performance of one genre (classical) was privileged and prioritized over other genres, written notation was privileged and prioritized over learning by ear, and formal recitals/concerts were prioritized and privileged over other forms of music presentations. It took much time and a great number of conversations among all stakeholders to unpack concerns, identify priorities, and sketch the potential for a new approach to a higher music education curriculum. Over four years, we created a meeting place for learning where the formal elements of a clear plan of work and well-defined assessment practice remained, but the nonformal practices of tailoring the curriculum to our specific learning community; developing a more inclusive definition of “music literacy;” generating more flexibility within course syllabi; making space in our classical canon of repertoire for living composers, women composers, and composers of color of all genders; installing CCM-centered courses and content throughout the curriculum; and infusing project-based courses, self-reflective assessment, peer-mentoring, and diverse performance options into the learning environment also became department norms.

Performing, Praising, and Entertaining

During my one-on-one interview with study participant Angel, she shared that she had begun leading songs with her church choir for the congregation when she was 6 or 7 years old. Later, she noted her anxiety during her first time performing for an audience in a high school talent show when she was 16 years old. I was curious about her differentiation, because in my mind she had been “performing” since she was a young child. In a follow-up question, Angel confirmed that she sees a very clear distinction

between singing as praise at church and singing as performance. I had often heard my students speak of praising/worshipping, but had not realized that singing for a church congregation may be considered one thing and singing for a secular audience another. Revisiting the other one-on-one interview texts, I noticed that three different words connected to the act of singing for others (*performing*, *praising/worshipping*, *entertaining*) were used in very specific ways regarding for whom the music is for, content of meaning, contexts, and overall purpose. To better understand, I asked these participants to explain the differences and similarities between performing, praising/worshipping, and entertaining:

SHERRY

Performing is emotionally engaging with the song according to [its] feelings and actions.

Praising and worshipping is using your talents, emotions, and gratitude to worship God.

It's between you and God, even though you're doing it in front of an audience.

Entertaining is choosing a set that allows you to evoke a specific audience—not perform something you emotionally connect with.

LANYCK

Performing is personal—

who you are as a person and who you want your audience to see you as.

Praise and worship is where an atmosphere is set, where you bring in and give off feeling

so everybody else can return the feeling of whatever religious aspect it may be in.

Entertaining is an imitation of a character [that] somebody else wants you to become or that you want to portray.

JERIEL

Much like LaNyck said, *performance* is a showcase of my abilities, my creativity, my interpretation of what I'm feeling for an audience.

Praise and worship,
I'm creating an atmosphere for people
to be delivered so they can reach God.
Entertaining feels similar to *performing*,
but instead of it being about me, you're utilizing your gifts and abilities to
entertain people;
to help them leave feel good about something.

TI

With *performing*,
it's a necessary hobby.
You cannot live without it.
It's an experience that you want to continue to have.
Praising and worshipping
is a personal connection with God.
Along the way if you're able to bring people into your atmosphere—
that's a bonus.
Entertainment is to simulate the crowd—
doin' it for money or whatnot.
You're out there just wantin' to have fun.

ANGEL

Performing is meeting my demand.
Entertaining is meeting the person that hired me—
their demand.
Worship is meeting God's demand
because it's all about Him.
When you take on that call as worship leader,
then you lead His people to His presence.
Performing is your art.
Entertainment is...
So, I just got hired to sing at a party.
Weirdest phone call. Whatever.
They're paying so I'm going to entertain.

ANGELA

I look at *performing* as learning new skills,
the energy of the crowd, playing off the character
with emotion and feeling.
But *worship* is being in total submission to God—
and you bring others in as you do that,
because your submission is unto Him only.
Entertainment is the fun part—
getting the crowd going,
gettin' 'em hyped.

REI

Performing is the act of singing or dancing
or playing an instrument for a crowd of any size.
Worshipping and praising is reactionary—
a thought, an emotion.
God has been good to me and I want to share that.
Like Angel was saying, to bring people
closer to the word of God.
Entertaining is for the crowd,
to please the crowd in some sort of way.

MELODY

Performing and *entertaining*
are kind of the same to me.
Praise and worship is more personal.
When you *perform*, you want to impress people
and be like: "Wow"
and really love what you do.
You're looking for acceptance from people.
But *praise and worship* is your personal relationship with God.
Just you talking to Him.
It's a type of release.

NORA

Performing is about yourself.
Praising is about you and God.
Entertaining is about the crowd.
Praising is relating to the "audience" in a spiritual way
while *performing* is the performer experiencing something and
doing their best to convey their feelings and bring their audience into it.
Performing is more sophisticated than *entertaining*.
Entertaining is how you make the crowd feel.
Hype and excited.
Performing is taking the audience somewhere—
hoping they understand the "who, what, where, when, why."⁶⁴

Naturally, these explanations do not arrive at definitive conclusions for the parameters of each term, but they do give a deeper insight into the perspectives of this cohort in this context which is more crucial for this study than universal definitions.

⁶⁴ This focus group discussion portion has been distilled down from the original by the researcher for focus and essence of content.

Dimensions, Meta-Dimensions, and Contextual Dimensions

The majority of Marygrove music students entered the program with a strong holistic understanding of music and musicking but being able to zoom in to identify and address concerns with specific dimensions and meta-dimensions was sometimes quite new. In the coursework of my doctoral program, I had been introduced to Wiggins' (2015) *Meta-Dimensions Circle*.⁶⁵ This visual manifestation of Wiggins' *multidimensional structured whole* (as described at the opening of this chapter) “represents a musical work or experience with the dimensions overlapping and interactive within” (p. 31). Wiggins acknowledges that any two-dimensional, linear diagram cannot possibly convey all the relationships and influence between the dimensions and meta-dimensions. However, despite this limitation and its initial purpose of crafting K-12 music learning experiences, I wondered if my college students would find this tool useful in our classroom work and musical practice.

I first introduced the heuristic my vocal literature and lyric theatre classes—in which study participants Angel, Jeriel, LaNyck, Melody, and Sherry were a part of the initial crafting.⁶⁶ Over time, we worked together to help transform this original circle into a practical tool for their needs as undergraduate voice performers and vocal music scholars (See Figure 2). For the inner-most dimensions circle, we expanded some of the language to better represent the musical complexity of college-level repertoire (e.g., melody expanded to melodic structure/phrasing). We also added voice-related elements

⁶⁵ At that time, it was the 2009 edition of Wiggins' text, but here I am referencing the most recent edition.

⁶⁶ Smaller edits continued in later classes with Angela, Nora, Rei, and Ti.

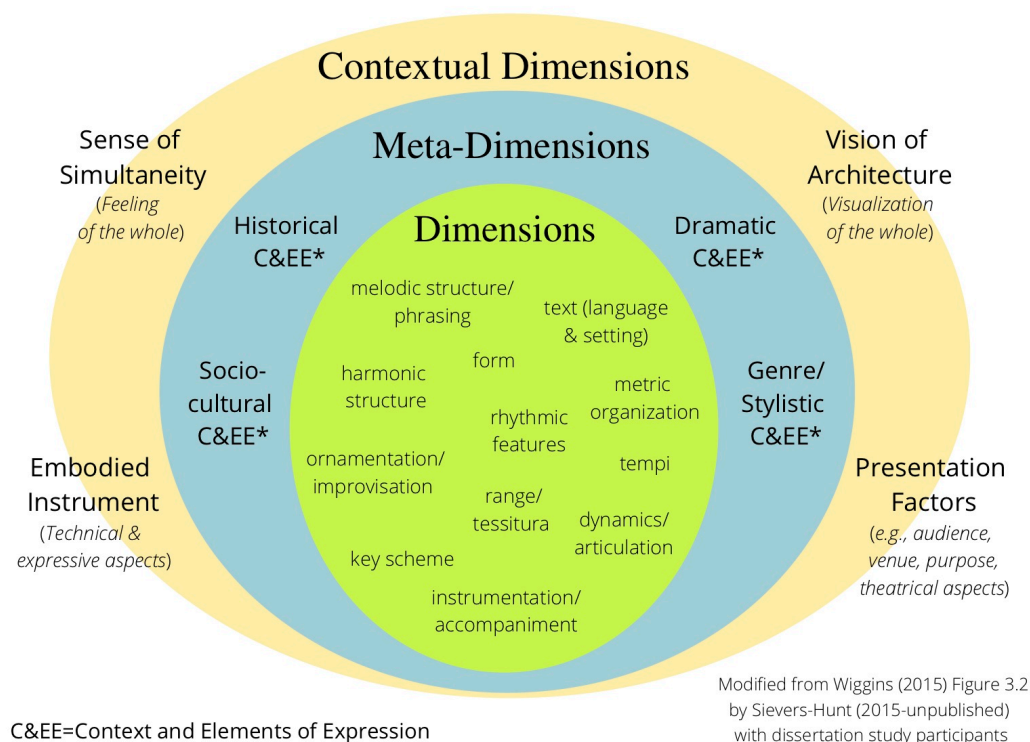


Figure 2. Dimensional Considerations in a Vocal Performance

such as text setting, language, accompaniment/instrumentation, and range/tessitura. This inner circle represents components that must be learned and embodied through the voice.

As we examined the outer meta-dimensions circle, Jeriel suggested we required a third circle—one that represented engagement in the act of performance. He reasoned that the meta-dimensions were more research-informed aspects, while the new circle (later termed: “Contextual Dimensions”) addressed the experience of performance, either as the musicker himself or as a professional listening to another professional. The original second circle of meta-dimensions was then split in two: a middle circle representing contexts and elements of expression that must be researched to apply deeper

understandings and nuance to the dimensions and performance itself (i.e., historical, cultural, genre/style, dramatic); and an outer circle referencing the active and reactive context of the performance (i.e., how a singer-musician envisions the piece as a whole (*Architecture*), how they feel the piece embodied (*Sense of Simultaneity*), utilization of their instrument, presentation factors (e.g., venue, audience)).

Because all study participants had actively engaged with the crafting of this heuristic (“The Circle”) and much of our work together at Marygrove centered around the concept of music as a *multidimensional whole*, I decided to reintroduce it during the focus group interview and ask for their perspectives as alumni of the music program.

A/R/TOGRAPHER⁶⁷

So pick up the next two pages. One is the question, the other is...

ALL

Ohhhh...

SHERRY

I love this thing!

A/R/TOGRAPHER

It’s been a while.

I’m curious about thoughts you have now about this Circle?

TI

My experience. Was. Me being stubborn. With this piece of paper right here. (*taps it with her finger*) Only because. I didn’t want to realize what it was all about.

(*Nods and stifled laughter from group*)

TI

Because half the time, I was confused—and the other half of the time, it broke me down in an emotional way. I’d feel like: “What’s the point? I already know key signatures and blah, blah, blah.” But I was very closed in a box with the bigger

⁶⁷ I have claimed the identity of *A/r/tographer* within this research and the resulting ethnodrama. This term will be explained and explored in upcoming sections.

picture. I learned to appreciate it because it helped you take apart your music even better. So although I started off stubborn to this sheet...

ANGELA

Um-hm.

TI

I have to really give it some praise. I just don't wanna look at it anymore!

(Laughter from participants)

NORA

Musically,
being required to tear the music apart helped with
learning difficult music.
It also made me more aware of everything happening separately
as well as simultaneously.
Intellectually, I was able to see music
in a different light.
Before all I saw was just a song.
Then I was able to look at the actual work.
Emotionally,
it was torture.
Like it was more work than what it was worth at the time.

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Is it worth the work now?

NORA

Yeeeah.
I still don't like doin' it,
but it's worth it.
Back then, it was like:
"What does Tara have us doin' now?!?"
But...it definitely helps.

ANGELA

Well, I'm like Ti.
At first, I hated it.
But then,
it became the best thing ever.
We did all that research [in vocal literature]
and it just really opened me up to the process of learning.
You know?

Like:
“What made them make this music?”

JERIEL

Yes.

A/R/TOGRAPHER

So a good process?

ANGELA

It was a great process.

LANYCK

This...piece of paper. (*snort laugh*) It...broke me...but it made me.

REI

Um-hmm.

LANYCK

I...uh. (*light laughter*).

I am a rebel.

Hard-headed. Stubborn.

I came into this program (*holds it up*) with this piece of paper.

And I did not want to comply

because I knew what a musician was and what kind of musician I wanted to be.

But it made me reevaluate what I wanted to do as a musician—

as far as gettin’ emotional,

learnin’ lyrics and languages,

looking up information about genres and composers,

breakin’ down the music until you cannot break it down anymore.

It really engaged me and made me want it more.

And that’s...

That’s what made me a musician.

SHERRY

When I first seen it,

I was super-overwhelmed

cause I didn’t understand half of it.

For the most part, I was always listening to the piece overall.

I never thought about:

“Let’s stop and make sure we have all
these pieces.”

Like, we did that,

but we didn’t know that’s what we were doing.

Now it’s like a checklist for me.

That responsibility made me want to perform the song the way it was intended and helped me feel more connected because I did the research.

JERIEL

I loved this when I first saw it.
Because at this time in my career as a vocalist,
I always did everything by rote
and by feeling.
But Tara, you were challenging me to intellectualize music,
to actually step outside of just what I felt,
and learn how to interpret it.
So it made me feel like a brainiac when it came to structuring,
because this is how you get closer to authenticity
as an artist.
So now when I do a piece,
I immediately go to research
and it helps me feel good about it.

MELODY

Me and my friend were just talking about this yesterday.
You can really tell the difference now
since I've been at Marygrove—
the difference between a trained singer versus
someone who just has natural ability.
You understand and appreciate the value
of being able to
look at the harmony and the structure.
It made me more diverse
and opened me up to a whole other realm
that I would have never experienced
had I never gotten that aspect of learning.⁶⁸

(2017 Focus Group Interview transcript)

This heuristic is not definitive for all contexts of higher music education, but as shown above, it served our localized needs as a tool for our undergraduate voice majors to think about, engage with, and speak about the aspects of music preparation and

⁶⁸ This focus group discussion portion has been distilled from the original by the researcher for focus and essence of content.

performance within their vocal literature course, private lessons, and performance-based courses. Wiggins (2015) had suggested for her original meta-dimensions circle that we could begin thinking about music through the lens of one dimension and then shift our view to also consider it through each of the other dimensional lenses from multiple points of entry. Similarly, our students could use the heuristic to identify different entry points into a new piece of repertoire, but additionally, it could be used to determine a starting point for comparing pieces from different genre traditions or for exploring unfamiliar aspects of a new piece in contrast to one's prior music experiences. For these participants and myself, the Circle helped facilitate countless conversations about our prior experiences in music as well as the resulting values, assumptions, frustrations, epiphanies, our different perspectives of singing and musicking (as described through this chapter) to light: our different definitions and values of musical doers, processes, products/outcomes, and contexts; our ideals and knowledge related to performance practice, voice use, and terminology in genres/styles in which we were each fluent; our reflections upon experiences in formal, informal, and nonformal music learning settings; and our thoughts on singing as forms of performance, praise/worship, and entertainment.

Musicianhood

*She played **music** on the piano.*

*He played with an authentic and heartfelt **musicality**.*

*They have worked hard to develop their **musicianship**.*

*The community came together through their experiences in **musicking**.*

*I have felt a strong sense of **musicianhood** since I was a child.*

Within this study, I frame the participants' topical life stories as "journeys to professional musicianhood." Use of the term, *musicianhood*, is borrowed from music therapist Gary Ansdell (2016) who outlines a very person-centered, holistic view through

a unique perspective of the interactions between *musical experiences*, *musicality*, *musicianship*, *musicking*, *musical personhood*, and *musical lifeworld*. The terminology below (and some of the connections between these terms) will be defined through Ansdell, but I have brought the perspectives and interpretation of a critical constructivist view of higher music education to much of how I envision the relationship between them.

Musicality, Musicianship, Musicking

Coming from a constructivist epistemology, everything begins with *musical experience*. “Experience” was explored in depth in Chapter Two, but for our purposes here, Ansdell (2016) adds that: Our *musical experience* is “grounded in our real embodied experience of time, space, and motion (p. 72) and “shows up in the active relationship between musical things, people, and situations” (p. 88). Our musical experiences connect both directly into and from our musical core—that which calls us into a state of being musical and “enables a musical engagement with the human world”—our *musicality* (p. 102). Ansdell rejects the idea of *musicality* as a limited endowment—hardwired, biological, and/or innate in a limited few. Instead, he views musicality as a *personal capacity for* and a *natural relationship with* musical engagement in all humans, which needs only to be “awakened and mobilized with the help of other people and situations” (p. 102). It is our core musicality that then inspires and motivates us to seek development of musical facility, or *musicianship* (e.g., music literacy, instrumental technique, performance practice).

The idea of musicianship is often connected to a sense of formal musical learning, especially when associated with terms such as *music literacy*, *instrumental technique*, and *performance practice*. However, these are merely big words for very simple concepts.

Taking the example of study participant Ti teaching herself how to play the piano at 11 years old—I would make the case that she was beginning to develop her musicianship through these means. *Music literacy* simply means having the ability to translate music from one mode or method into another,⁶⁹ which Ti was doing by listening to B.B. King and reproducing his melody on the piano. *Technique* simply means “the way in which basic physical movements or skills are used,” which was Ti using her right index finger to produce the correct melodic line on the keyboard (Merriam-Webster, n.d., 2021). *Performance practice* simply relates to “the quest for the ‘authentic’ style of performing the music of previous generations and eras,” which Ti was aspiring to do through seven months of attentively listening and reproducing this song of her grandparents’ generation (Oxford Reference, n.d., 2021). These elements of musicianship were perhaps not the most effectively, efficiently, artistically, or professionally executed at that point in her musical career, but they still occurred and in authentic and meaningful ways.

Frequent participation in musicianship is significant because to truly develop a deep relationship with music “requires an increasingly skilled and knowledgeable engagement” with music listening, music performance, and/or music composition (Ansdell, 2016, p. 102). However, this may only be achieved through consistent social engagement, grounded in and motivated by our core musicality, with musicianship in action—also known as *musicking* (citing Small, 1998).⁷⁰

⁶⁹ I crafted this definition of music literacy during our curricular discussions at Marygrove about decentering written music notation.

⁷⁰ Ansdell (2016) suggests Small’s *musicking* is “an ecological perspective” because everything in an ecology is “connected and interdependent” with “living and nonliving things and processes” often being “embedded or nested inside each other.” He sees music as the same because it is “part of complex process of interdependent interactions between people, practices and things within a particular place” (p. 27).

Musicality, musicianship, and musicking are dynamically interdependent and simultaneously interactive (Ansdell, 2016). For example, participating in *musicking* helps further develop ability (*musicianship*), which creates greater access to new ways of expressing one's core *musicality*, which then motivates individuals to continue expanding their knowledge and skill (*musicianship*) by seeking more opportunities for *musicking*. In this way, a *musician* is simply "someone, somewhere, doing something musical" (Ansdell, 2016, p. 105). It is a personal, relational, and social engagement with music and with others in musicking that then "recognizes, evokes and elicits the musical personhood" (p. 100).

Musical Personhood, Musical Lifeworld, Musicianhood

With *musical experiences* providing the foundations for a person's *musicality*, *musicianship* and *musicking*, these three aspects then work together to create an overarching dimension of *musical personhood*. In this section, I will explore how *musical personhood* and *musical lifeworld* come together to generate the sense of *musicianhood* and how this may be expanded into a *professional musicianhood*.

Musical Personhood

Psychologist Tom Kitwood (1997/2007) defines personhood as "a standing or status that is bestowed upon one human being, by others, in the context of relationship and social being. It implies recognition, respect, and trust" (p. 246). In this way, personhood has three interdependent components (Ansdell, 2016):

1. *Individuality* because each person is someone unique.
2. *Subjectivity*, because this uniqueness exists within a subjective lifeworld and is the subject of particular socio-political, cultural, and historical context(s).

3. *Relatedness*, because we deeply rely on others to “recognize us, communicate with us, and try to understand our situation and how we feel about it” (p. 99).

Extending this concept into music, *musical personhood* is “a dimension of general personhood that emerges and is cultivated specifically through musicking” because it is “only possible to perceive and work with this *in relationship* and *in situation*” (Ansdell, 2016, p. 100). Because humans are “unique, social, cultural, emotional, corporeal, cognitive, intersubjective, empathetic, and gendered human agents,” their experiences in musicking will always be linked to the experience of being “living entity that possesses, undergoes, enacts, and performs his or her personhood” (pp. 153-154). By engaging in music, we find deep connections to humanity in intellectual, emotional, and spiritual ways. However, this connection does not simply relate to personal expression, but towards developing a more comprehensive definition of Self through an engagement with the voices of others. Self is a form of learning, which is discovered, constructed and developed by the individual as she observes, engages with, and assesses the world around her (Wiggins, 2009; also citing Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998). Although one may easily perceive definition of Self to be a singular process, many researchers emphasize that our identities are “defined both by the individual and by the culture in which he or she participates” (Bruner, 1996, p. 116).

Ansdell emphasizes that “to truly bestow personhood on another is therefore not simply to acknowledge them, but to take responsibility for how they can only retain individuality and subjectivity through our relatedness with them” and if these three principles are not attended to, then “people shrink to objects, and their personhood diminishes or disappears” (p. 99). This idea connects closely to Martin Buber’s modes of

existence: “I-Thou” and “I-It.” Engaging with another human through the lens of an “I-Thou” relationship creates a participatory encounter between two whole unique entities in a dynamic, living process. However, in an “I-It” relationship, the beingness of the other is rejected and they are perceived as a “predictable and manipulable object that exists only as a part of one’s own experiences” rather than an individual “I” in their own right (para. 24). Critically, the “I-Thou” relation is dialogical—a conversation between two individuals “in which each partner is both active and passive and each is affirmed as a whole being” (Scott, n.d., para. 26). This recognition of others in relation to their identities and selfhood can spark interactions that “are formative of identity subjectivity, consciousness, self-awareness, the development of self, and generally, the becoming of a person” for other parties (van Manen, 2015, p. 139).

The heart of critical constructivism as shared in Chapter Two speaks to our responsibility as educators, as scholars, as artists, as researchers, as humans to generate dialogic connection to empower the personhood (and musical personhood) of other human beings, especially our students. This is what the conversations had between the stakeholders toward a remapping of the Marygrove curriculum, the interviews and ongoing conversations between the participants and I; and you, the Reader taking time to construct understandings of the musical backgrounds and perspectives of participant-characters and the research-playwright through this chapter before engaging in the digital ethnodrama to come. All three are examples of the acknowledgment and empowerment of both the personhood and musicianhood of others through the practice of critical constructivism.

Musical Lifeworld

Whereas musical personhood relates to identity within musicking, a *musical lifeworld* is the subjective backdrop against which this happens. A musical lifeworld is a “musical ecology assembled, experienced and described from a first-person perspective...[which] is continuous with the shared physical and sociocultural world, but unique in being shaped by the personal history of our unique attachment to music, our current access to it, and our engagement with it” (Ansdell, 2016, p. 42).

Husserl (1935/1970) first spoke of the *lifeworld* (or *Lebenswelt*) of humans, which is not just physical and objective, but a unique intersubjective construction of meaning and experience. Lifeworlds are embodied, continuous, “a taken-for-granted ‘common-sense reality’ of the social world as it is lived” as constructed by the individual (Harrington, 2006, p. 341). Similarly, musical worlds are not something that stand outside of us or that we can just step into ready-made. We are constantly building and modifying these worlds as our musicking experiences interact with the “individual, social, historical, temporal, aesthetic and political” dimensions of our personal and social worlds (Ansdell, 2016, p. 32). It is important to say that, similar to “identity” being a collection of identities rather than a singular entity (Bruner, 1990; Leavy, 2017), a person’s overarching *musical world* may be a collection of worlds that may either blend together or stand apart.

Musicianhood

Originally termed by Godlovitch (1998), *musicianhood* characterizes “the complex relationship between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ aspects of self and identity as a musical flow of engagement with the world” (Ansdell, 2016, p. 134). From this, I have

come to see musicianhood as the result of the interplay between *musical personhood* and *musical lifeworld*—the individual experiencing musical self in relationship to the musical world around them. Similar to personhood, musicianhood is partly a status attributed to someone by others, but it does not simply indicate social belonging or make commentary about a person’s talent or quality of musicking. A sense of musicianhood develops when there is a particular alignment between how an individual experiences themselves in relationship with musicking (enhanced by their core musicality and musicianship), and how this is acknowledged and recognized by others also in relationship with musicking (Ansdell, 2016). It is a musical identity which encompasses all musical identities—long-lasting, but always in transition and flux, ecstasy or agony, depending upon the “psychological or social ecology of [our] lives” (p. 134). Everyone can have a musicianhood, but it is not just that they have musicked. They must have reflected on musicking and generated narratives about self and others in and through the musicking. As Bruner (1990) notes, we make ourselves and our identities through the stories we tell ourselves and others about ourselves. We music and story ourselves into musicianhood.

Theory of Musicking

In reading Ansdell’s (2016) descriptions of musical personhood, musical worlds, and musicianhood (as well as Small’s musicking), I saw a connection into Small’s (1998) *theory of musicking*. Like musicianhood, we each have a theory of musicking which helps frame our ideas “of what musicking is, of what it is not, and of the part it plays in our lives” (Small, 1998, p. 13). Music is both a personalized and a social art form which is constructed from extremely varied perspectives of “musical goals, values, practices, experiences, effects and social functions” (Turino, 2008, p. 20). Our theories of

musicking are how we verbalize or otherwise express these philosophies, beliefs, values, goals, and roles constructed from our own musical experiences. A person's theory of musicking is a philosophical perspective which helps answer important questions about music and people in music. For example:

1. Axiology (e.g., *What music has value? What are the preferred aesthetics?*)
2. Epistemology (e.g., *How is music learned? What can be learned?*)
3. Ontology (e.g., *What are identities/roles in music and who can hold them?*)

Small (1998) clarifies:

If musicking is an activity by means of which we bring into existence a set of relationships that model the relationships of our world...and if through musicking we learn about and explore those relationships...then musicking is in fact a way of knowing our world. (p. 50)

He insists that having a theory of musicking is not reserved only for intellectuals and cultured people, but for everyone because it is an “important component of our understanding of ourselves and of our relationships with other people and other creatures with which we share our planet” (p. 13).

In many ways, *theory of musicking* is very similar to a theory of *aesthetics*.

Reimer (1991) views aesthetics as a form of philosophical perspective, including attitudes and experience, artistic values, expected constructs of the artistic object itself, and a general philosophy of art (e.g., “the nature of beauty, how to define art, how art is understood and appreciated, how it is created”) (p. 6). Playwright Timothy Daly (2019) defines *aesthetic* as a very “complex and subjective thing” which is “first, a theory of beauty, and second, a conscious set of creative principles as well as an intuitive feel for the sort of [art] you wish to create” (p. 35). He continues that a person's aesthetic is both

personal (resulting from your own life, beliefs and artistic responses) and communal (resulting from society's impact on you and your art)" (p. 35). Whether intentional or not, across time, everyone receives an *aesthetic education* (Reimer, 2003) from their family, community, school, peers, social culture, etc. Aesthetics are determined by experience and narrative (i.e., personal, socio-cultural, localized, and master). Someone's aesthetical preference does have the potential to change over time, but sometimes it is more difficult than one might imagine.

When we speak of aesthetics (whether that of artists or of audience), we are really talking about comfort, familiarity, and preference—which is very natural and relatively innocuous for an individual or a localized narrative (Lyotard, 1979). However, the promotion of aesthetic value can become an issue when it occurs at an institutional level. Institutions, which typically represent the interests of a master narrative (Lyotard, 1979), convey to the population at large what is true, what has beauty, what has value, and what has meaning. For example: in an art museum, European art may have been carefully identified and curated by theme, style, artist, or time period—whereas the art of Others has been generalized, grouped, and labelled broadly by continent, ethnicity, or race. Or in a college voice department where Western classical opera and art song are predominantly represented and upheld as the “ideal” in theory, history, and literature courses as well as in voice lessons and recital programs, while other genres are represented as less respected or less complex (or even vocally harmful), a broader world view of artistic value can become overly narrow or skewed. In both cases, “aesthetic” has now become a political issue—a biased system of judgement and access, hidden behind words such as: good taste, high quality, beauty, complexity, sophistication, excellence, and meaningfulness.

For better or worse, it must be acknowledged that music institutions also have a theory of musicking which informs their pedagogical and curricular approach, determines the aesthetic education they provide students through an agreed-upon canon of repertoire, which musical knowledge/skills have value, definitions of *ideal* prospective students, and all content, forms, and means of assessment (including the preparation and execution of the capstone senior recital). More significantly, it is an artistic representation of values, which upholds and perpetuates the values of the master narrative—which, in turn, is upheld and perpetuates by the institution. However, it does not need to be this way.

Reimer (2003) speaks ideally of an aesthetic education broken free of the dogmas for purposeful engagement in situating one's own aesthetics and exploring how others situate theirs (p. 9). Without this, Small warns that: "As long as that theory remains unconscious and unthought about, it not only controls people and their musical activities, limiting and circumscribing their capabilities, but also renders them vulnerable to manipulation by those who have an interest in doing so for purposes of power, status, or profit" (Small, 1998, p. 13) If everyone is born musical and everyone's musical experiences are valid, then pedagogical practice (e.g., speaking of and engaging with a cohort of theories of musicking) must address these concerns.

Working with the new curriculum at Marygrove, I learned firsthand the challenges of "listening" before "telling" as a teacher, especially in higher music education. I struggled with what it means to embrace each student's theory of musicking as a form of truth, even if it conflicted with my own. As we opened conversations through our new curriculum, I had my established knowledge called out by students and either had to conduct research to reintroduce topics with a more inclusive lens; or

acknowledge my limitations and transfer the knowledge-sharing to a student as the more knowledgeable other.⁷¹ I also learned the difficulty of selecting which “essential” white male composers would need to be removed from the syllabus to allow space for better representation by women composers and composers of color. Finally, I had to open myself to the idea that a scholarly, high quality, pedagogically-sound, undergraduate senior voice recital could consist of works by G.F. Handel, Franz Schubert, Ricky Ian Gordon, Nina Simone, Sarah Bareilles, Cynthia Erivo, and Jalacy “Screamin’ Jay” Hawkins; be accompanied by concert piano, live band, guest singers, and interpretative dancers; and unified under the theme of “Red: Love & Pain.”

Although it vastly underestimates the power and influence of master narratives, perhaps Reimer (1991) still holds true as a vision toward which to aspire:

Aesthetic education is not a body of immutable laws but instead provides some guidelines for a process that, by its very nature, must be ongoing and open-ended... We require a philosophy amenable to and dependent on change as an essential characteristic, because it is a given that the philosophical problems considered to be fundamental to music education will change over time, the availability of viable solutions to them will also continually change, and the social-cultural nature of music education will also. (pp. 194, 209)

Coming into Professional Musicianhood

During the fall 2020 follow-up interviews with these participants, I asked the question: “Do you consider yourself a professional musician?” The following quotes are the participants’ responses (as distilled by the researcher):

⁷¹ As an example of the former, study participant Rei pointedly asked why I only spoke of Western European notation and never of systems developed in other countries, such as Ethiopian musical notation (*melekke*) developed in the 6th century by Saint Yared. As an example of the latter, study participant Ti expressed deep concerns about the way I was teaching and conducting an African-American spiritual for our choral concert, which led to the piece being handled by a student conductor with a large amount of experience with spirituals at his church.

ANGEL

There are so many intricacies in the words “professional” and “musician.”
I struggled
because I didn't feel as professional as some people
and I worry what others may say.
But...yes.
I am.
I have a degree that says I am
and a lifestyle that does its best to follow.
I began to think I could only call myself that while on the clock teaching voice
or in the studio recording,
but it is more than that.
I have applied education and sacrifice for the field.
So
I'm going to say yes.

ANGELA

Yes, I do.
I consider myself as being a professional musician.
I've studied it.
I've went to school for it.
I have a degree in it.
I have the opportunities to sing professionally and I get paid for it.

JERIEL

Yes, because
I have an understanding of music now as an educated musician.
I'm not the best in the world,
but I'm pretty decent though.
I have that confidence to say:
“I can look at sheet music.
I can interpret.
I can take time and really dissect the music.
I also have an ear for vocal performance and could help guide
an inexperienced musician.”
So, yes.
I'm educated enough to call myself a musician.

LANYCK

Yes.
A professional musician is not about being paid.
A professional musician is what you make it.
The things you've learned as a musician
and how you've carried yourself as a musician
helps you grow

and move forward into a career.
And regardless of what it is,
I'm goin'.

MELODY

Yes.
Because I get paid to do it.
It's really that simple because
that's how I pay my bills.
I've made more money as a singer,
as a performer than I have in anything else.
That's a blessing.

NORA

Yes, I am a musician
and I am a professional.
I haven't been doing this that long, so
I need to work on being well-grounded by
professional decision.
But I do know how to conduct myself in a professional setting,
regardless of how unprofessional it is in that environment.
I know where to put that line.
So, yes.

REI

No, I don't.
With the professional musician aspect comes...
working in that field regularly enough.
The way life has taken me,
I haven't worked in music
in about a year and a half.
If the question was:
'Do I consider myself a musician?'
That would be a different answer.
But I don't feel like a professional musician right now.
Right now.

SHERRY

Out of all the questions, this is the hardest.
I tell other people I'm a professional musician.
(*laughs*) So, yes.
But only because I understand it's so deep.
We're constantly growing,
learning and changing—
and because I know that,

that makes me a professional musician.
But I don't always feel like one.
When you're a mom and a teacher,
it can get away from you.
I don't feel like I put enough time into it
consistently
to be called a professional musician.
I do still perform weekly—
but I mean,
there's always people better than you too.

TI

I would say 'yes' based on...
I have the degree to prove it.
But at the same time without the degree, I would still say
I'm a professional
because of everything that I've come across,
the people I've come across,
the new instruments I've picked up,
how well my voice has tuned in,
and music in general.
A lot of times you don't need a degree for that.
So I'd say for both sides—yes.

Of the nine participants, six answered yes with confidence, Angel and Sherry responded yes with some hesitation, and Rei noted that they did not feel they could name themselves as a professional musician in the moment because their career was taking them another path. Their reasons for considering themselves a professional musician (or not) included:

- having received a music degree;
- having committed time and energy to professional musicking;
- having made personal sacrifices for their craft;
- having multiple professional experiences under their belt;
- having performed regularly and recently;
- having high quality abilities and knowledge in music;

- understanding that being a musician requires continual growth and change;
- having the ability to conduct themselves in a professional setting;
- having the ability to negotiate difficult situations within professional settings;
- being paid money for their musicking;
- being able to teach music to others; and
- having a sense of progression in their musical career.

Outside of this list, both hesitations voiced by Angel and Sherry were connected to “other people.” Angel’s primary hesitation related to her concern about what other people would think if she claimed herself as a professional musician. Sherry’s primary hesitation was that she carries multiple life roles (e.g., musician, teacher, mother, wife) and she felt that other people who committed more time were better than her and may deserve the designation more.

In the same follow-up interviews, I next asked the question: “Do you feel you have a sense of professional musicianhood?” to see if/how their responses would differ.

ANGEL

I do.
 From the people that I have relationships with.
 It’s family that's built.
 You got to know who's who in the family
 or who's really a part of that
 musicianhood circle.
 Community isn’t a requirement but is very beneficial.
 It's a lot of lone rangers out there.
 I started out that way.
 I didn't want the criticism
 or people all in my stuff.
 I'm always trying to do everything by myself
 and that's not the place to be.
 It's definitely better as musicians to have good musicianhood.

ANGELA

Yes.

Due to the fact that
we're getting together as professional musicians during the pandemic to
use our voices to encourage other people
and lift them out of their "sat and stayed" depressed stage.
Just encourage them with our voices singing.

JERIEL

I do,
but I've been challenged by it because life happens
and so you feel
pulled away from that musicianhood sometimes.
You have to always remember to reengage and reconnect
and keep the community alive
to allow you to utilize your resources.
It's like a relationship.
There has to be consistent communication
to make those great moments happen,
because people create their best work
with
their friends.

LANYCK

It depends on what circle I roll in.
Because I'm like seasoning—
I'm sprinkled in different areas.
I'm not just stuck to one specific thing.
I'm willing to keep myself open whatever group that I'm in.
I never say no when it comes to music, because
that's the only way that I'm going to build my confidence in being a musician
and being more comfortable as a musician.
I do feel like I am professional.
Yes.

MELODY

Yes, absolutely.
The fact that I have spent most of my life around
musicians and performers,
I feel really blessed.
And the fact that I chose to believe that I can do that
and I'm still a growing and developing musician.

NORA

Yes. Actually.

I know I can go talk to my brother and he'll have certain things to share with me.

Because some male musicians out here will try to take you for a spin because you're a female musician and a soloist so you're by yourself.

They will try to treat you like that because they can.

It's good and bad parts of the musicianship.

But I have a musicianhood in Detroit—

and I can go somewhere else and have some more relationships.

REI

Yes, I do.

Because I do feel like a musician—

and if I had the space and time,

I could be a professional musician.

I have the tools to take my musicianhood further

and that makes me feel like I am a part of professional musicianhood.

SHERRY

Yeah.

Because being in a band and being consistently involved in that sense.

But also Jeriel and Angel and them just started trying to meet the second Friday of every month to get together and sing.

So yeah.

I feel like I have a musicianhood within those two senses.

TI

I guess so.

In the sense of,

with any type of “hood” you need a leader

and I find myself stuck in a lot of leadership positions

with whatever type of hood I’m referred to.

So yes.

In this case, all nine participants answered yes—seven did so without hesitation, LaNyck considered that it depended on which of her musicianhood identities, and Ti (who is fiercely independent) took a moment to determine that her leadership of groups is still being part of a musical community. Their reasons for feeling a sense of professional musicianhood included:

- having relationships with other professional musicians;
- having established musicianhood circles or communities;
- knowing you can enter or develop new musicianhood circles or communities;
- understanding that your different musical personhood identities and musical worlds create different senses of musicianhood, each with their own communities and expectations;
- having trusted individuals/mentors to advise you in a professional capacity;
- having spent a large amount of time around professional musicians;
- gathering with other professional musicians for meaningful work;
- committing regular and consistent time and energy to professional musicking;
- recognizing that having the tools and committing the space/time are two different elements of professional identity;
- knowing you must continue to communicate, engage, and reconnect with members of your circle regularly;
- knowing you can maintain a sense of professionalism and still handle less than ideal work situations by setting boundaries when you need;
- embracing a sense of continual growth, change, and development;
- recognizing that it is beneficial to have a community of musicianhood and perhaps you create your best work with musicians you feel connected to;
- feeling a sense of leadership within a professional music community; and
- recognizing that it can be a challenge to maintain a strong sense of professional musicianhood, if there are not many opportunities to exercise it.

In Old English, the suffix *-hood* meant: “state, rank, order, condition, character” (Trips, 2009, p. 41). In modern English, we begin seeing an expansion into “general natural conditions of human life”—such as *parenthood* or *priesthood* (“civil states with legal right and duties”), *childhood* or *adulthood* (related to a time period, and referring to the “status of a person”), or *brotherhood* or *neighborhood* (which is “denoting collectivity”) (p. 41). In a previous section, I noted that *musicianhood* is the complex, “musical flow of engagement” between one’s internally-grounded *musical personhood* and the externally-grounded *musical world* aspects of self and identity as a musical flow of engagement with the world.” I found it meaningful that most of these participants seemed to deeply connect the term *musicianhood* into the third type (collectivity) and speak deeply of identity within community and in connections to community. Whereas “being a professional musician” seemed to relate to a stand-alone identity, musicianhood sparked responses having to do with community and connection as professional musicians. From these participants’ responses, “professional musician” seemed more as a label bestowed, whereas “professional musicianhood” felt like an identity developed. From a critical constructivist perspective, I found myself much more interested in exploring the research puzzle of professional musicianhood as identity.

As their former professor and co-chair of the department, I knew that all these study participants entered Marygrove with a strong sense of musicianhood. Not only did each of these individuals display a strong sense of core musicality, high levels of ability in musicianship, and abundance of experiences in musicking during the application and audition process, but they all *chose*, for themselves, to pursue a degree in music. Coming more deeply into this dissertation study, the questions then arose:

1. How did each of these individuals transform a sense of musicianhood into a sense of professional musicianhood?
2. How might I begin to explore and examine these participants' journeys into professional musicianhood?

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ATTENTION OF NARRATIVE INQUIRY

*Listening is a creative act,
and it can be an act of love.
To pay attention changes us and changes the object of our attention.
Our attitude toward an event contributes to what the event becomes.
We are part of the equation.
The one gift we can give to another human being is our attention,
and that attention, in turn, allows the possibility of change.
We can be available and open to their change.
Which means concurrently that we will change too.
The gift we give is not to hold onto some way we have decided that this person is.
Perhaps this gift of attention is also a gift of love*

A poetic transcription created from Bogart's (2007)
And Then, You Act (pp. 60-61).

Aspects of Qualitative Research

*The term 'holistic' refers to my conviction
that what we are concerned with here
is the fundamental interconnectedness of all things.*

*The connections between causes and effects
are often much more subtle and complex
than we with our rough and ready understanding of the physical world
might naturally suppose.*

*Let me give you an example.
If you go to an acupuncturist with toothache,
he sticks a needle instead into your thigh.
Do you know why he does that, Mrs. Rawlinson?
No, neither do I, Mrs. Rawlinson,
but we intend to find out.*

A poetic transcription created from
Douglas Adams' (1987) *Dirk Gently's Holistic
Detective Agency* (pp. 144-145)

As shared in Chapter Three, humans connect to their sense of musicianhood through engagement with their core musicality, musicianship, and musicking in their musical worlds (Ansdell, 2016). Because it is a dimension of general personhood, developing one's musical personhood influences the overarching identity of Self as well. Additionally, we can make deep connections—intellectually, emotionally, spiritually—to the musical and general personhoods of others through musical engagement. Musicking, especially in relation to song, is not simply a form of personal immediate expression, but can be a way of connecting with the voices of others (e.g., audiences, other performers, composers/songwriters) and through the voices of others (e.g., characters, poets/lyricists, composers/songwriters).

As a singer engaged in musical storytelling, I often feel I have gained an inside perspective into someone else's journey and lifeworld by sharing song. The act of exploring, understanding, and embodying another helps me to learn more about myself, as well as multitudes of *lifeworlds* (Husserl, 1936) that surround me. Participating in performance of these works, I then share these understandings and interpretations of *other storied selves* with audiences, who, in turn, have opportunity to understand and interpret through the lens of their own lifeworlds. Whether a storied piece resonates with an audience member on a personal level, helps them to gain a different perspective of someone they know, or introduces a completely new example of personhood to their awareness, the act of sharing the stories of others has potential to help everyone to learn more about "Self along many." Because of these key elements of storytelling inherent in my experiences both as a professional musician and as an educator of the performing arts, I feel intimately connected to the naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), narrative (Barrett

& Stauffer, 2009; Clandinin, 2010b, 2013; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Leggo, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008), critical (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Duncan, 2002; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2003), and creative (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010; Barone, 2008; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2018; Denzin, 2015; Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Leavy, 2015; Saldaña, 2018a) footings of qualitative research.

Qualitative research is a form of *meta-communication* that follows naturalistic and interpretative practices under an existential- and constructivist-centered paradigm. Briggs (1986) defines *meta-communication* as that which reports, interprets, describes, and evaluates the act and process of communicative events. Conducting this form of research does not establish universal truths nor reduce humanity to a statistical mean by sharing *data*, in its verbatim form, as irrefutable, tangible fact (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Instead, it is an attempt to describe or interpret the authentic meanings of lived experience with a depth and richness beyond what numerical relationships could achieve (Polkinghorne, 2005; Schwandt, 2001; van Manen, 1997). As a result, research topics typically relate to “the *life world* as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 84). Stated simply, qualitative research is humans studying humans to create studies to be received by more humans. It is a process in which all stakeholders (researchers, participants, and reader-audiences) interpret and reinterpret, define and redefine meanings of things they have experienced in varying measure and temporal points of their lives (Stake, 2010). All speech communities possess “repertoires of metacommunicative events that they use in generating shared understandings with respect to themselves and their experiences” (Briggs, 1986, p. 2). Qualitative research

aspires to contribute to these shared repertoires which helps expand and clarify understandings of subjective yet communal *lifeworlds* through a holistic, multi-dimensional interpretation of what it means to be human (Stake, 2010; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

In this dissertation study, I have sought to explore my research topic through the richness of its context and in all its complexity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Rather than selecting a specific question to answer or hypothesis to test, I am “interested in how different people made sense of their [musical] lives”—and having a prior relationship with these participants, I sought a research methodology that would help “construct a picture” of deeper understandings of their storied experiences (p. 2). I expected these phenomena to be “intricately related to many coincidental actions” informed by temporal and spatial, historical, political, economic, cultural, social, personal” contexts (Stake, 2010, p. 31). This expectation requires an epistemology that is existential, naturalistic, constructivist, and emergent (Stake, 2010)—*existential* because it focuses on human participants who often think, feel, and act in unpredictable ways; *naturalistic* because inquiry of knower/known is intricately tied to its context of origin, the paradigm of the inquirer, and the research methods utilized; *constructivist* because participants, researcher, and readers all build understandings from their own experiences and reflections upon those experiences; and *emergent* because, due to each of these factors, any researcher cannot predict with certainty the exact path an inquiry will take from start to finish.

The critical constructivist approaches to teaching and learning outlined in Chapter One as well as the paradigmatic views of musicking shared in Chapter Two have led me

to qualitative research. Specifically, to explore *prior knowledge* contained within the *musical life worlds* (Ansdell, 2016) and *theories of musicking* (Small, 1998) of my former students as shared through focused life-history (Seidman, 2013) and qualitative focus group (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011, 2013) interviews. Through a bricolage of qualitative methods, I have crafted a digital ethnodrama exploring nine college music graduates' journeys into professional musicianhood. Over the next three chapters, I will frame the four-year journey from inviting them to participate in this dissertation study to the creation of *Called to the Conversation*, a digital ethnodrama crafted from their stories. Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011) make a clear difference between methodology and the methods which emerge from it. They describe methodology as the philosophical bridge between a researcher's beliefs about the nature of existence (*ontology*) and the nature of knowledge (*epistemology*), whereas methods are the tools and process by which she conducts the study. The next three chapters work together to clearly define the methodology and methods of my research bricolage. In this chapter, I will address the philosophical underpinnings of my approach to research methodology—first in a broad sense as I explore specific qualities of qualitative research as they relate to this dissertation study, second as I highlight and clarify my role and identity as an *a/r/tographical bricoleur*, and third as I outline the role of story as data and narrative inquiry as a foundational methodological approach. In Chapter Five, I describe the data collection methods and illustrate the journey into the methodological approach to performance ethnography (specifically ethnodrama) and related theatrical considerations. Chapter Six will give a detailed account of the narrative analysis process leading into the construction methods for the digital ethnodrama.

Researcher as Empathetic Instrument with a Contextual Lens

To truly engage in qualitative inquiry, a researcher must aspire to gain a deep awareness of her own suppositions and worldview; commit to being *with* people and immersing herself in their lives and situations; and then faithfully represent their *testaments to events* (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Van Maanen, 2011). Whereas a quantitative researcher seeks to separate himself from the study to avoid unduly influencing the results, qualitative researchers not only acknowledge their involvement within and effect upon the study but affirm their role as the key research instrument (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002; Richardson, 2000; Seidman, 2013). Regardless of any provisions taken, the researcher's complex combination of identity and personality traits will have an impact upon both the collection and interpretation of empirical materials. Most crucially, the individuality and humanity of the researcher is not perceived as a form of *bias* to be avoided, but as both the essence that forms their unique research lens (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and a navigation tool through the process. Indeed, the research report itself is considered a product of the researcher's subjective interpretation, or form of embodied meaning-making (Dörnyei, 2007; Piantanida & Garman, 2009). Because Self is what makes sense of the situation under investigation, researchers need to recognize and monitor how personalities, knowledge, and sensitivity all affect the quality and inform the sum of the work (Eisner, 1991/2017; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As Saldaña (2011b) notes, "who you are (or are becoming) determines to a large extent what and how you research" (p. 22). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to deeply examine the quality and exact role of the instrument they are bringing to the process (Stake, 2010).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that any qualitative researcher has the potential to become a “marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact, and understanding” (p. 107). However, preparing oneself as an effective, high-quality instrument of inquiry can entail a commitment of unrelenting effort (Piantanida & Garman, 2009).

Because of the critical nature of my study, I deeply explored three aspects related to my role with this inquiry process: specifically, the unpacking of Self through reflective practice, the negotiation of empathy, and the role of the researcher as active participant.

Unpacking Self Through Reflective Practice

I have come to embrace my active, enmeshed roles within this study, especially because of my longitudinal connection to these informants and the educational and artistic journey we made together at Marygrove and beyond. Over the six years prior to the start of data collection, I came to know these individuals, the college in which we engaged as stakeholders, and the city in which the institution resided. Encouraged by my PhD advisors, Marygrove mentors, and the curricular discussions among Marygrove music faculty, I looked for ways to proactively and conscientiously examine both my position and my positioning within this inquiry. I worked to enhance my ways of seeing by cultivating *a working skepticism* to reveal what I commonly thought to be true, and increased both my *appreciation for subjectivity* and *ability to tolerate complexity* because the world is “comprised of meanings, interpretations, feelings, talk, and interactions” that must be examined on their own terms (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 11). Then through this view, I addressed my approach to inquiry-related work by *committing to close scrutiny* of naturally occurring details through close contact with the lived worlds of

study participants; *searching for qualities of social life* to better comprehend aspects of diversity, intimacy, and complication; and a *focusing on the process* of “seeing people as active agents of their affairs” (pp. 11-12). Although Gubrium and Holstein outline these qualities in a clear and straightforward manner, practical application was only possible in partnership with the act of *reflective practice* (Schön, 1984).

For Dewey (1910), the act of *reflection* is “not merely a sequence of ideas, but a *consequence*” with each thought determining the next yet leaning back upon the prior (p. 2). As each thought grows out of and supports another, their flow of progression forms “a train, chain, or thread” (p. 3). Purposeful reflection is “aimed at the discovery of facts” that will help choose a path supported by experiential evidence or proof (p. 8). Dewey expressed that reflective thinking begins with a moment of doubt or hesitation and ends with some type of logical resolution with the act of reflection as a double movement between these two points. The first movement carries outward from the moment of uncertainty into the potential for new understandings (inductive reasoning) and the second returns from the chosen resolution(s) to the moment of uncertainty to infuse original facts with the new understandings and perhaps even better data (deductive reasoning). In this way, everything becomes bound into a coherent whole through the “inclusive and comprehensive unity” of meaning (p. 81).

Donald Schön (1984) extended Dewey’s foundational ideas into two forms of reflective thinking: *reflection-in-action* (ongoing revision of action in the moment of doing, mostly unvoiced and subconscious) and *reflection-on-action* (a retrospection on previous action to formulate knowledge from the experience). I had regularly engaged in reflective practice as part of my performance and teaching processes. However, the action

research-inspired roundtable sessions and subsequent curricular discussions at Marygrove gave me a perfect opportunity to apply reflective practice to research as well.

Through journaling, conversations between both my own “internal voices” and with other individuals, “flow-of-consciousness recordings,” poetry, and other creative projects, I began to unpack Self and to challenge my moments of doubt (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 186). Leitch and Day make connections between reflective practice and Grundy’s mode of *emancipatory action research*, which seeks to emancipate participants “from the dictates of compulsions of tradition, precedent, habit, coercion as well as from self-deception” (Grundy, 1982, p. 358; as cited in Leitch & Day, 2000). This approach simultaneously involves both the social system (e.g., education) as well as the individual in practice (Leitch & Day, 2000). In its original iteration, *emancipatory action research* branched in two directions. The first was deemed as a “collective, collaborative activity” used to help practitioners “confront, in their own and other’s practice, the oppression inherent in dominant, socially and historically embedded ideologies” (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 185—paraphrasing Carr & Kemmis, 1986). I see this form of action research relating closely to our collaborative curriculum re-mapping at Marygrove. The second direction of *emancipatory action research* focused on an individual educator pursuing a “living educational theory” in which she discovers she is a “living contradiction” of herself because her values do not always align with her practice (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 185—paraphrasing Whitehead, 1996, p. 2).⁷²

⁷² Unfortunately, this term has died out over the years with Kemmis pursuing *critical action theory* and Whitehead his *living educational theory*—but I am still drawn to the term and its description.

Whitehead's description of an educator as a *living contradiction* resonates with my own difficult realizations during my reflection-on-action process described above. My discoveries of disconnect between my values and practice became increasingly difficult as I began to see how my suppositions tied into racial and socio-economic beliefs I had been taught by my community and society in general. I was fighting conflicts between what I had been told and what I saw; what I wished to see and what was; and what I wished to be and what I was. For example:

- exploring my *tacit knowings* (Polanyi, 1958) and bringing them to light;
- challenging my *scholastic folklore* (Piantanida & Garman, 2009) and *partisan musicianship* (Woody, 2012);
- facing incorrect and unfair assumptions I had been making about people and places;
- clarifying terms, tones, inflections, and actions I had often misunderstood; and
- exploring my ability and right to cross 8 Mile and be a teacher-mentor to these students.⁷³

The unpacking of these personal experiences was crucial because they prepared space for the more difficult lessons to come. Beginning with these meaningful engagements within the culture and milieu that was the Marygrove College Music Department, I came to hear stories (including my own) with more richness and less assumption, to ask better questions for deeper understanding, to become more familiar with the benefits and consequences of my own privilege and experiences, and to become increasingly

⁷³ For decades, Eight Mile Road has marked, both physically and psychologically, the divide between the City of Detroit and the suburbs, and the barrier between Black and White.

comfortable with discomfort and open transparency to invite higher-stakes, more emotionally-fraught conversations. The results of this self-reflection process may be seen in how I have written the opening chapters of this dissertation, the methodology and methods of the study, and in the digital ethnodrama itself.

The Negotiation of Empathy

During my time at Marygrove, I had become more intimately connected with a culture and localized narrative previously foreign to me, despite it being only a handful of miles away from my home.⁷⁴ In the moment of this writing, I have received my students' (now participants') stories over the course of 8-10 years (both formally and informally), lived some of these stories told alongside them (both in college and post-graduation), and have seen the impact of stories upon their hearts and minds (both in celebration and as challenge). Having this incredibly empathetic connection with these participants, not only would it be impossible to separate myself from the study, but it would also be detrimental to its quality, meaning, and impact. Stake (2010) points out that empathy, in conjunction with any corresponding advocacy, should be part of the work of the researcher—but what is the true role of empathy within inquiry and is there a point where it can be taken too far?

Some stories were of great sadness and pain.

*I was aware doing research
would involve emotional experiences.
But the spontaneous sharing by participants
sometimes caught me unaware
and left me feeling humbled.*

⁷⁴ I am reminded of Barone's (1989) moment of self-awareness during his interview with rural Tennessee student, Billy Charles: "Even more jolting is a sudden realization of my vast ignorance about the ways of people who live within a two-hour drive of my home and about the fundamentals of a world no longer honored in the dominant culture" (p. 147)—except in this case, my vast ignorance began 10 minutes away.

*There were times when events being described
resonated with my own experiences.*

This always presented a dilemma for me.

*Should I say “I too have experienced that”
in an attempt to link their experience to my own?*

Or should I maintain my research distance?

*Nothing I had read prepared me
for the emotionality of the research process.
Participants told me of life events
that had great emotional impact on them...
which then had emotional impact
on me.*

*I was stunned as a human being
and thrown off track as a researcher.*

A poetic transcription created from Rowling’s (1999)
Being, in, Being out, Being with (pp. 174-176).

Louise Rowling’s (1999) description of this empathetic tension resonates with my own experiences engaging in the interview process with my participants. Empathy (*verstehen*) is identified as a key part of qualitative research (Bresler, 2005; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; van Manen, 1997). Because of its “personalistic orientation,” qualitative inquiry relies on empathy between researcher and participants to generate a deeper understanding of “how things work” (Stake, 2010, p. 46). Through this form of *connected knowing*, a researcher can build highly valuable insights, credibility, and protection instincts within the “studied perception of participants’ situations in context” (p. 47). Similarly, Susan Gair (2012) encourages developing the ability to sense another’s world ‘as if’ it were your own (though never losing the “as if”) and to listen with sensitivity as you walk beside them on their storied journey. Empathic connection with study

participants is part and parcel of being a human instrument of inquiry. I feel confident saying that I have established this type of deep, authentic empathetic connection with my participants.

From the other side of the pendulum, Rubin and Rubin (2005) warn that too much empathy may hinder key elements of the research process. For example, the researcher may avoid asking important follow-up questions at the risk of being too critical, pointed, or impolite; or he may fail to see beyond the *specialness* of individual participants to be able to analyze or connect their stories within a larger picture (p. 81). Losing professional perspective and the outsider/objective view by leaning too closely can result in a researcher ignoring or emphasizing findings so the research report reflects only the participants' perspective (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 97).⁷⁵ Gair (2012) illuminates the dangers of over-empathy from a critical theory perspective. She notes how overly empathetic researchers run the risk of: (a) mirroring institutional binary norms of whom deserves empathy, (b) ignoring an informant's specific social, cultural, spiritual, and historical circumstances in their drive to connect, or (c) finding their sense of needing to *help* overpowers the need to *understand*.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) speak of the ever-present tension between wanting to remain an objective outsider and yet to become fully involved in the experiences shared by research participants. They view this tension as inevitable because of the relational quality of narrative-focused research and encourage researchers to develop the ability to move "back and forth between falling in love and cool observation" as needed

⁷⁵ Also known by the now-antiquated anthropological phrase: *Going native*.

(p. 82). This swing between closeness and distance simply mirrors that of relationships in everyday life, like most elements of an interpretative methodology. It is a co-constructed responsibility of both inquirer and informants, but the researcher should guide or model the interaction and the balance.

Bresler (2005) balances *empathy* against maintaining a distance of scholarship by comparing it to Eisner's (1991/2017) concept of *connoisseurship*. The latter being "primarily a detached expert's discernment" while the former "involves putting oneself in another's place" (Bresler, 2005, p. 176). Bresler continues that "unlike the connoisseur's detachment, empathy opens to a dialogue between researcher and the studied" in which the researcher/performer is "touched and expanded, not just in terms of factual knowledge, but also in his resonance to the world" (p. 176; also citing Gadamer, 1989).

To find a more scholarly empathic balance, Stake (2010) suggests that researchers might attempt to separate feelings of *sympathy* from those of *empathy*. He views the former as more of an endearment and emotional accord which may not be valuable to scholarship, while the latter's "matter of perception" greatly benefits negotiation and problem solving (p. 47). Stake does admit it is unlikely that empathy and sympathy can ever exist completely separately, but awareness and attempt would be worth the effort. Rowling (1999) agrees that being "enmeshed in the feelings of the participant" is quite different than "providing support at a specific point in time" (p. 179). She ponders whether the "either/or" might be avoided altogether and instead of trying to maintain a position either *inside* or *outside* of the emotion-filled context, researchers might find ways to be *alongside* or *with* a participant.

I am drawn to Rowling's idea of "being among," but worry this may be misinterpreted as finding a *comfortable place*. Perhaps, as researchers, we need this constant tension between inner and outer, empathy and connoisseurship, falling in love and cool observation, professional distance and personal friendship. Settling into a place of comfort is tempting, but the discomfort of being pulled between two points of view compels a researcher to constantly evaluate her beliefs, intentions, and actions in relation to the best interests of both her participants and the study itself.

I have also found Rowling's (1999) narrative, in conjunction with Pike's (1967) *emic* and *etic* paradox and Schön's (1984) reflective practice, to inspire an additional multi-leveled perspective of empathy in inquiry.⁷⁶ Pike (1967) found that being to be able to observe phenomena from both insider and outsider standpoints could lead to understandings that "shade into one another" (p. 37). Connecting to his linguist's background, he referred to the outsider viewpoint of a cultural system or community as *etic*, coined from the ending of *phonetic*. On the other hand, *emic*, coined from the ending of *phonemic*, is internally connected and makes sense of an event through the perspective of an inside observer.⁷⁷

I have come to see the question of empathy as two-fold: (a) an emotional standpoint of human connection, and (b) an intellectual standpoint related to methodology. The first relates closely to Pike's *emic* viewpoint and Schön's *reflection-in-action*. During an interview or conversation, I felt a very human, social-emotional connection with the participants as they shared life history narratives. However, in this

⁷⁶ A found poem of Rowling's words was shared at the beginning of this section.

⁷⁷ As a singer and teacher of vocal diction, I fangirled over the origins of these terms.

sensitive moment, there was no time, for example, for analyzing the specifics of why I might feel compelled to cry alongside them. I simply acknowledged a natural compulsion to do so. Borrowing from Schön, this might be called: *empathy-in-action*. The second relates to Pike's *etic* viewpoint and Schön's *reflection-on-action*. Prior to conducting the interviews, I prepared myself by reading literature about being an instrument of inquiry and planned the interview process with that knowledge. After the interactions with the participants, I revisited my original informed intentions, and utilized my empathic connection in the analysis to discern deeper meanings and in the writing process to convey these stories in a way that (hopefully) generates empathy and understanding from the audience/readers. This might be called: *empathy-on-action*.

Rowling's narrative at the beginning of this section beautifully explains the grappling between these two points: She prepared for the data collection process (*etic*), but was surprised by her powerful and authentic sympathy in moments of high emotion (*emic*), and was able to negotiate her reactions to the feelings both professionally and empathetically. Feeling compelled to connect in human ways yet adjusting instinct to better align with professional practice represents an ideal moment of tension and negotiation.

Most of this chapter addresses elements of *empathy-on-action*—however, the trickier moments come with the unexpected. For example, the one-on-one interviews I conducted for this study focused solely on the music-related life stories of these participants. However, music happens in and amongst real life, and the lives of these participants included stories of great emotional, psychological, and spiritual stress-trauma. Traumatic experiences related to sexual/physical assault, bullying, poverty, loss

of loved ones, depression/anxiety, unexpected obligations of caregiving, and family/friends grappling with mental disorders and addictions have not been unfamiliar to my participants at various points in their lives. I was honored by their openness to sharing—although admittedly, as Rowling said in her narrative above, I too was sometimes *stunned as a human being and thrown off track as a researcher*. I feel I would have been at a loss for how to balance my job as a researcher and caring mentor had it not been for two established dynamisms:

- My years of experience as a performer and teacher of singing
- A multiple identity of Self as bestowed by these former students.

The ability to elicit the empathy of audience or reader underpins a core usefulness and goal for both performance and research (Gair, 2012). I have often used the metaphor of “standing at the edge of the cliff” of emotional and empathetic connection to a text or musical phrase. As I sing, I stand as close as I dare to the edge of this cliff, allowing the winds of sorrow, anger, joy, and jealousy to fill my soul and infuse my song. However, to throw myself into the void—abandoning character-self and flooding Tara-self with the true emotion of tears, pain, and ecstasy—is more self-serving than ideal. Tara’s true tears will never resonate as the character’s authentic emotion with an audience. My job as a performer-storyteller is to serve as the conduit between a story and an audience’s experience of this story. Breaking the connection between self and character can isolate and disconnect an audience from the story. Regardless of how deep into playing a character I seem—every cell of my flesh resonating with *another*—I remain grounded to Self and the Moment within my core. I wrap my toes around the edge of the cliff as tightly as possible and lean into the winds as far as I dare. But a breath after its

conclusion, I immediately shake this otherness from myself as a second skin and resume my own life once more.⁷⁸

I found an innate similarity between this artistic connection and researcher empathy. In the moment, I may feel a vital connection, but as I walk away from the interview session or the score, I leave it behind. This does not mean that I do not care about my participants or their stories. I am honored by the openness and emotional vulnerability displayed by each of these individuals, and I found myself moved to tears, anger, and laughter on several occasions. Just as a character's emotions are not mine to take and embody so, too, are these not my stories of struggle and success. I do my participants no regard to carry their stories away as if they were my own. Just as throwing myself into the ravine of *being with* a character does not serve my audience, nor will it serve the intentions of my research or (by proxy) my research participants. I need true empathy as a musician, educator, and researcher, but I have a job greater than empathy to accomplish through my performing, teaching, and inquiry.

For the second portion of finding my *empathy-in-action*, it was the participants themselves who created the balance of empathic connection and academic distance in my relationship with them. Even upon stepping through the doors of Marygrove in my first days, I would be assigned the dual-identity of *Professor Sievers-Hunt* and *Tara*. Through the roundtables and eventually the interviews for this study, I would add a third identity through their eyes: *Researcher*. In Chapter Six, I will reveal my establishment as a fluid,

⁷⁸ Not to be confused with negative connotations of "Othering" or "Otherness" later addressed in this chapter.

multiple self through the eyes of these participants as: *The Researcher, Professor Sievers-Hunt, and Tara*.

The Role of Researcher as Active Participant

For a period of time, I had considered whether this study contains elements of *reflexive autoethnography* (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), which relates to the researcher studying her own life alongside the study of students' lives. Reflexive autoethnographies may explore how the researcher herself has changed as a result of engaging in the study, use the researcher's biography as a starting point to the research, or include significant portions of ethnographic memoirs (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) or *confessional tales* (Van Maanen, 2011).

Although the frame of this study refers to reflexive autoethnographic approaches and the ethnodrama itself will contain *researcher as character* (Saldaña, 2011a), this study is not a true reflexive autoethnography because I am not planning to examine or justify the meaningfulness of my own experience. I have taken extra time and care with understanding and sharing my lens especially because I am a privileged white researcher sharing the stories of former students, the majority of whom claim identities connected to being a person of color (POC), living within lower socio-economic strata, being raised within an urban setting, or affirm belonging within other marginalized communities. Therefore, a large portion of this study's credibility, ethics, and trustworthiness relies on how I position myself as a researcher separate from the participants and as a co-participant among them. On a personal level, I also feel called to open myself in honesty and vulnerably in solidarity with the individuals I call participants and the way in which they have honored me with the stories they have shared. However, the primary focus of

my study is on the self-storied journeys of these participants with my own alongside as transparency of researcher lens and in self-reflective observation. This will be revealed in the role I take both as a formal scholar and as a character-participant alongside them in the dissertation ethnodrama.

Participants as Unique, Socially-Situated Individuals

Another key aspect of qualitative inquiry is how individual participants are selected, viewed, and engaged as individuals throughout the research process. While qualitative research aspires to be holistic, looking at the larger picture to understand the whole, this is accomplished through personal, face-to-face, and immediate interactions with participants recognized as unique human beings (Janesick, 1994). Naturalistic researchers do not seek to number, group, categorize, label, or generalize their participants as objects of the study as one might find in quantitative methodologies (Dörnyei, 2007). Instead, these inquirers regard themselves as fellow humans seeking to conduct research “among others rather than on them” and to do so must “treat fellow humans as people” (Wolcott, 2009, p. 17). Connecting to the social constructivist paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (1985) note how the contribution of each individual is recognized as essential to the creation of a contextualized reality revealed through the research text. Toward this aim, all participants are invited by the researcher for specific reasons pertaining to what he might bring to the study rather than a selected blind sampling of multiple informants.

Qualitative inquiry is deeply *personalistic*. As Stake (2010) notes, researchers work to understand individual perceptions by seeking out uniqueness more than commonality and by honoring diversity of experience in the same breath as identifying

any threads of sameness. Study participants are “purposeful actors [who] participate in, construct, deeply experience, or imagine their lives” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 12). Meanings and interpretations are negotiated with participants from which data is drawn because it is their constructions of reality that the inquirer seeks to reconstruct (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41). Research strives to capture rich and vibrant descriptions of people in interaction with others and their natural contextualized spaces as they live, unfold, and reflect upon their lives (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). For this reason, the number of study participants is typically small, which can allow the researcher to explore the “insider meanings” of each individual participant (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38).

Beyond the individual’s experience itself, the significance and influence of both the context and phenomena upon the individuals is also taken into consideration. Participants are also viewed as part of a cohort and as part of a culture (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Within a study focused on a particular research puzzle or setting, aspects of one participant’s exceptional reality will typically overlap with those of others trying to negotiate, understand, and explain similar phenomena. Differences come in the meanings that are attached to each phenomenon through “the sense making in which each actor engages in order to keep his or her world whole and seamless” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 82).

Everything described above reflects my principles and aspirations in regard to the participants in this dissertation study. Angel, Angela, Jeriel, LaNyck, Melody, Nora, Rei, Sherry, and Ti were each specifically invited to participate in this study because (a) I had been privileged to receive many stories about their journeys over the years of knowing and working with them as their professor, (b) I have been blessed to have walked

alongside them for part of those journeys, and (c) I felt called to learn even more about their unique perspectives and experiences. While there are common elements within the stories they shared (especially as singers, Detroit residents, and a cohort in the Marygrove Music Department), I have never sought a consensus of truth but rather glimpses of experiential resonance between them.

Inherently, research seeks to better understand the unfamiliar—that which is beyond our current understanding. Within qualitative research, inquirers are typically looking to better understand the lived experiences of other people—noting both similarities and differences in ways of making meaning from lives lived. Nevertheless, problems of representation can arise when differences are not well understood by the researcher or are taken too heavily into account before the data is collected. I wish to briefly return to two significant topics from Chapter Two as they relate to these qualitative research participants as uniquely storied and socially-situated individuals.

The first is the significance and complexity of individual identities as they connect to socially-constructed groups, especially when those groups have historically been plagued by a system of oppression, which includes (but is not limited to) the application of stereotypes that are limited, simplistic, demeaning, stigmatizing, and prejudicial (Staszak, 2020). For my dissertation study, it is important to note that these participants may carry, embody, or story themselves in/with/through identities commonly marginalized and/or minoritized in and by American society. These types of marginalized identity groups include self-categorized designations of African American/Black/Person of Color, 2SLGBTQIA+, women, and/or socio-economically challenged (where incomes and housing arrangements were not always ample for the full needs of the family). Not

only do these identities stand alone, but in a unique *intersectionality*, which co-exist under the same storied life story and related master narrative.

This dissertation study is not specifically about marginalization and discrimination, but because this is a systemic reality for people with the identities held by these participants—and because I, as researcher, do not carry, embody, or story myself through many of the same identities—it is an important contextual element to acknowledge. The rich and powerful stories of these participants exist far beyond the smallness of marginalization and prejudice, but their stories are also irretrievably linked to these experiences. In a similar way, my stories exist far beyond any marginalization and prejudice I might perpetuate simply by receiving benefits related to my privilege, but my stories are also irretrievably linked to this truth.

The term *Othering* originated in Said's (1978) seminal work, *Orientalism*, which explored the historical justification for Western colonialism through false, generalized, and prejudicial representations shared within social discourse (e.g., stories, media) and which were meant to reduce non-Western peoples, places, and things to inferiority or fetishization. Generalization and marginalization allow individuals from one group to treat those from another group as less human themselves, which is the destructive effect of Othering (Murphy, 2016).

There is a distinction between embracing the *differences* of an individual and *Othering* an individual as described here by Staszak (2020, p. 25):

Other: Member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group.

Otherness: Characteristic of the Other.

***Othering*:** Transforming a difference into otherness so as to create an in-group and an out-group.

We know ourselves through the existence of and our understandings about others.⁷⁹

Addressing *Othering* is not intended to seek elimination of *self* and *other* designations, but rather striving to identify the effects that power structures have on our views of others who are dissimilar from ourselves and whom society has taught us more about than we have actually experienced with the individuals themselves. Hooks (1990) notes that problems with viewing others as *Other* arise when it becomes an “us” talking of “them” and “we” then use “our” words for “their” stories. Having the ability to see, celebrate, and respect the unique differences between myself and another storied individual is crucial because this has the potential to develop closeness; whereas *Othering* generates a loss of individuality or a grouping with “Them” which creates a distance.

Through an inquirer’s lens, Michelle Fine (1994) views *self* and *other* as a “knottily entangled” relationship between researchers and informants which has been obscured in social science texts “protecting privilege, securing distance, and laminating the contradictions” (p. 73). She warns of the dangers when researchers opt to simply write *about* people—in particular, those who have been traditionally Othered—instead of finding the vulnerability and courage to “work the hyphen” between the Self-Other paradigm. In this way, we may come to invite discussions to better understand “whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence” (p. 72).

⁷⁹ de Beauvoir (1949/2011), Heidegger (1962), Husserl (1950/1991), and Sarte (1943) are among the original scholars who spoke of Otherness.

Expanding upon Fine's work, Krumer-Nevo (2012) noted that qualitative research is inherently involved with the concept of the *Other*. Trying to represent the Other is the beginning of a process of reduction, because no representation can capture the true complexity of any person. While the heart of social research is the desire to know another person, this work will always contain the threat of Othering regardless of researcher intention. Krumer-Nevo encourages researcher colleagues to strive to avoid the creation of the "harsh and harmful distinction" between *We* (who have "emotions, rationality, capabilities, experiences, knowledge, and will") and the *Others* (who lack "complexity, motivation, rationality, and capabilities, and who serve as carriers of what is undesirable") (p. 186). In this way, our research may seek great potential for "empowerment, for experiences of trust, support and understanding" between participants, researchers, and audiences (p. 187).

In Chapter Two, I spoke of Buber's (1923/1971) dialogical *I/Thou* relationship, which is applicable here to help avoid creating an objectifying relationship of *I/It*. Through Krippendorff's (1997) view, this relationship of *I/Thou* denotes "a pair of complementary constructions of people characterized by their ability to speak for themselves, with each Other, and in that process create worlds of their own" (p. 58). In the true rapport of *I/Thou*, each individual respects the other person as having a fully unique identity, informed by culture and society, but not dictated by socio-cultural assumptions or stereotypes of presumed identity. It is critical for researchers to constantly remind themselves that a human who stands before them is an individual first—and an individual who may have constructed stories within a different localized or with a different alignment to the master narratives than the researcher has had.

Within this dissertation study, my goal as a researcher is to respect and uplift the individuality and normality of my participants rather than attempting to distill their unique paths into any form of single essence (Krumer-Nevo, 2012). Toward this goal, my participants will be the ones to decide how to name (or even whether to reveal) their own unique identities. I have no right to name or label anyone, and I refuse to speak **for** others when they may speak for themselves. In my aim to avoid Othering these study participants and to esteem the potential importance of their own intersectionalities, I have created a process by which participants may name their own aspects of intersectionality through the use of self-constructed character descriptions. This process gives participants the power to determine what audiences will know (and how they come to know it) prior to hearing their stories in the ethnodrama.

Context as Storied Place

Qualitative research takes place in natural contexts of the participants and typically with an intense and prolonged contact with, or immersion in a setting (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38; also Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The goal of this is “to understand social reality on its own terms...as it really is” and “to describe what comes naturally” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 6). Any attempt to distance a word, act, or gesture from its context loses sight of the meaningful relationship between observed human action and the settings in which it occurs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Because of this connection, researchers must view reality in its “textured detail” and strive to “richly and accurately describe these realities without unduly disrupting—thus distorting—these worlds” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 19). Because of this,

situated contexts related to the participants—and in some cases, the researcher—become incredibly important to the study.

In Chapter 2, I introduced Lyotard's (1979) description of *master narratives* (also known as *meta-narratives* or *grands récits*) which attempt to provide a universal truth story toward explaining how the world is, how it was, and how it should be for everyone. Gilroy (2015) notes that meta-narratives are not inherently bad, but their claims to truth and value need to be examined and viewed with suspicion (e.g., promoting Western society and civilization as the height of human achievement to which everyone needs to aspire). As an alternative, Lyotard suggested that people endeavor to see and understand the world more through *petite récits* (small, localized narratives). This approach helps us to take events and stories in their context and to emphasize the diversity of human experience instead of upholding a singular, universal view. The goal is a promotion and celebration of the plurality of meaning and truth within humanity. Building from these understandings, I relate the significance of research settings within qualitative inquiry to the humanist geographical approaches of *space* and *place*. Localized narrative directly implies a connection to places, because both localized narrative and senses of place “partake of cultures and [consist of] shared bodies of local knowledge with which persons and whole communities render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance” (Basso, 1996, p. xiv).⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Basso credits Geertz (1983) with the term: *localized knowledge*.

The Significance of Place

Although the philosophical origins of *place* may be found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, Heidegger's (1971) essay, *Building Dwelling Thinking* and its exploration of the relationship between dwelling in and the building of worlds set the stage for humanistic geography's social constructionist views of place. Human geography "focuses on how people make places, how we organize space and society, how we interact with each other in places and across space, and how we make sense of others and ourselves in our localities, regions, and the world" (Fouberg, Murphy, & de Blij, 2015, p. 5). Tuan (1974, 1977, 1979) views *space* as a location through which we move—abstract and undifferentiated. However, *place* is about pausing, becoming involved, and finding belonging. Each place is "a unique entity" with a history, which "incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people" (Tuan, 1979, p. 387). We come to know the world through our experiences within and our perception of the places we inhabit.⁸¹ Tuan's view of experience is not dissimilar to Dewey as Tuan also suggests that to experience is to learn by acting and creating out of the given. What is "given" cannot be known in itself, but rather is a reality constructed of experience through the creation of feeling and thought (1977, p. 9). For Tuan (1977), "experience" bears connection to the terms "experiment" and "perilous" through their common Latin root, *per*. From this, *experiencing* requires that "one ventures forth into the unfamiliar and experiment with the elusive and the uncertain...[and] dare to confront the perils of the new" (p. 9).

⁸¹ I would argue this also occurs through our constructed perceptions of places we may view from the outside, but cannot or choose not to inhabit (e.g., foreign countries, restricted institutions, sites featured in social and reality-based media, the other side of the 8 Mile line).

Building upon Tuan and Dewey (1934/2005), Cresswell (2009) agrees that experiences are “at the heart of what place means” and in this way, place transcends the concepts of geography and philosophy (p. 170; also Cresswell, 2015). Place is space that people have made meaningful—a meaningful, storied location that can be both extremely personal (connected to individuals and their personal biographies) as well as shared and social (Cresswell, 2015; Jacobsen, 2012). Whereas space relates to the structure of the world—locations where events and objects occur in the relative position and direction its environment—place contains an infusion of storied humanity, such as social meaning, convention, cultural understandings, or purpose (Harrison & Dourish, 1996). As a part of lifeworld, our sense of place is “continuously enacted” as we live in, utilize, have experiences within, and build stories about the places we inhabit (Cresswell, 2009, p. 170). In this way, spaces become places “when meanings, constructed through social interaction, cultural identities and personal involvement are supported and embedded into the environment” (Wahlstedt, Pekkola, & Niemelä, 2008, p. 1024). Jacobsen (2012) uses a college dorm room as example of space transforming into place. Walking into his dorm room on the first day of a new semester, an incoming student is greeted by a generic, undifferentiated space containing standard-issue furnishings of bed/desk/chair. By the end of the week, however, the addition of personalized elements such as bedding, wallcoverings, photographs, technology, clothing, and bric-a-brac, as well as the bodies and voices of friends, have begun to inscribe story into this temporary home-place.

Complex social institutions such as schools, cities, and places of worship are all places with shared bodies of local knowledge which help inhabitants know how to act, what should be known, how they should come to know it, what is valued and meaningful

(Wenger, 1998). The milieu of each college, church, and city differs in multiple ways from the next; however, threads of similarities between these institution types are evident. Cresswell (2009) identified three elements that directly contribute to the constructed understanding of and are intimately linked to the concept of experience in *place*: material topography, meanings (inscribed into the material landscape but open to contestation), and practices (what is appropriate in a particular place)

Continuing the example, college and university campuses are established places of topography, practices, and meanings inscribed by a long history of people entering, doing, being, and moving on to new places (particularly those now open to degree-holding individuals). Fouberg, Murphy, and de Blij (2015) speak of these types of *cultural landscapes* as heavily storied places which carry “layers of impressions from compounded years of human activity” (p. 10). As new students arrive and occupy the campus, they bring with them their own cultural, social, and technological traditions which work to transform the landscape accordingly. Histories are negotiated as updates in the form of curriculum, new buildings, equipment, or other assets appear and disappear through the years.⁸² These imprints created by sequences of occupants begin to layer one on top of the next (Fouberg, Murphy, & de Blij, 2015, p. 10).⁸³

Speaking of the setting of a qualitative study, we are referring to this complexity of place, specifically places related to the research process. There are three places significant to this study:

⁸² Marygrove College is a perfect example of this. The campus, built in the early 20th century with grand historical neo-Gothic architecture, struggled to accommodate in modern conveniences and technology (e.g., air-conditioning, accessibility, Wi-Fi). You can feel and see the layers of years in its buildings.

⁸³ Fouberg, Murphy, and de Blij (2015) note that Whittlesey (1929) described this phenomenon as *sequent occupance*.

1. The Marygrove Music Department
2. Marygrove College
3. Detroit

While the complexity and significance of these places could inspire and deserves multiple studies in and of themselves, I will highlight a few key considerations related to meaning in relation to this study.

Marygrove College and The Marygrove Music Department

As shared throughout the dissertation, Marygrove College (and its music department) played a powerful role in my life and the lives of the participants of this study. We carry this place with us—not just the physical topography of buildings, classrooms, performance/practice spaces, and studios; or the practices of musicking and learning as shared in Chapter Three—but memories and identities built from experiences and human connection. Many of the stories shared through the ethnodrama monologues were lived meanings created at Marygrove.

When each of us (the participants and I) entered Marygrove College and its music department for the first time, the campus topography and its localized narrative were landscapes we needed to learn.⁸⁴ Our starting points were our preconceived notions and projected expectations of what higher education music would mean at Marygrove. These were informed by our prior experiences and accepted truth narratives of schooling, musicking, and Detroit which influenced our transitions into, engagement with, and understandings of Marygrove as both a college institution and a music department.

⁸⁴ Four of the participants were already underclassmen at Marygrove when I arrived, one participant arrived the same year as I, and the remaining four entered in my second and third years.

Soon after my arrival, the curriculum and departmental mission of the Marygrove music department began to change.⁸⁵ As these participants and I worked with other stakeholders (i.e., faculty, students, staff, administrators) to change the music department curriculum, we were beginning to change the localized narrative of the music department as well. As the localized narrative changed and new stories were created through it, the Marygrove Music Department began to change as *place*. In the end, the department's narrative began aligning better with the mission and localized narrative of the College (especially its urban leadership initiative) and the localized narrative of Detroit (especially the embracing the vernacular musicking practices of the community)—and aligning less with the master narrative of the 19th century music conservatory. These changes were generally more comfortable for the students and less comfortable for the established music faculty, including myself.

Tuan (1979) spoke of significant places flourishing into small worlds “rooted in the past and growing into a future” that reflect a unique and complex spirit or personality (p. 388). Across the 90 years of its history, Marygrove College and the Marygrove music department had flourished in their uniqueness and complexity of spirit—carried outward by generations of alumni making their final walk through the historic 6 Mile archway and carried inward by newly enrolled students bringing their own personalities, stories, and dreams to the narrative. Now when these participants and I speak of this place together, we speak of it fully in past tense, not only because we no longer create new stories there,

⁸⁵ The college-wide curriculum had also begun to shift to bring it into alignment with Marygrove's newly adopted Urban Leadership Mission.

but that while the space remains, the *place* no longer exists.⁸⁶ I ponder the question: How does relationship with place change when the place exists only in memory and there will be no “growing into a future”—especially for a group of people with such a strong sense of topophilia and who devoted much time, love, and care toward its potential future?⁸⁷

Detroit

“So, what part of Detroit is the bad part?” a guy from New York asked a woman from Rochester Hills during a study abroad program.

“Pretty much anything south of Eight Mile is ghetto,” she said.

I was within earshot, and I wasn’t going to let this one go.

“Oh, you mean the part where I grew up and where my family still lives? By Seven Mile? That’s the ghetto part?”

She turned multiple shades of red. I wondered how exactly she could make such a determination considering that she probably hadn’t ventured very far south of Maple Road, let alone visited the city itself outside of downtown.

Even after college, when I met suburbanites in their late twenties and early thirties, the lack of familiarity with Detroit remained surprising. A guy I dated grew up in Bloomfield Hills and lived in Troy; he didn’t have any idea how to get to my parents’ home, and thought we needed to traverse I-75. I told him the main street near his apartment could simply be driven 6 miles south, directly into Detroit. The name changed from Coolidge to Schaefer once you hit 8 Mile, but it was the same street.

We’d grown up just 6 miles away from each other, yet it seemed worlds apart.⁸⁸

From Shannon Selton Miller’s (2014) essay
“I’m from Detroit” (p. 27)
in *A Detroit Anthology* (Clark, ed.)

⁸⁶ Marygrove College declared exigency in August 2017. The Marygrove Music Department, along with all other undergraduate programs, closed in December 2017. Marygrove College, with its remaining graduate programs, fully closed in December 2019.

⁸⁷ Tuan’s (1974) term *topophilia* refers to the “affective bond between people and place” (p. 4).

⁸⁸ Rochester Hills, Bloomfield Hills, and Troy are all northern Metro-Detroit suburbs situated in affluent areas of Oakland County. Technically, Maple Road is 15 Mile Road.

Although the author was not known to me prior to reading this narrative, her words mirror my experience from the opposite geographical starting point. Shannon Selton Miller's family home is in a neighborhood not far from the Marygrove College campus—and I grew up in Rochester Hills. Once upon a time, I said things very similar to “a woman from Rochester Hills” and was just as unfamiliar with the streets of Detroit proper as “the guy” she dated.

Growing up in a suburb north of Detroit
during the 1980's and 90's,
I was taught a very specific narrative
about the land that lay south
of the 8 Mile line.
Dirty.
Dangerous.
Decaying.
A relic of past glories
abandoned to those who turned a once powerful city
into a wasteland.

Once upon a time, Detroit was prosperous:
The Arsenal of Democracy
where my immigrant grandfather
founded his manufacturing business.

Once upon a time, Detroit was safe:
Oma and Opa
sleeping in the grass of Belle Isle
on hot summer nights.

Once upon a time, Detroit was vibrant:
My aunt and father being taken for school clothes
and ice cream sundaes at Hudson's.

But then
there were the riots.

Five days in 1967
that ruined everything.

I saw the evidence throughout my childhood.

Headline stories of bankruptcy,
violence,
corruption,
and arson
on the evening news.

Passing
abandoned and blighted properties
as we carefully drove
down I-75
on our way to Cobo,
the Fox,
Tiger Stadium.

Always with a full tank,
windows up,
doors locked.

Never venturing beyond
the familiarity of the downtown area.
Never into the spaces
of the violent,
lawless,
Them.

And this is how I saw Detroit
as I left for college:
A hopeless, helpless city,
which certainly had nothing to do with me.

“Flowers in Detroit I” (section 1)—
by Tara Sievers-Hunt (2020)⁸⁹

I believed these things because I had not had any reason to challenge the narrative
I knew as truth. I did not have a reason to challenge the narrative because I did not know
that what I had experienced was limited and prejudicial.

Fifteen years later,
I’m back in Michigan driving south down Woodward Avenue
for an interview at a small liberal arts college

⁸⁹ I created the digital story, “Flowers in Detroit I” through StoryCenter’s Online Digital Storytelling Workshop in October 2020.

in Detroit.
I feel nervous.
Not for the interview itself,
but for the route I would have to take
to get there.

By 2010, Downtown and Midtown were on their way back.
High-powered investors and hopeful suburbanites
reclaiming the heart of the city as theirs
once more.

As for the other 130 square miles
of Detroit proper...
Those old rules still applied because:
We don't belong there.

So, gas tank full and doors locked,
I drive across Eight Mile Road
for the very
first
time.

The GPS says:
A right on Seven.
Past Pontchartrain.
A left at the BP and then...

I blink
at the large wooden barrel
sitting in the center of the boulevard.
Geraniums and impatiens overflowing
in red, purple, and white.
Then I pass another barrel,
and another.
All the way down the street.
Fear and judgement are set aside
as I stare dumbfounded
at these unexpected blossoms
carefully planted by residents whom I believed
cared only for wreck and ruin.

Something so simple
disrupting my entire understanding
of this foreign, unknown land
located only four miles

from my home.
I called my mother after the interview
and she asked how it had gone.
The only thing I could say was:

"Did you know there are flowers in Detroit?"

"Flowers in Detroit I" (section two)—
by Tara Sievers-Hunt (2020)

As crossing Eight Mile Road daily became normalized for me... As I became invested in my students as a faculty member at Marygrove College... As I began to learn new perspectives and language about the history of Detroit...⁹⁰ As I refocused upon the lived experience of Detroit residents instead of the nostalgic shock-value of its ruin porn...⁹¹ Then my *ways of seeing* grew (Berger, 1972).⁹²

Oct 12

Things I see in Detroit: Two handsome young Black men wearing fitted riding pants/boots & basketball jerseys canter their stunning (and flawlessly outfitted) quarter horses down the grassy median of Livernois at 6 Mile.

Feb 10

Things I see in Detroit: A man in thick work clothes stands at the bus stop with 3 heart-shaped pink balloons fighting to free themselves from his gloved hand. Another man in a dress coat and sharply polished shoes approaches hugging a large teddy bear to his chest. The 1st man turns, nods. The 2nd man responds. Then in unison, turn towards the street to await transport home. Happy Valentine's!

⁹⁰ For an introduction to modern Detroit history: Boyd (2018), Binelli (2012), and Sugrue (1996/2005). For narrative and poetic insights from Detroiters: Boyd and Liebler's (2001) *Abandon Automobile*, Clark's (2014) *A Detroit Anthology*, and Foley's (2017) *The Detroit Neighborhood Guidebook*. For a lighthearted, yet deeply insightful text for suburbanites-come-Detroiters: Foley's (2015) *How to Live in Detroit Without Being a Jackass*. For a comprehensive list of Detroit-related literature, Klug's (2021) *Bibliography of Detroit History, Politics, and Culture* available from The Institute for Detroit Studies (IDS)—established at Marygrove College and carries on through the Marygrove Conservancy.

⁹¹ *Ruin porn* refers to images of ruin, abandonment and decay in urban centers, especially Detroit. Doucet and Philp (2016) highlight how it only serves to "obscure the humanity and the complexity" behind the city's long struggle and reduce Detroit to its ruins" (para. 1; also Binelli, 2012). Ruin porn "is almost always devoid of people... overwrites the voices of those who still call Detroit home...[and] ignore[s] the humanity of residents' current struggles, while replicating the history that created them" (para. 12).

⁹² "Seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world ... The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe... To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach" (Berger, 1972, pp. 7-8).

April 27

Things I see in Detroit: A nerdy teenage boy with a backpack rides down the street on his bike. He's wearing old-school headphones and pedaling his bike without hands as he fiercely air-drums to the music (full set with at least 4 cymbals). As I stop my car to let him cross, he waves, smiles, and keeps on drumming completely unfazed.

May 19

Things I see in Detroit: A gentleman in a royal purple 3-piece-suit struts down the sidewalk pulling a yellow grocery cart by a suitcase strap attached to the handle. The cart, half-filled with clean hay, contains 6 brown/white puppies playing happily inside.

July 9

Things I see in Detroit: Two tall skinny high school boys grinning like Cheshire cats race each other down the sidewalk. Each balancing a stack of 4 "Hot-and-Ready" pizzas in their hands,⁹³ and a 2 liter of Coke in each armpit. Snack time!

Sept 16

Things I see in Detroit: Dad walks behind his young son on the sidewalk as the boy fights imagined enemies in a homemade TMNT costume.⁹⁴ The shell is a green trash lid secured to his back with a brown belt, his mask is a scarf with eyeholes, and 2 thick sticks tied with rope serve as nun-chucks. Best. costume. ever.

(Examples from my series of personal social media posts, from 2012-2015, sharing my observations of people living life along the Live6 corridor)⁹⁵

These joyful and quirky moments within very normal scenes of everyday life combined with experiences within the city and meaningful conversations with Marygrove students (the majority of whom were Detroiters themselves) shifted my perspectives. The soul of Detroit is not the glittering Opera House or the Fisher Theatre—it is gospel music resonating throughout a neighborhood church on a Sunday morning. The heart of Detroit

⁹³ Popular carry-out menu item from the Detroit-based Little Caesars pizza franchise.

⁹⁴ *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* – characters created by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird in the 1980's and utilized in comics, cartoons, video games, films, and toys.

⁹⁵ Live6 is the term for the Livernois and McNichols (6 Mile) commercial areas between Marygrove College and University of Detroit Mercy.

is not a row of derelict houses with boarded-up windows and trees rising through the roofs—it is the one house on that block, tended to with love and care, as the family fights to stay and remembers. The resilience of Detroit is neither the revitalized skyscrapers nor a collection of shuttered businesses and empty factories—it is stories, wisdom, and laughter pouring out of its barbershops and beauty salons; and a home-based cheesecake business, started by a 15-year-old girl and her mother, celebrating grand opening day in a brand-new Live6 storefront.⁹⁶

Although Detroit itself is not the focus of my research, its influence as the location of the College and as a home to these participants has deeply affected my/their/our stories. It has been such a journey to examine my own relationship with the City. Ten years after seeing those flowers blooming on a Detroit boulevard, I am still coming to understand the profoundness of that moment.

For the next seven years,
I would cross back and forth over that Eight Mile line.
A thousand days
of crossing-over and crossing-back.
Crossing-over,
crossing-back.

Crossing between spaces.

Between narratives.

Hard lines becoming fluid.

Tensions and discords
challenging so much of what I had been told
and thought
I knew.

⁹⁶ Lucki's Cheesecakes has now expanded its offering beyond its flagship store in Live6 to over 50 Metro-Detroit stores and restaurants. Highly recommend!

A transformation
of We
and Them.

Into Us.

“Flowers in Detroit I” (section 3)—
a digital story by Tara Sievers-Hunt (2020)

Each of the participants came to Marygrove with an understanding of Detroit informed from the perspective of the Detroit *localized narrative* itself. I came to Marygrove with an understanding of Detroit from the perspective of a *localized narrative* from the northern Metro-Detroit suburbs. These narratives are completely different and offer many contradictory understandings of Detroit as place (e.g., history, geography, industry, values, people, community). Over the course of my time at Marygrove and engaging in this study, I have come to see the differences between these two narratives of Detroit, to value the perspectives of the Detroit localized narrative, to challenge my understandings of Detroit according to secondary localized narrative by incorporating new understandings of Detroit from actual experiences with Detroit and its residents.

Individuals create their own sense of place through experiences in and knowledge of that place, but these are also influenced by others around us with established ideas of the place as well. Humans may also develop perceptions of places they have never visited through books, movies, stories, and pictures (Fouberg, Murphy, & de Blij, 2015). Rubin and Rubin (2012) warn that part of the responsibility when entering a research role is negotiating any cultural and social gaps which may result in differences in background and status between yourself and the participants. In addition to developing a sense of trust and addressing unequal power status issues, these gaps may also include fostering a

fluency of the localized language culture. Because applications of words, actions, and processes are not universal understandings, all speech communities possess repertoires of metacommunication that are *taken-as-shared* (Cobb, 2005) understandings with respect to individuals and their communal experiences within the speech community. Briggs (1986) warns that unless a researcher gains competence in these localized speech repertoires, she will be deprived of “an adequate sense as to how the information...fits into broader patterns of thinking, feeling, and speaking” and she will run the risk of misinterpreting the meaning of the responses (p. 2). *Prolonged engagement* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a significant asset to help prevent this scenario. Investing a sufficient amount of time to know the culture more deeply is not only informative, but establishes trust between all parties. It is necessity to create both time and space among participants “to cultivate investigation, exploration, and deepened relationships beyond initial and negative reactions” (Bresler, 2015, p. 10). By striving for these sustained encounters of *persistent observation* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and active engagement, we have more opportunity to unpack elements of both resonance and dissonance, which becomes key to identifying connections between our inner and outer worlds, which shapes our observations. With the deep racialized history of the Metro-Detroit area, my prolonged engagement with Detroit as place and its localized narrative becomes even more critical (especially about the significance with the familiarity of language of place and the weight of my storied skin). I could not imagine undertaking this study without having already built trusted relationships and developed some sense of fluency with the history, language, gestures, and customs of Detroit proper and the Black Detroit community.

The Research Cohort

Could relationships and collaborative projects result in the development of a conceptual place? This research study is intimately connected to places as listed above, but the stories and experiences shared transcended any one place as participants and I co-constructed portions of our musicianhood across the past 8+ years. The participants and I created our research place together, mostly based on our experiences doing research together through the Marygrove curriculum roundtables. I was at the forefront of the curriculum project as leader, but these experiences influenced construction of this dissertation study as well—especially with conversational interview style, a roundtable-like focus group, and the performative resulting products. Our nonformal research work at Marygrove resulted in a new curriculum in which they engaged and within this formal study, the result will be an ethnodrama with which they may engage. Further, the research cohort we have created together and carried forward seems to have its own sense of place regardless of the actual physical (or digital) location.

Inquiry as Holistic, Emergent, Pluralistic, and Iterative

In Chapter Three, I describe the musical learning and music making process as a *multidimensional structured whole* (Wiggins, 2015). The engagement with architectural dimensions (e.g., pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, form, meter, tempo, dynamics, articulation) informed by cultural, historical, dramatic, and stylistic meta-dimensions made into being by a contextually-situated individual with a unique perspective of interpretation and intentionality.

Similarly, the goal of a qualitative research study is to craft a *multidimensional structured whole*. The structural dimensions of the study are informed by the meta-

dimensional aspects of participants and context, conducted by a contextually-situated individual with a unique perspective of interpretation and intentionality to create a unified picture. As a situated pursuit, it is vital for each component of the study (e.g., researcher, participant, location, data collection, data analysis) to be understood in relation to the whole (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Whether acting as singers or researchers, we are the subjective story-sharers or “situated speakers...engaged in knowing/telling about the world as [we] perceive it” (Richardson, 2000, p. 928). A singer’s presentation of song and a researcher’s publication of study both represent a revealing of human experience through a shared interpretation. A singer must, above all things, be authentic to the intent of the composer/poet/culture, the needs of the work, and deeper connective meaning brought to life through her own voice (laryngeal, personal, and experiential). A researcher, like the singer, faithfully attends to the interpretations of meaningful life experience shared by the participants, composers of the phenomena to be observed. Singers interpret a musical score, not simply for what is written, but for what lies beneath, between and beyond the printed notes. The immediate observations of rhythm, pitch, and meter are only the beginning of the story, a place to start looking for true meaning. Similarly, the researcher thoroughly documents the words and actions of study participants, then carefully examines this text for a depth and richness just beyond the obvious. Just as a singer will always bring a piece of herself into the song she sings, so too will a researcher personally influence the context of a study. In both cases, it is something to valued and embraced—a natural part of a shared human experience. However, in recognition of this influence, both singer and researcher must be as “perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to

show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its greatest depth...while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or...carried away by our unreflected preconceptions” (van Manen, 1997, p. 20). Musical and academic audiences may be different, but both expect and deserve a clear and honest interpretation, a feeling of connection to the story, and sense of a greater understanding through our presentations. If we accomplish this, we not only honor the composers of the life experience and our audiences, but also ourselves. Inquiry crafted as a *multidimensional structured whole*, which embraces a pluralistic view of truth, ever-changing influences of personal interpretation, and the significance of the One irretrievably intertwined with the Many, poses an interesting conundrum.

Connected to an interpretive methodology, qualitative inquiry is holistic, pluralistic, emergent, and iterative (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Qualitative studies are left “open and fluid” so they may respond in a flexible way as new details or possibilities emerge during the investigation process (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37). Researchers’ work requires examining multiple perspectives and “sketching a larger picture that emerges” including the identification of “the complex interactions of factors in any situation” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). With the data at the center of the process, studies emerge from the bottom up from many disparate, yet interconnected pieces of data collected. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) liken this to “constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts” rather than putting together a puzzle whose picture is printed on the front of the box (p. 6). In this way, research questions (or *research puzzles*, as preferred by Clandinin (2013)) may “evolve, change, or be refined” during the course of the study. Without being tied to a preconceived hypothesis, the

researcher may enter the process with a completely open mind and the research process is messy, and intentionally so (Dörnyei, 2007). Noting this *iterative* nature, Dörnyei (2007) describes the shape of inquiry as a nonlinear “zig-zag pattern” which moves back and forth freely between the data collection, analysis, and interpretation as a comprehensive picture emerges (p. 243; also Polkinghorne, 2005). For Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), the stability of the process comes as each aspect of an integrated nexus of ontology, epistemology, and methodology informs and strengthen the others along the way. Revising a methodology once the research project has begun may seem counter-productive to producing a quality study. However, if the data collection or initial analysis becomes complicated by the data received and prompts a reexamination of process, the study may benefit from a change to the methods design. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) reason that if a researcher’s philosophical belief system embraces this type of fluidity, then a reconfiguration of process is in line with the holistic approach inherent in qualitative research.

As a result, any findings should be considered localized, contextualized, and temporally-situated interpretations rather than concrete answers (Stake, 2010). The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize findings for direct application to populations outside of the research setting (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Any knowledge gained of people, organizations, cultures, and contexts being studied are seen simultaneously as common and unique (Stake, 2010). Qualitative researchers seek to share their understandings in meaningful ways that may resonate with the reader or connect elements to other cases, things, and events; but there is always an emphasis on situational uniqueness.

When this research process began, I knew I wanted to examine stories from particular participants connected to a particular context; and to explore how these stories might inform the curricular doings within that context. However, much has shifted since that first submission of the IRB five years ago. As shared in the opening of Chapter One, this dissertation study has taken an incredible number of unexpected twists and turns—inspiring, frustrating, exciting, confusing, and heartbreaking in fairly equal measure. The completion of this study was only made possible by having not merely a methodology that was holistic, pluralistic, emergent, and iterative, but by embracing a researcher identity with the same flexibility and resilience.

An A/r/tographical Bricoleur

A/r/tography and bricolage are qualitative methodologies, but they may also function as identities when used as a guiding personal philosophy beyond formal inquiry settings. In this dissertation study, I have embraced an identity as an a/r/tographical bricoleur.

An A/r/tographer

A/r/tography is practice-based research which acknowledges “making, learning, and knowing as interconnected” within pedagogical and artistic practices (Irwin et al., 2018, p. 37). This form of inquiry situated in the “in-between” of “theory-as-practice-as-process-as-complication” which “intentionally unsettles perception and knowing” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxi). It is a form of living inquiry which seeks to interpret and describe the “complexity of experience among artists, researchers, and teachers as well as the lives of individuals within the communities they interact with” (p. xxv).

A/r/tography is *rhizomatic* (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). In biology, a rhizome is a type of plant stem which travels parallel to the ground and grows perpendicular to the shoots it produces (Biologydictionary, 2019). Each part of the rhizome can produce a new plant, which allows different plants to spring up in many different areas of the garden, but still in connection to the same organism. In relation to a/r/tography, a rhizome is viewed as “relationships between and among” different ways of understanding experience and “are integral to an intertextuality and intratextuality of ideas” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxiv). It is a collective identity and way of being that “moves and flows in dynamic momentum” (p. xx) and forms “rhizomatic ways of experiencing the world” (p. xxiv).

While I am not specifically naming a/r/tography as a methodology of this study, I do feel a keen sense of connection to the a/r/tographical identity. I was inspired to claim myself as an a/r/tographer after seeing Patricia Leavy (2013) refer to herself as such, saying that her work was “the ultimate blurring” of her artist-researcher-teacher identities and represented how her life experiences in those roles were now “inseparable” from how she thinks and acts in the world (p. 10). Kincheloe’s (2003) exploration of the teacher-researcher had been a strong source of inspiration, but I had always asserted my artist self as an equal identity partner alongside education and inquiry. Lea, Belliveau, Wager, and Beck (2011) phrase this beautifully: An a/r/tographer engaged in the practice of inquiry “emphasizes the process (*praxis*) through which practitioners draw upon their Artist, Researcher, and Teacher identities to artistically engage (*poesis*) in research and (re)question their understandings (*theoria*)” (p. 3). William Pinar (2004a) described a/r/tographers as those who integrate their artist-researcher-teacher roles within both their

personal and professional lives. They are “neither this nor that, but this *and* that” as they dwell within the “in-between spaces” of these identities (p. 9). Plus, it is not simply that an individual makes art, engages in research, and teaches students. The central idea to the identity of an a/r/tographer is that she lives through the embodied experiences of being an artist, an educator, and a researcher; and makes sense of them in purposeful ways (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008).

A Bricoleur

*The bricoleur derives poetry from the fact
that he does not confine himself to accomplishment and execution.
He ‘speaks’ not only with things,
but through the medium of things;
giving an account of his personality and life
by the choices he makes
between limited possibilities.
The bricoleur may not ever complete his purpose
but he always puts something of himself into it.*

A poetic transcription created from
Lévi-Strauss’ (1966) *The Savage Mind* (p. 21).

Beyond the practice of bricolage within this study itself, I also feel a strong connection with the identity of being a *bricoleur*. The French word, *bricoleur*, describes “a handyman or handywoman who makes use of the tools available to complete a task” (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 1). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) first used the term in regard to inquiry as “a maker of quilts” who uses (or invents) different tools, techniques, and interpretive practices as needed, depending upon the context, the research question, the resources available, and the final research form (also Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Because bricolage “exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world,” a bricoleur actively constructs research methods “from the tools at hand rather than passively

receiving the ‘correct,’ universally applicable methodologies” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 324). Such an approach allows for “different voices, different perspectives, points of views, angles of vision” to emerge and interact together in simultaneity and “create spaces for give-and-take between reader and writer” and keep our engagements authentic and meaningful (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). These elements of flexibility, variance, and multiplicity are inherent in both music and storytelling, and as essential factors in the interpretation of music as a naturalistic phenomenon must be embraced as components of any study involving individuals, music, and storytelling. Working as a bricoleur is especially poignant for this study as life stories may also be thought of as a form of bricolage (Harper, 1987, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Berry (2015) notes that a bricoleur is not simply a researcher who engages in bricolage, but who claims this personal identity extending beyond the practice of inquiry. In her experience:

1. A bricoleur loves intertextuality. She brings a variety of methodologies and theories into her “research toolbox” and then seeks to construct her inquiry into a final form that “avoids the linear, reductionist structure” of a research report (p. 88).
2. She starts from what she knows and where she is. As someone who has been “asking questions and doing research since birth,” she engages in inquiry with “curiosity and wonderment” as “compassion for others drives [her] forward” (p. 89).
3. She seeks to “rethink and re-see” the world in all its “complexity and multiplicity” while problematizing its puzzles to help transform “policies,

discourses, and practices of exclusion, inequities, and social injustices” (p. 98).

4. She embraces a process of reading and thinking about everything until it is so messy, complex, and interconnected that she becomes overwhelmed and must force herself to stop and organize the messiness into “a ‘readable’ but writerly text” (p. 106).

Bricoleurs reject the idea that there is only one answer to any question and that any one question may be considered superior over all others. While bricoleurs may examine selective knowledge through their research, they openly acknowledge that the academic tradition of fragmenting the world into “neat compartments” remains a primary reason why they have been drawn to bricolage (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 46).

Throughout the dissertation, I will be making connections to my identity as an a/r/tographical bricoleur as it reflects how I learn, process, apply, and create within each of the worlds of art, education, and research. I engaged with thinking, learning, and creation as a bricoleur throughout my a/r/tographical practice as a scholar, researcher, musician, writer, teacher, and professor. Further, through this study, I have engaged in methodological, theoretical, critical, and narrative forms of bricolage as well as working as interpretive bricoleur in the production of a bricolage in the form of a digital ethnodrama (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Kincheloe, 2001).

Humans as Creatures of Story

*If you want to know me,
then you must know my story,
for my story defines who I am.*

*And if I want to know myself;
to gain insight into the meaning of my own life...
Then I, too,
must come to know my own story.*

*I must come to see in all its particulars
the narrative of self,
the personal myth
that I have tacitly, even unconsciously,
composed over the course of my years.*

*It is a story I continue to revise
and tell to myself
(and sometimes to others)
as I go on living.*

A poetic transcription created from
McAdams' (1997) *The Stories We Live By* (p. 11)

Storytelling in Everyday Life

Human beings think, imagine, and make moral and value choices according to narrative structures (Sarbin, 1986). Sarbin identifies *narrative* as an organizing principle for human action, which is invoked as humans impose structure on the flow of their experiences. Experiences become storied phenomena as lives are composed, lived, told, and relived in storied ways on storied landscapes (Clandinin, 2010b). In turn, the storied lives of individuals are “embedded within, are shaped by, and shape those storied landscapes” of larger familial, social, cultural, and institutional narratives (p. 2).

Experience as a human phenomenon was explored more deeply in Chapter 1, primarily through Dewey's (1938/1997) Theory of Experience.⁹⁷ Dewey's two criteria of interaction and continuity enacted in situations provide the grounding for “attending to a

⁹⁷ The works of John Dewey define experience for both the underpinnings of teaching and learning as well as narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Clandinin, 2013).

narrative conception of experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality” (p. 12). Stated another way, experience is a social process embedded in both the social and physical worlds which may be considered “continuous and interactive,” “temporal and transactional,” and “a continuous whole of an individual’s actions and interactions unfolding over time” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 35).

Organization by Narrative Means

Stories are the most common form we use to organize and record both social and personal experience. Crafting narrative meaning through storytelling is a cognitive process that shapes human experiences into temporally meaningful episodes organized by elements of awareness (Polkinghorne, 1988). Through the organizational process of storied action, the Self is narratively constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed across the lifespan as it is communicated to oneself and to others (Bruner, 1986; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Bogart (2014) notes that humans are “meaning-making machines” who fiercely translate experiences into potent narratives in order to make sense of them (p. 7). An essential part of our individual and cultural identities, we create written, aural, oral, visual, and kinesthetic stories about ourselves; both self-narratives which enable us “to construe who we are and where we are heading in our lives” and cultural narratives that “give cohesion to shared beliefs” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 207).

Storytelling is a way that we challenge and raise questions about the *known* (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012). Through stories, we understand who we are in relation to others, engage in identity formation and transformation, share and witness events in place and time, give voice to dreams and imagination, understand the past, and seek to know

the future (Leggo, 2008). Stories are effective in these tasks, because they offer a balance between uniqueness and universality. This allows us to assert and maintain our individuality, while still aiding us in creating categories, recognizing repetition, and developing a sense of familiarity within daily life (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986). The crafting of stories can help us express and articulate our life experiences in more complex, accurate terms, which may direct us toward meaningful and innovative ways of understanding human lives, especially our own (Schiff, 2012). As Barrett and Stauffer (2012) note: “Story is a means of sense making, a way in and through which we represent, interrogate, and interpret experience and come to know ourselves and others...a means by which we might trouble certainty, and raise questions concerning the ‘taken-for-granted’” (p. 1). Even the imaginative elements of our stories that present insights as fictions are “part of the reality in which we live our lives” (Sarbin, 1986, p. 12). In this way, fact, fantasy, action, intention, past, present, future, and place may be seamlessly blended into these organizing episodes (McAdams, 1985; Sarbin, 1986; Schiff, 2012). Collectively, these human-wrought narratives then give order and meaning to existence itself (Bogart, 2014; Leggo, 2008; McAdams, 1985; Sarbin, 1986).

Thinking by Narrative Means

Jerome Bruner (1986) speaks specifically of how we think and know not only in logical-scientific ways, but also in narrative ways. He identifies two modes of cognitive thinking which each provide distinctive ways of ordering experience and constructing reality. The first is a *paradigmatic mode* that categorizes, conceptualizes, and “attempts to fulfill the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation” (p. 12). The second he deems a *narrative mode* which deals with human intention and action

and the “vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course” in imaginative ways. The result is the creative production of “good stories, gripping drama, [and] believable (although not necessarily ‘true’) historical accounts” (p. 13).

McAdams (1997) expands Bruner’s explanation saying that in a narrative mode of thought, humans “seek to explain events in terms of *human actors striving to do things over time*” (p. 30). As time passes and events happen, he states, actions lead to counteractions, to consequences, to “obstacles confronted, and intentions realized and frustrated over time” (p. 30). Comprehending our actions over time is what leads to the development of life as story.

Each of these two ways of knowing has differing operating principles, procedures for validity, and criteria toward quality construction. Both arguments of the paradigmatic mode and stories of the narrative mode can be successful in contributing to knowledge, but what they may inform or convince one of is fundamentally different. While arguments strive to convince audiences of truth in broad, abstracted applications through empirical proof, stories deal more with concepts of particularity, lifelikeness, and verisimilitude. Also, whereas the formal structure of paradigmatic approach involves following wherever one’s premises, conclusions, and observations take her and her conclusions, narrative structure invites a more flexible, pluralistic, and iterative journey toward denouement⁹⁸ (Bruner, 1986). As will be discussed in the next chapter, the common story structure consists of “*characters in action* with intentions or *goals* in *settings* using particular *means*” (p. 20). Bruner clarifies that drama is generated when

⁹⁸ *Denouement*: “The final part of a play, movie, or narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved” (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

there is an imbalance between these components, and a sense of denouement is reached when some sort of rebalancing or resolution is achieved (also citing Burke, 1945). Story-making seeks to construct two landscapes simultaneously with each landscape being essential and distinct from the other. One is a landscape of *action*, where things happen through agents in locations in time; and the other is one of *consciousness* and entails “what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel” (Bruner, 1986, p. 14). In this way, experiences illustrated through story come to embody and communicate both *meaning* and *feeling* for the individual about the happening (Bochner, 2014).

Communication by Narrative Means

Communication of our experiences is the way humans create and express meaning and value in their lives, and storytelling is one of our primary methods of communication (Barthes, 1975; Bochner, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Humans have storied themselves using words, images, music, and movement since the beginnings of recorded history. Bruner (2004) observes that “we seem to have no other way of describing ‘lived time’ save in the form of a narrative” (p. 692, also citing Ricoeur, 1984). It is our established means of sense-making, “a way in and through which we represent, interrogate, and interpret experience and come to know ourselves and others” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012. p. 1). As *creatures of story*, storytelling plays a variety of crucial, functional roles in the daily lives of human beings (Gottschall, 2012). Beyond the arts and tales at the dinner table, it is also our means of capturing history, politics, business, and social expectations. Stories inscribe our memories with our rituals of daily life, rites of passage, passionate moments, and plans for the future (Sarbin, 1986).

Storytelling may be used to convey perspective of an event, to provide a testimony of observational insight, to illustrate belief, to persuade or convince of a personal truth, or simply to entertain others around us (Schank & Abelson, 1995). Narrative is “a model for thought and action” and through examination of our stories, we can “reflect on any slice of life” (Sarbin, 1986, p. 11). Human memory, knowledge, and social communication are grounded in stories generated from past experiences, which then inform assumption and interpretation of new stories to come (Schank & Abelson, 1995). In narrating, we “establish the subjective facts of our life experience” and gain opportunities to “communicate the feel and texture of our lives” (Schiff, 2012, p. 37). From the typical to the extraordinary, epiphanies to turning points, occasions, events, and episodes of the past—each of us carries a range of experiences lived and just waiting to be shared (Bochner, 2014, p. 298).

According to Ricoeur, narrative is a form of discourse that speaks of human action and its meaning, which, when examined and understood “contributes to reconfiguring our understanding of human action and its possibilities” (Pellauer, 2007, p. 72). Human beings spend their lives “tangled up in stories” which happen to us, around us, for us, and for others; and as a result, we are “made up of the living imbrication of all lived stories” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 30). We are “awash in stories”—involuntarily born into the narratives of family, community, and nation (Leggo, 2008, p. 2). Narrative is an entity that “is present at all times, in all places, in all societies” and that “there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories” because “like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural” (Barthes, 1975, p. 237). As a result, our narratives are socially constructed through our engagement

with everything and everyone, especially stories that we may “hear and witness” in places of influence, such as our homes, schools, public spaces, places of worship, and through various forms of media (Leggo, 2008, p. 3). As an example, pedagogical content knowledge is a narrative way of knowing shared in classrooms through teachers, subject matter, textbooks, and administrative policy (Gudmundsdottir, 1991). Leggo (2008) continues by expressing how “epistemologically and ontologically engaged” we are in utilizing stories to “sort who we are as people in relation to other people” by attending not only to our own stories, but also the stories of others (p. 3). We craft our life stories to “express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way” and to “communicate this sense of self and negotiate it with others” (Linde, 1993, p. 3; also Bruner, 1987; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 2003). This dual process not only allows us to assert ourselves as collaboratively-fashioned individuals, but also as worthy members of our selected social groups by demonstrating the proper credentials, beliefs, standards, and/or expectations (Linde, 1993). Stories and talking about stories are also one way that “we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35). They entertain us, cause us to feel, instruct us how to act and live, help us learn about different people/places/ideas, learn morals, help organize our thoughts, provide a narrative for remembering events, and can move us toward healing and fulfillment (McAdams, 1997).

Narrative thinking is a constructive and collaborative activity, but it is important to emphasize the creative worldmaking nature of this process as well (Bruner, 2004, p. 691; also Bateson, 1989; Bogart, 2014; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Perpetually, each of us is creatively engaged in processes of identity formation and transformation by

attending to stories (Leggo, 2008, p. 3). Our storied accounts are “built up from experience, differentially combined, and actively cast in preferred vocabularies” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 104). In our function as narrators, we “artfully pick and choose” from what is experientially and culturally available to us as we articulate life and experience (p. 103). We *compose* our lives, which makes our lives, as lived, autobiographical (Bateson, 1989). Just as the philosopher Nelson Goodman argued that physics, painting, or history are “ways of world making” (Goodman, 1978), so too should autobiography be viewed as a process for “life making” (p. 692). Lives are shaped by choice, selected memory, place, circumstance, and our ceaseless resonance with the other countless life compositions going on all around us.⁹⁹ Bateson celebrates the complex process of improvisation that goes into composing a life as “a patchwork quilt in watercolor painting, rumpled and evocative” as past empowers the present, while “groping footsteps...mark pathways to the future” (p. 34). Anne Bogart (2014) follows a similar thread of thinking:

The narratives that I choose determine the sort of life that I will live because I create who I am with the stories I tell...I impress myself upon and into others. I write and I am also written upon. DNA writes upon me and my family writes upon me. I am written upon by the experiences that I undergo, by the people that I meet, the books that I read and the music that I listen to. I am also an inheritor of great stories, myths and parables that formed who I am and how I think about the world. (p. 9)

Yet, for as something so easy to expound upon as *life story* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), it remains elusive. Of particular significance to the practice of inquiry is the understanding that any story told will always be but “a fragment of the complex and

⁹⁹ *Resonance or dissonance* with other life compositions.

wide-ranging experiences that each of us lives daily in our bodies and imaginations” and in connection with our family and community (Leggo, 2004, p. 98). We will never capture the complete account of a life lived, because the stories of which it is comprised are boundless, endless, and ever-changing. Echoing earlier statements in this document, McAdams (1997) says humans seek to provide their scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories. However, he stresses that these are more than organizational true stories subject to any objective judgement of validity or authenticity. These stories are our *personal myths* of which we are both author and reader. Through the creation and telling of our personal myths, we compose heroic narratives that illustrate essential qualities about ourselves and help us discover what we believe is true and meaningful within life. It is “an act of imagination that is a patterned integration of our remembered past, perceived present, and anticipated future” (p. 12). McAdams remarks that parts of our personal myth may be acted out in daily life, but it resides inside of us as it is “made and remade in the secrecy of our own minds, both conscious and unconscious, and for our own psychological discovery and enjoyment” (McAdams, 1997, p. 12). It is only in “moments of great intimacy” that we choose to share important episodes with another person (p. 12). In doing so, we open the potential for moments of remarkable insight, both for the listeners and tellers. Stories shared in this way “create a shared history, linking people in time and event as actors, tellers, and audience” and in this space, deeper meanings of humanness may be explored (p. 28).

Storytelling in Inquiry

*We live by stories.
Complex relationships
between knowledge, context, identity.
Interconnected, nested,
intergenerational.
Composed and handed down.
Temporal plotlines,
connections among all living things.*

*Stories lived by,
lived in.
Indelibly marked by the shaping power of early landscapes.
Stories we planted,
knowingly or unknowingly;
intertwined, interwoven
into who we are
and are becoming.*

*Attentive to my unfolding, enfolding, storied life,
I am the one who calls words forward.*

*Lives meeting in storied ways,
where spaces open and create possibility
of being in relation;
understanding what it is
to be other.
What it is
to be.*

A found poem from Clandinin's (2013)
Engaging in Narrative Inquiry (pp. 21-23)

Introduction to Narrative Inquiry

The methodology of story is *narrative inquiry*. First utilized in education by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) to explore the personal stories of teachers, narrative researchers seek to understand and share real-life experiences conveyed by the stories of the research participants. A narrative approach strives for an exploration of the meanings participants derive from their experiences and to present a rich description of these

experiences within the final research text. It is “an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17). The underlying philosophy of narrative inquiry enables access to and illumination of personal stories from real people within real contexts. As a result, it is “a complex, polyvocal, multilevel, interdisciplinary field” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012, p. 2).

Clandinin (and her associates) think more about the relationship between people’s life stories and the qualities of their experiences. Her work tends to delve into the *whats*, or the “storied content of personal narratives—plots, characterizations, and themes” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012, p. 7). Researchers following in her footsteps investigate the everyday experience as conveyed through narratives. McAdams and his colleagues (1986, 1997) utilize a slight variation of this approach. The emphasis is still on story content, but with a focus on the self-storying of identity and how understanding experience can help us change how our lives are lived. Riessman (2008) has a related approach—however, it is less about interaction and more about how the storyteller attempts to persuade listeners of “the way things happened.” Her methods examine story content, form, and organization, as well as the details of storytelling. Riessman combines a thematic emphasis with a performative viewpoint which also examines to whom a story might be addressed, under what circumstances, and for what purpose.

My philosophical (methodological) approach to narrative inquiry began with the work and perspectives of Clandinin and her colleagues (Clandinin 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Clandinin’s approach to narrative inquiry is grounded in two established theories already discussed in this

dissertation. The first is Bruner's narrative mode of thinking discussed in the last section. Beyond his introduction of this concept, Bruner (1986, 1990) challenged social science researchers to "consider narrative as a distinct way of knowing" and "a means of making sense of the self and the social world, and as a representation of the meaning of experiences" (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012, p. 2). The ultimate "meaning-making device," narratives assemble any available parts (e.g., actions, events, objects, people) into a "comprehensible pattern" which through the telling of story becomes "a meaningful whole" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 147). With narrative inquiry, it is critical to understand that within the methodology narrative inquiry, *narrative* becomes both the phenomena under study and a method of study. The knowledge of participants is conveyed through "expressions of embodied individual and social stories" which requires researchers themselves to think narratively as they enter research relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 4).

The second cornerstone of Clandinin's narrative inquiry is Dewey's (1938/1997) pragmatic definition of *experience*, which was also referenced earlier in this chapter. Applying Dewey's *Theory of Experience* to narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) center his notions of interaction, continuity, and situation in specific ways. Interactions, both personal and social, occur in a temporal continuity of past, present, and future combined with sense of place (or situation). This framework helps create "the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third" (p. 50). When thinking narratively, researchers must acknowledge the uncertainty of subjectivity, "of knowing that each person's experience is always contingent on time,

place, people, and events” (Clandinin, 2009, p. 205). I have learned to see myself as “always in the midst” of this space, located alongside these multiple dimensions “in the middle of a nested set of stories—ours and theirs” (p. 63). These three views of experience—relational, continuous, and social—have been fundamental to the composition of this narrative inquiry study (Clandinin, 2013).

Creation and Use of Narrative

Barrett and Stauffer (2012) embrace the idea that the action of telling a story, especially from one’s own library of experiences, is in itself an “experience of meaning-making” (p. 7). As we purposefully attempt to arrange entities, bodies, and events into *meaningful constellations*, we convey our own particular understandings of experience to both ourselves and others (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012; also citing Bruner, 1986; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1988). Further, the crafting of a story involving subjects, actions, events, and consequences over time supplies us with more than simply “what happened” by expressing the author’s related attitudes, emotions, values, beliefs, and interpretations (p. 6). To think as a narrative researcher means “to think of events as happening over time” with each event or entity having “a past, present as it appears to us, and implied future” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 45).

In thinking of inquiry in narrative terms, researchers are able to conceptualize the concept of story into a multi-leveled, “reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71). These actions (i.e., living, telling, retelling, and reliving) are all important concepts in conducting narrative inquiry. People, including our study participants, live out stories on a daily basis and tell stories of this living. In conducting a narrative study,

Clandinin (2013) describes how we “come alongside” participants, inquiring into their lived and told stories by asking them to select and retell some of these stories. As a result of this action, “we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories” and in a way, we may begin reliving stories through the telling (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). I have found this view significant because it helped me understand that stories are not “fixed entities” to be inquired into, but to be retold meaningfully. Also in narrative inquiry, people are not looked at as “exemplars of a form,” but as “embodiments of lived stories” as they compose and shape, and are composed and shaped, by social and cultural narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 43).

Paraphrasing Clandinin (2013): To instigate, engage, and work within a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (temporality, personal/social, and place) requires the “unpacking” of the lived and told stories. During the retelling of lived stories, a narrator constructs remembered events into a sequence of action-leading-into-action according to the meanings that they want listeners to take away. It is a surprisingly complex process as events perceived as important for this particular audience and this particular telling are “organized, connected and evaluated as meaningful” (Riessman, 2008, p. 3).¹⁰⁰ Bruner

¹⁰⁰ In the defense of the dissertation, the question arose from a committee member regarding how I have utilized both Clandinin and Riessman within this dissertation; whether Riessman’s ideas intersect with Clandinin’s ideas or contradict them; and if narrative analysis and narrative inquiry can be complimentary approaches. As previously stated, my philosophical (methodological) approach to narrative inquiry began with the work and perspectives of Clandinin and her colleagues. This approach is grounded in the professional knowledge landscape of educators with special emphasis on the balance between theoretical and practical knowledge. It deeply informed the data collection process as well as the ethical and storied treatment of the data itself. I have utilized Riessman’s approach to narrative analysis (i.e., structural, thematic, dialogic/ performance, visual) to inform the tangible methods utilized in the analytic and strategic construction of the final performance-centered research text (i.e., the digital ethnodrama). From the perspective of an a/r/tographical bricoleur, I see the use of Clandinin and Riessman within this study as both intersecting and contradictory--which further contributes to the essential tensive dialogue between inquiry/art and philosophy/practice within arts-informed educational research.

(2004) suggests that “life as lead” and “life as told” are fairly inseparable because a life is not an objective story; it relies on “how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold” (p. 708). Building from this statement, Barrett and Stauffer (2012) agree saying that experience and story have a reflexive relationship whether we are telling our own stories, listening to the story of one person, or retelling someone else’s story to another.

Researchers can enter into narrative inquiry through one of two ways. The most common practice is to begin telling stories by coming into a place and engaging in conversations with participants who relate their stories of experience. However, Clandinin (2006) says inquiry can also begin with living stories alongside participants which is “a more difficult, time-consuming, intensive, and yet, more profound method” (p. 478). I am blessed to have lived alongside these study participants for several years and many of the stories they shared through the interviews were either ones which we had lived through together, or ones with which I was already familiar because they played key roles in our educational journey together. It is particularly meaningful to have had such intimate connections with these participants in my roles as artist, educator, and nonformal researcher prior to the first dissertation interviews. Therefore, I consider this inquiry to have begun with the “living of stories.” However, the connection between the participants and me extends beyond Clandinin’s indication of *alongside* which Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines as “close by” or “in company with.” Instead, I find myself *among* these particular participants. *Among* is more aptly “in association with” or “in the midst of” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It indicates a more personal connection than simply standing alongside—with a stronger sense of understanding and connection “earned” through time and trial—yet not as intimate or incorporated as “belonging.” I still maintain

some separation from participants—especially a type of outsider-ness to place—which is significant in conducting qualitative inquiry.

Generating Final Research Texts

Clandinin (2013) clearly defines the different steps of moving from the *field* (e.g., identifying setting and participants) to *field texts* (e.g., interviews) to *interim texts* (e.g., interview transcripts) to a *final research text*. The process of moving between texts is complicated and iterative, not a “linear unfolding” as one might imagine (p. 49). There are tensions as researchers decide what to do with field texts, how to “capture and represent the shared stories of ourselves and our participants,” or “issues of audience and form,” or “how to represent the situatedness of the inquiry within place” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 139). Then as we compose and scrutinize interim texts, researchers awaken to “the interwovenness of life experience” which may lead to unexpected considerations before even moving into a final form (Clandinin, 2013, p. 50). Selecting a form for the research text also creates a tension between personal aspects of the inquiry (e.g., “what form seems to fit with the experiences of the inquirer and the participants”) and social aspects (e.g., “what seems to fit into the ongoing conversation that surrounds the matters addressed in the inquiry”) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 150). For this reason, narrative inquiry leaves the form of the final research text open to the researcher’s discretion.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize that the most critical consideration of making the transition from field to research text is “what kind of research text we intend to write” (p. 136). Considerations may include elements such as: voice, signature, narrative form, and audience. Voice and signature are ways that a researcher puts her

stamp on the work, especially in having a "rhythm, cadence, and expression, which mark the signature and make the work readily identifiable as the work of a certain author" (p. 148). During the transcription process, I pictured an audience hearing the participants' words and seeing them in living action, rather than reading them on paper. Although the literal dissertation document will be captured on the written page, I imagined it crafted in a way that lifts off the page toward the reader, so they can envision the participants before them. The final forms of narrative inquiry must strive to "engage audiences to rethink and reimagine the ways in which they practice and the ways in which they relate to others" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 51). In this way, the final research text itself becomes representational of its methodology—a three-dimensional inquiry space of "disparate but intimately connected" facets rather than a fixed, indisputable object of named parts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 146).

So the question was posed as I moved forward into the final phase of my study: Which final research form could capture and represent the meaningful stories of these participants, actively engage the audience I envision, create a three-dimensional inquiry space, and allow for the creation of a personal signature that balances my voice and those of the participants, contexts, and larger thematic elements?

A Note On "Narrative"

Polkinghorne (1988) says *narrative* refers to "the process of making a story, to the cognitive scheme of story, or to the result of the process" (p. 13). For this reason, he often uses the word *narrative* as equivalent to *story*. I will also use "a story" and "a narrative" interchangeably. However, the term *narrative* can also be applied to a collection of stories: *Personal narrative* refers to someone's life story (a collection of lived stories

significant to that individual), *localized narrative* (collections of stories from individuals which define that socio-cultural place/context), and *master narrative* (collections of stories that strategically place one group of “ideal” humans above others). The second is new and relates to my methodological perspectives of ethnodrama and the transformation of research data into final research text.

Narrative text is a term which Bal (2017) uses to refer to a specific product of a particular telling of a story to a reader, viewer, or listener. Unique to this definition is the recognition that narrative texts will tend to “differ from one another even if the related story is more or less the same” (p. 5). The same lived story may be retold many times, but with each telling, a different narrative text will be generated. The bones of the story itself will most likely remain the same, but the telling (e.g., role of the narrator, characters, order of events, theme, climax, tone, genre) typically shifts for each context, audience, and time. Not only this, but the teller of the story themselves has changed across time and context which also affects the resulting text. Perspectives change and experiences multiply across time, which will continuously alter the narrative text of a story told of an experience lived. For example, the one-on-one and focus group interviews I conducted with participants resulted in a series of narrative texts. Interviewing the same participants on the same day about the same stories with another audience or conducting the interview again a few weeks later in the same scenario (Tara as researcher), the narrative texts would most likely contain notable differences (or perhaps the participants would not even choose to share the same story again, if at all). I find it significant that the narrative texts to be utilized in the construction of monologues for this ethnodrama are special, singular,

and particular to a context, especially because this aligns with the nature of qualitative narrative inquiry.

It is important to note that Mieke Bal is a scholar of narratology, which is a structuralist approach to narrative analysis built on the work of Levi-Strauss (1966). Levi-Strauss examined the structure of myths and saw similarities in the same basic structures of actor/character, event, narrator, time, and place/space; but then generalized the model and expanded out from mythology into other forms of narrative. Narratology is not only a field of study, but “an ensemble of theories of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events...[which] helps us understand, analyze and evaluate narratives” (Bal, 2017, p. 3). As Polkinghorne (1988) points out, trying to “dissect stories in order to reduce them to formulas” feels alien and incomprehensible (p. 93). I agree and will not be engaged in narratological analysis for the study per se. However, I do find narratology to be useful in one area of this study. Theatre is comprised of consciously- and purposefully crafted stories of humans. Like musical compositions, theatrical works are often subjected to a theoretical analysis of individual components according to construction, use, and levels of commonality (or uniqueness). *I will be examining perspectives on the various elements of dramatic construction later in this document.* Narrative storytelling may also be examined through the theoretical lens of narratology, which, if utilized sparingly and strategically, may help me better identify and understand elements of the holistic construction, and assist in the transition from narrative text to ethnodramatic script.

I am specifically drawn to Bal’s work and writing for two reasons. The first because she cautions against “the illusion of objectivity, both in storytelling as witnessing

and in analysis as the scientific discovery of the truth” as well as seeking “a sense of value inherent in narrative: either as intrinsically true, hence, good, or as intrinsically false, fictional, manipulative” (p. xxi). To Bal, the point of working within narrative texts is to ask meaningful questions. Not primarily to examine where and from whom words come, but exploring what the speaker is proposing for her audience to believe, see, “hate, love, admire, argue against, shudder before, or stand in awe of” (p. xxi).¹⁰¹ The second reason is Bal’s statement that her “working definitions” are “meant not to hold the truth of their object but rather it to make it accessible and discussable” because if characteristics of narrative can be defined, then they can serve as a “point of departure” for examining them (p. 3). Bal’s words parallel my view of the practical use of Western music theory as well as playwriting analysis. Musicians and music scholars need terms, definitions, and identified common structures of musical elements to talk about and to see the construction of musical works more acutely. However, these terms do not constitute the spirit and meaningfulness of music.

This study and the resulting ethnodrama are not just about the storylines themselves, but also the way in which they had been shared. For the ethnodrama script, I am not looking to simply transcribe or adapt the interviews into storied content of a play. I also wish to share and honor the spirit of the participants’ narrative texts—the uniqueness of the telling, the individuality of the participant, and the common thematic through-lines of the group—and narratology could be useful in this regard.

¹⁰¹ This also connects into Goffman’s (1959) performance of self in everyday life as well as the foundations of performance ethnography which will be explored in Chapter Five.

Ethical Considerations

Across the next two chapters, I will outline the methods I have utilized which led from inviting my former students to participate in this dissertation study to crafting the final research form of a digital ethnodrama. Throughout this methodological journey, I have sought to generate feelings of credibility, trustworthiness, integrity, and validity with these participants and any audience-readers by grounding my research practice and decision-making in a sense of *relational ethics*.

Relational Ethics

The foundations of this study (e.g., research question, data collection, transcription, first-level analysis) are grounded in narrative inquiry, especially the philosophy and praxis of Jean Clandinin and her colleagues. Clandinin et al. (2018) emphasize that narrative inquiry must be approached as “an ethical undertaking” because how we tell our stories and listen to others’ stories can profoundly shape and influence the lives of both storytellers and listeners. These stories (as well as their tellings and retellings) are already situated complexly and are made even more complicated by the addition of a researcher who seeks to understand, shape, and retell these stories for the purpose of inquiry.

Each person is composing a life shaped by the contexts, times, and relationships within which they are enfolded. These larger narratives reach backward and forward, over time and over multiple generations, and over multiple places, and relationships. Within narrative inquiry people’s experiences cannot be seen as within a fixed category that reduces this complexity. However, it is equally important to understand that these aspects become more complex when we, as inquirers, come alongside in narrative inquiry. We, too, cannot be reduced to a single story, for example, a story of researcher. Our experiences, too, are multiple, shaped over time and place and relationship. They too are nested within larger

social, cultural, linguistic, familial, and institutional narrative. This complexity calls forth an uncertainty that is also embedded in relational ethics. (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 19)

Ethical concerns and considerations are directly connected to the researcher's intentions, biases, and suppositions; their ability, comfort, and fluency in seeing, embracing, and re-storying this complexity; and their facility in determining best methodological practices toward this end. As stated earlier, identity is never singular, but a messily interwoven plurality of various identities that make up Self. As a researcher, I am responsible for examining how this messiness of Me may influence my lens and, by extension, my research praxis.

Relational ethics embraces this perspective because it lives in the heart of narrative inquiry. This approach asserts that ethical matters in such inquiry cannot be reduced to a checklist of ethical measures or a stamp of approval from an Internal Review Board (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Instead, inquirers must view ethical actions as directly and consistently “situated within, and central to, relationships with participants” (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 1). Further, the term “relational” does not simply refer to the type of relationship that the researcher has with the participants, or for how long. Knowing I have taught these participants and been involved with their lives for so many years, one might correctly assume that I have best intentions for their involvement in this study—but relationship does not predicate ability and intention is not the same as action. Relational ethics infers that this action and ability begins with a more comprehensive sense of relationship and a wide-awakeness within both larger and smaller capacities. Greene's (1995) *wide-awakeness* plays an important role in relational ethics. We must “stretch past” the individual relationships to also explore who we, as researchers, are in

relation to ourselves; to our views of ontology, axiology, and epistemology; and to the socio-cultural lifeworlds that people (especially our participants) inhabit (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 20). This idea, in and of itself, connects back to the relativistic, pluralistic, and holistic perspectives of the critical constructivist view shared in Chapter Two.

Clandinin et al. (2018) name five considerations in a relational ethics approach to narrative inquiry (p. 14). These dimensions emphasize the necessity of certain actions interwoven within the research process. Relational ethics means:

- engaging with “imagination, improvisation, playfulness, and world-traveling,” which are an integral part of “co-composing” field and research texts (p. 193);
- “moving slowly in ways that allow for listening and living,” which are situated for a continuous return to “narrative beginnings” (p. 88);
- understanding that “understandings are always in process” highlighting a continuous awakening into the “ongoingness” of life experiences (p. 14);
- engaging with “a sense of uncertainty and not knowing” through the recognition that living ethically means embracing living in “liminal spaces that position us in places of dis/ease (p. 198);
- understanding that ethical relations are “lived embodiments” (p. 14) composed of our unique connections with intergenerational knowledge and social narratives within our bodies, which we “come to know” through times of “silent walking” and contemplation (p. 200).

Or placing these five dimensions into a broader sense of flow:

*We open up questions
to explore the responsibilities and obligations we have as researchers.*

*We take up questions
around what it means to live in relational ways.*

*We tell and retell moments...
to engage with
imagination that calls forth improvisation;

to come alongside slowly;

to attend closely to the stories lived
in the ongoingness of lives in motion;

to co-create spaces with participants;

to attend to “not knowing” and liminality
of bodies in relation
within places of stillness, silence, and contemplation.*

*We begin with a conversation
that speaks to a moment.*

A poetic transcription created from Clandinin et al.’s (2018)
The Relational Ethics of Narrative Inquiry (p. 173)

Establishing Expectations for Conversation

For Dörnyei (2007), validity and reliability in qualitative research come from a researcher’s longitudinal relationship with the context and participants; from the opportunity for participants to be engaged in the research process through member-checking and by exploring emergent themes; from transparency of process; and from careful and mindful data collection and transcription (p. 54). He further suggests that a researcher may generate feelings of trustworthiness and researcher integrity with readers by being open and honest with the researcher’s lens; offering a detailed and reflective account of the steps taken; and presenting in “rich contextualized detail” so the reader will be able to “come on board” with the findings (p. 60). Through my work, I have come

to see each of these ethics-related elements as connected to the idea of being in conversation.

Clandinin et al. (2018) express that inquiry spaces become “relationally ethical spaces” if a researcher is willing and able to “improvise ways that make the space one into which participants can...fill the space with the richness of their stories” (p. 121). These relationally ethical inquiry spaces are neither spaces of power nor deference, but of conversation. Therefore, inquiry is the process and result of a *complicated conversation* between researcher, participants, data, established scholars through their literature and related studies, and reader-audiences.¹⁰²

My interactions with these participants began with conversation. We had conversations together in our classroom, my private studio, rehearsal and performance spaces, hallways, and in the roundtable discussions that sparked our curriculum re-mapping. Across the years, these conversations have been forthcoming and awkward, animated and passionate, challenging and stressful, formal and technical, cheerfully silly, honest and heartfelt, and utterly delightfully luminous. Angel, Angela, Jeriel, LaNyck, Melody, Rei, Sherry, Ti, and I have come to know much about one another musically, academically, professionally, and personally through conversation. Importantly, an expectation for and normalization of conversation had been set amongst this cohort of participants and me long before the interviews of this dissertation had taken place. As I move forward into Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I will be referencing this conversational approach to relational ethics throughout the bricolage of methods used in

¹⁰² A consequence of placing an iterative process into a linear format is that not everything arrives in the correct order. The phrase “complicated conversation” is a direct reference to Pinar’s (2004b, 2012, 2019) approach to curriculum as *currere*, which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

this study—including the use of standard formal procedures (e.g., two consent forms, offering of pseudonym, follow-up interview) and typical qualitative process (e.g., informal follow-up texts, member checking, narrator checking).

(Im)possibly Voice: A Poetic Transcription

Voice happens.

But when?

*I am no longer certain that I can know
because it is always happening.
Exceeding my ways of hearing, knowing, understanding.
The voice I've been seeking to capture and tame
now present as
slippery, shifting,
knowable, unknowable,
certain, uncertain,
always already happening.*

How does voice happen?

*It clearly happens in spoken utterances
but does it not also happen in silence?
Through art, dance, music?
Other unthought ways in which our participants voice thought?*

Where does voice happen?

*It plainly happens in interview or conversation,
but does it not also happen in dreams?
In the spaces and places that name us and claim us?
Does it happen everywhere?*

*If I no longer know
when voice happens,
or how,
or where...*

*Then how am I to know what constitutes
voice?*

A poetic transcription created from
Mazzei's (2009) *An Impossibly Full Voice* (p. 45)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MAGNETISM OF PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY

I found myself wondering why,
after all,
do people attend the theater.
Because theater has survived for so many centuries,
I figured it must exert some essential magnetic power.
Its roots are ancient, primal, and rich
and keep us with one another on a deeply visceral level.
Transcendent experiences in my theater-going life
were visually engaging *and* emotionally stimulating,
intellectually arresting *and* entertaining,
tragic *and* hopeful, political *and* personal,
spectacular *and* intimate,
sophisticated *and* dumb, ugly *and* beautiful.
Challenged to use my entire life,
everything I had ever felt, thought, and imagined
in order to engage.
These miraculous journeys make room for me within them
and I return altered by the experience

A poetic transcription created from
Bogart's (2007) *And Then, You Act* (pp. 64-65).

The Story: A Poetic Transcription

*The Story never really begins nor ends,
even though there is a beginning and an end to every story—
just as there is a beginning and an end to every teller.*

*Never does one open the discussion by coming right to the heart of the matter.
For the heart of the matter is always somewhere else
than where it is supposed to be.*

*To allow it to emerge, people approach it indirectly—
letting it come when it is ready to come.
There is no catching, no pushing, no directing, no breaking through.
No need for a linear progression
which gives the comforting illusion
that one knows
where one goes.*

*Headless and bottomless, the Story is built on differences.
We differ in the content of the words,
the construction and weaving of sentences;
in the choice and mixing of utterances,
the ethos and tones,
the paces, cuts, and pauses.*

*The Story circulates like a gift;
an empty gift which anybody can lay claim to
by filling it to taste,
yet can never truly possess.
A gift built on multiplicity.
Inexhaustible within its departures and arrivals.
Its quietness.*

A poetic transcription created from
Trinh T. Minh-ha's (1989) *Woman, native, other* (pp. 1-2)

Act I: A Gathering of Narratives

The common objective of qualitative research is to make sense of cultural or personal meanings within a particular observable phenomenon (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, engaging in qualitative inquiry equals an attempt to describe or interpret the meanings of lived experience with a depth and richness that goes beyond statistical relationships (van Manen, 1997). Regardless of form, the data collected must capture the rich and complex details of people, places, events, conversation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Researchers may then explore the ways of knowing located within the meaningful realities within the immediate settings of daily life (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). To accomplish this, empirical inquiry must first and foremost “respect the boundaries of real life, but at the same time penetrate them to reveal what is held in store” with the researcher looking specifically at how informants work “to understand what things mean to them” (p. 7)

The data collection for this study was conducted through a series of open-ended, in-depth interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013; Weiss, 1994). For the interview structure, I chose to follow Seidman's (2013) three-part interview design. The first interview would be a one-on-one *focused life history* in which the participants were asked to reconstruct early experiences related to the research topic (in this case, musicking) and then narrate a "range of constitutive events" from past experience up to present day (p. 21). The second interview would be a focus group gathering to explore common aspects of experience that emerged from the first interviews in more depth. Because of their connection as an undergraduate cohort, I was especially interested in conducting a group interview so I could document their shared, interactive responses. The structure of the third interview was not defined at the beginning of the data collection, because I wished to see what would be beneficial after the one-on-one life history and focus group interviews were completed. By structuring the interviews in this way, Seidman suggests that while each serves a purpose by itself, they also connect into one another with every interview illuminating and deepening the next (Seidman, 2013). In this section, I will outline the process and experience of the conducting the first two interviews as well as the initial transcriptions. The third interview will be described in Chapter Six.

One-on-One Interviews

Data collection for this study was conducted through a series of open-ended, in-depth interviews, specifically an approach advocated by Rubin and Rubin (2012) called *responsive interviewing*. Responsive interviewing seeks to facilitate the gathering of narratives as a gentle, cooperative, respectful process, and "in a way that participants

would recognize as real” (p. 7). These types of interviews are not dominated by the researcher but are instead embraced as a collaborative endeavor by people who have a relationship built on trust, where interviewees feel comfortable sharing intimate stories and where researchers keep their promises. I felt drawn to this approach to interviewing because of the close relationship I had established with my participants over the years of teaching and mentoring them, the rich narrative storytelling I expected from these creatively minded participants, the concerns of power and privilege of a White researcher studying the experiences of participants with multiple identities often marginalized by larger meta-narratives of our culture, and the sensitive topics and unexpected twists that I knew would most likely emerge.

For the IRB submission, I was required to construct an interview guide which I did according to my initial research question. Based on my knowledge of their experiences from working with these participants through their undergraduate degrees, I expected mostly stories of informal musicking from pre-kindergarten through middle school, an introduction to formal musicking with in-school music programs around high school, a divide of informal and formal musicking practices during college, and some combination (or hybrid) of the two in present day. My initial plan was to create a multiple case study which would directly inform our continued work with the curriculum at Marygrove. However, the conversational nature of the interview process led each interview into a much different direction than I anticipated.

All one-on-one interviews were conducted in-person during winter/spring 2017, and each lasted approximately two hours. I decided to document the conversations in these initial interviews using only audio-recordings. The use of videorecording seemed

too intrusive for these intimate conversations and I did not believe recording physical/gestural data was necessary for the case study I planned to conduct.

After the participant was informed about the consent process and the interview procedures, I began by inviting each person to tell me a little about themselves. I left the invitation open and general without many parameters as to desired content. Most participants struggled with the broadness of this request, especially since we all knew each other so well, but I hoped it would set up the open-ended, conversational nature of the interview itself.

Next, I asked each participant to recall his/her/their earliest musical memory. Each participant seemed to find this memory quite easily—and for most, the storytelling took off with a self-perpetuating energy and momentum. Story led into story, both teller and listener fully became absorbed in the tale at hand. Upon reflection, I was not surprised—not only because of the long relationship and years of conversations I had had with participants, but also because as singer-performers, they are all storytellers by nature and by trade. With the one-on-one interviews transforming into a topical life-storying, I found my interview guide to be of little use during the actual interviews. Following the model of responsive interviewing of changing the interview approach or interview questions in response to what I, as researcher, was learning from the participants, I followed their lead (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Of the two pages of the semi-structured questions and prompts on the interview guide, I directly asked the participants only three of the original questions:

1. *What is your earliest musical memory?*
2. *How and why did you decide to pursue a degree in music? Why our college?*

3. *What was the process and purpose of capstone prep (recital)?*

Outside of this, the majority of my questions were for prompt (to keep the story moving forward) or follow-up (to clarify understandings or gain more detail) purposes.

While I had been expecting to receive *objective* elements of musicianship (doing), the participants chose to share more personal *subjective* aspects of musicianhood (being). This shift occurred across the interviews despite my efforts to initiate and conduct each in the same original manner. Story led into story, across time and place, with both teller and listener becoming fully absorbed in the tale at hand. Transcriptions of these interviews would reveal a wealth of powerful stories related to musicking and the joys and struggles of coming into an increasingly complex musical identity.

Adventures in Transcription

For the initial rough transcriptions of the one-on-one interviews, I decided to use *Trint*, online audio transcription software that uses an automated speech-to-text algorithm to transcribe audio files into written text.¹⁰³ Trint boasts a 95-98% accuracy rate for transcriptions made from high quality recordings with clear speaking voices and I hoped it would give me a jump-start on the 18+ hours of interview recordings (which I would then carefully edit to ensure 100% accuracy). After examining the first few Trint transcriptions, however, I realized this software would be of little use to my needs. With my Inland Northern American English accent (Schneider et al., 2004), my speech was accurately transcribed at about 90%+ as promised by the company. However, with those

¹⁰³ Trint requires a username and password which allows for security and privacy for all interactions and submissions. I did receive IRB approval and consent from all participants for the use of Trint in the initial transcription process.

participants who spoke with heavier degrees of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and/or Southern American English accents, the accuracy rate was far lower.

My experiences with Trint were disappointing (albeit unsurprising) but led to a larger methodological question.¹⁰⁴ As I generated and edited the rough transcriptions of my participants' words, I sometimes found myself struggling with how accurate I should be with the language and speech patterns of my participants. Most of my participants speak with varying degrees of African American Vernacular English (AAVE); and as a singer, storyteller and vocal diction scholar, I am passionate about the ways in which words are crafted and articulated. The handling of grammar, syntax, and word choice was straight-forward since I obviously wished to honor the participants' own narrative constructions; but what of dialectical phonetic elements, such as pronunciation and inflection? For example: Do I write "tuh" instead of "to," or "ax" instead of "ask" if this is how they sound to my ear? Or do I clip the missing "ŋ" sound from "going" ("goin"), emphasize the addition of "g" in "singing" ("sing-ging"), or carefully note the emphasis of the final "s" in "Illinois." At what point does honoring authenticity become a distortion or parody, promote a negative stereotype, or hinder communication between participant and potential readers? A phonetic spelling of key words would most authentically represent the manner of speech, but would this continue to perpetuate my own manner of speaking as the "ideal"? How do I honor speech authentically, but not do so in a way that risks trivializing my participants? To this end, I consulted raciolinguistics

¹⁰⁴ I would like to note that these transcription results were from 2017. However, when I conducted the follow-up interviews in 2020, I tried Trint again for the transcriptions and the accuracy was much improved for all recordings of all participants that I submitted.

and AAVE literature (Alim et al., 2016; Fought, 2006; McWortner, 2017; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 2000).

The musical tone, lyrical banter, colorful slang, and signature configurations of Detroit-based AAVE have become increasingly familiar to me through years of conversations with both my husband's family as well as Marygrove students, colleagues, and student families. By exploring literature on raciolinguistics, I was able to connect my lived experiences with this oral culture to a clearer understanding of both the hows and whys of its construction. For example, Smitherman (2000) provided concrete verbiage and organizational knowledge for the rhythmic patterns and key dialectical characteristics of AAVE including its *call and response* engagement, lively spontaneity and immediacy of its energy, the concreteness of imagery used to story reality, a strategic repetition of key words and phrases, and the playful verbal wars in *signifying*. She also underlined the direct connections of these practices to both Niger-Congo and Creole languages of Caribbean. Fought (2006) brought my attention to specific phonetical aspects of AAVE, such as: metathesis, the removal of postvocalic "r," the stopping of fricatives before nasals, and the substitution of labiodentals for interdentalals. McWhorter (2017) highlighted other significant elements such as monophthongization, counterexpectation markers, and emphatic dismissive pronouns.

Beyond helping me to see the construction and AAVE more clearly, I also learned of its intimate connections to the history of Black culture and understand how language has been used as a "tool of oppression" in America (Smitherman, 2000, p. 129). Highlighting an example significant to the context of my study: social deficit theorists decided that Black language equaled social inadequacy, which led to a government-

sponsored corrective language program in the Detroit schools beginning in 1959. Smitherman quotes Golden (1959) who rationalized the program by stating that “many doors may be closed to those with nonstandard language” and if they wish to progress in Midwestern communities, then “Negro students of a low socio-economic level in Detroit [must]... change their patterns of speech” and learn to “speak as we do” (cited in Smitherman, p. 79). As a graduate of Detroit’s Cass Tech High School, Smitherman directly experienced this indoctrination of what she refers to as “front door English.” Her time in these speech therapy classes as a young girl learning to *code-shift* into Standard American English would later inspire her scholarly studies of sociolinguistics.

Through this literature, I did not find instructions for my own questions pertaining to transcription, nor even consensus of approach. However, I have come to see my own engagement with AAVE as primarily grounded in respectful intent and meaningful purpose. Perceiving my participants’ words as “mispronounced” and then perpetuating this perception by changing the spelling promotes the White suburban Midwest accent as the ideal, which is not my intent. However, there is also a beauty and poetry to capturing the unique sound and structure of words as spoken and I aspire for this to be celebrated.¹⁰⁵ Becoming more aware of the complexity and richness of the construction of AAVE, I felt an even deeper call to protect and represent the unique language usage of all participants on the written page. As I worked to transcribe *field texts* into *research*

¹⁰⁵ I have found useful examples within ethnodramatic works (e.g., Anna Deavere Smith’s plays are exemplary in this). I also found particular beauty in one monologue from Michael Keck’s *Voices in the Rain* (in Saldaña, 2005). The character of Bug Eyes describes himself operating as a “bidness man” within the prison community. The majority of the written text does not reflect any particular dialect so the phonetic spelling of this one particular word (used repeatedly throughout his monologue) stands out powerfully and yet infuses the whole with the unique character of this individual.

texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I returned to these recordings often as I carefully negotiated my transcriptive intent and purpose.

Focus Group

The second interview with my participants was a semi-structured focus group using a critical qualitative approach (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008, 2011, 2013; Kamberelis, Dimitriadis, & Welker, 2018) with eight of the nine participants, which was conducted in July 2017 on the campus of Marygrove College.¹⁰⁶ This focus group with participants gave opportunity for discussions on common elements, terminology, and/or experiences that had arose within the initial interviews and/or connected the participants as cohort. To gain a deeper understanding of these terms and topics raised across the interviews, I asked three comparison questions (i.e., performing/praising/entertaining, passion/purpose/calling/anointing, holistic/atomistic learning), two thematic questions (i.e., coming into conversation as a metaphor for musical journey, making transitions in the musical-life journey), and a reflective question about our creating the new Marygrove curriculum together.

Preparation

In preparation for this focus group, I experimented with different ways to code the data, but most felt shallow, contrived, and too formal too soon. Being a librettist and a performer, I set aside these formal approaches and turned to narrative inquiry for guidance (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Clandinin, 2013). I simply looked at the transcripts for what they were (scripts of lived experiences) and

¹⁰⁶ The ninth participant was on a performance tour until late fall, so we conducted her second one-on-one interview through Skype utilizing the same series of questions.

placed myself *in the midst* of their “nested sets of stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63).

My initial idea for the focus group was to share selected quotes from first interview transcriptions. I had planned to de-identify 10-15 quotes and then ask participants if each quote resonated with their own musical life journey experience. The resulting discussion would serve as the data analysis and begin to clarify the emergent themes. As I began to prepare for the focus group, I wrote over 60 potential quotes and their possible themes on a large whiteboard in my basement before I ran out of room. Overwhelmed, I realized it be nearly impossible for me to select a manageable number of quotes without unduly influencing the study. I was not ready to narrow any possibilities as of yet, so what did I ask?

I stand facing the gigantic whiteboard, spinning the dry-erase marker in my hand and tilting my head slightly as I ponder the sheer amount of information in front of me. Brilliant, insightful words from my participants are carefully written across the board, punctuated by a colorful madness of arrows, circles, and question marks. Every square inch of the board is filled. I take a deep breath to speak—reconsider my words—and release the air in a slow heavy sigh. My fourth such breath progression in the past few minutes.

“You can’t ask everything,” comes the voice from behind me.

My best friend, also a member of my doctoral cohort and creative partner for two of my productions, is examining the board as well. She’s come to my aid after an S.O.S. text message. Glancing over my shoulder, I throw her a look.

“This is impossible,” I state flatly, “I could take this study a thousand directions by the questions I ask. I’m not ready to narrow it down yet!”

She purses her lips. “Then you need to stay philosophical. What do you see broadly that connects to everyone?”

I look back at the board and try to see beyond the words themselves. Hearing portions of the interviews in my head, I search for any broad gaps in my understanding.

“Well...,” I say slowly, “there are several important terms that everyone seemed to use at some point, like ‘performing’ verses ‘praising.’ I’d like some clarification on those.”

“Good! And?”

I toss the marker onto the table and fold my arms across my chest as I look up at the ceiling for answers.

“They each talked about points of transition in their journeys. All different kinds at different points in time. I’m curious to learn more about the act and experience of transitioning.”

“That makes sense. Any questions that require group-think?”

I debate the different threads shared by my interviewees.

“Jeriel had really cool things to say about ‘joining the conversation’ or ‘feeling part of the conversation.’ I would love to see if any of the other participants relate to that metaphor.”

“That’d be great! What about something that ties into why you’re all here in the first place?”

I laugh out loud. “Oh, yeah. There’s always been one question I’ve been dying to ask...”

(Researcher’s Personal Journal, July 2017)

From this discussion, I constructed six questions to ask my participants during our two-hour focus group:

1. In regard to making music, talk about the differences and similarities between:
 - a. Performing
 - b. Praising/Worshipping
 - c. Entertaining
2. All of you had been engaging in music-making long before you arrived at Marygrove – and for the most part, the processes of musical learning and doing were approached holistically. Describe the experience (e.g., intellectually, emotionally, musically, spiritually) of being asked to tear apart your holistic process into the dimensions you see on the heuristic.¹⁰⁷
3. Several of you spoke about “coming into the conversation” or “joining new conversations” through the study of music. Would you use this metaphor in relation to your musical journey? If so, how and why?
4. What are the differences and similarities between these phrases?
 - a. Having a Passion
 - b. Feeling a Purpose
 - c. Sensing a Calling and/or Anointing
5. Each of you spoke about different transition points in your musical-life journeys:
 - a. leaving & coming into communities
 - b. gaining & losing skills/habits

¹⁰⁷ This heuristic showing the dimensions, meta-dimensions, and contextual dimensions was shared in Chapter Three (See Figure 2). As a reminder, all participants not only used this heuristic as a tool in their college courses, but also played a role in developing it.

- c. engaging with known and unknown audiences
- d. living in two separate “worlds” or having those worlds blend/collide

Speak about the general experience of making these types of transitions within your journey.

6. Most of you spoke about changes to the Marygrove music curriculum and all of you were engaged in this change while in school. During that time, why did you feel that you, as a student, should have a say in the music department curriculum (e.g., content, methods of teaching)? What gave you “the right” to change a college curriculum?¹⁰⁸ How did that curriculum play into or affect anything we’ve spoken about today?

Gathering Data

On the second floor of the Madame Cadillac building, I prepare the tiny classroom for our focus group meeting. It’s a bit small for our needs, but this is one of the few available rooms on campus with air conditioning—a necessity on this stifling July evening. It’s been a long time since I’ve had this whole group together in one place. I’m really excited and wonder if they are, too. The participants, my former students, will be arriving in a few minutes.

Packets of question forms—check. Jimmy-Johns and iced tea for everyone—check. Recording devices powered up—check. Eight cans of Play-Doh—check. Suddenly, I hear a high-pitched squeal outside. I quickly cross the room to the leaded-glass window and look down to the circular driveway below.

Sherry and LaNyck have found one another and are hugging like mad. I hear a sing-songy, “Haaaayyyy!” off to the right, and Jeriel comes two-stepping up the drive with a huge grin on his face. More hugs and excited talking as Ti quietly sneaks around the corner of the building. She smiles when she sees the group and quickens her pace to join them.

I remember that I haven’t told my former students whom exactly is involved in my study, so every arrival will be a surprise for them. My heart soars and aches as I

¹⁰⁸ I have just recently come to truly understand the significance of this question, the unspoken power narratives behind it, and how my participants honored me in their honest answering of it.

watch my former students, this beautiful cohort of musicians, find each other once more.

With a smile, I step away from the window to continue my preparations until I hear the door slowly open.

“Tara?”

Suddenly the room is filled with the energy, smiles, words, and magic of these radiant people whom I have been so proud to mentor over the years, and I, too, am swept into the joyful reunion of hugs and hellos.

(Researcher’s Personal Journal, July 2017)

As each participant takes a seat around the table, they find a stack of papers, a pen, and a small can of Play-Doh at each place. Each question has been printed on an individual piece of paper and placed upside-down in a stack for the participant to reveal sequentially. I have constructed a process in which I would invite participants to flip over the first question, read it, and quietly make notes on the paper for 2 minutes before the verbal responses began. This gave participants the opportunity to clarify their own thoughts before hearing those of others. It also gave me an additional set of written data connected to the focus groups. The Play-Doh would serve as both a way to indicate interest in speaking (“To keep some type of order in the speaking, just move your Play-Doh forward in front of you when you have something to say”) and a means to dispel the high energy of the group.

I gave a small welcome speech and reminded everyone of the purpose of the study, their one-on-one interviews, and the key contents of the consent forms. It had been many months since most of the participants had completed their initial interviews and it was important to prepare them for the evening’s discussions. I introduced the questions

and together we decided upon some ground rules of sharing and negotiating speaking time. After all questions had been answered, we were off!

*I can mark the intensity of thinking
and the complexity of answer construction
by the group's engagement with their Play-Doh.*

Bam!
*Hands slap the colored dough onto the table,
pressing it smooth and flat.*

Skwwk!
A flattened pancake is slowly pulled up from the table.

Fft, fft, fft!
*Palms circle round and round
to form flawless spheres of color.*

*A giraffe, the Great Pyramid of Giza, and a girl with pigtails
all slowly appear under careful molding fingers—
then swiftly disappear with a crush of the fist.*

*Discussions are momentarily side-tracked by the discovery
of Sherry's meticulously-created SpongeBob SquarePants.¹⁰⁹*

*The group comes to consensus
that every meeting,
every class,
every focus group
should always utilize Play-Doh.*

(Researcher's Personal Journal, July 2017)

The end of the evening concluded with a presentation of the new genre-diverse curriculum itself. Most of these participants had not seen the final product and they express their astonishment at seeing so many of their ideas outlined in a formal plan-of-work with course numbers and titles. There is a mix of feelings in the air—a happiness

¹⁰⁹ SpongeBob SquarePants is an American cartoon television series, created by animator Stephen Hillenburg, which has been produced Nickelodeon since 1999.

and pride of ownership in crafting something meaningful, and a sad envy of the incoming students who will benefit from the finished curriculum these participants helped create.

Curtain Scene: What Happens to Meaning When Purpose Is Gone

Three weeks after the focus group gathering, the Marygrove College faculty were asked to gather on-campus for an important announcement about the future of the institution. On August 9, 2017, Marygrove College declared exigency, which would require all undergraduate programs to close at the end of the fall semester. As co-chair of this 90-year-old music department, my attentions immediately shifted to helping the current students either finish or transfer and to terminating the physical holdings. The flurry of texts I received from these study participants echoed the sadness of one question: “What happens to our curriculum now?”

I struggled to return to my dissertation study for quite a while. Every time I opened related documents, transcriptions, or recordings, I was confronted with the loss of our department all over again. The larger purpose for my study had seemingly evaporated overnight—there was no longer a curriculum needing to be informed by these participants’ experiences. My advisors encouraged me to look beyond the original purpose, but to what end? I needed to reconnect into the data through something which would be deeply meaningful as a final research form.

Act II: Dramatizing the Data

Starting in 2014, I had begun to expand my creative work into playwriting. I had crafted and co-produced two stage works: *Cinderella through Kaleidoscope* (a jukebox musical which had been performed at Marygrove by the visual and performing arts students, including four of these participants); and *Pat & Emilia: A Mixed-Media*

Chamber Opera. I approached my advisor with a (seemingly) radical question: “Would it be possible for someone to craft a play as her dissertation?” The response I was given consisted of a smile and one word: *Ethnodrama*.

Storytelling in Theatre

According to Spencer (2002), the act of storytelling can be divided into three basic forms: *Prose* (e.g., novels, short stories, online texts), *Theatre* (anything performed by live humans that incorporates language for a live audience), and *Film* (e.g., movies, TV, other video media). He notes that each of these forms serves a particular purpose and may affect audiences in ways the others do not. Film, for example, operates in an immediate and visceral fashion as we receive images that were “selected and deliberately distilled into a purer form in order to achieve a greater impact” (p. 5). Prose is often more contemplative and analytical because the written story provides more opportunity for time between the experience of a word and the moment of understanding. Theatre has a visual dimension, *spectacle*, which can serve to highlight the essential drama when it is “extravagantly imagined but tightly integrated...justified by the demands of the plot” and serves as a metaphor that “supports and is supported by the meaning of the text” (p. 11).

Humans are drama-crafted species. Because we create ourselves through stories, the act of theatre began at the dawn of humanity as our species began to perform for others around the fire (Spencer, 2002). The act of theatre arises spontaneously in all of us and, like music, is “part of the collective spirit” of what it means to be human (p. 115). Drama, on the other hand is the invention and craft of a particular artform, conveying its coherent picture of life through its architecture (Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale, 2008). These authors define *architecture* as: “the art and science, style and method, of designing

and creating something” (p. xiii); but within a frame of drama, it also concerns itself with aesthetics, the nature of beauty, and our response to it. Each playwright’s aesthetic originates from “a conscious set of creative principles as well as an intuitive feel for the sort of drama you wish to create” (Daly, 2019, p. 35).

In the Western world, the ancient Greeks are credited with giving drama a particular shape and for establishing particular conventions.¹¹⁰ A hundred years after the plays of Sophocles, Aristotle wrote his *Poetics* based on his own assessment of what he considered to be the “rules” based on his own experiences watching theatre (Grace & Bailey, 2016; Niggli, 1967).¹¹¹ Aristotle’s exploration of the “poetic or productive science” behind playwriting (Telford, 1961, p. 1), especially of six parts of a play (i.e., plot, spectacle, character, thought, diction, and melody)—or rather the materials in which the agents imitate, how they imitate, and the things they imitate (p. 12). *Plot* refers to the synthesis of events across time and place, *spectacle* to visual appearance of set, costumes, and props, both *melody* and *diction* refer to the construction of the lines or verses of text/song, and agents of the action can be understood by their *character* and *thoughts*.¹¹² In modern day, playwrights speak most often of five components within the architecture of dramatic storytelling (Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale, 2008):

1. *Plot* is events selected and arranged as action leads into action and answers the question: “What’s happening?”

¹¹⁰ Particularly the works of Aeschylus (c. 525—c.456 B.C.E.), Sophocles (c. 496—c. 406 B.C.E.), and Euripides (c. 484—406 B.C.E.),

¹¹¹ Interestingly Aristotle, who would shape playwrights’ thinking for centuries to come, was not even a playwright himself but a political analyst and a biologist.

¹¹² Over time, agents in a theatrical piece have become known more commonly as *characters*.

2. *Character* refers not only individuals appearing in the drama, but the *essence* of those individuals.
3. *Theme* is the artist's point-of-view on the subject matter, and answers the question: "What does it mean?"
4. *Genre* is the type of drama (e.g., comedy, tragedy, farce) which is differentiated primarily by the response they seek to elicit in their audiences.
5. *Style* is the characteristic mode of expression.

One of Aristotle's fundamental observations that does hold through into modern theatre is that theatre cannot be regarded, in itself, "real life." Instead, it may be considered an act of imitation or a representation of real life (*mimesis*). This idea parallels statements earlier in this document that stories of experience do not replicate or literally recreate the experience itself but are memory-based inventions or constructions of the event itself (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986). In creating a storied sketch of an event from our memories, information is selected, details may be sacrificed or altered, emphases placed, and sequences of actions are created as we attempt to "discover and reveal what happened in a way that is faithful to reality and at the same time illuminates it" (p. 114). Grace and Bayley (2016) note that drama, like a painting or a symphony, must be acknowledged as different from a historical work or even facts, because it does not attempt to present what *is* but rather a *version* that one may recognize as related to the original subject (p. 18). It is through this "act of translation" that we come to speak effectively and communicatively of how things were, and develop opinions and assumptions about how things are or will be (Bogart, 2014, p. 7).

Spencer (2002) maintains that, at its heart, theater is about human communication and the expression of ideas. Therefore, the rules of drama, much like the laws of nature, were never truly “decided” but discovered. The elements of theatre exist onstage because they exist in storytelling because they exist in the ways in which we live and story our lives (e.g., characters in plays have actions because we have actions in real life). Spencer questions whether those who have studied or practiced playwriting in modern times have truly arrived at their own rules or have simply expanded upon structural ideas that Aristotle was simply first to note.

Traditionally, theatre has come to be known as a planned and public dramatic presentation of the stories of humans, and in this way, it is centered in and emulates from everything related to story (narrative) and storytelling above. Like music (as discussed in Chapter Three) or indeed any artform with a rich history and repertoire, theatre is notoriously difficult to define. Any personal attempt here on any comprehensive or inclusive scale would surely fail in its attempt. Instead, I will rely on the insightful words of playwright, teacher, and dramaturg Timothy Daly (2019), who says that theatre is “a complex historical and cultural construction” grounded in timeless traditions of storytelling, and may be seen as “the sum of many things [including]:

- an entertainment...
- a set of encoded meanings...about how to live—or how not to...
- a cosmic statement of humanity’s place in the universe...
- a narrative pattern using recognized mileposts and markers
- an agreement between teller and audience...
- a meditation on things almost too deep, or high, for words...

- a chance for an audience to dream...
- a chance to air and debate social, political, moral and ethical issues...
- a reminder to its audience that we are social beings who live in a society...
- a structured unleashing of the imagination” (pp. 87-88)

Moving forward in the next section, I will be combining these worlds of story (i.e., every day, inquiry, and theatre) and the methodological practice of ethnography to outline the approach to and philosophy behind the proposed final ethnodramatic form for this dissertation.

The Beginnings of Research-Informed Theatre

Research-informed playwright Tara Goldstein (2012) notes that there was a literary turn in American anthropology with the publication of Clifford and Marcus’ (1986) anthology, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. It begins with Clifford’s introduction, which says that ethnographers *invent* rather than represent ethnographic truths. No longer could any ethnographic research be considered an accurate and transparent mirror of cultural life that the traditional anthropological field had long presumed them to be. Beyond questioning this “politics of poetics,” social scientists were asked to begin examining a system of writing that “relied on the words and stories of (frequently less privileged) others” who assisted researchers in the writing of their culture without receiving either benefits of authorship or any form of decolonized power relations (pp. 86-87). Across its pages, *Writing Culture* set out a new agenda for anthropological writing to be more “innovative, dialogic, and experimental” to better emphasize the *inventedness* of ethnographic works as well as “to reflect a more profound self-consciousness of the workings of power and the partialness of all truth” within them

and the contexts they studied (Goldstein, 2012, p. 3). Ethnography invited researchers to move away from the presentation of a “circumscribed ‘other’ reality” and to evolve toward a “constructive negotiation...of dialogue and polyphony” (Clifford, 2003, p. 132). The writing of ethnography, transforming from the product of a dominant authority into an “unruly, multisubjective activity” with various interpretations and possibilities, emerges from readers’ engagement with cultural text (p. 133).¹¹³

Leading into Clifford and Marcus’ call for more innovative forms of ethnographic writing, interpretative anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973, 1983/2000) and symbolic anthropologist Victor Turner (1974, 1982) had each brought a renewed focus to how studies of culture are centered in individuals interpreting their symbolic worlds in search of meaning. Geertz (1973) understood human beings as being “suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun” (p. 5). From this, he introduced a view of data as the researcher’s construction of “other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (p. 9). Any resulting anthropological writings would then be a second (or even third) level interpretation of an original interpretation (p. 15) of “transient examples of shaped behavior” (p. 26) as shared by a participant. In this way, an ethnographer may only find understandings by fully immersing himself in the studied culture and seeking to converse with people belonging to that culture (1973, p. 13). This requires the writing of *thick descriptions* of cultural context and meaning that participants themselves have placed on words, actions, and objects so that outside readers may understand their normalness as well as their particularity.

¹¹³ Lincoln and Denzin (2003) also note the change in ethnographic practice as defined by “the triple crises of authority, representation, and praxis.”

Complimentary to Geertz, Victor Turner (1974) saw the social world as “a world in becoming, not a world in being,” and any studies within this world must embrace “the actual flux and changefulness of the human social scene” (p. 24). Social researchers examine the performance of a social world rather than any fixed structure contained within it. The symbology of which Turner speaks goes beyond tangible materialism into the *doing* of performances and ritual. Performances are “the languages through which a group communicates itself to itself” which includes not only verbal conversation, but also “gestures, music, dancing, graphic representation, painting, sculpture, and the fashioning of symbolic objects” (Turner, 1979, p. 94). For Turner, the study of culture is the exploration of its *social dramas*, which function as a kind of “meta-theater” or “dramaturgical language” for social interactions in daily living (p. 65). Turner states that Self is presented through “the performance of roles, through performance that breaks roles, and through declaring to a given public that one has undergone a transformation of state and status, been saved or damned, elevated or released” (Turner, 1979, p. 72). He draws heavy inspiration from sociologist Erving Goffman’s (1959) view of presentation of everyday self as a performance. However, instead of embracing Goffman’s performance as imitation, Turner shifted the perspective to performance as creation. In this way, humans may move beyond being “mere copies” of what they observed and instead transcend to “become inscribed with personal meaning” (Haanstad, 2014, p. 95). Turner’s approach developed immensely when he began working with Richard Schechner’s experimental theater company, The Performance Group, in the 1970’s.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ The Performance Group is now known as The Wooster Group.

His resulting method, *ethnodramatics* was fashioned as he sought to explore fieldwork documentation through dramatic and theatrical modalities (Turner, 1982). Turner's "on-your-feet" adaptations of field notes, interview transcripts, and ethnographic narratives were improvised and dramatized, beset with the goal of coming to deeper understandings of other cultures (p. 100). This work would inspire a number of researchers to link ethnography with performance, whether directly or indirectly—most notably, Conquergood, Denzin, and Saldaña (Haanstad, 2014).

Culture as Performance

Building from Turner, Goffman, and their contemporaries, Dwight Conquergood entered the performative conversation in 1989 with *I Am a Shaman: A Hmong Life Story with Ethnographic Commentary*. His ideas on cultural performances and performative stances would influence ethnographic researchers up until and even beyond his untimely death in 2004. For Conquergood (2003), shifting thinking from "world as text" to "world as performance" requires several commitments from the ethnographic researcher:

- thinking about *culture* as a verb instead of a noun.
- thinking of fieldwork as "collaborative performance of an enabling fiction between observer and observed, knower and known" (p. 366).
- thinking of performed experience as "a way of knowing, a method of crucial inquiry, a mode of understanding" (p. 366).

Rather than being classified by a set of variables, Conquergood (2013) envisions culture as a vortex of "enabling energies swirling around an axis" which "performs and articulates us as much as we enact and embody" its qualities (p. 17). He addresses a common concern: If we define culture in this way, does it then become "so dynamic and

evanescent as to prevent analysis?” (p. 18). Conquergood says no, because cultural processes are enacted and expressed as social dramas while simultaneously pulling towards a moral, symbolizing center. These outward expressions (or “culturally reflexive events”) are publicly accessible as “rituals, ceremonies, celebrations, myths, stories, [and] songs” which “focus, interpret, punctuate, and endow meaningfulness to experience” (p. 19) and enable researchers to examine and engage in “the core values, virtues, and visions of a culture” (p. 18). Conquergood (2013) borrows Turner’s (1974) term for these expressions: *cultural performances*. Culture as performance is beneficial to ethnographers because it eliminates the option for “variables to be isolated, measured, and manipulated” and “dissolves hard-edged distinctions between observer/observed, self/other, subject/object” (p. 17). As a result, interactions within ethnographical writing are more “vulnerable and open to dialogue with the world” (p. 66).

Conquergood (2003) viewed ethnography as an *embodied practice* with the *embodied researcher* being required to immerse herself in the field “for a period of time sufficient to enable one to participate inside that culture” (p. 180). These concepts of embodiment and connection in qualitative research will be familiar from Chapter Four. However, Conquergood clarifies the term *immerse* as something more meaningful and committed than simply being present and among. He cites Goffman’s (1989) suggestion that getting data is “subjecting yourself, your body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals...so that you are close to them while they are responding to what life does to them” (p. 125). Ethnography, which was traditionally grounded in the act of observation and sight, shifts instead into a “communicative praxis” of speaking and listening (Conquergood, 2003, p.

357). Listening becomes “an interiorizing experience, a gathering together, a drawing in” and the act of conversation as demanding a “copresence” which “decenters the categories of knower and known” by invoking elements of “vulnerability and self-disclosure” (p. 357). As a result, the embodiment of which Conquergood and Goffman speak expects the researcher not only to study participants, but to participate in the act of inquiry alongside them, to be affected by them, and to be in dialogue with them. This dialogic engagement then creates space for “give-and-take” rather than “turning the other into the object of a voyeuristic, fetishistic, custodial, or paternalistic gaze” (Denzin, 2003, p. x).

From this premise, Conquergood generated a figure representing five stances of interaction and engagement between ethnographic researchers and participants in the field. Each of the stances take place between one axis of feeling a sense of *detachment* vs. *commitment* to the other, and between another of *identity* vs. *difference* with the other. A researcher with a detached identity results in *The Custodian’s Rip-Off* stance, which is characterized by a desire to acquire and own what belongs to the participants’ culture, rather than a genuine inquiry. These researchers are only concerned with to getting good raw material from their subjects “with little or no consideration of how their presence affects the dignity, safety, traditions, order, economy, and health of the people they meet” (Madison, 2020, p. 14). Conquergood gives the example of a “preservation group” who continued to perform Hopi dances and sell Hopi-style trinkets in the name of “preserving [a] dying culture,” even though Hopi elders strongly objected to their actions (p. 70). On the other side, a committed identity may lead to *The Enthusiast’s Infatuation*, which is a superficially enthusiastic connection with another. Believing that all people are really alike, Conquergood sees this stance as unethically trivializing because “the

distinctiveness of the other is glossed over by a glaze of generalities” (p. 72). The Other becomes an admired object “without a will or voice of its own” with the researcher “imposing their own romantic lens over difficult realities” (Madison, 2020, p. 15). To help readers understand the concerns of this stance, Conquergood (2013) quotes Tzvetan Todorov (1984): “Can we really love someone if we know little or nothing of his identity, if we see, in the place of that identity, a projection of ourselves or ideals?...How much is such love worth?” (p. 168).¹¹⁵ At the intersection of detachment and difference lies *The Skeptic’s Cop-Out*, which is overly committed to the difference and remoteness of other. This researcher wishes “to astonish rather than understand” and is “suffused with sentimentality and romantic notions” about other (Conquergood, 2013, p. 73). He says that instead of bringing humans into genuine contact and conversation, this mode creates “aesthetic, romantic, political” distance like “museum exhibits, mute and staring” (p. 73). Finally, there is the committed difference of *The Curator’s Exhibitionism*, which Conquergood condemns as “imperialism of the most arrogant kind” (p. 74). Researchers in this stance celebrate their position in the dominant culture, “foreclose dialogue” with anyone perceived as Other, and sit alone “detached and estranged, with no sense of the other...in an echo-chamber of his own making, with only the sound of his own scoffing laughter ringing in his ears” (p. 75). Conquergood (2013) sees each of the four performative stances listed above as being “morally problematic” for ethnographic research as a whole and suggests an alternative positioning (p. 7).

¹¹⁵ This connects directly with issues of *colorblindness* (as noted in Chapter Two), which continues to be upheld by many in the White community as the ideal views of racially different Others.

Situated at the center is *Dialogical Performance*, a balancing point between the axes of identity and difference as well as commitment and detachment. The aim of this stance is to bring together the various voices, worldviews, and value/belief systems of researcher and participant so, as humans, they might question, debate, challenge, and converse with one another (Conquergood, 2013). It “resists conclusions,” is “intensely committed to keeping the dialogue...open and ongoing,” and “does not end with empathy” (p. 75). D. Soyini Madison (2012) sums up Conquergood’s dialogical performance stance as a way to “emphasize the living communion of a felt-sensing, embodied interplay and engagement between human beings” (p. 10). It provides an “ethical alternative” because this stance “resides in tension” outside of any established point within the four extremes (Madison, 2020, p. 16). Because this dialogical stance is situated in the space *between* competing ideologies, it functions as a hyphen rather than a period by bringing “self and other together even while it holds them apart” (p. 75). Although the *dialogical performance* box may appear quite comfortable as a middle place, it is suspended in constant, balanced tension as it is simultaneously push-pulled between *detachment* and *commitment*, and *identity* and *difference*—like an object suspended in magnetic levitation between two sets of perpendicular polarized fields. Because this continuum is in a perpetual state of energy and flux, there develops the potential for appreciating both similarity and difference among individuals and groups. It is through the lens and practice of dialogical performance that I enter into performance ethnography.

Performative Ethnography

The ethnographer moves from a view of performance as imitation, or dramaturgical staging (Goffman, 1959) to an emphasis on performance as liminality and construction (Turner, 1986a), then to a view of performance as struggle, as intervention, as breaking and remaking, as kinesis, as a sociopolitical act...that break through ‘sedimented meanings and normative traditions’ (Conquergood, 1998, p. 32). (Denzin, 2003, p. 4)

As described in the previous sections, interpretative ethnographers seek “a holistic understanding of how individuals in different cultures and subcultures make sense of their lived reality” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 193). Studying different socio-cultural worlds and the individuals who inhabit them, their aim is never to assert an objective, uncontested Truth about Other, but to gain appreciation for these participants’ own understandings of how they want to be represented, both as individuals and cultural members (Denzin, 1997, p. xiii). To accomplish this, ethnographers must enter a social world to engage with its people, events, and experiences so as to “understand social reality from the participants’ perspective” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 197). Only this level of intimacy and vulnerability will afford an ethnographer any chance of transforming the Us/Them-style Othering into an I/Thou (Buber, 1937) relationship so she might engage in the types of conversations that lead to meaningful research texts.¹¹⁶

A performed text research is lived experience in two ways: the experience represented in the researcher-writer’s text as lived by the participant, and re-presentation of those experiences through an embodied performance for an audience (Denzin, 2018; Pelias, 1998). Denzin (2018) gleans his understandings of experience from Goffman

¹¹⁶ There is a rich infusion of constructivism and critical theory perspectives throughout the performance ethnography and ethnodrama literature.

(1959) and Bruner (1986) in that “representations of experience are performative, symbolic, and material” (p. 38). He builds his definition of *performative* on gender theorist Judith Butler’s (1993/2011) *performativity as citationality*—a “discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names” and not just a single act but “a reiteration of a norm or set of norms” that “acquire an act-like status in the present” (p. xxi). We are “*homo histrio*—performing creatures who are created and maintained through enactment, through doing what they do” (Pelias, 2008, p. 185). If the way we share experiences is through performative events such as storytelling, ritual, and drama, then the most natural way to share experiences is understood through performative events (Denzin, 2018).

Denzin (2003) models his performance-based social science closely in the steps of Victor Turner (1986) and in a similar breath to Conquergood (2013). The *performance* of which he speaks may exist as many things at the same time: “A verb, a noun, a form of being, an action, form of doing, a form of mimicry, of minstrelsy, showing, a way of knowing, a way of making the world visible, an incitement to action, and entanglement” (Denzin, 2018, p. 19).¹¹⁷ This is similar to Conquergood’s (2013) view of performance studies as an *interdiscipline* which “privileges threshold-crossing, shape-shifting, and boundary-violating” and can cultivate our capacity to “move between structures, to forge connections, to see together, to speak with instead of speaking simply about or for others” (p. 27). It also aligns with Pelias’ (2008) dual vision of performative inquiry as both an

¹¹⁷ Denzin did not clarify his purpose for including *minstrelsy* here. However, knowing him as an advocate for social justice, I choose to view his inclusion of this entertainment form which mocks and denigrates African-Americans as a warning and reminder that not all *performance* may serve a higher, altruistic purpose.

embodied practice which may foster meaning-making and social change and a “communicative act” which can provide a “generative vocabulary” for better understanding human behavior (p. 185).

Through the flexibility of this dramaturgical lens, both the inquirer and audience may become better sensitized to “patterns of relationship across time, the settings specific to these patterns, the stylization and plasticity of human action, and the possibility for altering such patterns through deliberation and dialogue” (Gergen & Gergen, 2018, p. 57). While traditional ethnographers assumed a level of finality and accuracy regarding a participant’s statements and their meanings, a performative approach challenges these assumptions. Reiterating again, ethnographers are not dealing with objective numerical data but socially constructed units of experience and meaning (e.g., stories, dramas) (Bruner, 1986). Any language chosen does not mirror a person’s experience, but rather represents their current understanding of experience which remains constantly in motion and is always subject to change (Denzin, 1997). Therefore, we can never consider any storied representation to be a final, accurate version of what was meant or even said. We can only capture “different textual representations of different experiences” at different moment-settings in time (p. 5).

Quality ethnographic research texts are dialogical by nature because they are the place where the voices of participants and researchers “come alive and interact with one another” (Denzin, 1997, p. xiii). Every aspect of the inquiry is in conversation with another in “complex systems of discourse” where meanings “all circulate and inform one another” (Denzin, 2003, p. x). Mieczakowski (2006) explains that consequently the inquiry is about “*speaking with* informants and audiences rather than *speaking for* or

about them” (p. 238). This interaction often goes even further into “experimenting with and disturbing the delineation” between study participants (authors), researchers, final research texts, performers of those texts, and audiences (Mieczakowski, 2006, p. 238). A contextualized, situated performance helps to define and mediate these “ongoing relationships between texts, readers, interpreters, performers, and audiences” (Denzin, 1997—citing Loxley, 1983, p. 42). Conquergood (2013) says performance studies also help collapse the division between a researcher’s identities of scholar/researcher and artist/practitioner. This unification replenishes and revitalizes the connections between “knowing how,” “knowing that,” and “knowing who, when, and where” (pp. 42-43). He insisted there is no need to banish your artistic spirit to become a critical thinker, or to repress your intellectual self to act as an artist. Performance-based research also centers “the experiencing body situated in time, place, and history” which requires face-to-face encounters, not distance and generalizations (Conquergood, 2003, p. 363). Conquergood (2013) sees an interdependence and vulnerability established between Self and Other in the performative view of research. Instead of the researcher being poised as detached and in control, the performative view brings ethnographers and participants together as “co-actors, mutually engaged collaborators in a fragile fiction” (p. 21). These works unsettle the researcher-writer’s place in both process and product because it privileges *lived experience* over any single individual, which frees both the text to become (and the researcher-writer to create) an interactional sharing and understanding of another’s point of view. This is not only between the researcher, participants and performers, but also the audience as the fourth wall “blurs” and “the meanings of lived experience are inscribed and made visible” (Denzin, 2003, p. x).

Denzin approaches the act of ethnographic writing through the lens of Jacques Derrida, who believed: If a theory of the social is a theory of writing, then a theory of writing must also be a theory of interpretive (or ethnographic) inquiry. In this way, theory, writing, and ethnography are inseparable material practices; a cyclical relationship because the worlds we study as researchers “are created, in part, through the texts that we write and perform about them” (Denzin, 1997, p. xiii—also paraphrasing Derrida, 1981). He seeks a writing form that flows between interpretation and empathy into empowerment and social change, is temporally flexible while exhibiting vulnerability, credibility, and honesty, and does not “parade” theoretical underpinnings, but is “saturated” and “thoroughly conversant” with critical pedagogy, performance ethnography, and pragmatism (Denzin, 2003, p. 133). This form “should show, not tell” and focuses more on “dialogue than on plot or characterization” yet “does not ignore the demand to impose narrative unity on the events described” (p. 133).¹¹⁸ Gergen and Gergen (2018) speak of a similar desire they name: *performative consciousness* (p. 56)—where some languages are not privileged over others, the range of communication and representation paradigms are expanded, pluralism, inclusion, accommodation, and collaboration are celebrated, and the right of any one group to claim truth or accuracy beyond itself is removed. Therefore, this performative consciousness helps “open a space for otherwise delegitimated or marginalized discourses to be heard” (p. 56).

Performance inquiry is simultaneously an interpretive process and a text (Denzin, 1997). Denzin (1997) claims that ethnographic performance texts potentially answer

¹¹⁸ To accomplish this ideal, Denzin (2003) connects his work with progressive pragmatism of Dewey, the critical theory of hooks, Du Bois and Ladson-Billings, and the critical pedagogy of Kincheloe.

Trinh's (1991) call for research texts that evoke experiences, not explain them; and bring both performers and audiences into what he calls "a jointly felt and shared field of experience" (p. 94). Denzin joined Mienackowski (1995), Richardson (1997), Turner (1986), and Conquergood (1988) in calling for final research texts that move beyond aspirations for the purely representational and toward the presentational. It is a minimalist and dramaturgical form, which stays close to how people perform everyday life (Denzin, 2018—also citing Goffman, 1959). Performance ethnography texts create and present the personal, the political, the local, the historical and the cultural in one (Denzin, 2003). However, this is accomplished through a holistic form of writing that "shows, does not tell, hesitates, stutters, enacts what it describes, is evocative, reflexive; writing to embrace, enact, embody, effect" (Denzin, 2018, p. 8).¹¹⁹

This writing form would exist as part essay, part memoir, and part autoethnography—a fluid, creative nonfiction which translates, rearranges, and remakes "scenes of memory" into a "fictional truth" which does not seek "exact truth or factual accuracy" but an "emotional truth, for deep meaning" (Denzin, 2018, p. 133—also citing Blew, 1999). The resulting "explosion of 'messy' forms" (e.g., plays, poems, ethnodramas) with their "skirted, pleated, and layered texts" has affected debates around scientific research and provoked ongoing conversations about the meaning of life, human purpose, community, and positive social change (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 7). This description leads into the final research form I have chosen for this dissertation.

¹¹⁹ This aligns with Anna Deavere Smith's (2000) description of searching for moments when an interviewee's syntax and grammar begins to break down (which indicates that the individual is truly living inside the moments they are describing (p. 53).

Considerations in Ethnodrama

Perhaps we should not merely read and comment on ethnographies, but actually perform them...To turn the more interesting portions of ethnographies into playscripts, then to act them...and finally to turn back to ethnographies armed with the understanding that comes from “getting inside the skin” of members of other cultures. (Turner, 1982, pp. 89-90)

Transforming findings of ethnographic research into a play script which may either be read or performed onstage is known by several names, including: *performance texts* (Conquergood, 1991/2003; Denzin, 1997), *performance ethnography* (Denzin, 2003), *performed ethnography* (Goldstein, 2012), or *ethnodrama* (Mieniczakowski, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2003; Saldaña, 1998). The literature of these scholars figures predominantly in my approach, but for this dissertation, I have embraced the specific format title of *ethnodrama*.

Defining Ethnodrama

The term *ethnodramatics* was originally coined by anthropologist Victor Turner (1982) as an exploration of ethnographical research through dramatic and theatrical modalities. He envisioned on-your-feet adaptations of field notes, interview transcripts, and ethnographic narratives being improvised and dramatized for broader audiences so they may come to a deeper understanding of other cultures (p. 100). The prefix *ethno-* specifically refers “to people regarded as cultural beings” (Wolcott, 2008, p. 202). In the case of a performed ethnography, Denzin (1997) defines *theatre* (ethnographic or otherwise) as “an aesthetic place and space where text, performers, performances, and audiences come together to participate in an embodied, evocative, reflective experience” (p. 96). Saldaña (2005) finds it quite natural for theatre and ethnography to be paired together because both disciplines share a common goal: “to create a unique, insightful,

and engaging text about the human condition” (p. 29). Conquergood (1991) and Mienczakowski (1995) were among the first to explore hybrid forms of ethnography and theatre in their studies in criminal justice and health care, each with critical and therapeutic social agendas. While crafting his first ethnodrama *Maybe Someday If I’m Famous*, Johnny Saldaña (1998) realized that while Mienczakowski (1995, 1996) and his colleagues had shared their ethnodrama projects alongside some theoretical and aesthetic framework, there was little beyond models to assist aspiring ethnodramatists like himself (p. 183). He felt this lack of “how-to” pieces in the methods literature left researchers to learn by doing while self-negotiating the dual roles of ethnographer and playwright. Since that time, Saldaña (2005, 2011a, 2018a) has worked to expand and clarify the methodology of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre and has become one of the best-known practitioners of the methods.

Saldaña (2011a) differentiates between crafting *ethnodrama* and producing *ethnotheatre*.¹²⁰ *Ethnodrama* is “dramatizing the data” through “a written play script consisting of dramatized, significant sections of narrative collected from interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journal entries, personal memories/experiences, and/or print media artifacts such as diaries, blogs, email correspondence, television broadcasts, newspaper articles, court proceedings, and historic documents” (p. 13—see also 2003, 2005). “*Ethnotheatre* employs the traditional craft and artistic techniques of theatre production to mount for an audience a live performance

¹²⁰ Throughout my writing, I will follow Saldaña’s (2011a) verbiage: *Theatre* refers to the formal play production process and performed product, *Theater* refers to a building or production company, and *Drama* refers to dramatic literature and improvisational studio work (pp. 14-15). He indicates that while this is not standardized vocabulary usage, he has found it is often preferred by theatre professionals.

event of research participants' experiences and/or the researcher's interpretations of data" (Saldaña, 2005, p. 1). Simply put, ethnodrama is a specific genre of dramatic writing in which "the qualitative researcher playwrites with data" (Saldaña, 2003, p. 218) which could lead to an onstage ethnotheatrical performance. I have crafted an ethnodrama for the dissertation, but will keep ethnotheatrical perspectives close at hand because the ultimate goal is to give performances shortly after completion of the PhD. There is a great deal of cross-over between ethnodrama and ethnotheatre within Saldaña's writings. The largest difference appears to be researcher intent, so therefore I will reference both freely in this document because my eventual intent with this project is an ethnotheatre performance. Saldaña (2011a, 2018a) lists many other names for *research as performance*, such as ethnostorytelling, lifeworld theatre, and social portrait play. He notes that common thread for all these different terms is that "the script or performance text is solidly rooted in nonfictional, researched reality—not realism, but reality" (2011a, p. 14). Also, the goal within each is "to investigate a particular facet of the human condition for purposes of adapting those observations and insights into a performance medium" (Saldaña, 2018a, p. 377). In this way, Saldaña sees ethnodrama and ethnotheatre as umbrella terms for all of these subgenres.

Van Maanen (2011) likens ethnodrama to a variant of the *impressionist tale*, one of his three types of storytelling for qualitative research. Like an impressionist painting, an ethnodrama is figurative yet expresses a "highly personalized perspective" as it "sets out to capture a worldly scene" in a particular position of time and space (p. 101). They comprise of "a series of remembered events in the field" which are written to convey the drama of experience, the mysteries of culture, and the inquirer's "way of knowing it"—

but not to interpret strictly or conclusively (p. 102). Saldaña (1998) built his initial understandings of ethnodrama directly from this view in collaboration with Denzin's (1997) chapter on "Performance Texts" from *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st century*. He followed Denzin closely in developing the text: to begin by searching for "participant 'epiphanies' in the data," "construct an 'evocative' rather than explanatory text," and to aspire to an "on-stage verisimilitude" (p. 184). These texts aligned closely with Saldaña's (2018b) understandings of qualitative inquiry from his mentors, Tom Barone and Mary Lee Smith. His reflection on their influence during the writing of his first ethnodrama (1997) resonates with my own experiences so far:

Barone challenged my perceptions of research authority, while Smith demanded evidentiary rigour in my field notes. He is art and she is science. Barone's spirit floats over my left shoulder, gently prodding me to compose evocative narratives. Smith's spirit sits firmly on the right and scrutinises my coding system. Barone encourages me to fly; Smith tells me to keep both feet on the ground. Hence, I am a schizophrenic researcher still searching for my own voice but, in the meantime, writing to appease the jurors—too frightened to fall, too frightened to lose my footing. (p. 184)¹²¹

Ethnodrama works to reveal "a living culture through its participant-characters, and if successful, the audience learns about their world and what it's like to live in it" (Saldaña, 2005, p. 14). There is a "collaborative power" between performance and ethnography which rises when "descriptive knowledge of lives" and events are coupled with "embodied artistic practices" to engage audiences with deeper critical social awareness (Alexander, 2005, pp. 411-412). Ethnodrama is especially invested in

¹²¹ My own metaphor is that of a 4-seat dining table: Denzin to remind me of attendance to the "inquiry of we," Clandinin to remind me of attendance to the "inquiry of I," my a/r/tographical self (the sum of my experience, study, and intuition as artist, researcher, teacher), and Saldaña's work and literature to help me negotiate among all three.

“decoding” the culturally-specific symbols, aesthetics, and experiences of informants using theatre practices and making them accessible to a wider audience by performing them in an accessible language” (Mienczakowski, 2006, p. 236). Ethnodrama has come to represent a form which activates conversations on themes important to the researcher informants, bringing concerns and understandings to the attention of the audience (Mienczakowski, 2006, p. 237). The genre does not aim to “transgressively...blur boundaries” between art and research, but also to present a form of “public voice ethnography” which has potential for emancipation and education for social-cultural issues related to participants’ storied experiences (p. 237). Goldstein (2008) says the richness of this research genre comes from three sources (p. 85):

- The ethnographic/narrative research from which the play is created
- The reading or performance of the play itself
- Any conversations that take place with audiences after the reading/performance

At the beginning of the process, an ethnodramatic script is consensually constructed by researchers and informants controlling the text and representations made. However, most ethnodramatists see their work as a form of *living inquiry* (Irwin, 2004; Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005; also Mienczakowski, 1996) with the later performances being “subject to continual processes of validation through its audiences” (Mienczakowski, 2006, p. 236). In this way, ethnotheatrical performances may be “constantly updated according to data drawn from audience interactions” (p. 237). In its most successful iteration, the performance of ethnographic texts may even inspire reader-audiences to challenge their understandings of “dominant stereotypes and

myths concerning both the lived realities of certain marginalized groups” (Mienczakowski & Moore, 2008, p. 453).

In *Tales of the Field* (2011), Van Maanen outlines three kinds of storytelling for qualitative research: realist tales, impressionist tales, and confessional tales. Saldaña (2005) identifies ethnodrama as a variant of the impressionist tale. Impressionist tales are written to convey the drama of what occurred but hold back from any strict interpretations or grand theorizing. They highlight “episodic, complex, and ambivalent realities” and aim to share messages of “the particular, eventful, contextual, and unusual” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 119). The impressionist tale reveals both the researcher's thought process as well as the participants’ meaning-filled words and actions. They are written not only to inform, but also to maintain the audience's attention which Saldaña notes is a critical part of theatre. The goal of these tales is to help audiences connect to humans from a particular context or feel the spirit of being in the field through the use of highly detailed and authentic accounts. Saldaña (2005) highlights ethnodramatic works in his anthology that are “more local in their content, more particular in their focus, and more intimate in their experience” (p. 3). My overarching goals for this ethnodrama relate closely to this description as I explore the commonalities and uniqueness of the life curricular episodes shared by these participants.

Art or Research: Where is Your True Allegiance?

I am drawn specifically to the term *ethnodrama* by how it gives equal weight to both the ethnographic and the dramatic/theatrical. For me, narrative inquiry, ethnography, and theatrical practice are equal partners in this research endeavor. The play would not exist without the storytelling and the research behind the storytelling, but the study of that research would be lessened without the final form of drama. However, although this

combination sounds ideal, how practical is its execution of the balance in real life?

Addressing the new forms that ethnographic research can take, Wolcott (2008) supports the allure and benefits of blending fields, but he also notes the difficulties with hyphenated methodologies as he raises the question: *Where is the true allegiance of the researcher? To art or to research?* (p. 210). Barone (2002) posed a similar question: *Are not the aims of an ethnographer different from that of a dramatist?* Mienczakowski and Moore (2008) speak of ethnodrama as being different from traditional theatre work because it is a new aesthetic that values accurate interpretation of research over style, mode and traditions of theatrical presentation. Although audiences are often connected to and interested in the themes of the piece, Mienczakowski and Moore see any resulting entertainment being secondary to the expectation of engagement. For Saldaña (2011a), as a theatre practitioner and audience member, he believes *art* must come first, and *message* second. He emphasizes social change is an “admirable goal” that should never be given up, but that researchers should be realistic about their expectations when it comes to ethnographical representation and presentation (p. 33). Ethnography has a responsibility to create “an entertainingly informative experience” that is “aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative” for its audiences (Saldana, 2005, p. 14—also 2011a). Acknowledging it may be hard to accept, Saldaña (2003) insists that theatre’s primary goal is “neither to ‘educate’ nor to ‘enlighten’” but to entertain—to entertain ideas as it entertains its spectators (pp. 219-220).

I cringed when I first encountered Saldaña’s use of the word “entertained” and struggled even more when I found he uses it quite liberally and unapologetically throughout his writings. Providing “entertainment” can mean something quite undesirable

to classically trained musicians pursuing the performance of high art as well as to music educators fighting to be taken seriously in K-12 academic settings. Researching the term, however, I found an interesting difference between the verb *to entertain* and the noun *entertainment* in Merriam-Webster. *Entertainment* was defined as expected:

“Amusement or diversion provided especially by performers” or “something diverting or engaging: such as a public performance.” On the other hand, there are many more layers in defining *entertain*:

- “to show hospitality to”
- “to provide entertainment for”
- “to keep, hold, or maintain in the mind”
- “to receive and take into consideration”
- “to play against...on one’s home field.”

The combination of these various definitions made me rethink my aversion to the application of the term “entertain” in the relationship between ethnodrama and audience. I certainly want to provide the audience with something that that they will “receive and take into consideration” and continue to think about and ponder (“maintain in the mind”) after the show is done. As a professional performer, I know that helping an audience feel welcome (by “showing hospitality to”) and providing an engaging (perhaps even diverting and amusing) experience are essential means toward accomplishing this. Even the idea of playing ideas against one another on “one’s home field” of the stage has interesting implications. There is a richness behind the idea of “entertaining” an audience that I had not before considered.

Exploring these perspectives, I wonder: Does there even need to be a “true allegiance” or even a clear leader in the union between ethnography and performance? Ackroyd and O’Toole (2010) do not believe so and emphasize that there are no prizes or benefits in distinguishing the voice of the theatre-practitioner from the voice of the scholar-academic in ethnodrama. They find that the “hope and ambitions of performance research” lie between these two identities and their “built-in ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction” (p. 80). Alexander (2005) and Saldana (2003) specifically note that performance and ethnography are not dissimilar in their goals, because “both disciplines, after all, share a common goal: to create a unique, insightful, and engaging text about the human condition” (Saldaña, 2003, p. 229—also citing Saldaña, 1999). They are both concerned with “lessening gaps between the known and the unknown, illuminating and exploring the lived practices of others...bridging geographical and social distances through vivid description, narration, and embodiment, [and] helping readers/audiences see possibilities through the visualization of experience” (Alexander, 2005, p. 419). In an earlier publication, Saldaña (1999) even highlighted the similarities among the skills of theatre practitioners and the prerequisites for strong qualitative inquiry, including:

- “the ability to analyze character and dramatic texts, which transfers to analyzing interview transcripts and field notes for participant actions and relationships;
- enhanced emotional sensibility, enabling empathic understanding of participants’ perspectives;
- scenographic literacy, which heightens the visual analysis of field-work settings, space, artifacts, participant dress, and so forth; and

- an aptitude for storytelling, in its broadest sense, which transfers to the writing of engaging narratives and their presentation in performance” (p. 68).

As I prepared to craft this dissertation ethnodrama, I wondered if I might be able to find this unity of approach; to enter into the process of ethnodrama not as a researcher, or a playwright, or an educator but as an a/r/tographer living and working fluidly in the in-betweens; and to “weave truth and art, in all their magnitude, into a scripted, performed, and published ethnotheatrical work (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 212).

The Question of Verbatim

The word *verbatim* appears throughout the literature both in terms of the use of interview texts as a source and verbatim theatre (also known as documentary theatre) as a genre. *Verbatim* is defined as “being in or following the exact words,” which is how ethnodramatists most often utilize data texts for the creation of their works (Merriam-Webster). Hammond and Stewart (2008) clarify that “verbatim” refers to the origins of the text spoken in the play rather than the final product. It is not a form but a technique—a means rather than an end (and end products can vary wildly). Saldaña (2018a) says that verbatim extracts “heighten the realism of the presentation and maintain the participant’s *voiceprint*” while any edited adaptations “eliminate the occasional verbal debris of everyday speech to create a more artistically rendered account” (pp. 380-381).¹²²

As an artistic expression of verbatim texts, ethnodrama provides an opportunity for researchers, artists, and audiences to more closely examine the “multiple, ambiguous, contested, and complex” realities of I, we, and other. (Saldaña, 2011, p. 213). Engaging

¹²² The construction process of verbatim ethnodramatic monologues will be discussed in Chapter Six.

in theatrical forms invites us to explore multiple and diverse voices within the human condition and to work individually and collectively in constructing understandings through meaningful storytelling. An ethnographer may ask: “What is this research about?” But ethnodramatists must also ask: “Whose story is it?” (Saldana, 2003, p. 223). Similarly, a traditional playwright may ask: “What is the story I will tell?” and the ethnodramatist must ask: “How will I re-tell the stories that I have received?” The playwright in ethnodrama does not create the stories or characters within the play, he crafts and reveals them because he is “not just a storyteller,” he is “a story-reteller” (Saldana, 1999, p. 63). The content for this dramatized re-telling of story comes from the transformation of the verbatim data (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, journals) by reducing down and focusing in (Saldana, 1998). The plot and storyline of the resulting play is a distilled combination of “meaningful life vignettes, significant insights, and epiphanies” from the participants and/or researcher (Saldana, 2005, p. 16). Saldana quotes a common theatre saying: “A play is life—with all the boring parts taken out” and quips that a comparable phrase for ethnodrama would be: “An ethnodrama is the data corpus—with all the boring parts taken out” (p. 16). It is the ethnodramatist’s main function to use an economy of words by omitting lengthy sentences and extraneous passages within an extended narrative transcript to re-tell the story for an audience (Saldana, 2003, p. 224). Saldana (2011a) insists that, in most cases, he only feels comfortable labeling a play as *ethnodramatic* if the script consists of approximately 90% verbatim extracts from empirical materials” (p. 208). However, the most difficult questions come not from how much of the ethnodrama should be verbatim material, but rather how much of the verbatim material should be in the ethnodrama.

Although a researcher may value each word of every story shared by participants during the interview process, “economy of time” is a massive consideration in the creation of any play (Saldaña, 2018a, p. 381). With over 30 hours of interview recordings, there is simply no way for me to include every piece of data within a one-hour ethnodrama. Like any qualitative research analysis and writing process, there must be decisions made as to what will be most meaningful and informative for audiences. Overall, the goal is to “compose a self-standing representative slice of the data that presents a *“portrait in miniature”* for each participant (Saldaña, 2018a, p. 381). The enterprise seems daunting, but Saldaña (2011a) assures that he has yet to hear of *any* ethnodramatic playwright who did not struggle with how to manage the amount of the verbatim material, what to leave in, what to leave out, etc. He notes that these tensions “are not anomalies but givens of the ethnotheatrical enterprise” and the solution is not to shy away but to lean into the process (p. 40).

For Mienczakowski (1996), one of the most significant aspects of ethnodrama is that the verbatim process returns ownership, and therefore power, back to participants in the final form (as opposed to an inaccessible academic publication). Ackroyd and O’Toole’s (2010—also citing Saldaña, 1998) agree it is “a moral imperative to respect the stories given,” but warn execution is not as simple as the intent (p. 57). Despite the verbatim process, the researcher-playwright is still primarily in control of how the overall story is re-told. In their powerful words: “All stories are equal but some are more equal than others...[and] it is ultimately the ethnodramatist who is the gatekeeper, determining which stories will be presented and how” (p. 57). In all qualitative inquiry, no matter how a researcher may try, it is impossible to be completely objective. The ethnodramatist

chooses which voices are privileged and which are silenced, and this leaves the ethnodramatist with power and control not only in the presentation, but in the research process as well (p. 52). As a result, even though we may craft the play with an intent for conclusions to be left to the discretion of the audience (Mienczakowski, 2006), the audience's conclusions will always be shaped (at least in part) by the performance, which itself is a construction by the ethnodramatist and/or the production team. Therefore "conclusions left to the audience's discretion" are never fully possible because of the bias-laden decisions made in the construction and presentation process (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010, p. 51).¹²³

Significance of Monologue

Originating from the Greek term *monologos* meaning "speaking alone," monologues are extended passages of text spoken by one character in a story (Collins, n.d.). Saldaña (2011a) observes that monologues are "portraits in miniature" capturing "the essence and essentials" of a character within an "economical slice...of time" (p. 66). Crafted wisely, monologues have the ability to answer key questions of: "What does the character want, what stands in their way, and what they might do to attain it?"

Source materials for ethnodramas typically come from one-on-one interviews where the person being interviewed speaks for extended passages of text. Because of this, most ethnodramas are primarily monologic in nature (Saldaña, 2011b). Monologues are

¹²³ Because of its committed use of verbatim materials, Saldaña (2011a) refers to ethnodrama as a form of *verbatim theatre*. Viewing verbatim theatre as a broad construction-based umbrella term, I agree with Saldaña's application. However, I hesitate to specifically use the term because I see significant differences to the British verbatim theatre of Alecky Blythe, David Hare, Max Stafford-Clark, Robin Soans, and Robin Belfield.

also ideal because of the need for an “economy of words to tell the story” as pages and pages of verbatim transcript are “reduced to the ‘juicy stuff’ for dramatic impact” (Saldaña, 2005, p. 20). Monologues give opportunity to showcase participants as participant-characters through “snapshot portrait[s]” that reveal both personal and socio-cultural insights and generate true emotional connection with audiences (pp. 21-22).

One of the goals of an ethnodramatist is to take the actual words of a participant and adapt them into an economic form that has aesthetic shape...like a film editor working with pieces of performed material captured on media...[or like] a sculptor—chiseling away at hundreds of pages of interview transcripts until a distinctive form emerges. (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 70)

Saldaña (2005) views the extended monologue of a character as the theatrical cousin of the individual case study in ethnography (p. 20).¹²⁴ As in straight ethnographic research texts, each interview transcription must be “*distilled* or *condensed* to capture its essence and essentials” through the researcher’s lens (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 71). Distillations would vary with different researchers and what they brought to focus for their reader-audiences.

Direct address monologues to the audience are the most common in ethnodramas. In this format, the character may also utilize the audience as if they were a character or group of characters (e.g., a son talking to his mother, a minister preaching to her congregation) (Spencer, 2002). In this performer/audience relationship, the audience is asked to be more present as if in conversation—“seduced...into participating viscerally in the experience of the drama” (p. 263). This connection is immediate, intimate and the audience comes to serve as a “collective witness” who is drawn into the character’s world instead of observing passively from afar (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 65).

¹²⁴ I would then extend this definition to say that multiple actors with extended monologues would be the theatrical cousin of a multiple-case study.

Traditional plays typically utilize dialogue as the primary form of stage communication rather than monologue. Ethnodramas can present challenges lest they fall into the trap of becoming what playwrights Doug Wright (2004) rebuffs as “little more than a series of question/answer interview exchanges” (p. xix) and Robin Soans (2008) bemoans as “a random collection of monologues” (p. 26). Finding ways to generate some dialogue within the play can be an option to help avoid these concerns. Dialogue can show interaction and interplay between characters, and not only help advance the action, but reveal another character’s reaction (Saldaña, 2005). Saldaña suggests multiple ways to infuse dialogue into ethnodramatic plays. Dialogue can be created from conversational interviews between researcher and participant, focus group interviews involving multiple participants, or participant observation field notes. However, dialogue can be a “slippery modality” in ethnodrama because it can be difficult to facilitate and capture a natural context of conversation between participants during data collection (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 99). Instead, some dialogue is often created for an ethnodrama by thematically aligning statements from numerous one-on-one interview texts as a “*plausible construction* or *creative nonfiction*” (p. 99). Regardless, a monologic-centered play must somehow express the collective journey of multiple participant-characters with multiple storylines—and “some sense of unity and direction must be evident in the plot” (p. 118).

The Architecture of Theatre

Although a playscript may present as a prose narrative on the paper, it is more like a musical score—a blueprint for performance (Niggli, 1967). The script is a form of writing that is “heavily dependent on special methods and techniques for the stage” (Ball, 2017, p. 3). To successfully craft a play script, a writer needs to understand how a play

works, and the theatricality beyond narrative which makes it *theatre*. Theatre is a medium based on both words and deeds, which can share a variety of points of view all at once (Spencer, 2002). Theater is demanding on an audience who must be willing to “listen and watch carefully, to comprehend ideas and images emerging in complex, often multilayered patterns” (p. 14). It is created by “the releasing of energy in a social context” using narrative patterns within “the medium of time and space” (p. 69). Forms of energy may include physical, verbal, acoustic, sensory, visual, emotional, and/or mental—while time has to do with plot techniques or time manipulation (e.g., the ordering and pacing of time). In traditional plays, most playwrights try not to load their scripts with instructions so as to allow the director to express her/their/his own vision (Niggli, 1967). However, I have found in ethnodramatic plays that more of these theatrical details (e.g., stage directions, set design elements, lighting design elements, costume design elements) are provided by the playwright as a crucial part of the data. The characters onstage are not fictional beings to be openly interpreted by director and actor, but rather real-life people who move, speak, dress, and act in particular ways. The richness of participant-character within an ethnodramatic script comes not only from the words spoken, but from the myriad of other human characteristics.

All plays can be broken down into the basic elements of playwriting and storytelling, but the true art of the piece comes from its *gestalt* (Spencer, 2002).¹²⁵ The ethnodramatist has the difficult job of dismantling and analyzing multiple living gestalts

¹²⁵ *Gestalt*—“something that is made of many parts and yet is somehow more than or different from the combination of its parts” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

(e.g., participant, context-culture, self), translating these into theatrical expression, and “somehow” arriving at a new gestalt in the form of a play.

*The gestalt is your play.
It is a whole, greater than the sum of its parts;
organic, complete, indivisible.*

*Character is indeed action.
and one character’s action is another’s conflict—
an event connected inextricably to them both,
the consequence of them.*

*Exposition is everywhere,
not just where you happen to see it.*

*Plot proceeds from story,
which in turn is related to theme,
which is another way of stating action,
which is a way of describing character.*

*We sometimes break elements down—
smaller pieces, compartmentalized;
but only to better understand,
before we put them all together again.*

A poetic transcription created from Spencer’s (2002)
The Playwright’s Guidebook (pp. 111-112)

Within this section, I will be defining the various components of the architecture of theatre (i.e., character, conflict and action, plot, theme) and exploring their use in ethnodrama. Similar to Western music theory relating to Western musical works, these are not “laws” of how Western theatre must be done—plenty of examples could be cited that do not fit within the terminology and structure described below—however, they are common enough to be named and outlined as typical.

Character

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle distinguishes between a character (*ethos*) and an agent (*pratton*). Pulling this into modern times, Bruner (1986) explains that an agent is a stock figure whose actions simply “fit the requirements of the plot,” while a character is developed beyond the information or action required (p. 38). In this way, a character is a 3-dimensional person, a gestalt, constructed how real people are with behavior coming from within. True characters are complex, multifaceted, and unpredictable people (Spencer, 2002). Regardless of whether they are onstage or in your living room, it is impossible to “learn a person,” even if you can get to know them a bit (p. 173). It is also important to note that a *character* is different than their characteristics or a characterization. In real life and in theatre, the essential nature of a person cannot be revealed through a list of biological, physical, psychological, or social *characteristics*, but by his *actions* in pursuit of an objective and his handling of the tangible consequences that follow (Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale, 2008). More specifically in theatre, a character is revealed through conflict, and conflict begins with a decision which then sets in motion another decision (Egri, 1942/2004). An *inciting incident* occurs that “forces the character into action to restore the balance that has been disrupted” and a decision is made which sets the plot in motion (Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale, 2008, p. 11). The play is then propelled from beginning to end by one decision resulting from another—just like in real life (Egri, 1942/2004). Saldana (2018a) names six elements of characterization which align both with the dramatic framework described above and the people in everyday life whom ethnodramatists seek to represent. Both real people and strong characters have:

- *objectives* which are “things they want or want others to do” that propel into...
- *conflicts* which “prevent them from achieving their objectives” which lead to...
- *tactics* or strategies to “achieve objectives and overcome conflicts” which are naturally tied to...
- *emotions* as “a human universal” and certain...
- *attitudes* toward themselves, other people, and certain issues—which are not always straightforward and can lead to “covert layers of unspoken meaning” or...
- *subtexts*. (p. 384)

In ethnodrama, participants become *participant-characters* (Saldaña, 2018a), and in my dissertation ethnodrama, each is presented as a self-standing three-dimensional lead character. Spencer (2002) warns that writing a play with multiple central characters means you must contend with multiple series of actions. He compares it to the writing of a fugue: “A song with a single melody may be relatively simple...add a second melody line, however, and a far deeper understanding of musical structure is required” (p. 193). Egri (1942/2004) uses another musical metaphor saying the playwright needs to make sure to *orchestrate* the characters well. His view of orchestration means creating a set of “well-defined, strong, and uncompromising characters” (p. 121), each in conflict with something or someone, in movement “from one pole toward another...commensurate to the movement of the play” (p. 119). What makes my job slightly easier is that this group

of participant-characters are all very “well-defined, strong, and uncompromising” and yet connected through their experiences as a cohort.

Action

The foundational component of drama is *action*. For such a simple word, it is surprisingly challenging to verbalize competently about what it is (and what it is not).

Action is not one individual component of theatre, but a combination of straight-forward elements operating together in complex ways to tell a story. My simplified understanding of the construction of *action* is here:

Objective is what a character wants.

Motivation is why they want it.

Conflict is the disconnect between what a character wants and their (in)ability to have it.

Obstacle is whatever is in their way of having it.

Action is what a character does to try to get it.

Objective (or “What a Character Wants”)

Simply stated, an *objective* is what a character wants and the struggle to achieve it forms the basis for the play’s central conflict (Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale, 2008).

Each of our lives is defined by our objectives and “everything we do—every impulse, every thought, every movement, every word—is filtered through the prism of our life experience” (pp. 17-18). In everyday life, people are rarely single-minded in the pursuit a particular objective, but theatrical drama needs such focus. Dramatic storytelling needs its characters to be relentlessly focused on what they seek for both time and momentum in the show. Playwrights must work to distill the passions and needs of their characters,

so each impulse (action) provides meaning and insights for the audience (p. 22).

Objectives also need to be defined in specific terms from moment to moment. Using an example from my dissertation play, “I want to be a professional musician” may be a calling or a personal goal—a *through-line objective*—but it is too general to serve as the objective for each of her choices and actions within the progression of the play (Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale, 2008). The through-line objective must be developed by smaller objectives “specific enough for an actor to play and an audience to comprehend” (p. 20). For example, in *The Wizard of Oz*: Dorothy returning to Kansas is her through-line objective, but the smaller objectives are getting to Emerald City, seeing the Wizard, etc.

Motivation (or “Why They Want It”)

Simply put, if objective is what characters want, then motivation is their reason for wanting it. However, Spencer (2002) warns that motivation can be a surprisingly complex phenomenon. In crafting their works, playwrights need to consider several factors, including stakes, subtext, and hope.

Tucked within the aspects of conflict/action/motivation are the *stakes* behind someone getting what he wants. Stakes are “what the character has to gain or to lose” and serves as “a function of action” (Spencer, 2002, pp. 74-75). Naturally, when the characters onstage express a sense of high stakes in obtaining their objective, they appear to care deeply about what happens to themselves and those around them. As a result, the audience will also tend to care deeply (p. 76). Conversely, if there is little for the character to gain or lose, she might tend to appear less concerned about the outcome, which will result in the same for the audience. As playwrights we must generate a sense

of high stakes investment to capture the interest and concern of the audience. As Spencer commands: “Make them care” (p. 80).

When a character appears to have one motivation, but in fact has another, it is called *subtext* (Spencer, 2002, p. 51). True to its name, subtext lies hidden under the spoken text at hand. It is “either waiting to be discovered or serving to add other levels of meaning to what’s happening on the surface” (p. 51). Things are not always as they seem and motivations are not always seen or known, even to the storyteller himself.

Spencer (2002) speculates that audiences do not attend the theater simply to see things that are true, but also that which is interesting. But “when there is no hope, there’s usually little interest” because “the actual experience of any good play...is one of great hope” (p. 82). As an example, he references the lead characters, Vladimir and Estragon from Samuel Beckett’s (1954) *Waiting for Godot*. These two characters are in utter despair in their physical, psychological, and spiritual struggles—and yet they still have hope. If a playwright can give a character the way to remain hopeful, then “chances are good that we [as audience] will too” (Spencer, 2002, p. 83).

After the aspects of stakes, subtext, and hope were brought to my attention, I found myself listening to the interview transcripts differently and changing how I asked my follow-up questions. The layers that have been revealed through these perspectives have added much to their monologues.

Conflict (or “The Disconnect Between Want/Have”)

Conflict is the disconnect between what a character wants and their inability to have or attain it. Conflict is not about fighting, confronting, or yelling—nor is it an emotion (Spencer, 2002). Conflict is a structural device in the form of the disconnect

between what a character wants and their inability to have it. If a character onstage has exactly what they want, then there is no conflict. Plays open with the world in dramatic *stasis*, full of potential, but then there is an *intrusion*—and this world of stasis “is jarred into action...setting free the irresistible forces that run a play from that point on” (Ball, 2017, pp. 21, 23). It is this intrusion that sets up the conflict. Conflict is a statement of “a clash” between *want* and *have*, and the search for possible solutions or resolutions that follows (Niggli, 1967, p. 39). All conflict springs from something in the character’s physical or environmental background and inherent discomfort and contradiction in the wanting/not having (Egri, 1942/2003, p. 60).

Obstacle (or “What is in the Way of Having”)

Obstacles are anything (e.g., something unattainable, outside circumstances, one’s own inabilities or fears, God/chance/fate) that blocks the character’s objective and keeps her from having what she wants (Ball, 2017). Regardless of the obstacle, however, Ball (2017) notes that the obstacle must be something the character is willing to fight for because otherwise she will do nothing and there will be no action. What the character wants (motivation) and whatever is keeping him from having it (obstacle) work against each other to create the dramatic conflict. This results in a series of conflict-filled actions which form the heart of any drama from the inciting incident to the story’s final climax (Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale, 2008). Letwin, Stockdale, & Stockdale (2008) note two major categories of obstacles: *internal obstacles* and *external obstacles*. Internal obstacles “originate within the mind, heart, or body of the character” (p. 26). For these dissertation participant-characters, I have found internal obstacles to include worthiness, self-confidence, vulnerability, conflict between vision/reality, and vocal damage.

External obstacles are the human, social, divine, and natural forces that stand between the character and their objective. Social conditions are also noted as an obstacle for these participant-characters, along with family, teachers, peers, institutional expectations, time, money, and sometimes even “serendipity.”

Spencer (2002) observes that an internal obstacle can be much more difficult to present and represent onstage because it often occurs entirely within a character. It is not something we can see because the characters may “contemplate it [and] mull it over, but almost never state it out loud” (p. 65). The conflict comes from an internal monologue, which must then be shared aloud for the audience’s benefit. While this may create a problem for most dialogue-driven and heavily staged traditional productions, ethnodramas (as will be discussed later in this document) are predominately monologue-built. A play crafted upon monologues can often struggle to hold the audience’s attention, but Spencer indirectly notes one great benefit. Because the source material is participants’ reflective narratives, there can be equal amounts of internal and external obstacles shared. When a character has internal conflict, things are more complex, and the struggle is “greater and deeper” than just two characters in conflict: “Greater because there is, simply, more conflict in the scene. Deeper because a struggle that is within one’s own conscience (or soul or mind...) is perhaps the most profound struggle that we humans know of” (p. 67). The strength of ethnodrama comes from these profound, often deeply personal internal struggles, shared so openly by participant-characters with their audience.

Action (or “What They Do to Get It”)

As described above, after an event (*inciting incident*) disrupts the stasis of a character’s world, she realizes what she truly wants (*objective*). *Motivated* to have this object of her desire, she feels an intense *conflict* and resolves to challenge the *obstacle* standing in her way. *Action* is what she decides to do to try and attain her objective.

Within the structure of a play, action is triggered by an event, which then leads to another event (and another action, etc.). Ball (2017) describes action as two connected events, with one triggering the another like a series of dominos (p. 9). Spencer (2002) envisions action as “vertically integrated” levels with each “connected to and dependent on both the one above it and the one below” (p. 54). Sometimes one event can trigger more than two or more separate actions for different characters, which creates multiple simultaneous paths of action (Ball, 2017). Niggli (1967) focuses more on the tangible event saying, “An event takes place because something happened previously to bring it into existence” and this something is the action sprung from a previous event (p. 29—also citing Aristotle).

A play itself is constructed of series of actions: “A play is not *about* action, nor does it *describe* action. Is a fire about flames? No, a fire *is* flames. A play *is* action” (Ball, 2017, p. 9). However, it is not the plays themselves that have action, it is the characters (Spencer, 2002). Speaking of the “action of a play” is not truly possible—only talking about a character’s action is real. Action is inseparable from a character and his setting and it is “only with difficulty that we can conceive of each of them in isolation” (Bruner, 1986, p. 39). “Every character in a play should have an action, which means that a play will have as many actions as it has characters...a necessary part of the general movement

of a play...even the character who is onstage only for a few moments wants something” (Spencer, 2002, p. 43).

Action is dynamic and fascinating—it is clash, dilemma, and conflict (Niggli, 1967). Action does not refer to physical behavior—however, physicality and language are the only methods that actors have at their disposal to communicate action to audiences (Spencer, 2002). Action is something which occurs within a character’s mind, the wanting of and desire for something (Spencer, 2002). What we know about the action comes only through external demonstration—what characters say and do—because the true action itself remains invisible.

Plot

Plot is strongly connected to storyline, but it has important defining differences. A *plot* is “the overall structure of the play”—whereas *storyline* is “the progression of events” or “sequential arrangement of units” (e.g., acts, scenes, vignettes) within a plot (Saldaña, 2005, p. 15). In qualitative terms, the *plot* is the play’s conceptual or theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 115). Niggli (1967) compares storyline to a charm bracelet: “The storyline is the chain from which all the events must dangle like charms. The chain binds the charms together into the unity we call a bracelet (p. 34)...Every event in that play must spring from—and be motivated by—that line” (p. 37). Niggli then frames plot as the bones of the play or “the outline your play takes on when your scenes are arranged in their proper order” (p. 110). Daly (2019) views both storyline and plot as being infused with human motivation, intention, and morality found within the events and actions of the play. However, the means and purpose of ordering these events is different for each. In storyline, the ordering of events or actions is symbolic and illustrative—“of

something deep and important to human life and experience” (p. 91). Plot is focused instead on structural ordering—“the art and craft of putting these symbolic events into a certain order...for the communication of a rich and powerful set of meanings relevant to our human existence” (Daly, 2019, p. 91). One of the challenges in crafting any play is finding the magic that will weave these separate processes of storylining and plotting into a moving and memorable stage production (Saldaña, 2005).

Arts-Based and Arts-Informed Research

Beginning my exploration into ethnodrama, I had assumed it fell easily under the umbrella of arts-based research practice. The term, *arts-based research* originated in 1993 at educational event hosted by Elliott Eisner and Tom Barone. Its aim was to create an expressive form of inquiry which enabled individuals to find empathetic participation and connection in the lives of others and in the contexts studied” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, pp. 8-9). Taking advantage of the *blurred genres* moment (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), arts-based research sought to push inquiry beyond the constraints of traditional discursive communication into the possibilities of artistically-centered representation (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 1). Arts-based research is an approach to qualitative inquiry that “exploits the capacities of expressive form to capture qualities of life that impact what we know and how we live” (p. 5). The arts make “empathetic participation possible because they create forms that are evocative and compelling” (p. 3). Arts-based research lives at the intersection of art and science where the creative arts spark “a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge building” (Leavy, 2018, p. 4). While the arts bring imaginative, nuanced, and expressive elements into scientific approaches, science infuses the art building process with an empirical view of the world which “honors careful attention to

the realm of human experience” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 46). Leavy (2015) reminds us that art and science do have strong intrinsic similarities, even though many people tend to view them as opposites. Not only do both art and science strive to “illuminate aspects of the human condition,” but they are also both grounded in “exploration, revelation, and representation to advance humane understanding” (Leavy, 2015, p. 3). Arts-based research seeks to bridge the researcher-self with the artist-self, not divide them into opposing forces (Leavy, 2015). As a result of this connective view, arts-based research is holistic and evocative, can provide new insights and critical awareness, challenge dominant ideologies, forge micro-macro connections, open up multiplicity in meaning-making, and make scholarship more publicly accessible (Leavy, 2018).

Like types of arts-based research, ethnodrama is also an example of Denzin and Lincoln’s *blurred genres* and utilizes artistic practices (i.e., theatre) as a key part of its construction, if not methodology. However, there seems to be continued discussion whether ethnodrama falls under the definition of arts-based research. In 2002, Barone explored whether Johnny Saldaña and Harry F. Wolcott’s 2001 ethnodrama, *Finding My Place* might be considered an example of arts-based research. Among other aspects, he noted that the piece not only has roots in theatre but also “reveals an allegiance” to social science because it is also a true ethnography (p. 259). Although Barone (2002) praised the “cohabitation” of both artistic and ethnographic elements in the performance text (p. 261), he also made a pointed aside that “arts-based researchers refuse to use the term *social science* in describing our work” (p. 258). Ten years later, Barone and Eisner (2012) clearly claim ethnodrama under the umbrella of arts-based research, especially Saldaña’s (2005) *Street Rat* as a strong example. Finley (2008) also cites *Street Rat* as a

prime work of arts-based research, which she sees as a methodology that “takes form in the hyphen between art and social science” (p. 72). Within the context of ABR, she sees artist-researchers colliding, coalescing, and restructuring both standpoints to create new works that contribute to cultural action by “initiat[ing] introspection, reflection, and representations that teach” (p. 76). Gergen and Gergen (2018) say performative studies like ethnodrama do fall within the family of arts-based research, but note that performative social science is primarily constituted by researchers whose work is often more scientifically-based than arts-based. Instead, these researchers tend draw upon various arts traditions “in order to carry out social science research” so one might think of ethnodrama as *research-based art* (p. 54).

Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) shares that in the early days of arts-based inquiry, two directional strands began to emerge in the methodology (p. 9):

- *hybrid forms* of artistic and scientific scholarship; and
- *art for scholarship’s sake*.

Whereas *hybrid forms* exist in the in-between of art and science, *art for scholarship’s sake* finds its way past hybridity into its own space of “stand-alone artistry” (p. 10). For Cahnmann-Taylor, ethnodrama can easily be considered a hybrid form of ethnography and theatre, but she also places some higher quality examples of ethnodramatic work under *art for scholarship’s sake*. When compared the hybrid option, *art for scholarship’s sake* is a much more difficult undertaking because it strives to simultaneously imbue art with socially engaging meaning from research and to permeate socially-engaged research with art. Cahnmann-Taylor holds that *art for scholarship’s sake* may only be accomplished if the researcher is grounded in his artform with years of extensive artistic

training in addition to studies in the social sciences.¹²⁶ Both *hybrid* and *art for scholarship's sake* can result in a strong final research text, but Cahnmann-Taylor has found the latter tends to be “unexpectedly memorable due to their emotive and visceral impact” (p. 11). She makes it clear that Saldaña’s ethnodramas fall under this designation.

Having wound my way through the literature above, I discovered a different route to an arts-related inquiry view through a connection to the words of Dilma Maria de Mello (2007). De Mello (2007) examines ways that art has been brought into narrative inquiry and reflects on the difference between the terms: *arts-based narrative inquiry* and *arts-informed narrative inquiry*. She notes that these terms are often used interchangeably but looking at ways art was/is utilized in the narrative inquiry landscape, she felt there was a distinct difference. Using the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, de Mello defines *base* as “the lowest part of something, esp. the part on which something stands” while *inform* is “to give information or knowledge to.” Further defining, she determined that information is “built on something already constructed so that something else can be constructed” (p. 214). Therefore, when art is applied in the methodology “as a way of composing and gathering field texts, it is considered to be the base of the whole research process” (p. 214). This would most accurately be called: *arts-based inquiry*. In her view, the term *arts-informed research* suggests artistic thinking and/or process has informed the analysis and the meaning made of the already-existing field text (de Mello, 2007, p. 214). Further, for de Mello, arts-based narrative inquiry has to do with field texts

¹²⁶ Cahnmann-Taylor warns this will not be confused with *art for art's sake*, because of the context in which it is found, and its grounding in data collection and analysis processes.

gathering, while arts informed narrative inquiry is related to research text presentation.

Also, de Mello notes that in arts-based narrative inquiry “the researcher creates space for the participants to live an aesthetic experience” while arts-informed “creates conditions for the readers[/audience] to live an aesthetic experience” (de Mello, 2007, p. 215).¹²⁷

Through the bricolage, I came to see connections to both ethnography and the study of culture (“we”), and narrative inquiry and the study of the individual (“I”). There are both us/them, I/thou components that speak to me through the stories of these participants. The participants are individuals and we are connected through elements of commonality; yet they are connected to one another, and to other communities in ways that I cannot fully belong. To focus only on individuals ignores important socio-cultural aspects – to focus on group culture only ignores the uniqueness of the individuals. My work is not “based” in artistic practice. The data collection and primary analysis originated in the practices of ethnography and narrative inquiry. Through these two methodological approaches (along with permissions from bricolage), I have come to see playwriting as an option for the final research form. Understandings of a research-based theatre may be enhanced or expanded by knowledge of arts-based research, but the origins truly come from performance ethnography as described above. I would not definitively say that ethnodrama cannot be considered arts-based research. However, in the case of my dissertation study, I relate more to the origins of performance ethnography and the defining parameters of arts-informed research. For me, ethnodrama is a form of research-informed theatre, which is a type of arts-informed research primarily evolved

¹²⁷ If/when this project turns into ethnotheatre and work for a staged production begins, I could see this transforming into a second-stage arts-based inquiry project because they would have direct ways to live the aesthetic experience.

from performative ethnography. Through the deep exploration of these nuances of multiple methodologies, I have come to new understandings of my identity as an a/r/tographical bricoleur.

Becoming a Playwright of Research-Based Theatre

Within her text, *Staging Harriet's House: Producing Research-Informed Theatre*, Tara Goldstein (2012) took time to outline her playwriting experience since it was her chosen representational form for her research. An educator by profession, she wished to share her background and training in research-informed playwriting. Having a solid academic background in music, my decision to craft an ethnodramatic script as the final research form for my dissertation may seem a curious (or even injudicious) choice. Similar to Goldstein, I hope a brief introduction to both my related prior experience and additional strategic preparation may prove informative for the reader.

Prior Experience in Performance, Theatre, and Playwriting

Playwright Josefina Niggli (1967) says the person attending all the best plays in New York is not as lucky as the writer in a small town who can “stain [her] hands with paint, smear [herself] with makeup, and even serve as curtain puller” in an active local theatre group (p. 2). She openly states that “knowing theatre” will never come from *attending* plays, but by working on them from backstage. For nearly ten years, I wore many hats as we produced shows, sometimes three deep, from audition to cast party, as a high school teacher and as co-director of a community youth performing arts company. The role of Music Director was always primary but I also casted, staged, and coached scenes. I advised on sets and costumes, taught different characters how to walk, speak, gesture, and handle props; and delivered pep talks and overt threats to numerous casts. I

played every show at the keyboard and learned to feel intuitively the emotional and physical needs of the players and audience. I learned to negotiate the time between scenes and the space between moments. I scaffolded the growth of young artists over the course of our 2-3 months together. I strategically made adjustments to larger shows so they could work with the cast/setting/audience we had available, and I adapted outreach performances to entertain anyone from wiggly small children to demanding older fundraisers. I crafted moments and touched everything that made the script and the score into living theatre. Working with cast and crew to present over 30 musicals, this is where I began to learn how to craft theatre—preparing other people’s dramatic compositions and making them work.

In 2015, I had the opportunity to serve as a playwright and creative director for two new research-informed theatre productions. The first, *Cinderella through the Kaleidoscope* was a new version of the classic tale crafted as a *pastiche* musical¹²⁸ from over 30 different Cinderella-inspired musicals, plays, ballets, operas, films, YouTube videos, and songs.¹²⁹ I wrought the patchwork production for the music, dance, and theatre majors/minors at Marygrove College, because a larger percentage of our student population had work/family/life obligations which made it difficult for them to commit to a large number of evening rehearsals.¹³⁰ With multiple Cinderellas, Princes, and Evil

¹²⁸ Similar in style to Baz Luhrmann’s 2001 film, *Moulin Rouge* or John Gay’s 1728 production, *The Beggar’s Opera*.

¹²⁹ For example, Act Two opens with the “Grand Waltz” from Prokofiev’s (1945) ballet, *Solushka*; “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)” by Beyoncé (2008), as used in Todrick Hall’s (2013) Youtube parody *Cinderoncé*; and “Stepsisters’ Lament” from Rodger and Hammerstein’s (1957/2013) *Cinderella*.

¹³⁰ Four of the study participants performed in *Cinderella Through the Kaleidoscope* and were part of the final editing process. Three of the remaining five came to see the production. Additionally, I music-directed two participants in a production of *Cabaret*, several participants came to see a performance of *Pat & Emilia* and I assisted five of the participants in preparing and crafting their senior capstone recitals. As a result, all are familiar with my work in a playwright, creative director, and/or performance director role.

Stepsisters,¹³¹ the department faculty members rehearsed their students to craft their assigned scenes of music, drama, and dance. In the final production week, these quilted blocks were sashed and sewn together on-stage into a single show with over 75 Marygrove students.

Pat & Emilia: A mixed-media chamber opera is based on the lives of two Canadian artists—photographer Pat Sturn (1910-2011) and opera singer Emilia Cundari (1930-2005).¹³² The first act focuses on the life of Emilia and features opera arias from Emilia’s repertoire alongside original monologues inspired by her life story. I had conducted some interviews with family, former colleagues, and former students about her life, singing, and personality—but most of the source materials utilized in the creation of the work stemmed from newspaper articles, recordings, opera house archives, and other published materials. The libretto for the second act was crafted from a prose narrative written by Pat’s dear friend and poet, Marty Gervais and set to music by composer, Jeff Smallman.

Two interesting qualities related to accountability and integrity played a role in both productions. The first had to do with adaptation and plagiarism. Because the majority of the materials used to craft both the first act of *Pat & Emilia* and the full show of *Cinderella* were published, they had their own power and protection per American and Canadian copyright law. I felt a sense of comfort in this since the rules for quoting these

¹³¹ This was accomplished through costume. The audience was instructed by our Fairy Godfather that although their faces might change, Cinderella would always be in blue, the Prince in red, and the Stepsisters in orange and yellow.

¹³² I had applied the term *mixed media chamber opera* as my own invention. In later investigation, I did find others who used similar terms. The earliest use I found was a production titled: *Mixed Media Opera* by Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik which was combination of an “avant-garde music experience” and “an underground film” performed at the University of Massachusetts in 1967.

materials within my works were clear (10% of any published source for educational purposes; 30% of each newspaper article from the Windsor Star and Toronto Star). The second quality pertains to authenticity of characterization. I felt little apprehension about the representation of Cinderella because although she is a beloved fictional character, there have been countless interpretations of her story across time and culture. On the other hand, Pat and Emilia presented a higher level of challenge and tension because they were individuals who had been beloved in their communities with several family and friends carefully scrutinizing their characterization in the play. However, close collaboration with key intimates of these women assisted in securing a passable authenticity for many audience members who knew them.¹³³

As I planned for this ethnodramatic dissertation study, I could see several similarities between the research-informed construction of these works and the ethnodrama I intend to wright.¹³⁴ Shifting from utilizing archival and published materials to field texts from participant interviews certainly diminished my comfort in adaptation and characterization. Through the data collection and analysis process, I have had many questions and concerns regarding the nature of interpretation and the ethics behind adapting real life materials. The literature I have found on adaptation in theatre (Edwards, 2007; Mullin, 2009; Sanders, 2016) and dramaturgy (Barnette, 2018; Kerry-Moran, 2008) has been invaluable to framing my intention and process. The nature of character has also proven to be tricky, especially since the characters of this dissertation play are still traveling through their life journeys. These participants are still growing, learning,

¹³³ One openly disparaging remark about our representation of these women came from one of Pat's friends who angrily declared that Pat would never have been caught dead in the tennis shoes worn by the actress

¹³⁴ Not a spelling error. See the upcoming section: The Role of Playwright

experiencing, actively creating new stories, and editing past ones. How do I capture the essence of characterization in a play based on ten living, breathing, ever-in-flux humans?

I have also come to see a number of gaps in my knowledge and experience, especially regarding the art and craft of playwriting. As a deeply trained and heavily experienced professional musician, I am aware of the importance of having awareness-knowledge in the complexities and performance practices of an artform. I had a strong resume of life credits into the playwrighting process for *Pat & Emilia* and *Cinderella Through the Kaleidoscope*. My tacit knowledge and critical/creative thinking skills in partnership with brilliant artistic colleagues contributed to the successful production of both shows. However, I asked myself: As I step from these nonformal research-theatre projects into the role of a formal ethnodramatic playwright, how might I best prepare myself for the challenges ahead?

Deepening my Knowledge and Skills

Daly (2019) encourages aspiring playwrights through his assertion that: “You’re a writer when you say you are...long before others tell you so” and in preparing yourself for writing plays, “you’ll find you’ve already begun” (p. 36). He identifies ten skills that he finds useful for playwrighting:

- a love of theatre
- a knowledge of audience
- the mastery of human psychology
- a virtuosity in language
- the mastery of narrative form
- a strong formal(ist) instinct

- a feeling for theatre space
- something to say
- an ability to write for actors
- the hardware (and software)

Using this list, I identified #5, #6, and #9 as my weakest areas and committed myself to a year of exploring (formally) what theatre and playwriting can be.

Literature

Following conversations with several theatre colleagues, I constructed a list of key playwriting and play analysis literature which ranged from Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 B.C.E.) through Timothy Daly's *21st Century Playwriting* (2019). I stepped into the philosophy and architecture of playwriting through the eyes of award-winning professionals such as Peter Brook (1968), David Mamet (1998), and Lajos Egri (1942/2004). I came to understand both the domino-effect of action through David Ball's (2017) *Hamlet* reverse-sequential-analysis exercise; to appreciate the art of delivering information to an audience through Niggli's (1967) scattered-exposition-underline exercise;¹³⁵ to recognize the power of intentional theatricality through Kaufman and McAdams' (2018) *Moments We Love* exercise, and to develop patience with creative emergence through the character scene writing prompts outlined by Stuart Spencer (2002). Through Jester and Svich's (2018) interviews with *Fifty Playwrights on their Craft*, I explored what it means to take on the identity of "playwright" in this current era of theatre. I discovered terms and processes for things I had seen within theatre and

¹³⁵ Completed with native Detroiters, Dominique Morisseau's (2018) *Pipeline* as well as Niggli's own recommendation of Ibsen's (1879/2008) *A Doll's House*.

storytelling but had not known, attempted to unpack the mysteries of what makes a moment “work” onstage, and began to develop my own sense of laws to keep, rules to negotiate, and guidelines to break within the act of dramatic writing.

Works

Within this literature, I also read a number of plays noted as seminal and essential works (with special attention to works by women and people of color, and social justice plays). I discovered the elegant simplicity of Greek masterworks by Sophocles, rediscovered the brilliantly intricate dance of Shakespeare, and became intimately acquainted with a number of modern American and British theatre repertoire. Naturally, I have also read a large number of research-informed works (e.g., ethnodramas, docudramas, verbatim theatre works). Three works especially had a profound effect on my work with this dissertation play.

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992

For *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, Anna Deavere Smith conducted interviews with over 200 people connected in some way to the riots/uprisings following the Rodney King verdict, including King’s family, police, politicians, lawyers, witnesses, civic leaders, and a wide range of community members. She then crafted monologues from the interview transcriptions of select interviewees and performed these onstage using their verbatim words. The diversity of the stories shared was critical for Smith and she said her challenge was always to select the voices that best represented the event she hoped to portray (Smith, 1994, p. xxii).

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, Smith could only portray 25 individuals onstage, but she worked to share a wide variety of perspectives on the original assault,

trial outcome, and repercussions. From the script and recordings. I have found it is easy to see Smith's commitment to every participant-character she portrayed—regardless of socio-cultural status, political leanings, or personal opinion. She also decided to include additional monologues in the book script that did not make it onstage to “enrich the reader's understanding of the conflicts that erupted” or to stand as a companion piece to the theatre experience (p. xvii)

Interestingly, there is no internal stand-alone plot in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. The play consists of back-to-back monologues following the external timeline of the Rodney King saga from the beating through the riot-uprisings. The real-life story serves as the thread along which the monologues are strategically strung. There is no specific message or “answer” to be gained by watching the play unfold, but rather a broader understanding of multiple perspectives on a significant event in American history. The actions and storylines of the play are contained within each of the reflective monologues themselves. They truly exemplify Saldaña's (2011) idea of monologues as “portraits in miniature.” Each character carries equal weight in the play—there is no true “leading character” and each monologue is equally committed to conveying its truth to the audience. Smith's play may have been inspired by an event, but it is completely character-driven. Smith (1994) speaks of her work as a calling and an invitation to examine problems, to participate in problem-solving, and to break silences by encouraging more people to participate in the dialogue.

Smith approaches her interview, analysis, and playwrighting process as someone searching for a “*physical, audible, performable* vehicle” (Smith, 1994, p. xxiii). The script then becomes “a document of what an *actress heard*” and each performance “a

reiteration of that” (p. xxiv). She notes that the words of interviewees are not “an end in themselves” but are “a means to evoking the character of the person who spoke them” (p. xxiii). Toward this end, Smith engages in a form of verbatim transcription to capture the rhythm and phrasing of the participant’s spoken words on the page. She reflects: “Over time, I would learn to listen for those wonderful moments when people spoke a kind of personal music, which left a rhythmic architecture of who they were” (Smith, 2000, p. 36). She writes her monologues in this format, because she believes people speak in organic poetry.

I Am My Own Wife

I Am My Own Wife is a one-man, 2-act research-informed play created from playwright Doug Wright’s interviews and interactions with Charlotte von Malsdorf, an openly transvestite¹³⁶ woman who lived through (survived) WWII Nazi Germany and later the socialist Russian occupation of East Berlin. Wright traveled to Germany in 1993 to begin a series of interviews with Charlotte that would last several years. He was immediately entranced by her and wished to write a play based on her amazing story. Over the time he was interviewing her, Wright would come to learn much about Charlotte’s life, including details that did not paint her in such a heroic light. The play captures not only Charlotte’s story, but the full journey of inquiry as Doug celebrates the discovery of this woman, works to receive and unpack her stories, and eventually learns of her possible cooperation as a Nazi and Stasi spy. Doug’s love and admiration for

¹³⁶ This is the term Charlotte used to name herself as someone born male, but who lived and identified as a woman. *Transvestite* has become an antiquated and oft derogatory term. If she were living today, Ms. von Malsdorf may or may not have chosen different terminology for herself, but since 2SLGBTQIA+ identity is extremely personal, I do not feel it appropriate for me to use any identifier beyond her own chosen one.

Charlotte is quickly complicated by the horrible things she might have done (which is mirrored by the public's discovery as well). It is an open, honest, and vulnerable account of both Charlotte as subject and Doug as inquirer.

As Doug grapples with whether to proceed with the project in light of this new information, his friend John recommends simply treating the newspapers and reports as truth. Doug immediately rejects this option as he feels called to believe Charlotte's stories as much as she did. He grapples with big issues that affect most researchers at some point, including truth, trust, empathy, and accountability. Doug finally finds direction in a statement Charlotte had made about not refinishing her antique furniture, because any damage is part of the history, use, and survival of the piece—and reflects its record “of living and of lives” (Wright, 2005). Doug comes to understand that researcher-artists must tell stories in all their complexity and imperfection, even when the result is not what you had wished it to be. By the end of the play, Doug decides how to write the play: sharing both Charlotte's stories and his researcher-playwright journey as truth, but also showing the damage, cracks, and inconsistencies of that truth without repairing or glossing over the uncomfortable conflicts (which helps promote conversation long after the curtain closes). In this way, the final play becomes the creation of itself which the audience has already participated.

The play is quite complex with two separate storylines—Charlotte's life and Doug's inquiry journey—but temporally, the plot follows the latter. There are also multiple streams of action that must be accounted for—Charlotte in her recounted history, Charlotte in present day, Doug as he proceeds through the inquiry process, John as he assists and advises Doug, and whatever desires/conflicts arise for lesser characters

who pop in and out of the story. Whereas Smith's *Twilight* utilized monologues as organizational structures for the multiple storylines throughout the play, Wright turns to Kaufman and McAdams' (2018) *moment work* (which will be addressed in Chapter Six). Moments in time, place, and/or theme are carefully crafted to give a sense of where, when, how, and whom. As a result, there is a sense of energy running throughout the show as moment flows into moment.

Undesirable Elements

Undesirable Elements is “an ongoing series of community-specific interview-based theater works that examine the real lives of people who in some way are living as ‘outsiders’ in their communities” (Chong, 2012, p. 207). Playwright Ping Chong acknowledges that he does not consider his work to be a traditional play, but rather a “chamber piece of storytelling”—or a “seated opera for the spoken word” (p. 207). The works provide a type of oral history for those who feel outside of the community (“undesirable”) and feel called to share their stories. Chong's works are especially unique because they are always performed by the interviewees themselves.

Once a topic or identity group has been determined for the play, a number of extensive interviews are done with potential participants. Ideally, the production company seeks a group that will “represent a diversity of voices and experiences, and speak openly and honestly about struggles of identity, culture and otherness within different communities” (p. 208). A small number of participants (5-8) are invited for additional interviews, then their interview transcripts are adapted and theatricalized by Chong and his associates to form the basis of a script that “weaves the participants’ individual experiences together in a chronological narrative” (p. 207). The interviewees

then become performers as they gather to rehearse the written script (memorization is not required) and to prepare for a series of local performances. At these rehearsals, the cast members have opportunity to ask for minor revisions based on “historical accuracy, accuracy of voice/tone, or privacy” (p. 210).

The *Undesirable Elements* project aspires to three levels of impact:

1. A handful of individuals from different cultural/generational/social backgrounds share life experiences with others and “form intimate and enduring connections” (p. 208).
2. The stories are shared with a diverse audience in a theatrical setting which challenges the viewer’s expectations.
3. The third is the potential “cumulative, long-term impact of the previous two components, as the original participants and audience members bring their experiences out to their own communities, thereby broadening the dialogue and understanding generated by the theatrical experience” (p. 209).

The first *Undesirable Elements* (U/E) play was produced in 1992 with little fanfare for an art museum exhibition to which Chong had been asked to contribute. The origins of the idea and the title connect back to Chong’s awareness of being “other” in America. One play led to another, into what would become a series on the theme. Four are published (*Children of War*, 2002; *UE 92/06*, 2006; and *Inside/Out...voices from the disability community*, 2008)—but according to the organization’s website, partnerships with art organizations around the world have led to the creation of over 40 localized versions of U/E over the last 30 years (Ping Chong + Company, n.d.).

Having studied the original *Undesirable Elements* and then examined two other plays in their collection, there is an interesting mix of similarities and differences among them. The individuals and the stories shared always change, but Ping Chong has developed a common format that he uses with each. He likens his form to a Shakespearean sonnet—which maintains similar structural elements, but changes theme and subject. Each U/E play has a set form and the variations come from within the form so “the results and impact are always vastly different because of the nature of the stories told and people telling them” (Siegel, 2016, para. 5) The set typically remains the same: Small individual spotlights highlighting a semi-circle of chairs/stools, music stands for scripts, and microphones. Clothing is the everyday wear of the individual, which aligns with the participants performing their own stories for the audiences. The script features monologues for each individual as well as sequenced weaving of individual lines from common understandings and the providing of voices of others when needed. In this way, participants represent self, yet share in each other’s experiences as well.

The ebb and flow of the common “undesirable” theme (e.g., race, nationality, able-bodiedness, immigrant status) stands in for the sense of plot. Each show is highly rhythmic and theatrical, including handclaps, unison declarations, and grand pauses after key moments. There is no true storyline except for a sense of chronological time—as stories are ordered in this way and participants call out days/months/years to keep the audience on track. “It is a deeply collaborative process, one that seeks to balance the artistic vision with the need to honor the authentic voices and stories of the participants” (Chong, 2012, p. 210).

The Role of Playwright

A playwright is:

“...a transcriptionist, a wind catcher, a composer with words...and indicter of messy humans...”

Quiara Alegría Hudes

“...[a] joker and lover and grinner and mischief-maker, as well as healer (of a kind)...and shaker of trees...”

Caridad Svich

“...creating a living, fluid storytelling structure in which the audience is seeing, hearing, and taking in a multivalent array of information in real time...”

Naomi Lizuka

“...[with] one foot in the past, one foot in the now, and with a visionary arrow toward the future.”

Caridad Svich¹³⁷

Kaufmann and McAdams (2018) declare playwrights as *narrators of a tale* and the *editors and lenses* through which the audience watches a story (p. 194). Anne Bogart (2014) compares a playwright to Plato’s hero/prisoner who escapes the cave and its shadows on the wall to stumble outside into the sunshine.¹³⁸ Having seen the landscape for himself, he then chooses to return to the cave to tell others of what he has seen and experienced. Suffering their incomprehension, he attempts to describe the story of his journey and to ascribe new meanings and understandings to the mysterious shadows on the cave wall.

American playwright, Sarah Ruhl (2015) declares that *making* a piece of theatre is a “democratic act,” while *writing* a play is not. She clarifies: “Making and rehearsing a new play means that every voice counts; it is a collaborative process. Writing a play

¹³⁷ From interviews in Jester & Svich 2018—Hudes, p. 20; Lizuka, p. 83; Svich, p. 139. I also took liberty in changing portions of Svich’s quote from plural to singular (e.g., “jokers” to “joker”).

¹³⁸ The “Allegory of the Cave” was introduced by Plato in his work *Republic* (c. 375 B.C.E.)

means that the author is often collaborating with invisible or dead people” (p. 179). She is speaking specifically of two different processes (writing vs. development/rehearsal process), but the difference in terms is fascinating. In truth, I will have “written” very little of the dissertation ethnodrama as the words and actions are not of my own invention or imagination. For this reason, I hesitate to use both the terms “author” (which may be too easily connected to “authority”) and “writer” in relation to the ethnodramatic process. Instead, I am drawn to two terms to describe this work: *craft* and *wright*. The verb *craft* was popular in the mid 1500’s as “to make or act skillfully”—but was revived in the late 1950’s, primarily by American manufacturers who advertised their products as being “crafted or carefully put together by craftsmen” (Barnhart, 1988, p. 230). Especially as a descendent of German and Scottish craftsmen of various commodities, this term resonates with me. The other, *wright*—as in *playwright*—has its origins in Old English to name someone who is a “worker” or “maker” in a particular craft (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It indicates a humble position in the working classes—those who work with their hands, are invested in and touch every detail of their art. Spencer (2002) says the term holds true because a play is “more wrought than written” as its shape is “laid out, and then hammered, bent, nailed, reshaped, hammered again and again, until finally a functional and artful product has emerged” (p. ix). Anne Bogart (2014) sees herself intimately connected to a community of “wrighters” as each story she crafts contributes to “an interconnected accumulation of many stories by many other ‘wrighters’ in worldwide web of linked stories” (p. 9). English playwright, Simon Stephens (Jester & Svich, 2018) unpacks the term *playwright* even further:

We are ‘wrights,’ not ‘writers.’ We have wrought our plays, not written them, like a shipwright has wrought a ship...Our work is to shape or make a piece of theater...we are making playthings...and the energy and anarchy and disorder and creativity that play incorporates. When children play, they are...making sense of their position in the world through their imaginations. That’s what...our audiences to do too. (p. 204)

Through this research and reflection process, I have come to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of my theatre knowledge and skill. I have sought a deeper and more conscious knowledge of the why, how, and the vernacular of theatre. I had experiential understandings for what works in theater and playwriting, but reading the literature gave me a more sophisticated understanding of the structural “why.” I have discovered words and reasons for my tacit knowings and I am empowered by this. I am more of a writer and a playwright than I have given myself credit for. I have strong instincts on the plays I wish to write and craft—and how I wish to approach their writing and crafting. Through reflection on my own performance, music directing, and playwrighting experience, I am beginning to trust my instincts for what will work on-stage, what feels authentic, has flow, and will capture an audience and carry them through the duration of a performance. Like all artists, I am a work in progress, but there is much to build from. I have realized that even though my professional training lies predominately in music, this does not mean I cannot also be a playwright—there is no limit to the number of identities we possess.

Relational Ethics in Ethnography

In the conclusion of Chapter Four, I shared Jean Clandinin’s connection between narrative inquiry and relational ethics. However, as a bricolage, this study is grounded in both narrative inquiry and ethnographic practice. Therefore, in the conclusion of this

chapter, I will reveal the connection Carolyn Ellis makes between ethnography and relational ethics.

Ellis (2007) states that there are three dimensions of ethics in research:

1. *Procedural ethics*, such as procedures mandated by Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure consent, confidentiality, and privacy.
2. *Situational ethics*, which deals with the “unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field”
3. *Relational ethics*, which is closely related to Noddings’ (1984/2013) *ethics of care*.

Ellis (2007) sees this as significant because IRB guidelines typically assume that research is being done on “strangers with whom we have no prior relationships and plan no future interaction” (p. 5). However, this is often not the case in qualitative inquiry, which can cause researchers to encounter ethical situations which require further guidance for action.

Similar to Clandinin’s view regarding relational ethics and narrative inquiry as shared in Chapter Four, Ellis sees relational ethics as a requirement for researchers to “act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for actions and their consequences” (p. 3). When researchers conduct their work from “a concern for human dignity, justice, and interpersonal respect,” they “make space for the lifeways of others and create relationships that are based not on unequal power, but on mutual respect, granting of dignity, and deep appreciation of the human condition” (Lincoln, 1995, p. 284).

Ellis (2007) notes as part of relational ethics, we embrace the reality of our changing relationships with research participants over time. For example: If researchers establish friendships with their participants, how do their ethical responsibilities change? If doing ethnography involves “a back-and-forth movement” between engaging with vulnerable individuals and observing the broader context of their experiences in relationship to our own, then the development of a close relationship is natural (p. 14). Ellis believes that the ethical problem does not arise from being friends with participants, but “from acting as a friend yet not living up to the obligations of friendship” (p. 10). Toward this, researchers need to be aware that ethical considerations may change across the course of interactions with participants. Like ethnographic and autoethnographic research, ethics can be emergent as well. Even when formal consent is obtained, researchers can help prepare for any “new complexities along the way” by checking in at each stage to make sure participants feel informed and empowered (p. 23).

This type of continued conversation with participants has been invaluable during this dissertation study. As will be outlined in Chapter Six, the formal consent forms were only the beginning of the process of giving and gaining ethics-related information with participants.

CHAPTER SIX

AN ATTITUDE FOR PLANNING THE WORK

*Attitude is one of the few things
that one can control and be responsible for.
The choice and cultivation of attitude
affects every aspect of work in the theater.*

*There are many ingredients to attitude, including:
temporal (timing) and spatial (distance) issues;
your expectations;
your ability to adjust,
to be exact,
to have restraint;
and to combine doubt with readiness.*

*Study an issue in great depth.
Or move away and see the context in which it resides.
An artist in the heat of work needs to be simultaneously intimate and removed;
to propose different ways of perceiving.*

*Consciously choose an attitude.
Learn to adjust.
Stay connected.
Show restraint.
Cultivate sensitivity.
Concentrate the energy.*

*And then,
be precise.*

A poetic transcription created from Bogart's (2007)
And Then, You Act (pp. 93-105)

In Chapter Two, I grounded this study in the epistemology of critical constructivism and followed this in Chapter Three with the contextualization of musicking, both within that epistemology and in relation to the curricular experiences the participants and I had at Marygrove College together. Chapter Four situated the

methodology of my study in qualitative inquiry, specifically narrative inquiry; and Chapter Five expanded these foundations into the methodology of performative ethnography, specifically ethnodrama (research-based theatre) as a final research form. Within Chapter Six, I will outline the details of my thought-process and the bricolage of methods utilized as I moved from:

- the initial transcription of the one-on-one and focus group interviews, into
- multiple stages of narrative analysis, into
- member and narrator checking plus follow-up interviews with participants, into
- the shift into digital storytelling format (due to the 2020 pandemic), into
- the crafting of different parts of the ethnodrama (e.g., monologues, spoken word choruses, Musical River 313 Mixtape), into
- the construction of a hybrid (live/digital) *digital ethnodrama*.

Crucially, I wish to emphasize that I have not found “the” answer for creating ethnodrama. I found “an” answer and “a” process that worked for this moment of gathering, analysis, co-creation, and expression. As Fels (2012) notes:

Performative inquiry does not provide a method nor steps to follow, but rather offers researchers and educators a way of inquiring into what matters as we engage in drama or theatre activities, or indeed in any creative process or activity that is an action site of inquiry. (p. 51)

The Narrative Impulse

Narrative inquiry begins with the practice of storytelling, which Riessman (2008) calls “the narrative impulse—a universal way of knowing and communicating” (p. 6). Interviews have been used in this study to prompt the sharing of topical life stories by participants. These stories then became the narrative data or the “objects for scrutiny”

used in the process of narrative analysis, which is the “systematic study of narrative data” (p. 6). These methods help interpret texts with a storied form by bringing attention to “sequences of action of particular individuals, in particular settings, at particular times” (p. 11). Narrative analysts are broadly interested in how the storytellers select, assemble, and communicate events to an audience. Critically, they have a holistic focus and seek to understand extended accounts rather than categorizing decontextualized snippets of narrative. In a narrative study, the focus is on the details within the whole.

Riessman (2008) identifies four types of narrative analysis: structural, thematic, dialogic/performance, and visual. I have used all four types strategically within the process of analyzing the transcribed field texts to prepare for the research-informed creative process of crafting the ethnodrama.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis focuses exclusively on content. Stories are kept intact as themes emerge from the case itself. The focus is on the *told* (e.g., events, cognitions) instead of aspects related to the *telling* (e.g., “*how* a narrative is spoken, the structures of speech, audience, local context”) (Riessman, 2008, p. 54). Long portions of “messy” everyday speech are transformed by selective reduction and strategic organization to make points and themes “more readable” and clearer for reader-audiences (p. 58).¹³⁹

In particular, I have used Clandinin’s (2013) approach of looking within accounts for *narrative threads* and between accounts for *resonant threads*.

¹³⁹ As stated in Chapter Five, the unique word choices and speech patterns utilized by these participants have been preserved as much as possible. In this case, “more readable” and “transformed” does not refer to changing spoken words to better align them with any type of ideal vernacular English, such as Standard American English which has historically been privileged by those who hold power in academia.

Structural Analysis

Structural analysis explores how narratives are put together purposefully by the narrator. The focus is on the “telling” not the “told.” Riessman (2008) makes an analogy with classical music:

To hear how a composition is structured and what each part contributes, musicians break the score down, see what each instrument or musical phrase adds, that is, its function in the overall composition. When we go to a concert, unless we are musicians, we typically just experience the work; the performers, on the other hand, have done considerable “unpacking” in rehearsal to construct the unity we hear. Structural analysis of oral narrative requires the same level of scrutiny...[to] step back from it—to notice how a narrator uses form and language to achieve particular effects. (p. 81)

The term, *structure* can mean different things to different researchers and must be defined (e.g., aspects of narrative genre, overarching storylines, the contours of patterns across a lifetime, or “embedded moments...that take a poetic form” (Riessman, 2008, p. 78). Structural analysis can also be tied to *narratology* and the investigation of self-composition of narrative form and style itself (i.e., the way participants have structured their storytelling). Regardless of approach, narrative researchers must expect stories to be organized uniquely so they may develop a “narrative competence” for each individual participant and her their storied accounts (p. 80).

For this study, I have analyzed the narrative accounts in smaller dimension by identifying *nuclear episodes* (McAdams, 2013) and personal reflections as examples of Fels’ (2010, 2012, 2014, 2019) arts-based interpretation of Appelbaum’s (1995) *stop moments*; and through broad-stroke storytelling with a correlation to Vogler’s (2020) writer-centered interpretation of Campbell’s (1949/2004) *Hero’s Journey* story arc.

Dialogic/Performance Analysis

Dialogic/performance analysis views stories as social artifacts that are “co-produced in a complex choreography—in spaces between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader, and history and culture” (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). This form of narrative analysis explores identity through ethnographic and interview data and how it has been “dialogically produced and performed as narrative” (p. 105). Riessman says it requires close readings of context, including the researcher as an active presence, the localized setting, and social circumstances in relation to the interpretation of narrative. While structural and thematic analysis examines “what” has been said and “how,” the dialogic/performance approach asks “whom” the narrative is directed toward and for what purpose(s).

Building from Goffman’s (1959) performative self, Riessman affirms that “we are forever composing impressions of ourselves, projecting a definition of who we are, and making claims about ourselves and the world that we test out and negotiate with others” (p. 106). As shared in previous chapters, our identities are socially and culturally situated—but beyond this, identities are performed *for* others by being “constructed in ‘shows’ that persuade” (Riessman, 2008, p. 106). A narrator sharing their reality (“what happened to me”) is “telling a particular story in a particular way” by privileging some experiences, meanings, and identities over others in response to the context and the listener(s) present (Langellier, 2001, p. 150). A performance approach to narrative declares that:

- identity is a “performative struggle;”
- every performance of this narrative identity is “unique...multiple, fragmentary, and unfinished;” and
- each narrator bears “multiple marks of location” which “positions her at the nexus of culturally specific experiences...as well as in relationship to the interviewer and audience.” (Langellier, 2001, p. 176)

As these elements come together into the final research form, a narrative dialogue develops between “researcher and researched, text and reader, knower and known” (Riessman, 2008, p. 137).

In this study, the distillation of the interview transcriptions into monologues and other performative/theatrical elements for audience-readers is a form of dialogic/performance analysis.

Visual Analysis

Narrative research typically relies on spoken and written word, but Riessman (2008) reminds that words are only one form of communication and other forms (“gesture, body movement, sound, images”) transmit meaning (p. 141). She focuses on visual representations of experience especially which can enable others to “see as a participant sees, and to feel” (p. 142). Whether found or made, visual narrative projects “tell a story *with* images” and/or “tell a story *about* images that themselves tell a story” (p. 141). The process of analysis may include how/when the image was made and/or why it was selected, an examination of the image, and the story it suggests; and the responses that audience-viewers may bring to it. Riessman gives different exemplars of Visual

Analysis including creating sequences of images to tell a visual narrative and collecting images to share alongside written texts to tell a story.

Although Riessman (2008) focuses solely on visual artistry as the final analysis type, her list of forms of communication that transmit meaning opens the door to music (“sound”), dance (“gesture, body movement”), and theatre (“gesture, body movement, sound, images”) (p. 141). Further, Riessman declares that “because of the productivity of narrative concepts, narrative analysis keeps overflowing its container” (p. 145).

As I proceeded through the methods process, I found the analysis needs of this project had “overflowed the container” and saw Riessman’s words as an invitation to expand visual analysis into musical and theatrical to serve the needs of the ethnodrama.¹⁴⁰ In the flowchart, I have referred to this fourth type of narrative analysis as: *Artistic Analysis*.

A Bricolage of Structural and Thematic Analysis: Part One

My analysis process is anchored in the dialogic/performance analysis form, informed by components of structural, thematic, and visual analysis. Riessman (2008) speaks of how the four types of analysis can be used in combination (e.g., elements of structural analysis can be built into a thematic approach). Important to this study, she notes that the dialogic/performance approach typically folds components of thematic and structural analysis into the interpretive inquiry process. The researcher’s focus shifts from “detailed attention to a narrator’s speech—what is said and/or how it is said” to the overall “historical and cultural context, audiences for the narrative, and shifts in the

¹⁴⁰ Melody, LaNyck, and Jeriel are trained and experienced dancers as well. Although I did not see any opportunities for dance analysis, dance was referenced in their interviews. In future performances, I would be open to them bringing meaningful dance choreography to the ethnodrama if they felt called to do so.

interpreter's positioning over time" (p. 137). Additionally, Riessman explains that visual analysis can draw on thematic and dialogic/performance methods, especially when artistic works are interpreted alongside spoken/written text. Although this was not done purposefully, my work has found its way into this combined usage of different narrative analysis forms.

An Intuitive Process

The first half of this chapter will refer directly to a *Narrative Analysis Flowchart* that I created which represents the process of analysis for this dissertation study (See Figure 3). There are two critical aspects in relation to this process that I wish to make clear. First, none of the steps in this process were predetermined at any point. Instead, they emerged organically through engagement in the process of analysis—the next step only revealing itself after the previous had been taken. Second, coming to this place of process required that I develop a sense of trust in my intuition that was equal to my faith in logic and precedent. Kincheloe (2003) reminds us that bricoleurs “engage with a reality that is not fixed, but dynamic and ever-changing” (p. 250). Because of this dynamic, ever-changing nature of real-world research contexts and those who live within them, research methods used to explore these contexts, communities, and individuals must have the same dynamism. In bricolage, inquirers use tools in a “trial and error manner”—thoughtfully yet unapologetically altering them when needed to construct process rather than passively following the “correct, universally applicable methodologies” (p. 249). Bresler (2005) describes a “three-pronged connection” that anchors and guides this type of flexible approach: “(a) *reaching towards the phenomena* under study to understand it accurately and fully; (b) *reaching into oneself* to unravel

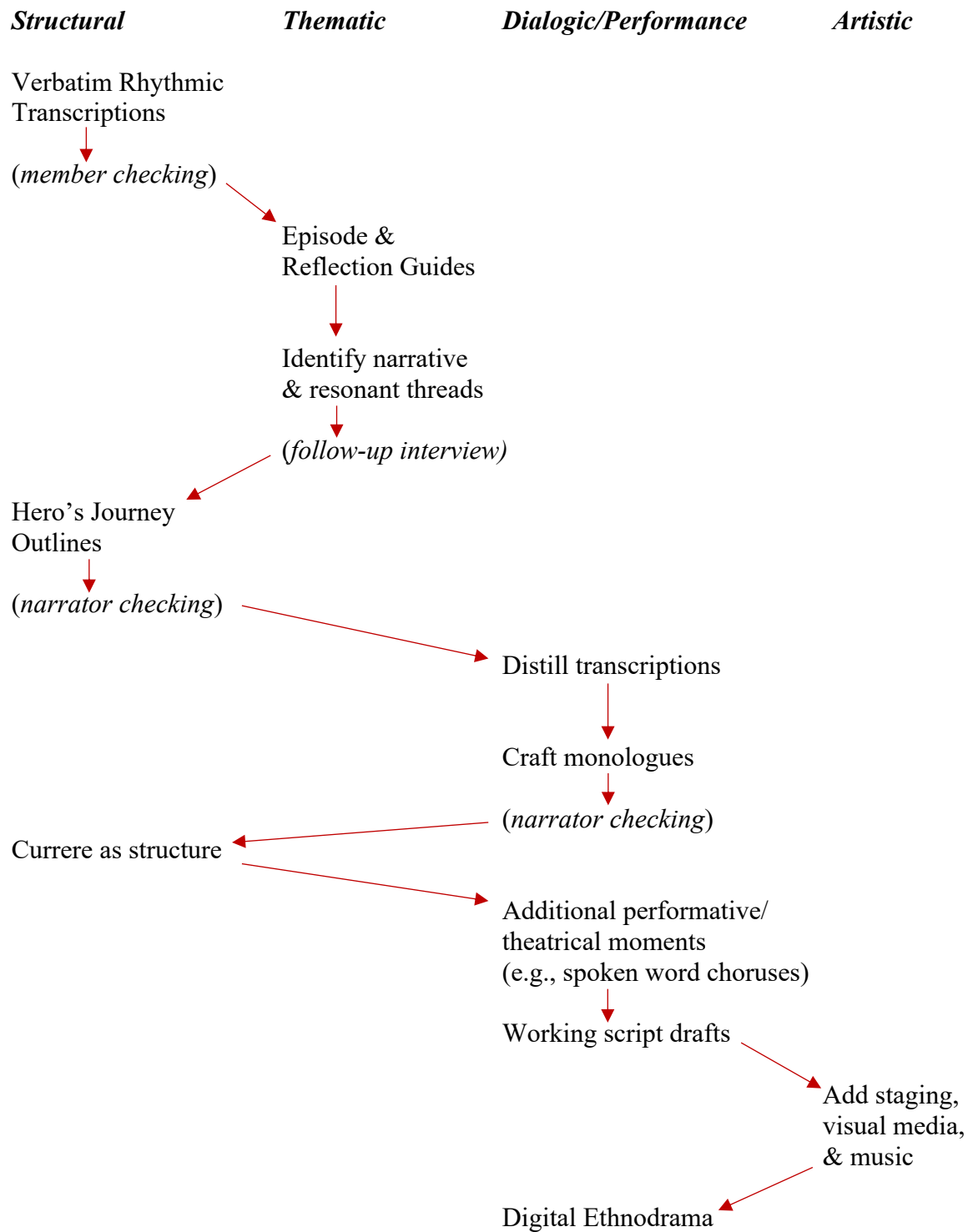


Figure 3. Called to the Conversation—Narrative Analysis Flowchart

subjectivities and values as shaping perception and interpretation; and I *reaching to the audience*” (p. 178). She says this third connection to audience is significant because the value of any final product is not solely based on its “correctness” but its depth and how it resonates with other it creates in others judged not only by its correctness, but also by its depth and the resonance it creates in others. Like musicians, researchers can be shaped and directed by opening themselves to an awareness of present and future audiences. These three qualities of “reaching towards, reaching into, and reaching to” build upon and support each other, because “in the process of discovering and shaping the music, the performer lives in and through it” (p. 178).

I have found that crafting an account that is not only insightful but resonant generates a feeling of being “torn between the structure and stimulation provided by theoretical abstraction and an unconscious creative process” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 132). As Belenky et al. (1997) describe, I needed to unearth and begin to listen to a *voice of integration* that helped me to “find a place for reason *and* intuition *and* the expertise of others” (p. 133). Moving through the process itself, I discovered that these elements do not work alongside one other as I first imagined, but integrate seamlessly into one another—an iterative, rhizomatic flow that matches and reinforces my identity as an a/r/tographer. Further, there was a thick infusion of creativity in the research process I was not expecting—not only for the creation of the ethnodrama itself, but in the determining and executing the analysis methods in alignment with my epistemology and methodology, the requirements of my doctoral institution, and the needs and wishes of the participants.

Valerie Janesick (2001) connects intuition with creativity and its combined purpose in the research process. She defines *intuition* as “a way of knowing about the world through insight and exercising one’s imagination” and *creativity* “in its generic sense...[of] having the sense or quality of being created rather than imitated” (p. 532).¹⁴¹ Janesick views intuition and creativity as being in a dance, specifically a *pas de deux* for two dancers who move as one in meaningful movement.

They embolden our discoveries and questions, whether in art, music, literature, the sciences, or everyday life. Intuition is connected to creativity, for intuition is the seed, so to speak, of the creative act...If we take the time to carve out some space to understand the place of intuition and creativity in our work, like the dancers of the *pas de deux*, we present a more complete, holistic, and authentic study of our own role as storytellers and artist-scientists. (Janesick, 2001, p. 539)

By inviting intuition and creativity in my work, I am learning to speak in my own unique and authentic voice as an a/r/tographer. My ambition became learning to trust in both my right and my ability to “jump outside the frames and systems authorities provide and create [my] own frame” (Belenky et al., 1997, pp. 134-135). The narrative analysis flowchart above is my physical representation of this ambition—a frame that illustrates a journey of narrative methods centered in the needs of the research puzzle and built from informed research practice, creativity, and intuition. Over the course of the next few sections, I will trace this path by outlining applications of Riessman’s four analysis types, explaining different types of analysis projects I created at each step (along with samples of any resulting charts or other documentation), and connections to any established methods or approaches that inspired them. I will also highlight moments of *member*

¹⁴¹ Janesick (2001) also cites Csikszentmihalyi (1996) who asserts that creativity is a “central source for learning and living” (p. 534) and Dewey (1934/1958) who reminds us that, overall, art is “dynamic, holistic, and intuitive” (p. 537)

checking and *narrator checking* with the participants along the way as well as the results of a structured follow-up interview conducted with all participants in fall 2020.

Verbatim Rhythmic Transcription

In Chapter Five, I spoke of giving special attention to preserving the word choice, grammar, and syntax of each participant's interview text. Connected to this, I worried about what would be lost in going from a live spoken accounts to written prose transcriptions. With any interviewee, the written form loses the color, energy, inflection, banter, and the rhythm of her original speech—but I keenly felt this loss with these participants in particular. In the recordings, the participants' words are spoken with such personality and are infused with much more than one might see on a page. I yearned for readers to be able to experience the passionate, powerful, rhythmic words of my participants in real time. Especially because the participants and I are all singers, by instrument and identity, celebration of the individual voice remained as crucial as sharing their words. Brown and Wake (2010) liken a person's particular speaking pattern and rhythm to a fingerprint—only in this case, it is a *voiceprint*. Although voiceprints are “utterly unique and almost impossible to reproduce,” the process of verbatim theatre attempts to capture and reproduce the voice as much as possible (p. 3).

For this reason, my first step of narrative analysis was formatting the one-on-one and focus group transcriptions according to what I have termed a *verbatim rhythmic transcription* process. The format is inspired by and similar to a process utilized by documentary playwright Anna Deavere Smith in many of her research-informed monologic plays such as *Fires in the Mirror* (1997) and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1994). This form of transcription attempts to capture the original performative aspects of

the participants' spoken words, specifically the rhythmic elements of phrasing, space, and stress with the strategic use of line breaks, punctuation, and underline.

My approach also has similarities to a poetic transcription technique used by Carolyn Lunsford Mears (2009) which she calls a *gateway approach*. However, the method she describes also includes the process of selecting excerpts from narrative transcripts to distill the text into a final research form. This is not a step I undertake until much later in the analysis process—because at this point, the verbatim rhythmic transcripts represent the narrative account in its entirety. However, I wish to note three significant similarities that also resonate with my process at this stage. First, Mears prefers this format because she believes it helps the written transcriptions “come to life with poetic vibrancy” (p. 6—originated by Richardson, 1994; adapted by Glesne, 1997).¹⁴² Second, she champions this technique because she believes it helps her keep the narrator (participant) at the forefront of the inquiry. Third, and perhaps most crucially, Mears emphasizes that narratives in this format are not poetry. Instead, it is *a data display*—and while the “white space around the phrases does make it look like poetry,” it does not hold a true poetic intent (p. 75). Similarly, the verbatim rhythmic transcripts in this study also look like poetry—and they do reflect the *organic poetry* we naturally speak (Smith, 2000)—but they have not been specifically crafted as poetry. This is why I have chosen to name my formatting process as “verbatim rhythmic transcription” without

¹⁴² Although Mears (2009) does appear to attend to the narratological aspects in the same way as I have outlined in the coming pages, she does not explain how this poetic-looking format relates to the way participants have spoken these words—only that she worked to “arrange these fragments in a ‘string’ that runs down the page, looking much like a poem (or a grocery list!) instead of a paragraph” (p. 124).

reference to any form of poetic analysis.¹⁴³ An example of this process can be seen below with an excerpt of original prose transcription from study participant Angel; and the verbatim rhythmic transcription of the same portion.

Example of Original Prose

Then there was this one talent show. I sung the theme from “Titanic.” Celine Dion. I was nervous, but I did it and it felt like a release. It wasn’t that I needed everybody to love my voice. I just needed them know that I sing. I can sing.

Example of Verbatim Rhythmic Transcription

Then
there was this one talent show.
I sung the theme from “Titanic.”
Celine Dion.

I was nervous.
But I did it.
And it felt like...
a release.

It wasn’t that I needed
everybody
to love my voice.
I just needed them know that
I sing.

I can sing.

At first, I debated whether verbatim rhythmic transcription should be considered structural or dialogical/performance analysis. However, even though it is the examination and replication of the performative aspects of the participant’s account, the analysis

¹⁴³ I will also note here that even in the process of distilling the transcripts into a monologue structure, I will not refer to poetic transcription, poetic analysis, or poetic inquiry. The final product of this study may look very similar to the final products of those methodologies, but the process is significantly different. The monologues in this ethnodrama are the product of the distillation of the verbatim rhythmic transcriptions, which gives the monologues their poetic-looking structure—but they are not poems, they are monologues.

focused on the structures of spoken word through examination and strategic representation of those structures.

This process also gave me a chance to spend time with the recordings and to delve deeply into the words themselves. Bresler (2014) encourages this type of *prolonged engagement* so that researchers may form “intensified relationships with a case, getting beyond their habitual, rapid manner of seeing and hearing” (p. 221). As a result, I became keenly aware of the characteristic linguistic features when someone is “choosing to *dramatize* rather than report what happened in a more distant way” (Riessman, 2008, p. 112) and sought to preserve these features through the transcriptions as well.

Performance Features in Storied Accounts

Wolfson (1978) and Riessman (2008) both identify performance features that may be present in storied accounts. Neither expects to find all these features in every narrative, but through their work, they have found at least some of them in all. I have identified and outlined five performance features within the transcripts which I preserved in the creation of the monologues.

Direct speech. When the narrator speaks not as themselves but invokes the words of other characters in her life drama by playing their roles (Wolfson, 1978). Riessman says this practice serves to “build credibility,” to pull listeners “into the narrated moment,” and allows a participant to communicate a significant message about self that might be “difficult to say in other ways” (Riessman, 2008, p. 112). I have highlighted these moments of direct speech by setting the text in right justify, such as in this example from study participant, Ti.

TI

In junior year,
my teacher asked me:

“What would happen
if you let everybody see
the ‘full you’?”

That stuck with me for a minute.

I also chose to highlight direct speech when the narrator’s own inner voice appeared to speak, almost like a separate character. I did this by centering the text, such as in this example from study participant, Rei.

REI

In my mind,
it was never if I was good or bad,
it was:

“Am I a real musician or not?”

or

“How much of a musician am I?”

Asides. When a participant steps out of the active storytelling to engage directly with the audience (Riessman, 2008). Asides allow the narrative to give added drama or to explain to the audience additional behind-the-scenes insights (Wolfson, 1978). In this example, I emphasized the asides by bracketing the text, such as in this example from study participant, Sherry:

SHERRY

My family would sing in the choir
and I followed that pattern.
I started doing specials,
and um...

[My voice wasn’t...
as nice as my older sister’s.
Now that I’m older
I can see that maybe just because she did it more often she got
praised more often.
But as a kid,
you kinda perceive that a little bit different.

Being one of the younger siblings, you're
kinda apt to be a little bit insecure anyway...]

So
usually every Sunday you have someone who sings a special...

Repetition. When a narrator repeats a word or phrase to emphasize its significance (Wolfman, 1978). This feature is often used “to mark a key moment in the unfolding sequence of events” (Riessman, 2008, p. 113). In this example, study participant Angel repeats key utterances to accentuate her realization.

ANGEL

We might not end up with the exact answer
today.
But...
we'll find it.

We're going to grow and we'll find it.
That's what I rely on.

Being comfortable
not-knowing
knowing.

You study.
You find out.
You second-think yourself.
You know.

Everything is just done like that.
I don't know,
but I know.

Expressive sounds. When a narrator moves beyond recognizable words into an emotional utterance or onomatopoeic representation. This is typically used “to signal pivotal turning points in the action” (Riessman, 2008, p. 113), such as in this example from study participant, Angela as she realizes her voice is in trouble.

ANGELA

So I had to go to the doctor...
and they was like:

“Oh, um,
your vocal cords
are swollen...

You probably don’t need to sing for a year.”

(Stammering and gasping)

“Iwa—

Huuh—

What am I supposed to do now?

That’s all I know how to do!”

Multi-functional “You.” When the narrator utilizes the word “you” in a variety of ways throughout their storytelling, such as:

- the direct and literal second-person “you” (referencing the listener—or in the case of these interviews, myself as a/r/tographer);
- a generalized second-person plural, which works to indicate a universal or shared knowledge and experience (Brown, 1998, p. 92); and
- a separation from self in reference to self, which Bal (2017) calls: “an ‘I’ in disguise” as the first-person narrator talks to or about himself (p. 22).

These three uses may be seen in this example from study participant, Jeriel.

JERIEL

You picked up on the fact that I could coast
through things.

Because I learn fast on a visual and kinesthetic level,
I could fake my way through it.

That kind of scared me

cause it was like: “Wow,

people can see what you don’t want to show them.”

So you really have to buckle down and learn something to a T.

In addition to these features, one of the biggest elements I noted during the transcription process was a tendency for participants to “inadvertently” switch between

present tense and past tense in their narratives. Initially, I was confused by it and considered fixing these instances in the monologues for consistency and clarity. However, I learned this phenomenon, *conversational historical present* or CHP, is a form of present tense used *performatively* to refer to past events (Wolfson, 1978, p. 215). A participant may switch into conversational historical present at key points to make events of the story more “vivid and immediate” and to focus attention on “particular segments in the long narrative” (Riessman, 2008, p. 113). Similarly, Langellier (2001) sees this alternation of past tense and CHP as helping to “embellish the telling” (p. 162) and “heighten the drama of a story” because it brings the listener into the lived moment (p. 163). Two examples are below:

LANYCK

I’m at a new school.
About to meet new people.
And I don’t know what to do
but I know I like to sing.
So, sign me up for choir!
I get to choir
thinking it’s like a regular choir
like I been doing forever.
Aaaand
it.
was.
not.

NORA

I remember my first day being here.
Even though this is a small campus,
it’s a lot of people.
I’m nervous,
trying to read my schedule.
Where am I going?
What am I doing?
I went to throw a piece of paper in the garbage
and ended up throwing my phone in.
It was a lot.

Interestingly, Wolfson (1978) has found that performed narratives using CHP alternation rarely occur within formal research interviews. Because an interview is “a speech event with rules for the use of language,” this tends to limit occurrences of performed conversational narratives (p. 235). She admits there is more of a possibility for performed stories within open-ended interviews, but notes its occurrence depends upon the identity of the interviewer and “the degree of similarity that the speaker feels they share” (p. 235). These similarities may include factors related to background, common experience, family membership or close friendship, and occupation. In Wolfson’s (1978) view, the speaker needs to feel “reasonably certain that his story, and especially the point of view which it expresses...can be understood and appreciated by his addressee(s)” (p. 225). She continues that “in this sense, CHP alternation may be seen as an index of received or proffered commonality between speakers and its use may provide insight into the way speakers view themselves and their relationships to others” (p. 236). Langellier (2001) agrees, saying that “performance is intensified when norms of evaluative interpretation are presumed to be shared” (pp. 163-164).

The degree of relationship and commonalities between these participants and I should make the use of CHP unsurprising—but still, I feel honored to see and understand these participants’ comfort in expressing their performative selves during the interviews through the lens of this phenomenon.

Member Checking

Throughout the transcription process, I engaged in *member-checking* with the participants. Member checking helped me ensure not only the accuracy of the words they said, but also, in some cases, the meaning (e.g., popular slang, vernacular terminology

related to CCM musicking or church practice). Whether as a formal or an informal ongoing practice, member checking can be an important means to ensure the dependability or trustworthiness of the data by checking the researcher's record and understanding of what had been said by participants (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Mears, 2009; Stake, 1995). Member checking can also refer to a researcher's interpretations of the data, but I am keeping my definition and use narrowed to the accuracy and literal understandings of the original research text. Interpretations will be covered under the *narrator checking* that came later in the process.

I conducted the member checking primarily through text messaging at this stage in the analysis. Prior to the study, participants and I had typically communicated through texting, so it was a natural choice to maintain the authenticity of our relationship.¹⁴⁴ This means of communication also allowed for responses to be returned fairly promptly, for engagement to remain purposeful yet conversational, and for valuable insights to their words and stories to be shared.

Identifying Episodes and Reflections

When the verbatim rhythmic transcriptions were complete and member checked, I returned to the original interview recordings to listen with a more holistic (and thematically analytical) ear. As Riessman (2008) recommends a "voice centered method of data analysis," I completed "five distinct listenings" of the recordings through different lenses (p. 117). The lenses I chose reflected the bricolage of this study: insider witness

¹⁴⁴ It is important to note that I worked carefully to keep inquiry-related separate from personal texts. If I had a question about someone's interview for the study, I would open a texting conversation by noting this directly. In this way, the participant always knew the purpose of the question and that their response would fall under consent. I would only use the participants' responses as data or member checking data if the participant was specifically aware it would be used as such.

(emic), outsider observer (etic), thematic (as educator and researcher), structural (as researcher and artist), and dialogic/performative (as artist and educator).

Episodes

Through these various listenings, I began to see layers of individual stories carefully constructed across the interview accounts, almost like scenes in a play. Because of the temporal framework of the interview process, each scene both imparts details of an event from a particular period of life (e.g., middle school) and denotes this event as a significant life moment. Like a dramatic scene as described in Chapter Five, these storied scenes have settings, characters, and plots which include emotional rollercoasters, climaxes, cliffhangers, and resolutions. McAdams (1997) refers to these types of life scenes as *nuclear episodes*—moments from our past that we “select and reconstruct” to represent “the climaxes of different acts of the life story” (p. 296). Humans try to make sense of their “scattered and often confusing” life experiences by arranging them into stories (p. 11). By creating a narrative frame for her own life, an individual may seek to discover what she considers to be meaningful and true about herself and her world. It is an imaginative, autobiographical form of story-making which is constantly constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed from “a patterned integration of our remembered past, our perceived present and anticipated future” (p. 12). Episodes are the critical scenes that have been selected and shared as specific autobiographical events in the larger story—often considered “turning points or chapter markers” by the speaker (McAdams, 1985, p. 63). By sharing episodes of our past, we reveal not only memories of “particular events, in particular times and places,” but memories that hold foremost positions (e.g., low

points, high points, turning points, connection points) in our understandings of who we were, are, and will be (p. 296).

Reflections

In addition to episodes, I also found significant moments where participants would shift from recounting temporally-centered events to begin ruminating on a musical lifeworld-related topic, philosophy, or idea related to prior experience. These *reflections* might have been sparked by something said in a previously shared episode, served as preparation for an episode about to be shared, or were simply the result of unknown inspiration. Whereas the episodes had a dramatic structure of events concluded in the past, the reflections appeared to be explorations of musical lifeworld, connected to the past but continuing to be pondered in the present moment.

Episode and Reflection Guides

In this second step of the narrative analysis process, I carefully worked through the interview transcripts to identify the different episodes and reflections for each participant. For documentation, I created *Episode and Reflection Guides* for everyone which identified each instance (in the order they were shared) and listed key points from the episode or reflection. Below is an example of the headings from study participant Rei's Episode and Reflection Guide.

Example: Headings from Rei's Episode and Reflection Guide

Introduction	I am Rei
Episode 1	Kid Idol and Lion King
Episode 2	Attending church(es)
Episode 3	Elementary violin
Episode 4	Middle school choir
Episode 5	University a cappella group (H.S.)

Reflection A	People who influenced me in music
Reflection B	My voice
Episode 6	Coming to Marygrove
Episode 7	First challenge at Marygrove
Reflection C	Studying a little of everything
Reflection D	Power of the private lesson
Reflection E	Hypercriticalness and identity
Episode 8	Senior recital
Reflection F	A connection to the divine
Episode 9	Post-graduation anxiety
Reflection G	Nothing can prepare you

Because the life story format began with the earliest musical memory and progressed chronologically, many episodes had extremely clean and easily identifiable beginning and ending points. However, others provided quite a challenge as a participant might foreshadow an episode told later in the interview, return to a previously shared episode, or swing back and forth between an episode and related reflection.

Stop Moments

*The stop is the time of awareness.
A hinge around which events pivot.
An initial impetus to movement runs its course
and is followed by a new impetus leading to a new movement.
A deviation from perfect continuity in that it stops,
begins again, stops again,
hesitates, recovers,
moves on, stumbles,
falls down, gets up,
crawls ahead, trots,
gets sidetracked, lopes along,
slips, gets up again,
and so on, to the end of its drama.*

A poetic transcription created from
David Appelbaum's (1995)
The Stop (pp. 16-17)

David Appelbaum (1995) introduced the idea of a *stop* as “a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity, which calls us to attention, awakening us to that which is invisible” (Fels, 2019, pp. 237-238). Stop moments arise through “performative encounters, whether in the classroom, on stage, or in our lived experience” (p. 237). Performative inquiry is what invites the interrogation of actions so we may recognize moments of interruption to our “habits of engagement” so we may better see “what is, what has been, and...what may yet become possible” (Fels, 2019, p. 238). Fels notes that Appelbaum’s *stop* is not a literal stop, but a “stop-in-action” which remains “dynamic, embodied, relational, opening a space of possibility” (p. 246). It is an “embodied realization” which “like the breath, is a moment within action” that “calls out to us, *listen, this moment matters*” (Fels, 2014, p. 112). For Appelbaum (1995), the stop offers an individual the choice “either to remain habit-bound or to regain freedom in one’s approach to an endeavor” (p. xi).

I have come to see the episodes and reflections shared by these participants as examples of *stop moments* in their journeys to professional musicianhood. These stop moments were “interwoven through the text” and “tugged on my sleeve, calling me to attention, moments that enlighten my understanding of pedagogical encounters” (Fels, 2019, p. 237). More significantly, as Fels signified, these memories “tugged on the participants’ sleeves” and asked to be shared as significant and meaningful within their storied journeys. These moments of risk and opportunity included:

- Angela being compelled to decide between pushing through vocal issues to complete her junior recital and trusting her instincts by stopping mid-performance to avoid damaging her vocal cords again.

- LaNyck reaching a moment of choice between holding to the familiarity of learning music aurally and risking written notation so she might fulfill her dream of joining the select high school vocal ensemble.
- Sherry realizing that completing her senior recital meant she could no longer keep her musical worlds of CCM/church and classical/college comfortably separate from one another.

Episodes are stop moments in the past being recalled and re-storied in the present as a point where wide-awakeness occurred. The reflections are stop moments in the present—where the forward action of storytelling stopped, for just a breath, to make a little more sense of itself.

Following Threads

In this third step of narrative analysis, I returned to the roots of this methodology: Jean Clandinin's approach to narrative inquiry. It had always been my intention to explore the *narrative threads* and *resonant threads* that weave throughout the narratives of this research cohort. My entrance into this step came from McAdams' (1997) observation that nuclear episodes can also "reveal central thematic lines in identity" (p. 297). It was time to unite the multiple episodes and reflections by following these threads to see where they led.

Clandinin (2009) thinks narratively about experience. She does not attend to experience as "vagrant shards" but rather as "*narrative threads* of experience unfolding and enfolding within embodied persons as they live in situations over time and in diverse places" (p. 204). These threads are "particular plotlines" that wind and weave across time and place through an individual's shared narrative (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132).

The first level of analysis during this step focused on identifying the narrative threads of each participant from their one-on-one interviews. Clandinin (2013) said that the act of crafting and negotiating participant's stories into interim research texts centers around "unfolding threads of experience" (p. 47). In narrative inquiry, the more familiar an inquirer is with the landscape (or lifeworld) of the participant, the more she understands the happenings and taken-for-grantedness of that landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In order to join the narrative, to become part of the landscape, the researcher needs to be there long enough and to be a sensitive reader of and questioner of situations in an effort to grasp the huge number of events and stories, the many twisting and turning *narrative threads* that pulse through every moment. (p. 77)

Having a longitudinal and ongoing relationship with each of these participants helped me bring a depth of personal experience with their lived stories to the analysis of their shared stories. To identify narrative threads within a participant's narrative account, I looked for 5-7 common key themes across her/their/his own episodes and reflections (as named in the previous analysis step). Two examples of narrative threads appear below:

Example: Nora's narrative threads

- Called to be a performer while grappling with anxiety/social awkwardness
- You "get it as you go"—always a challenge of learning on your feet
- Having a complex relationship with the audience (e.g., wonders what they are thinking, friend vs. foe, wants to share musical experiences but not be seen)
- Needing the safety of singing with others (e.g., choir) vs. seeking the community/collaboration of singing with others
- "Be here for you"—pursuing a calling is for yourself and no one else

- Yearning to bring something different to the world and contribute to the evolution of change

Example: Sherry's narrative threads

- Everyone has a calling and a purpose—she felt hers keenly
- The struggle transitioning from sacred praise into secular performance
- There is a depth to music found through study/experience (“The deep stuff”)
- There is an “organized chaos” of the learning process
- Her two musical worlds (classical/CCM & school/church) having a “head-on collision”
- Music as “a heart issue” (musical connection to emotion, mind, and spirit)

The second level of this analysis step entailed looking across the individual narrative accounts for *resonant threads* or discernable patterns across the participants (Clandinin, 2010a). Clandinin (2013) describes this as laying the accounts alongside one another and searching for “resonances or echoes that reverberated across accounts” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132). Identifying these resonant threads then creates “a deeper and broader awareness of experiences” overall and between participants (p. 16). Having some understanding of each individual’s lifeworld landscape along with its happenings and taken-for-grantedness (as described in the previous section) was even more critical during this process as I began to compare and connect the narrative threads of multiple individuals.

I began to see resonant threads between the narrative accounts of the participants (e.g., different ways to speak about a particular idea, highlighting various aspects of a

similar theme). I used a simple coding system to pull key statements from the interview transcripts and to connect them into thicker thematic threads.

Example of resonant thread coding: Sense of taking a journey

- *Angel*: The unpredictable journey of singing is like building/maintaining a house
- *Angela*: The music and education journeys are both “completed parts” and “more to learn”
- *Jeriel*: To face challenges in the “process of a journey” and you must stay tenacious and endure
- *LaNyck*: It is important to have *mentors who see you* and *a cohort to walk with* on the journey
- *Melody*: Being open/receptive to change as you progress in your career—you must earn where you go next
- *Nora*: You have to “get it as you go” (the challenge of learning on your feet)
- *Rei*: Nothing can truly prepare you for the journey beforehand—you have to “do it, experience it, feel it.”
- *Sherry*: The “organized chaos” of the learning journey
- *Ti*: Not all the people who start the journey with you, will finish it with you.

The above example is simplified for clarity of the demonstration, but sometimes a narrative thread was connected into more than one category of resonant thread; or more than one narrative thread from a participant was listed under a particular resonant thread. By the final iteration, I had identified seven resonant threads across the narrative accounts of these nine participants (as listed below).

Resonant Threads for This Study

- Feeling a sense of being *called* to something or somewhere
- Forging an identity related to professional musicianhood
- Seeking to engage in new conversations
- Having a sense of taking (or having taken) a journey
- Building self-confidence/agency/self-efficacy
- Negotiating relationships and conversations
- Developing a living musicianship

The term and definition for the final resonant thread (i.e., *living musicianship*) comes from a quote by study participant, Rei who observed:

This is a part of what it is to be a musician.
It's LIVING musicianship.
It's embracing that becoming a professional musician
means embracing perpetual nature of learning and growing;
and understanding that risk-taking, criticism
and self-reflection are a huge part of the process.
If you want to be good,
you gotta try.
You gotta take criticism.
You have to do.
Music isn't a "thing."
It's something
that your brain thinks about
which makes your body do.
It's nothing physical that you say:
"This is musicianship.
This is skill level.
Here you go, take this with you."
It's always growing,
and it's growing as you grow.
And it dims if you don't use it.

Plot Twist: Shifting into Digital Storytelling

In spring 2017, my plan for a multiple case study shifted into a narrative inquiry after the completion of the one-on-one interviews with my participants. In spring 2019, my vision for the final dissertation research form shifted into the crafting of an ethnodrama intended for performance onstage for a live audience. In spring 2020, the spread of COVID-19 across the world halted on-stage, live-audience productions and presentations of theatre, music, and dance for the foreseeable future.

Changing with the Times

Suddenly, I was consumed with the realization that the performativity of the framework I had so carefully constructed over the past year was now obsolete in the face of COVID-19. It had never been my intention to stage the work prior to the defense, but the participants and I had always planned to organize performances after the requirements of the dissertation had been completed. As I took a long walk to contemplate this change in circumstances, I texted several of the participants to let them know the situation and seek their thoughts.

Angel was first to respond. She assured me that we would simply find a way to perform the ethnodrama online from our homes. The more I explained why an ethnodrama would not work well in that format, the more she insisted that we could find a way. Finally, her words got through my stubborn ears. Why couldn't I find a way to craft an ethnodrama for the times we were in?

I sent a text to each of the participants asking what they thought of having the dissertation play be crafted as a digital performance. The participants were very positive

in their responses about the digital performance idea (e.g., “Awesome,” “I’m here for it,” “Very cool”) and stated their intention to participate.

As I opened myself to new digital possibilities, I knew that the participants’ monologues would remain the centerpiece of this new approach. I immediately pictured the participants performing and recording their monologues within the safety of their homes. I have seen the majority of the participants post personal videos to social media on a regular basis, so this could easily be managed. Perhaps audio/video clips of music performances could be included as well—or photographs of the places, times, and events they had described in their stories. The possibilities began to dance through my brain.

Later that evening, the big question arose: Would this online video collage of monologues, music, and other media still be considered ethnodrama? Looking at Saldaña’s (2005, 2011) definitions and exemplars of ethnodrama, I began to despair that it was not. This would not be performative drama shared collaboratively in front of a live audience with theatrical elements of set, costume, lighting, and props. Plopping myself next to my husband, David, on the couch, I began to mourn the loss of the ethnodrama. He immediately interrupted my eulogy with these words:

Look, we’re in a moment of crisis for live performance—so it’s adapting. You keep talking about all the new theatre and music initiatives starting to emerge during this quarantine. The arts adapt and live on. It’s what the arts do. This new idea—it’s theatre, it’s drama, it’s storytelling—just not how you pictured it. Your characters will be wearing costumes—their everyday clothes are their costume because they are the characters that they are portraying. And there will be sets, props, lighting because their homes where they make their recordings will provide those things—authentically. So, go write your ethnodrama.

(Researcher’s personal journal, Aug 2020)

Newly determined, I returned to Saldaña's writings looking for anything that made a connection between his working definition of ethnodrama and what I envisioned.

I finally found what I sought in his 2010 article for *ARTSPRAXIS*:

After reading and/or viewing well over 250 scripts and productions I classify as ethnodramatic, I have returned and applied to ethnotheatre my adopted pragmatic advice for selecting appropriate qualitative data analytic strategies: "**Whatever works.**" I notice that most of the ethnodramas in my bibliography have been written in such diverse dramatic and theatrical forms as the revue, rant, radio drama, performance art, chamber theatre, poetry, expressionism, debate, **digital storytelling**, participation theatre, simulated lecture, and ritual. (p. 6)

Two phrases caught my eye from this paragraph:

- a. "Whatever works"
- b. "Digital storytelling"

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling combines spoken personal narrative with multimedia elements such as audio, video, text, photography, and voiceover. It is a form of story-crafting and story-sharing that uses technology to create and share "media-rich stories" through "communities of common concern" (Atchley, 2000, para. 3). Digital stories contain multiple visual and audio layers"—such a single photographic images, layered images, movement, and/or written text presented in partnership with recorded voice-overs, music, and ambient sound (Lambert & Hessler, 2020, p. 79). In this way, digital storytelling is "a participatory media practice" (p. xiv) which focuses on "capturing lives" of individuals and "creating community" amongst them (p. xv). Like other participant-centered verbatim performance media, digital storytelling helps us to "know story through our experience" and for these stories to "become part of our tribe, our community, [and] our culture" (p. 5).

Digital storytelling began with Dana Atchley's (1991) multimedia autobiography, *Next Exit* which drew upon his stories of growing up, family videos, and photographs he had taken throughout his life.¹⁴⁵ Atchley worked with theater producer Joe Lambert to produce the piece for live staged performance in combination with recorded sound and video elements. In the mid-1990's, Atchley and Lambert, along with Nina Mullen, founded the organization that would become the Center for Digital Storytelling—and eventually in 2015, StoryCenter.

In fall 2020, I was honored to join one of StoryCenter's digital storytelling webinar cohorts to work firsthand at crafting my own digital story. This experience allowed me to directly engage with the seven tenets of StoryCenter's digital storytelling process (as shared by Joe Lambert and Brooke Hessler (2020)):

1. *Self-Revelatory*—Stories feel as if the narrator is sharing an awareness of new insight which gives the story “a sense of immediacy and discovery” (p. 40).
2. *Personal or first-person voice*—Personal reflections about a subject that has deep meaning are shared by the narrator using their own voice.
3. *Experiential*—Stories focus on the lived experience of the narrator and are revealed in scenes as a description of a moment (or a series of moments) in time.
4. *Photos more than moving images*—The goal is to create a relaxed visual pace which enhances the narrative and does not overpower it.

¹⁴⁵ Atchley's original website for *Next Exit* has been relocated to the Wayback Machine Internet Archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20070806222724/http://www.nextexit.com/index.shtml>. A brief clip used in *Next Exit* may be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upGHcEg6LFo>

5. *Soundtrack*—A soundtrack of music or ambient sound is utilized “to add meaning and impact to the story” (p. 41)
6. *Restrained length and design*—Digital stories should be brief (under five minutes), yet impactful with a very direct feel.
7. *Intention*—Digital stories privilege the process of self-expression and self-awareness over the final product. In this way, they may honor each narrator’s “process of authorship” (p. 41).

By the conclusion of the six-week StoryCenter workshop, I had constructed a digital story called “Flowers in Detroit” which traces my views of Detroit from childhood in the northern suburbs to my final days at Marygrove College.¹⁴⁶

After the workshop, I felt inspired to begin work on an “ethnodrama as digital storytelling” for this dissertation. The only aspect which concerned me was how I could make sure to honor each participant’s “process of ownership” when I had to prove my abilities as research-based playwright per the requirements of the doctoral thesis. I first resolved to double-down on inviting the participants to be involved in the process as much as possible (and as they were comfortable).¹⁴⁷ Secondly, I again looked to Lambert and Hessler (2020) who spoke on the significance of storytellers telling their stories with their own voices:

The recorded voice of the storyteller telling their own story is what makes what we call a ‘digital story’ a digital story...In digital stories, voice not only tells a vital narrative but it also captures the essence of the narrator, their unique character, and their connection to the lived experience. (p. 75)

¹⁴⁶ This piece would become “Flowers in Detroit I” which was shared in Chapter Four.

¹⁴⁷ In the future, I would like to explore more of an *Applied Theatre* approach (Boal, 1979/2008—see also O’Connor & Anderson, 2015) which is based on the work of Paulo Freire. It can be a democratic, transformative, and rehabilitative process which actively engages participant-storytellers from the very beginning in the creative theatrical process.

In much of documentary, verbatim, and ethnodramatic theatre, participants who shared their stories are not the ones to perform those stories on-stage. However, with this study, I have been blessed with participants who are both interested and able to perform their own stories for an audience. As I will describe in a later section, being able to craft this ethnodrama knowing these participants would be the ones to perform it has brought a special depth and meaningfulness to the process.

As a final comment on digital storytelling, Dr. Brooke Hessler views digital storytelling “as a research tool for documenting personal and professional transformation—passing through stages of growth and understanding as you make connections between your lived experience and new knowledge” (Lambert & Hessler, 2020, p. 235). She continues that “if we all think of academic learning as narrative experience, as being a good story with pitfalls and triumphs, then the stories we tell about the journey become the basis of more in-depth critical reflection in both the content area and the learning process in the content area” (p. 236). As these perspectives align with the goals of this dissertation project, I felt confident that digital storytelling would serve as an appropriate format for the ethnodrama I sought to create.

A Bricolage of Structural and Thematic Analysis: Part Two

Returning to the *Narrative Analysis Chart* (Figure 3 on page 310), I had now completed the verbatim rhythmic transcriptions; outlined episodes, reflections, and narrative threads for each storied account; and identified six resonant threads across the cohort. Since so much time had passed since our last formal interaction (pre-Marygrove

closure and pre-pandemic), I decided the next best step would be to invite participants to a one-on-one follow-up interview so we could reconnect and re-engage the conversation.

Relational Ethics: Continuing the Conversation

The follow-up interviews were conducted in August/September 2020 through Zoom (due to Oakland University's restrictions on face-to-face research interactions). As referenced in Chapter Four, this interview closes the loop on Seidman's (2013) three-part interview design. As in his model, the first interview was a *focused life history* in which the participants were asked to reconstruct early experiences related to the research topic and then narrate a "range of constitutive events" from past experience up to present day (p. 21). The second interview (in this case, a focus group interview) honed in on specific details of experiences shared in the first interview. Finally, this third interview invited participants to reflect on the meaning of experiences reconstructed in the interview process. By structuring the interviews in this way, as Seidman had suggested, each served a purpose unto itself, but also connected into one another with every interview illuminating and deepening the next. Each interview was about an hour long and was recorded (per their consent). After consulting with the IRB team, I included three key elements in the follow-up interview:

- A follow-up consent form
- Narrator checking on the episodes, reflections, and threads identified
- A series of questions to better inform the ethnodrama through the lens of the participants

Follow-up Consent Form

The Follow-Up Consent Form included several components to confirm their intent to continue having their narratives utilized in the ethnodrama and to clarify their preferences for involvement:

- willingness to engage in narrator checking the interpretation, analysis, and crafting of the final monologues and other performance pieces;
- choosing their participant-character name or pseudonym;¹⁴⁸
- indicating how they would like to appear in the performance work. I shared my screen in Zoom and we walked through the consent document together.

Verbal consent was given in the Zoom recording so the interview could proceed and a signed copy was sent via email or post afterwards.

Most crucially, all nine participants opted to have a monologue created from their interview transcripts and to perform their monologue in the ethnodrama. Eight of the nine participants chose to record their monologue using audio/video; and 1 participant chose to record their monologue using audio-only.

Narrator Checking

Whereas in member checking, the researcher asks participants to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts created from their narrative accounts, *narrator checks* are “asking a narrator to confirm that you have understood correctly” (Mears, 2009, p. 133). Narrator checking goes a step further into interpretation of meaning and asks narrators

¹⁴⁸ Participants had the opportunity to choose whichever name they wished for their participant-character—be it a name with a special meaning known only to them, a nickname, or their own real first name. They were also reminded (from their first consent process) that the name of the College would be utilized openly in the dissertation which made identification by a reader more possible. More than one participant insisted on using their own name regardless, because these were their stories and no one else’s.

(participants) to confirm that the researcher has represented the meaning of their stories authentically. For Mears (2009):

This checkpoint is the safety switch assuring that it is the narrator's voice...that is heard. In distilling the narrative and sequencing or arranging phrases and expressions, the researcher runs the risk of subjectively shaping the data because in making choices of what to include and what to leave out, meaning can be changed. By going to the narrator and saying—*This is what I understood from your interviews; did I capture what you wanted to communicate?*—a researcher circles back to confirm and authenticate the piece. (p. 72)

In this way, a *narrator check*:

- enhances the mutuality of understanding by...assuring that both the researcher and the narrator reflect on the meanings as accurately interpreted (p. 72);
- [makes it] possible to strive for authenticity and to ensure that the presentation is consistent with the narrator's sense of story integrity (p. 133); and
- allows the researcher to focus solely on the individual to check the individual narratives and the patterns that emerged against that narrator's story, not just the patterns that emerged from the entire research participant cohort.

In the second part of the Zoom follow-up interview, I shared my screen again so the participant and I could talk through the Episode and Reflection Guides as well as the narrative threads identified and how they connected into the cohort's resonant threads. It was incredibly strange and wonderful to tell each the participant's life story back to them through the highlights of these analysis summary documents. I especially enjoyed hearing their exclamations and confirmations that: "Yes, this is my story—that's exactly what happened." Sometimes this would be followed by the giving of additional details about a particular story, or an emphasis behind a participant moment and deeper insight on how that moment made them feel. It was particularly interesting when I outlined part of a

story that a participant had forgotten and it was almost as if I had reminded them.¹⁴⁹ In summary, this portion of the interview was incredibly valuable to the dialogic process because each participant and I were able to ask questions of one another, make adjustments or add additional insight to the analysis, and affirm the content and direction of their future monologue.

As Mears (2009) observed as well, the narrator check partnered with an interview helped to give the narrator-participants time and opportunity to interact with the researcher's interpretation of their narratives as well as to "reflect on deepening understandings that might have emerged in the interviews by reading how their words are understood by the researcher" (p. 133). To share two examples of participants' responses after looking through the episodes, reflections, and narrative and resonant threads:

JERIEL

It's brilliant to see your life capstoned like that—a pop-up page to see your life just jump off the screen before your eyes. It's great to see and to know that you made a victory in a small portion of your life that is just coming on.

REI

It was interesting seeing where my thought process was at that point. There were a lot of things that I've come to now that I was coming to then and didn't have the language for or the full analysis of even what I was thinking about. I felt younger than three years ago. Some of these things I had forgotten even said and so it brought back some really cool memories, too.

A Series of Questions

The final portion of the follow-up interview was structured from Saldaña's questions and sought to gain participants' perspectives, ideas, and concerns on the creation of their monologue and the digital ethnodrama as a whole. In this project, each

¹⁴⁹ It was never my intention for three years to pass between the initial interviews and this follow-up interview, but these interactions were an understandable yet fascinating result.

participant had the option of becoming a participant-character in the ethnodramatic script. Each participant-character was invited to read and rehearse portions of the script containing their data/stories, and share concerns, insights, ideas, etc. If any participant was concerned with any portion of the script containing their data/stories, the script would be edited.

Questions 1 and 2. Questions 1 and 2 explored a key theme identified from the thematic narrative analysis relating to professional identity. Responses to these questions were already shared at the end of Chapter Three:

- 1. Do you consider yourself a professional musician?*
- 2. Do you feel a sense of professional musicianhood?*

Responses to these questions were already shared at the end of Chapter Three.

Questions 3 to 7. Questions 3-7 were heavily inspired by Saldaña's (2011) recommended questions to ask and discuss with participants in support the ethics of participant representation and presentation in the ethnodrama (p. 40). After explaining the structure of the ethnodrama-as-digital-storytelling (i.e., recorded monologues woven with music, photographs, and stylized text slides), I then asked the following:

- 3. What is important for me to remember about you and your journey as I distill your interview transcripts into a monologue for the ethnodrama? OR What are you hoping your monologue will convey about you and your journey?*
- 4. What concerns you about your words and stories being dramatized in a monologue? Is there anything you do not want included or mentioned?*

5. *Who do you imagine as your audience for these stories? What do you hope this audience might take away with them after receiving your journey of musicianhood through the complete ethnodrama?*
6. *What ideas about the script or video production do you have at this time?*
7. *Let's discuss what we will do if there are any disagreements about your monologue script or the overall ethnodrama construction.*

A general overview of the responses to these questions will be shared below.

What Are You Hoping Your Monologue Will Convey? Answers to question #3 helped me get a very clear picture of how the participants wished for their participant-characters to come across to an audience. A character in a drama has very little time to convey their identities and their stories to the audience. An underlying energy must reverberate with the complexity of the individual within the limited number of words shared. Therefore, I paid close attention to the particulars desired by each of the individuals when I was crafting the monologues, but in general, the responses encompassed one or more of four key ideas:

1. 7 of the 9 participants noted *endurance* (e.g., I worked through the challenges and didn't give up; also encompassing determination & pursuit).
2. 6 of the 9 participants noted *evolution* (e.g., I learned and reflected and grew).
3. 5 of the 9 participants noted *determination* (e.g., I kept working and fighting through the difficult times)
4. 4 of the 9 participants noted *humility* (e.g., I tried to stay humble in the journey).

Is There Anything You Do Not Want Included? Answers to question #4 helped me to remove any stories or parts of stories that participants did not want included in this study. Two participants requested specific exclusions that were immediately honored (i.e., deleted from the analysis documents, no mention made within this dissertation or the ethnodrama). One participant wanted to see the final product before making a determination.¹⁵⁰ The remaining six participants said no—there was nothing they wanted excluded from potential use in the ethnodrama. I have deidentified their reasons why and will share key statements.

- I am who I am.
- If I left anything out, then it wouldn't make sense.
- I need to tell my story without worrying about people's responses.
- It's all true.
- I didn't say anything offensive and it's my journey.
- Tell the honest truth of what you've been through and somebody's going to relate.

Who Do You Imagine as Your Audience? Riessman (2008) reminds us that participants are not only speaking to the interviewer in front of them, but may also be influenced by the presence of imagined or “ghostly” audiences (p. 113; also Langellier, 2001). These narratives are not only a “record of experience” but are composed to accomplish something with or to have an effect on a particular listener—because “narratives *do things*; they are motivated and purposeful, if not always consciously” (Riessman, 2011, p. 315). This is not dissimilar to Bresler (2005) who offered that arts-

¹⁵⁰ All participants had the opportunity to see, express concerns about, and approve the final monologue.

centered research entails a *three-pronged communication*. She likens the dialogical relationship within the inquiry process to Buber's (1923/1971) concept of I/Thou and says that completing the conversation between researcher and participants also requires an awareness of and communication with future readers-audiences. This three-way conversation "evokes a polyphony of voices, where resonance and dissonance can generate intensified perception" (p. 4).

Answers to question #4 helped me to know if there any of the participants had a imagined audience in mind for their monologues to reach and to gain a better awareness of whom these monologues would be addressed. Each of the nine participants outlined a very clear description of whom their imagined audience would be. Collectively, this ethnodrama is for:

- Older "non-traditional" students
- Young aspiring performers
- Black queer people who seem to have it together but don't
- Young mothers who want to pursue a degree
- CCM musicians going to college for music
- Community members
- Musicians of all ages
- Those looking to follow a dream
- Those needing to be encouraged or to overcome something
- Those who could gain understanding
- Anybody looking to grow

What Ideas Do You Have for the Ethnodrama? The participants' responses aligned with many of the ideas I had already had about the construction of the ethnodrama, but I was even more motivated and inspired by hearing their perspectives on the project. I have shared a few examples of responses below:

ANGEL

It's gonna have life.
It's gonna have music.
All pieces of art: intertwined, meeting
and kissing each other all at once.
The coming together of everybody's story is gonna be beautiful.

ANGELA

Like they do in movies...
different stories that all mash up together...
Even though we have our own different story,
all of these people went to Marygrove
and they had an opportunity to be with you.
Like: "Wow, all these people who came from all these different beats and places
all went through Marygrove."
And you got your doctorate through Marygrove, too.

JERIEL

I envision people telling their stories...
moments where you're capturing people live and in action...
peeping through the keyhole of their life.
Showing how much we're really all connected,
how many of us feel the same things and have had similar experiences...
Just to show the humanity and life—
that we all are trying to get to the same end result...
a mindset of a life of joy and happiness.

LANYCK

I think what you're doing right now is great.
I like the format and I like how everything is being put together.
I'm really interested in everybody else's story.
Cause like, I mean,
once I looked at mine...
You just be like: "Dang, I said that?"
Like, "What did so-and-so say then?"
Like, "What happened over there?"

REI

We're all kind of sharing a story
and it's almost like a conversation between
all of us.
Something like "For Colored Girls."
How those were all different monologues,
but each story was so integrated into the other...
which might be hard.
But I think it also could be very interesting,
especially when you talk about the resonant threads.

What Will We Do if There Are Any Disagreements? Strangely, Question #7 was the quickest and easiest because all participants responded (almost without hesitation) that they expected we would simply have a conversation. Responses included:

- "Collab and work it out."
- "Find a happy medium or reconstruct it so we're both satisfied."
- "I'll vocalize how I feel and give reasons why; and you as director/visionary share how you feel and your reasons why."

Six of the participants even stated the unlikelihood of any kind of problem arising because "it'll be easy to talk about" since "the intentions are good on both ends." I have stated this before, but I will again—the level of trust expressed by these participants in my work and intentions as a researcher, a mentor, and a fellow artist still amazes and humbles me.

In a variety of ways and unprompted comments across the follow-up interviews, all nine participants referenced this digital ethnodrama as being my project and expressed their comfort in contributing their stories to it. This ease is largely because of our close, longitudinal relationship, and our work on the curriculum together (which established trust). However, I also believe it reflects that the role I am playing as researcher (project leader) is extremely familiar to these music performance-centered participants because it

mirrors the typical role of a music director, conductor, or music producer. As the performers and storytellers, they expect to be actively involved in the process, but at the end of the day the director/producer/conductor has the experience and the responsibility for seeing the big picture, making the big decisions, and getting the project completed.

Question 8. Question #8 related to potential ethnodrama content, and another means to help balance power within the research process. I will speak more about inviting the participants to ask me an interview question for data to apply toward my own a/r/tographer monologue in an upcoming section. This step also connects to the epistemology of critical constructivism in this study as we all work together to construct understandings of experience through the digital ethnodrama.

Relational Ethics Through an Ethnographic Lens

In Chapter Four, I described the connection between Clandinin et al.'s (2018) relational ethics approach to narrative inquiry and this study. Because this study is grounded in both narrative inquiry and performance ethnography, I turn to Carolyn Ellis (2007) to help make connections to relational ethics through the ethnographic lens.

Ellis (2007) references three dimensions in ethics: *procedural ethics* mandated by Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensure appropriate consent and confidentiality procedures; *situational ethics* manage the “unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments” that arise during the inquiry process; and *relational ethics* to help “recognize and value mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness” between researchers, participants, communities, and contexts (p. 4—also citing Lincoln, 1995). The IRB process is essential for establishing and enforcing key ethical research guidelines. However, IRB procedures generally assume that research is being done with strangers

with whom we have no past nor future. That is often not the case in qualitative research, and not the case in this study. Ellis poses the question: As qualitative researchers, what then will guide us when we encounter situations with participants in the field or in interviews that “make [our] heads spin and [our] hearts ache?” (p. 5).

Because of its close relationship to an *ethics of care*, relational ethics requires researchers to “act from their hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and initiate and maintain conversations” (Ellis, 2007, p. 3—also citing Noddings, 1984/2013). These connections and conversations require us to actively attend to our relationships with participants, communities, contexts, and even ourselves—especially because those relationships can and will change over time. Certainly, in this study, researcher and participants have changed quite a bit over the past four years since the start of data collection. Collectively, we have experienced births, deaths, unions, separations, changing of homes and career, and, of course, the pandemic and the loss of our common context and community at Marygrove. The ethical decisions I made in 2017 for best practices in this study may not be the same decisions I would make now in 2021.¹⁵¹ Recognizing and making space for this continuing change sits at the heart of relational ethics. In Chapter Four, I spoke about the significance of empathy in the interview process, and it plays an important role here in the ongoing engagement of analysis and narrator checking as well. The origins and history of relationships between stakeholders in this study are incredibly strong, but this does not mean that the types of conversations, interactions, and connections have not changed across the years.

¹⁵¹ A simple example: In 2017, the best practice was to meet with participants face-to-face for interviews. This has not been permitted since spring 2020.

Relationships in inquiry are no more fixed than any other type of relationship one might have. Being attentive, empathic, and responsive to these changes strengthens inquiry and the relationships that will hopefully continue long after my dissertation defense.

The earlier description of my follow-up interview process is a tangible representation of how I have sought to infuse best practices in relational ethics as a researcher, as a mentor, as a fellow artist, and as a friend to these participants. Ellis (2007) references the historic concern of researchers “being friends” with participants in their studies. However, she expresses that in qualitative inquiry, the larger problem is not being friends with participants, but in “acting as a friend yet not living up to the obligations of friendship” (p. 10). So beyond exemplifying a professional respect, I have also endeavored to treat these participants and their stories as I would wish to be treated if someone were crafting my stories into arts-informed research. These are stories that these participants want to share. I do not need to ensure the validity of their stories nor do I need to go against their wishes to share some sort of imagined “Truth.” Their stories-as-shared are their truth and will be communicated as they have indicated they wish them to be. There is ample narrative, and I am creative and clever enough to craft whatever these participants need to feel comfortable with and confident in the final product.

Framing the Hero’s Journey

*We first know story through our experience,
but the stories told us become part of our tribe,
our community, our culture
and are formed into myth and archetype.
We see our own lives in the plots of the journey.*

*Myths have always served our coming to terms
with our place in the world, our selfhood,
the stories that held us, that spoke to us,*

*that gave us patterns we could be assured of
in considering the choices and changes that are part of our lives.*

*Inherent in citizen democracy
is that every story matters.
We have a hero's journey myth in all our lives.
A journey that allows us to come to terms with ego,
and place ourselves as victors over our demons and deficits.*

*We should know our myths—
those we tell about ourselves and the world we inhabit;
and if they do not suit our healthy existence,
seek to change or reframe them.
As En Vogue sang: "Free your mind and the rest will follow."*

A poetic transcription created from
Lambert and Hessler's (2020)
Digital Storytelling (pp. 5-8)

It is funny how ideas come. Sometimes they strike in such a way that you can remember exactly when and where you were in that moment. Other times they creep into your consciousness so stealthily that you cannot remember a time when they were not present. My awareness of the *hero's journey* story arc and its connection to these study narratives is an example of the latter. Perhaps the participants' recurring use of the words "calling" (8 of 9 participants) and "journey" (7 of 9 participants) set the foundations; or maybe my prior experiences with mythology and theatre inspired an association; or possibly my best friend's interest in Jungian archetypes guided me to the related scholarship. Regardless of its origins, after completing the two steps of thematic analysis and returning to a better-informed holistic view of the interview texts, I suddenly became aware of a hero's journey weaving its way through each of the narrative accounts.

Hero's Journey

The *hero's journey* (or monomyth) is the “quintessential story of mythology” that involves a protagonist who “willingly or unwillingly ventures beyond the known boundaries of the day, meets and defeats spectacular forces, then returns with some hard-won, precious gift” (Ford, 2000, p. viii). It is a storytelling, literary, and theatrical tradition that in many ways transcends time and culture. Most famously, Joseph Campbell (1949/2008, 1991, 2004) researched and wrote extensively about the hero's journey as an underlying dramatic form of civilization and its connection to human consciousness. In his seminal text, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he examines the similarities in character, theme, and through-line of various myths found in Western cis-masculine mythology. Myths may serve one of three purposes: *etiological*, which explains “why a certain thing is the way it is or how it came to be” (also known as an origin story); *historical*, which recounts a past event but “elevates it with greater meaning than the actual event (if it even happened)”; and *psychological*, which “represents a psychological need to balance the external world with one's internal consciousness of it” by presenting an individual's expedition from the known to the unknown (Mark, 2018, para. 9-11). Campbell's work was concerned with this last type in which heroes undertake a journey to “discover their true identity or fate and, in so doing, resolve a crisis while also providing an audience with some important cultural value” (para. 11).

Campbell (1949/2008) concluded that the standard path of a hero's adventure mirrors the three-act rite of passage: *separation—initiation—return*:

1. *Separation*: Living in the known world, an individual receives and chooses to a calling to pursue, find, or achieve something.

2. *Initiation*: On this quest, the individual enters the unknown world to face obstacles/trials/monsters while meeting mentors/allies and developing skills/tools/knowledge along the way.
3. *Return*: Having faced the final challenge and her own transformation, the individual returns to the known world changed.

Each of these acts had a guarded threshold that the hero would need to cross in order to enter the next stage of his trek. Campbell then divided each of these acts into 5-6 identified scenes of action and drama (e.g., Call to Adventure, Road of Trials, Belly of the Whale) to describe steps of the journey he commonly saw in the stories themselves.

For this study, I have used Campbell's approach as a starting place and expanded into a more modern, writerly-centered, intentionally inclusive perspective as outlined by screenwriter, author, and educator Christopher Vogler (2020). Additional influences came from Valerie Estelle Frankel (2010) who crafted her version of a heroine's journey through an examination of female-led myths from various cultures and Clyde W. Ford (2000) who provides insights on the hero's journey through the lens of African mythology in his "The Hero with the African Face."¹⁵² These understandings have led me to view these participants' accounts as an expression of their personal myths recounting a

¹⁵² I have chosen not to include, but must give a nod to, Maureen Murdock's (1990) "The Heroine's Journey." In an interview with Campbell in 1981, Murdock asked his thoughts on her idea to create a heroine's journey. His response was: "In the whole mythological tradition the woman is *there*. All she has to do is to realize that she's the place that people [read: men] are trying to get to. When a woman realizes what her wonderful character is, she's not going to get messed up with the notion of being pseudo-male" (p. 2). In many ways, Murdock's text is a response to Campbell's belief that women did not and need not undertake a journey of growth and development; and her work inspired other authors to explore the heroine's journey including Blackie (2019), Frankel (2010), and McCord (2013).

hero's journey of separation-initiation-return as they pursued an undergraduate music degree for the purpose of achieving a professional sense of musicianhood.

First, I will clarify use of two potentially problematic terms: “myth” and “hero.” Then I will explore the steps of the journey as well as character-archetypes who we often encounter along the way, in relation to this step of analysis.

What is a Myth?

The use of *myth* in this study context is not specifically connected to any specific mythological folklore, established cultural chronical, and/or religion (e.g., Navajo, Yoruba, Greek, Polynesian)—especially regarding any supernatural or magical elements which may be inherent or implied. Like Lambert and Hessler in the opening quote and McAdams (1997), here we are speaking of myth as a *personal myth* that people create and utilize to better understand and define self:

We are all tellers of tales. We each seek to provide our scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories...Through our personal myths, each of us discovers what is true and what is meaningful in life...We compose a heroic narrative of the self that illustrates essential truths about ourselves...Each of us comes to know who he or she is by creating a heroic story of self. (p. 11)

McAdams (1997) says that we act out these personal myths in our daily lives as the stories inside us are “made and remade” in our conscious and unconscious minds and through the results of our actions (p. 12). Similarly, playwright David Mamet (1998) notes that not only do we all have a myth, but we live by a myth—and a major part of the hero's journey within that myth is for the protagonist “revamp her thinking about the world” whether through circumstance or force of will (p. 38) Used in this manner, the term *myth* refers more to its etymology from the Greek *mythos*, meaning “speech,

thought, word, discourse, conversation, story...anything delivered by word of mouth” (Etymonline, n.a., para. 1). This is quite different than the modern sense of myth as an “untrue story, rumor, imaginary or fictitious object or individual” begun in the mid-19th century (Etymonline, n.a., para. 2). Hero journeys are much more than a simple dramatic tale. They are a metaphorical representation of the “inevitable passages each of us faces in life” including the “courage, cunning, wisdom, strength, determination, faith, love, compassion, and the many other traits” that it takes to answer the challenge and travel the path “to the very center of one’s self” (Ford, 2000, p. 4).

Who is a Hero?

Most of us think of a “hero” as a character in a movie or someone on the front page of the news—an “unreal character achieving unreal goals” and working to “save the world or win the game” (Williams, 2016, p. 181). However, building on Vogler, Williams notes that the true hero’s journey is about everyday people bravely confronting an Ordeal and surviving. Whether it is in an office, a stage, a kitchen, a classroom, or “some other place of no particular note,” heroes find a way to challenge a lifetime of habits and take risks “to live differently” (p. 181).

The term *hero* needs not be archaic nor masculine in nature, but instead can represent an aspect of human nature which hears and answers a Call from deep within self (Rebillot & Kay, 2017). Like application of the term “actor” for anyone in a professional theatrical field, the term “hero” may be applied for all gender identities (Vogler, 2020). Every human being carries within them the heroic potential to “follow the impulse to something greater” (Rebillot & Kay, 2017, p. 32). Our stories as heroes are important, especially in the contemporary world (Pearson, 2015). On the surface, they

convey events of “leaping off the edge of the known to confront the unknown,” facing our dragons, and claiming our treasures—but in a deeper sense, they are about being “true to ourselves” and linking our own longing, pain, and passion “with those who have come before” so we might come to “learn something about the essence of what it means to be human” (p. 2). Throughout the storied accounts of each of these nine participants, I see this “answering of a call” and the subsequent moments of impulse, struggle, and arrival on the journey to something greater, together.

What is the Journey?

Analyzing the one-on-one interviews of these dissertation participants, I found the three acts of the hero’s journey curiously, yet perhaps unsurprisingly, aligned with the story arc of their episodes and reflections. For each of the participants, music was an integral part of their childhoods—their “Known Worlds.” Although the majority of the journey structure comes from Vogler (2020), he uses the term “Ordinary World” as where a hero begins, and the “Special World” as where she travels her journey. For this context, I am wary of labelling the participants’ informal/nonformal spaces of gospel and CCM musicking as “ordinary” while the academic world of formal musicking is considered “special.” For this reason, I am returning to Campbell’s original term of *Known World* to represent the starting place (which also fits well within the critical constructivist paradigm of building from prior knowledge and that which is “known”).

Further, I am introducing Valerie Estelle Frankel’s (2010) term *Otherworld* (as opposed to Vogler’s “Special World”) to represent an unknown place beyond the first threshold. At some point, each of the participants realized they heard a call to pursue music more seriously as something they were meant to do. Eventually, part of this

commitment included the pursuit of an undergraduate music degree at Marygrove College. Although everyone enters “unknowns” regularly, the hero’s journey requires crossing a threshold into an entirely new realm of unknown, or an “Otherworld.” Frankel describes the *Otherworld* as a place of “strangeness, vagueness...the threshold to transcendence itself...offer[ing] mystery and a taste of chaos to the hero...a new geography and a new psychological landscape...a place where a different type of awareness comes to prominence” (pp. 58-59). For this study and its collection of narrative accounts, the Otherworld for all participants is the music department at Marygrove College.

During their time in the Otherworld, each participant faced obstacles, trials, and monsters; met mentors, allies, enemies, and fellow warriors; and developed skills, tools, and knowledge. These factors also accumulated in an Ordeal that then led the crossing of a threshold back into the Known World (which introduced participants to the new challenges and surprises of becoming a degree holder and trained musician).

The steps of the hero’s journey outlined below are Christopher Vogler’s (2020) interpretation of Joseph Campbell’s (1949/2008) research into the monomyth of the *hero’s journey*. As a screenwriter and author, Vogler connected his own experience with key elements of Campbell’s original theory model and adjusted it to fit more modern examples of storytelling, especially theatre and film. Vogler’s work focuses on crafting an inclusive, flexible, simplified structure for writers as they craft stories from a hero-centered plot. He feels that it gives people language, metaphors, and an orientation to “the grand design” of how people “anticipate and cope with challenges” (p. ix). A

comparison of both Campbell's and Vogler's outlines of the hero's journey, and related terminology, may be seen in the side-by-side comparison in Table 1.

I am especially drawn to Vogler's model because of his open invitation for writers to make their own adjustments to it. Any type of "model" can be dangerous in a critical constructivist research paradigm because a researcher might be tempted to try fitting the unique narrative data into the predetermined mold. For example, Cruz and Kellam (2017) also utilized Campbell's hero's journey as their form of structural narrative analysis. Using the monomyth as the primary interpretative lens, they coded and reordered their transcripts per the 17 stages of Campbell's model. By breaking the transcripts down into these common chronological storied events, the researchers noted that they had to exclude any deeper moments of "introspection and conjecture" (which they admitted were "potentially important sources of data") from the final research form (p. 183). Vogler's flexible, arts-centered approach allows for the participants' narratives to set the requirements for the framework (instead of vice versa). Vogler's reasoning is that every storyteller needs to be able to bend the "mythic pattern" to their own purpose, to the needs of a particular culture, and/or to the needs of a particular individual. Referencing Campbell's well-known book title, Vogler declares that this why the hero has, and must have, a thousand faces (p. 7). This viewpoint is reflected in my use of the monomyth within the larger analysis process of this study. The monomyth framework has brought broader structural insights to the narrative accounts by helping inform the crafting of the monologues, rather than setting a structural agenda for the ethnodrama. I freely utilized Vogler's invitation to adapt as needed, without hesitation, while outlining the

Table 1. Comparison of Hero's Journey Frameworks

CAMPBELL	VOGLER
<i>Separation</i>	<i>Act One</i>
Known World	Ordinary World
Call to Adventure	Call to Adventure
Refusal of the Call	Refusal of the Call
Supernatural Aid	Meeting with the Mentor
Crossing the First Threshold	Crossing the First Threshold
<i>Initiation</i>	<i>Act Two</i>
Road of Trials	Tests, Allies, Enemies
Meeting with the Goddess	Approach to the Inmost Cave
Woman as Temptress/ Atonement with the Father/Apotheosis	The Ordeal
The Ultimate Boon	Reward
<i>Return</i>	<i>Act Three</i>
The Magic Flight/ Return to the World of Common Day	The Road Back
Master of Two Worlds	Resurrection
Freedom to Live	Return with Elixir

participants' journeys (e.g., omitting, moving, or repeating a step), but interestingly, adjustments were not required often.

A Heroine's Journey

The steps and process of the hero's journey tends to focus more on storied steps that are direct, linear, goal-driven, and individual-centered. These elements are predominantly what I have seen in the participants' storied episodes with the standard storytelling elements (e.g., place, characters, action). However, Frankel's (2010) and Murdock's (1990) description of a *heroine's journey* emphasize the journey as circular, self-reflective, intuitive; as more focused on the subjectivity of identity, purpose, and belonging; and as intimately linked with socio-cultural connections. This resonates for what I have seen through these participants' *reflections* within the one-on-one interviews (e.g., pondering topics in philosophy, identity, community).

Without delving into the gender-stereotypical minefield of *heroine's journey* verses *hero's journey*, I will note that, crucially, Vogler's approach makes room for both a linear/goal-driven journey and a circular/reflective journey. He invites a constructivist approach of allowing the story-form to be a guide, but omitting/adding/changing elements as needed to work with the story at hand. It is a writer's point of view where the story leads, and the structure follows. Whereas Campbell was an archival researcher, Vogler is an artist who has written stories in this structure, not just studied the works of others. Therefore, the invitation to flexibility for how the story needs to be told, for the linear and the circular, for both the goal-driven and the reflective, feels authentic. In this way, I have felt free, through Vogler's approach to include all elements of the thematic analysis.

Steps in the Journey

In this section, I will outline the steps of the hero's journey that I considered when analyzing the participants' transcriptions through this lens. Figure 4 represents the hero's journey structure I have used for the narrative analysis at this stage. The general descriptions are inspired from Vogler's work unless otherwise indicated. For clarity, I have outlined a basic description of each step of the journey below. Several types of character-archetypes essential to these steps are also included and will be specifically outlined in the following section.

The Known World (1). The *Known World* is where the hero-participant begins. It is familiar and normalized. It represents the history, background, prior knowledge, and social-cultural norms of the hero. The Known World is considered a static place, which becomes unstable once the seeds of change are planted. The hero may be restless, uneasy, and out of sync with their environment—but sooner or later, a new force enters the story.

The Call to Adventure (2). “Whether in real life or in myth, the hero quest begins with a Call that “wakes the hero to his destiny” (Ford, 2000, p. 19). It may come at any time and is a time of exploring, learning, traveling, and experimenting (Pearson, 2015). In this step, the hero is presented with an adventure to undertake (e.g., achieve a dream, confront a challenge, change a life, right a wrong). This new factor makes it impossible for the hero to simply “get by” any longer, “a decision must be made, action

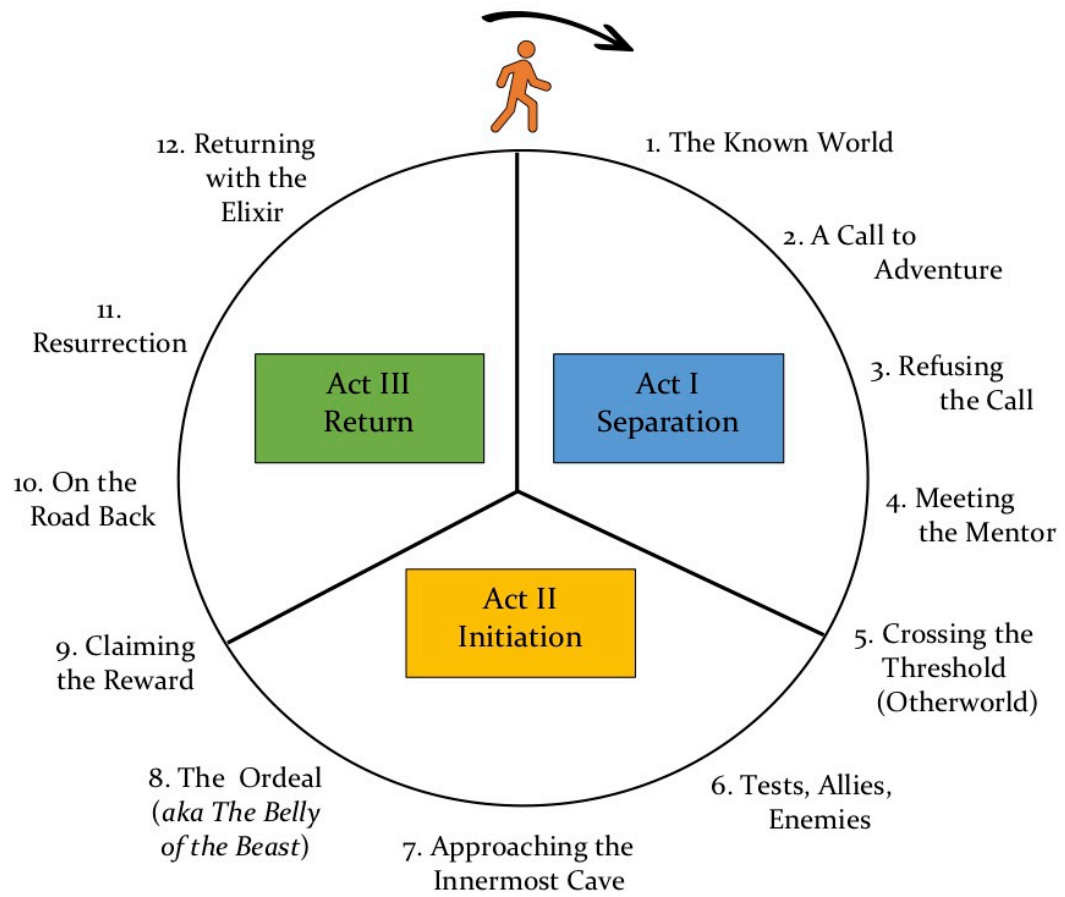


Figure 4. Hero's Journey Circle

taken, and the conflict faced” (Vogler, 2020, p. 62). The hero can no longer remain in the comfort of the Known World. A *Call to Adventure* may come as:

- an invitation, announcement, or challenge from a Herald
- a stirring within or message from the unconscious or somewhere Beyond.
- the hero getting fed up with how things are.
- a string of accidents or coincidences (Jung’s (1952/2010) *synchronicity*)

Sometimes heroes do not see any need for change and need *Heralds* to kick away their supports. Calls can often be unsettling, disorientating, and distasteful to the hero, but they are necessary for growth. To accept the Call: “We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us” (Campbell, 1991, p. 8).¹⁵³

Refusal of the Call (3). The refusal of the call is “where the summons is heard or felt, and perhaps even heeded, but for one reason or another cut off” (Campbell, 2004, p. 113). Sometimes the hero balks at the threshold of adventure, refuses the call, or expresses reluctance. Not surprising because he is facing the greatest of all fears—the “unknown,” which is a risky, high-stakes gamble. The refusal may be subtle—a word of hesitation, a small starting stumble—or it may be encountered on every step of the way. Some heroes do not hesitate or voice any fear because they are willing, but something else gets in the way; not every participant has a Refusal, not every Refusal is by choice.

Meeting with the Mentor (4). *Mentors* help prepare the hero for the unknown through advice, guidance, supplies, knowledge, and confidence needed to overcome fear

¹⁵³ For most of these participants, they embrace a concept of a Calling which connects specifically to Christian faith and the Word of God. In this analysis, I am using Call to Adventure as related to the decision to attend Marygrove College for a music degree. Music may not necessarily be their “God-ordained Calling” in life, but something was received in a sacred, spiritual and/or secular sense.

and commence the adventure. A Mentor can guide a hero because they have conquered their own journeys and have acquired enough knowledge and skill to advise.

Crossing the First Threshold (5).

*If the call is heeded,
the individual is invoked to engage in a dangerous adventure—
moving out of the familiar sphere of their community;
crossing the threshold
from the conscious to the unconscious world,
the path into the unknown;
to walk bodily through the door into the world
where the known rules don't apply.*

A poetic transcription created from
Campbell's (1949/2004)
The Hero with a Thousand Faces (p. 114)

A *Threshold* is the border of two worlds. The hero fully enters the Otherworld when he commits to taking a leap of faith into the unknown and crosses the first threshold. Heroes must decide whether they wish to go on as they always have, or if they will risk everything to grow and change. Once they agree to face the consequences of the Call, there is no turning back—but heroes don't always land gently. They may crash into the Otherworld and enter a crisis of faith as truths are shattered. Crossing of the threshold might be hindered by fear, low self-esteem, lack of confidence in abilities, or a loss of faith and hope (Ford, 2000, p. 26). The passage may be exhausting, frustrating, disorienting, or distasteful. Thresholds are often protected by *Threshold Guardians* who determine who is worthy to pass.

Tests, Allies, and Enemies (6). Once across the threshold, the hero encounters new challenges in the form of *Tests*, makes *Allies* and *Enemies*, and learns the rules of the Otherworld. The Otherworld has a different feel, rhythm, priorities, values, and rules than

the Known World. The trials and challenges faced are meant to prepare the hero for greater ordeals ahead. Heroes will also spend some time figuring out who can be trusted and relied upon. There is an opportunity for the forging of a team, or *cohort*, of multiple heroes.¹⁵⁴

Approach to the Inmost Cave (7). Heroes, now adjusted to the Otherworld, approach the second major threshold. The Approach encompasses a hero's final preparations for the Ordeal (the second major threshold), where they will face the *Shadow* fear getting in the way of their destiny. Every lesson and ally of the journey will come into play. In this stage, heroes may have "disheartening setbacks" or dramatic complications, which are a further test of their willingness to proceed (Vogler, 2020, p. 176). When delayed by obstacles, heroes get acquainted with fellow adventurers, polish and sharpen their weapons, and do final drills. They must go in "with confidence tempered by humility and awareness of the danger" (Vogler, 2020, p. 173). Heroes also come to the realization that they must face their Ordeal on their own, because there are some places where Mentors and Allies cannot go with us.

The Ordeal (8). The *Ordeal* is the crisis moment where the hero faces their greatest fear, challenges things they dislike about themselves, or roughs out a storm. It is the confrontation which polarizes the hero—pulled forward by their Call and pulled backward by their Shadow. Ford (2000) describes this moment as the hero entering the "belly of the beast."

¹⁵⁴ I will speak more of cohort in Chapter Eight.

*Coming to a threshold that he must cross,
a monster jealously guards the murky depths.*

*A battle ensues,
and the hero is swallowed whole (or in pieces)
into the monster's belly.*

The fate of the hero hangs in precarious balance.

*The symbolic descent into the belly of the beast
is the pivotal moment of the hero's adventure;
the crucible of his transformation,
the time of his reinvention.*

*Willingly or otherwise,
the hero must enter the belly of the beast—
not to lament;
but to blaze a trail out.*

*For should he manage to escape this foreboding place,
he will emerge forever changed.*

We ask ourselves:

*To what hero part of myself must I give birth
to meet this monster in battle?*

*Am I prepared to enter the belly of the beast
to wrest whatever victory is mine?*

A poetic transcription created from
Clyde W. Ford's (2000)
The Hero with the African Face (pp. 4, 35-39)

Afterwards, the hero finds she has transcended some of the old boundaries of Self.

She has risked much and has won the right to claim the Reward she has sought.

Everything has led to this moment. A witness can be an important part of this Ordeal as someone who has seen the hero transform.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ For example: When participants related their Ordeal to recital preparation/performance, the witnesses were those in the audience (e.g., family, friends, peers, professors).

Reward (Seizing the Sword) (9). Having faced fear and conquered it, the hero takes possession of the treasure she has been seeking. It is the moment of “seizing the sword” and taking possession “of whatever was being sought” in the Otherworld (Vogler, 2020, p. 209). Heroes have now received the “knowledge and experience that leads to greater understanding and a reconciliation with hostile forces” (p. 17). Heroes emerge from the Ordeal to be recognized as special and different. They have entered a smaller group of “special survivors” to gain a new beginning in a new rank, are privy to certain secrets, passed tests to prove worthiness, are more aware of the connectedness of things, are more intuitive, and have profound self-realization (Vogler, 2020, p. 211). They see ways that they “fit into the scheme of things,” have been foolish or stubborn, and who they truly are or will be (p. 212).

The Road Back (10). Crossing into Act Three, the Otherworld must be left behind, but there are still dangers, temptations, and tests ahead. Once the rewards of the Ordeal have been celebrated and absorbed, heroes must either take the road back to the Known World or continue on to a new journey¹⁵⁶ Returning to the Known World is not always the easier option as the hero must deal with the consequences of the journey.¹⁵⁷ *The Road Back* is “a turning point, another threshold crossing” marking passage into Act Three (Vogler, 2020, p. 221). The “plateau of comfort” that they have reached must be pried off as heroes try to tell others about their journey and “share the Elixir they have won” (pp. 221-222). Unfortunately, “the wisdom and magic of the Ordeal often seems to

¹⁵⁶ For example: Sherry continued into student teaching and Melody into cruise ship performance.

¹⁵⁷ This also highlights an interesting exchange between which place is “known” and which is “other.” At the beginning of the journey, the Hero leaves the familiarity of the Known World for the unfamiliarity of the Otherworld. By the end of the college journey, however, the Otherworld has often become more familiar and known—while a return to the Known World can almost feel like entering a new Otherworld.

evaporate in the harsh light of common day,” because few will understand (or even believe) the hero’s adventures (p. 220). Heroes gather up what they have learned and gained in the Otherworld, mourn what they have lost, and set out on a road leading somewhere. But before they arrive, there is a final test to pass.

Resurrection (11). Just as heroes must shed their old selves to enter the Otherworld, they now must shed the personality of the journey and build a new one that is suitable for return to the Known World. It should reflect the best parts of the old selves as well as the lessons learned along the way. Heroes often look to provide proof of where they have been, but most forms of evidence brought back from an Otherworld tend to evaporate. The traveler knows the experience was real, but often it is hard to explain to others. People must go to the Otherworld for themselves to truly understand. The real treasure from traveling is not the souvenirs (e.g., degree, recital program), but “the lasting inner change and learning” (Vogler, 2020, p. 242).

Return with the Elixir (12). Having survived the Ordeal, heroes proceed with a sense that they are beginning a new life chapter because of the road they just traveled. However, the journey is meaningless unless the hero brings back an *Elixir* from the Otherworld (e.g., knowledge/experience useful to the community such as the Otherworld exists, can be survived, and brings benefits).¹⁵⁸ This Elixir embodies the powerful wisdom and skill that heroes bring back with them which can force change not only in themselves, but also others. Heroes may find they take greater responsibility at the *Return*, such as leadership or service within a group. They may also feel sadder but wiser

¹⁵⁸ Many participants noted this as essential because they were the first college graduates in their families.

for having gone through the experience. This hero's journey may end, but the journeys of life and of self-storying never really end. As Pearson (2015) observes:

As soon as we return from one journey...we are immediately propelled into a new sort...The pattern is not linear or circular but spiral. We never really stop journeying...and each time we begin our journeys, we do so at a new level and return with a new treasure and newfound transformative abilities. (p. 3)

Who Do We Encounter Along the Way?

Based in Carl Jung (1959/1980), an archetype is “one of the familiar characters who people the landscape of the Hero's Journey” (Vogler, 2020, p. xvii). There are multiple archetypes that may be found in monomyths, but throughout the subsections above, I have identified five recurring types within the stories of these participants:

Herald, Mentor, Threshold Guardian, Ally, Shadow.

Herald. The Herald announces the coming of significant change by providing motivation, presenting a challenge, and alerting the audience “that change and adventure are coming” (Vogler, 2020, p. 62). They can arrive at almost any point in a story, but most often in Act One to bring the hero into the adventure. In this study, examples include teachers, peers, family members, and/or musical idols.

Mentor. Every hero must be guided by something—this is not a path they initiate or accomplish alone. Mentors aid or train the hero both prior to and during the journey. Mentors are often those who have walked their own journeys and are now passing on the knowledge and wisdom gained. They provide heroes with “motivation, inspiration, guidance, training, and gifts” on their journey (Vogler, 2020, p. 53). Mentors may be a conscience for the hero, motivate the hero, help them overcome fears, and/or give a hero

“a kick in the pants” to get things rolling (p. 48). In this study, mentors are most often a musical family member and/or a school or community music teacher.

Threshold Guardian. At the thresholds of the Otherworld, the Ordeal, and the return to the Known World, there are often powerful guardians tasked with keeping the unworthy from entering. These *Threshold Guardians* test heroes to see if they are resolved to change. In response, the hero may turn and run, attack head-on, use deceit to get by, bribe or appease, or even befriend the guardian. Successful heroes will recognize Threshold Guardians not as enemies to be defeated, but as useful Allies with wisdom to be integrated. These heroes learn a Guardian’s lessons, absorb them, and move on. As an example in this study, many of the participants cited the first semester theory course and/or private voice lessons (and their professors) as formidable Threshold Guardians.

Ally. Heroes always need someone to travel with them on their journeys. An *Ally* may serve as a fellow traveler, emotional support, a sparring partner, conscience, or comic relief. They may fight alongside the hero, advise and warn them, or challenge them. In this study, Allies are often a family member, peer, colleague, or friend. In this study, it is interesting that while these participants are all individual protagonists on their own journeys, they are woven into one another’s storied journeys as *Allies* as well.

Shadow. The *Shadow* is most often an energy or an idea, rather than a person. It is the dark side of unexpressed, unrealized, or rejected aspects of something in our lives—the suppressed monsters and fears of our inner world. The purpose of the Shadow is to create conflict and “ultimately bring out the best in the hero” when she faces it in the Ordeal (Vogler, 2020, p. 76). Shadows may be external forces to be conquered or destroyed by the hero— or internal creations, which must be disempowered simply by

bringing them into the light of consciousness. Sometimes a Shadow need not be vanquished, but rather reexamined, better understood, accepted, and/or utilized in a different way. As explained later, the Shadow plays a significant role within these participants' monologues.

Hero's Journey Outlines

In creating *Hero's Journey Outlines* for all nine participants, I discovered four anchor points across the cohort. Each participant:

- described their *Known World* prior to entering Marygrove College;
- followed a *Call to Adventure* which led them to pursue a vocal music degree;
- crossed a threshold into the *Otherworld* of Marygrove; and
- faced tests and trials which lead into an *Ordeal* to face a *Shadow* fear.

All other connections to the hero's journey outline were made completely in service to the participant's narrative account. In Figures 5 and 6, I share condensed examples of the *Hero's Journey Outlines* for two study participants, Angela and Sherry.

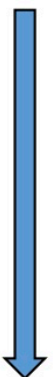
After the Hero's Journey Outlines were complete, I shared them individually with the participants for narrator checking. The participants confirmed that they represented their journeys and for the most part, agreed with my interpretation and alignment of the steps (especially the Ordeal). They commented on the process with statements such as:

- It feels like I'm writing a book.
- Seeing my journey written out like this is surreal.
- I read this like I wasn't myself!
- It's honest and transparent.
- I appreciate this experience.

Angela – Hero’s Journey Outline



The Known World—Church/gospel music with family; classical from piano lessons, school, and PBS; performs regularly as a vocal soloist and cheerleader.



The Call to Adventure—Leontyne Price serves as a *Herald* across her youth. *Mentors* include her childhood piano teacher and high school choir director.

Refusal of the Call—In senior year, vocal issues create a block so Angela is unable to pursue the call. No *Mentor* emerges to help her through.

Renewed Call to Adventure—10 years later, a new church community (*Herald*) entices her to sing again. The *Shadow* returns (voice damage at work), but she claims ownership of her voice and pursues rehabilitation.

Meeting with the Mentor—Her ENT connects her to a voice teacher (*Mentor*). She later gives Angela a “kick in the pants” to pursue a music degree.



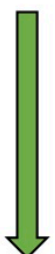
Crossing the First Threshold—Angela receives message from God (*Herald*) to choose Marygrove. She auditions and begins an undergraduate music degree.

Tests, Allies, and Enemies—She must learn to trust her voice again and reestablish high school theory skills. Fellow students become *Allies*.

Approach to the Inmost Cave—N/A. Not addressed in her life story.

The Ordeal—Angela faces her *Shadow* in her junior recital when her voice gives out. She stops the recital. Her doctor later praises her decision. She is empowered.

Reward—Angela’s senior recital (which she viewed as a “coming-out”) signified completion of this part of her journey.



The Road Back—N/A. Angela did not speak about any stress, anxiety, and/or difficulties post-graduation as she left the Otherworld.

Resurrection—Coaching voice students affirms Angela’s journey and provides proof of the skills/knowledge she has brought back from the Otherworld.

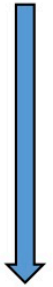
Return with the Elixir—She dedicates herself to creating a vocal rehab center where people with injured voices can come for healing and knowledge.

Figure 5. Hero’s Journey Outline [Angela]

Sherry – Hero’s Journey Outline



The Known World— Praise/worship music in church with her family. Sherry compares herself to older sister’s ability (rise of Shadow fear—not being “good”).



The Call to Adventure— At 15, she receives a dual-call to music worship (a cousin (*Mentor*) teaches her guitar for church) and music education (H.S. principal (*Herald*) asks her to step in as 6th-9th choir director for her ill teacher).

Refusal of the Call— Sherry follows music worship call (at 16, she became lead singer in a Christian band), but the call to teaching was delayed due to life events.

Meeting with the Mentor— While at community college (*Mentor*), Sherry prayed about her purpose and God (*Herald*) said: You will be a music teacher.



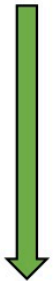
Crossing the First Threshold— Having 4 children, most colleges are too far from home. A friend (*Ally*) tells her of Marygrove’s program. She gets accepted.

Tests, Allies, and Enemies— Stress of life (husband, 5 kids, music pastor, band). As a professional CCM singer, Sherry is troubled by classical focus.

Approach to the Inmost Cave—Coming from informal into formal musicking and praise into performance is a shock. This brings out Sherry’s Shadow fear..

The Ordeal—Her senior recital brings her two musical worlds into a “head-on collision.” She freezes up and does not receive initial approval for the recital.

Reward—Sherry completes the recital successfully, but is immediately focused on going right into student teaching (which presents its own Shadow).



The Road Back—After her recital is complete, Sherry begins to question her true ability (and right) to sing classical in the Known World. This will connect to her Shadow in her teaching as well.

Resurrection— Sherry learns more about her calling through her teaching experience. She is struck by the “depth” of music, especially when teaching it.

Return with the Elixir—Sherry has been teaching K-8 music at a charter school in the city. She plans to pursue a graduate degree in education administration.

Figure 6. Hero’s Journey Outline [Sherry]

Entering Dialogic/Performance Analysis

All four steps of structural and thematic analysis described in the previous pages serve this moment. From this point, the ethnodrama begins to come together through steps of dialogic/performance analysis. The verbatim rhythmic transcriptions, *Episode and Reflection Guides*, narrative and resonant threads, follow-up interview, and *Hero's Journey Outlines* provide content, structure, and clarity of purpose toward the crafting of the most essential portion—the participants' monologues.

Distillation and Focus: Collisions of Calling and Shadow

The artist is meant to put the objects of this world together in such a way that through them you will experience the light of consciousness in which all things both hide and reveal.

The hero journey is one of the universal patterns through which that radiance shows brightly.

*Over and over again, you are called to the realm of adventure.
Each time, there is the same problem:
"Do I dare?"*

*And then if you do dare, the dangers are there;
and the help also.
And the fulfillment,
or the fiasco.*

There's always the possibility of a fiasco.

But there's also the possibility of bliss.

A poetic transcription
created from Campbell's (1949/2004)
The Hero with a Thousand Faces (p. 133)

In Chapter Five, I defined two terms to describe this work: *craft* and *wright*. Alongside these words, I introduce a related term: *distill*. The first step of crafting the monologues to wright the ethnodrama is the distillation of the transcriptions.

Distillation means “to extract the essence of” or “to appear slowly or in small quantities at a time” (Merriam-Webster, n.a.). Heather Greene (2016) explains that in the making of whisky, the distiller must know when to remove the alcohol from the *wash* (the most flavorful of the liquid, also called the “heart”). The process of distillation happens slowly, and the distiller must know when to start and stop the “cuts” to achieve the desired product. These cuts are determined by the distiller’s experience, intuition, and taste; resulting in an intense, unique product. Importantly, the flavors in scotch whisky (e.g., vanilla toffee, nutmeg, apple, Christmas cake) are not added by the distiller, but are revealed as this particular combination of water, grain, and yeast is distilled together in this particular distillery, by this particular process, in these particular casks, in this particular weather and environment, by this particular distiller. The complexity of identity is revealed by the process of creation. I view the process of distilling each 90-minute one-on-one life-story interview into a 550-word narrative monologue in much the same way.

The First Distillation

The first and most substantial level of distillation was done by the participants themselves during the interview itself. By choosing which episodes and topics of reflection to share, and which narrative threads to weave, whether consciously or subconsciously, the participants distilled a lifetime of lived stories down to 60-90 minutes. They decided how to “focus and direct attention, highlighting the essential elements” from among innumerable complex, messy, spiraling real-life tales and ways of recounting those tales (Mears, 2009, p. 74).

The Second Distillation

My first round of distillation focused on removing any spoken material that did not relate to the episodes, reflections, and narrative threads identified in the analysis process. I also decided to remove the false starts (incomplete sentences), fillers (e.g., uh, um, you know), and stutters (e.g., I—I—I went...). In true verbatim theatre, these are often kept to preserve the voiceprint of the participant-character. I made the decision to eliminate them because a) the ethnodrama is structured for the participants to perform their own monologues, and b) having completed the verbatim rhythmic transcriptions, I now wished to emphasize clarity in “what” was said rather than the “how.”¹⁵⁹ In this distillation, the mean of transcript pages per participant was reduced from 50 pages to 27.

The Third Distillation

At this stage, I realized that sharing a complete hero’s journey for each of the nine participants would be impossible. The length of the resulting monologues would exceed any viable performance time and the stepwise motion of the full hero’s journey made the text clunky, like a checklist rather than a dramatic work. I looked carefully through the distilled texts to identify a portion of the journey that would be compelling in a monologue form. I found myself drawn to the Shadow fear shared within each interview text. With these participants, the Shadow was formed in the Known World, before entering the College journey. Often, the Shadow worked in opposition to their expressed Calling, which comes to a head in the Ordeal. For seven of the participants, I noted their Ordeal as being related to their senior capstone recital (either in preparation or

¹⁵⁹ However, I did reinstate a few of these elements in the final versions of some monologues when they were essential for expressive authenticity.

performance). The other two were associated with other performance-related events (i.e., Junior recital for Angela and church praise team for Angel). I decided to focus the monologues on this interplay between the *Call to Adventure* pulling the individual forward and the *Shadow* pulling them back, which accumulates during the *Ordeal*. In this distillation, the mean of transcript pages per participant was reduced from 27 pages to 11.

Crafting the Participant Monologues

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) speak of narrative inquiry as the process of “piecing a puzzle together.” I found the process of crafting these narrative monologues to be part jigsaw puzzle (i.e., slowly connecting the pieces together sequentially to reveal a larger, more complete picture), part scavenger hunt (i.e., going out to find the pieces needed), part crossword puzzle (i.e., an iterative process where finding answers that fit depends on finding other answers that fit), and part dice game (i.e., take a gamble, roll the dice, and see what happens). There is an unexpected relinquishment of power and control in this monologic construction process. In an interview, Anna Deavere Smith said: “I’m shaping the piece, but I have many masters...I don’t have authority really. I may take this section or that, but the fact is the real master is the character” (Rose, 2011, p. 443).

Choreographer and educator, Mary Overlie (2016) agrees that when approaching a new project, the creator must:

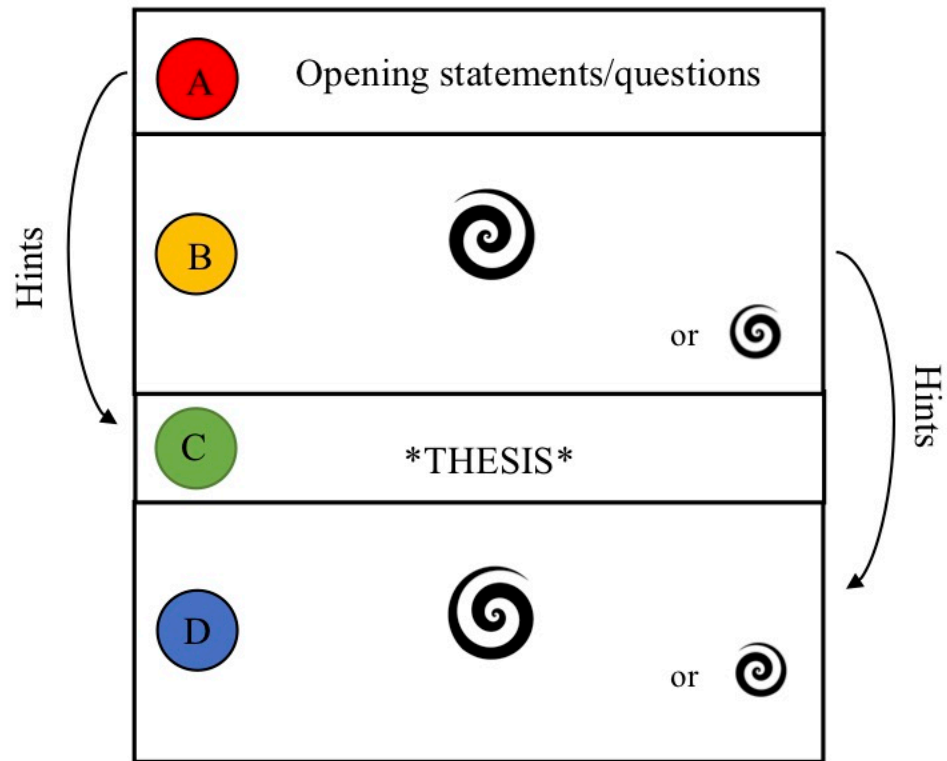
Turn off the impulse to control or own the material. Listen and see what already exists, instead of trying to manipulate a material into something that looks like art or theatre...Simply be there in it, be aware, be curious...a sense of freedom and connectedness based on simple existence with what surrounds us. (p. 3)

As a research-based playwright, I have felt a sense of service to these participant-characters rather than a creative authority. The words were “not an end in themselves” but rather “a means to evoking the character of the person who spoke them” because it had become my responsibility to highlight their presence and humanity rather than to simply present information they gave (Smith, 1994, p. xxiv). Two planning tools helped me to negotiate this process.

Planning Tools

First, I found inspiration for the larger picture with Stong’s (2020) Monologue Structure heuristic (See Figure 7). Strong thinks of monologues in four sections: A opening framed by attention comments or questions, a section of action, the thesis statement for the monologue, and a concluding section of action. These action sections have movement in one of two directions: a “pulling/processing” (during which the character is internalizing questions and realizing things for himself) and a “pushing/releasing” (during which the character is sharing thoughts and feelings openly and outwardly). These action sections may happen in either order. I did not follow this model faithfully, but it did give me a general template to begin construction.

Secondly, I created a *7-Point Table* (See Table 2) to remind me of the essential detailed elements for each participant during this heightened level of distillation. I discovered thesis lines and related titles for the monologues through *in vivo coding* (Saldaña, 2005). I was surprised how smoothly a thesis line and title seemed to emerge



 = Pull/Processing (internalizing questions and/or realizations)
 = Push/Releasing (sharing thoughts, memories, images, emotions)

Figure 7: Monologue Structure (Strong, 2020)¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Recreated from a description in Stong, J. [Playwrights' Workshop Montréal]. (2020, June 1). *How to write the perfect monologue (part 3): Writer's warm-up 16* [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYUGS7vJ>

Table 2. Participant Monologue 7-Point Table (Portion)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Thesis Line</i>	<i>Shadow</i>	<i>Action Verb</i>	<i>Ordeal</i>	<i>Who I am</i>	<i>Intended Audience</i>
Angel	<i>Not-Knowing</i>	I'm approaching it with fear, but good fear. To know I can do it. You might mess up. We might not end up with the answer today. But we'll find it.	Being in the forefront and being a leader makes her an outsider	To know	The Praise Team reacting to her new vocal skills and knowledge.	She tried, she conquered some, she lost some. She's still going, growing. She didn't give up even when she gave up.	Anybody feeling numb at the idea of growth and change. Those that need to be encouraged
Jeriel	<i>Beyond the Clap</i>	I don't do music to impress [or to get] applause. When I go in with an intention not to receive a clap, but to change the atmosphere, then my gift becomes a tool.	The feeling of not truly belonging in the conversation	To change	Prepping for senior recital and being called on for "faking the funk"	A never-quitting spirit, a determination from within. I hope my story can show a humility, endurance, and evolution.	All ages and all races—you can always change, become greater, and learn how to learn.

from each of the narrative accounts in relation to the relationship between Calling and Shadow. Next, I found words for the Shadow and the Ordeal themselves. Between these, I also realized that in crafting *narrative monologues*, I would need to ensure an action energy rang throughout.

Miyamoto (2018) clarifies that generally there are two types of monologues:

- An *active* monologue where the character uses words “as a way to take action or achieve a goal — whether it’s to change someone’s mind, convince them of something, or to communicate a specific point of view that the character has;” or
- A *narrative* monologue where a character tells a story from the past—whether to “use such a story as an analogy to the actual conflict and situation...or as a way to explain how [they] came to be the way they are or will be” (para. 8).

Narrative monologues can be tricky because as described in Chapter Five, the creation of drama is grounded in forward action, not backward reflection.¹⁶¹ Having a particular action verb in mind for the monologue as I crafted it, I found it easier to build in as much action-feel as possible. The nine verbs were all reflective of the relationship between the *Calling*, *Shadow*, *Ordeal*, and/or thesis line: to know, to unlock, to change, to prove, to hone, to work through, to be, to understand, and to realize.¹⁶² I also used the verb *collision* as the overarching (resonant) action energy across the collection.

Finally, I made note of two key questions from the follow-up interview: How the participant wished to present themselves to the audience, and whom the audience is.

¹⁶¹ I believe this is why ethnodramas can sometimes come off as a bit strange as theatre. They are built from a collection of narrative monologues which struggle to contribute to a larger forward-moving action.

¹⁶² I also established very clear definitions for these verbs.

Bringing It All Together

I listen to the original recordings again.

*These narratives of whom these amazing, complex people story themselves to be.
Powerful, meaningful, clever, funny, inspiring, heartbreaking.*

It feels disrespectful to touch them with my grimy fingers.

To weigh depth and breadth of their stories shared.

To value some portions of life-lived over others.

To move things about in search of a clear dramatic through-line

To determine what and how an audience will hear.

But I cannot have a 9-hour ethnodrama.

And we don't naturally speak in monologues.

10,000 words reduced to 550.

How was I going to do this?¹⁶³

*I work hard not to "fix it" to make it sound right to me,
while also making sure the intent is clear to the audience,
while also keeping to what participants shared in the moment,
even when they stumbled for words speaking a feeling aloud for the first time.*

It's so much to consider and honor.

Grappling with my inner voices of artist

*("I CANNOT craft these monologues without adapting the text. I will be as
gentle and respectful as I can, but it must change.")*

and researcher

*("THIS is unethical. You are messing with not only their voice, but how they
storied their selfhood. This is power and privilege right here. No.")*

It's a horribly stressful process, this.

I listen to the original recordings again.

*I try very hard to reduce the verbatim text while preserving the flow of utterances
that emerge organically from prior statements.*

*Sometimes needing to connect sections with [and], [but], [so], or [that],
or to insert reference words specifying [it], [that], or [she/they/he],
or to use words from my interview questions to flesh out a response.¹⁶⁴*

¹⁶³ The average number of words in the verbatim rhythmic transcriptions was 10,000 (an hour of speaking). I had resolved that each monologue should be 550 words (which put them at 3.5 to 4 minutes long apiece).

¹⁶⁴ e.g., "Then finally I did it..." becoming "Then finally I sang in front of other people."

I listen to the original recordings again.

The monologues are drowning in an onslaught of [like], [so], [I feel], [I think].

I make strategic choices for where to cut these words and where to preserve.

*I aspire not to normalize the Inland Northern American (or Midwestern
Standard) English accent.*

I preserve conversational historical present as much as possible.

I listen to the original recordings again.

Screw it.

*I give in and just do what I want to do. I tear apart the text to create my own
vision of these stupid monologues.*

*Then I return to the verbatim transcript, gain even more appreciation for the
original text, take a deep breath, and undo all of my rampant meddling.*

Lines I had eliminated in the first round become critical.

Lines I had envisioned as foundational crossed out.

I reinsert some of the emotionally-notable false starts, fillers, and stammers.

I listen to the original recordings again.

It amazes me how BIG I have to see, to be able to focus small.

A poetic transcription from
Tara Sievers-Hunt's personal journal entries
October-December 2020

The process of analysis had helped clarify the “what” quite a bit, but it had not helped me figure out how to transform a chronological timeline and intricate life details into dramatic moments. At some point, I had to stop “looking and thinking” and start “feeling and intuiting” because seeking a logical course in creating art will not work. At some point, I had to begin thinking in dramatic moments in conjunction with the inquiry process. Saldaña (2005) observes that:

A playwright of ethnodrama is not just a storyteller; she's a story-reteller. You don't compose what your participants tell you in interviews, but you can creatively and strategically edit transcripts, assuming you wish to maintain rather than “restory” their narratives. (p. 20)

I have come to embrace a responsibility to treat participants' words with great care, but to also acknowledge that this process is a creative one. The participants become participant-characters, whose individual narratives come together into a collective storying to highlight resonant threads between narratives. In an ethnodramatic methodology, sharing a collection of stories effectively to audience, so they are moved by the overall intent and power of a participant-character and her story, is more important than simply preserving an artifact. As an a/r/tographer, I have adapted the results of an interview into a theatrical context; I have fashioned a new conversation from multiple conversations; I am re-telling the narrative and not re-storying the narrative.

Constructing the A/r/tographer Monologue

For this digital ethnodrama, I decided to include myself among the participant-characters onstage. This decision was not made lightly or easily as it is fraught with issues of power and privilege if done without care or purpose. In the next sections, I share the different considerations made and steps taken toward constructing and including an A/r/tographer's monologue.

Positioned in a World of Meaning

Riessman (2008) speaks of participants "positioning" her "in a common world of meaning" by connecting her to their life worlds during the interview process (p. 112). My participants positioned me as well, in several ways often within the same interview. As I noted in Chapter Four, upon becoming a professor at Marygrove ten years ago, the students assigned me a dual-identity of *Professor [Tara] Sievers-Hunt* (when they needed to speak to me in my professional capacity) and *Tara* (when they wanted to have a

heartfelt conversation, connect to me as a fellow artist, or lay out some tough truth).¹⁶⁵

Through the interviews for this study, I added a third functioning identity: *Unknown researcher*. Therefore, in the transcripts I found myself positioned as their former professor with a role in several of their stories, a researcher with no prior knowledge of these stories, and as a witness who had lived/experienced these stories alongside them.

In these first two examples, Melody and Ti speak to me (Unfamiliar Researcher) about myself (Tara) using my first name because they are sharing some truth and are engaging a more familiar relationship. Melody also used “you” in three different ways: unfamiliar researcher listener, familiar witness, and a “generalized you.”

MELODY

This is as if I don't know you right?
One thing about when I worked with Tara.
She was always so sweet and supportive and nice.
But I needed that kick.
[My other teacher] just kinda
gave it straight with no chaser.
Because if you're tough on me...
for some reason,
people get a better reaction out of me.

TI

We sang a song...
It was a Negro spiritual song.
And I had the time of my life with Tara
because I felt like...
As she was teachin' it to us,
it was on a musical level,
but culturally...
I felt like she shouldn't be teaching this to us because she don't know the roots
of where we stand with this song cause it's a Negro spiritual.
And we had that, um,
lingo back and forth and what not and...
She kinda let the class

¹⁶⁵ I know the reasoning behind the different names because I once asked four of these participants why this was the case.

teach ourselves that then.
But the thing was that we had to
become emotionally attached to it and not just musically attached to it.

In these next two examples, Jeriel and LaNyck speak to me (Unfamiliar Researcher) about myself (Tara Sievers-Hunt) using my full name because they are referencing my professional capacity. Then midway, Jeriel switches from third person (my voice professor) to second person (“you” as witness).

LANYCK

This needs to change
because not everybody wants to sing classical music.
This is not the only genre that’s in the world.
Like, come on.
So, um...
had a meeting with Tara Sievers-Hunt
and she jotted some things down.
She was actually shocked
to actually have a student actually come and talk to her about it.

JERIEL

When my teacher, Tara Sievers-Hunt
(*laughs*)
challenged me to actually learn and not—
not just coast off of my ability to
perform.
I think you were one of the people who saw that when nobody else saw it.
You picked up on the fact that I could coast through things.
Because I learn fast on a visual and on a kinesthetic level.

This is the origin of my rhizomatic identity as an a/r/tographical bricoleur, which I outlined in Chapter Four. My participants brought this possibility to my attention during our work together at Marygrove and reinforced it during the dissertation research process, which is why I immediately embraced the term a/r/tographer once I learned of it.

A Problematic Choice

Originally, I was not planning to play a role in the ethnodrama as any of these identities. One of the concerns I have seen debated in the literature is that of the researcher playing a character (protagonist) or acting as a narrator in the ethnodrama alongside participants. Saldaña considers this a “problematic choice” and asks: “Whose story is it?” (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 111) and does the researcher have a role to play that is “as essential” as the primary participants? (Saldaña, 2005, p. 18). He warns that if these questions are not answered thoughtfully, then “the researcher’s onstage presence and commentary could detract from rather than add to the principal participants’ stories” (Saldana, 2003, p. 223). As I began this process, I agreed that in most cases the researcher should not be appearing on stage—the focus should not be the researcher. However, I soon realized that the inherent autoethnographical component of this study was going to be unavoidable.

The realization began when, on separate occasions, two of the participants asked about what my monologue would look like in the ethnodrama. It continued when I realized how often the participants referenced me as Mentor, Ally, Threshold Guardian, and/or Witness within their interview narratives. I accepted the depth of my involvement when I casually asked all the participants if they expected me to be on-stage with them in the ethnodrama. All nine participants voiced a belief that I, too, am part of this study and of this cohort, having taken a journey alongside the participants. All nine participants said that my having a monologue within the ethnodrama makes sense in relation to the needs and goals of this project. At my dissertation proposal presentation, when I voiced the question, even committee member Dr. Robert Martin agreed as he reflected: “It’s very

clear that you're in the middle of the story. If you took yourself out, then authenticity would be lost. You are a researcher in action" (personal communication, Aug 5, 2020).

An Unavoidable Autoethnodrama

I came to agree that keeping myself out of the ethnodrama could make the emergent work less authentic. While I did temper my presence in the data—for example, I deidentified any references to Marygrove faculty and staff in the interview texts, including any relating to myself—but an appearance as a stand-alone character-participant feels different. The participants and I have taken this journey together. I am not an outsider who has entered this context nor connected to these participants solely for the purpose of the research study. These are stories of a cohort and I have walked alongside this cohort as a more knowledgeable other, mentor, fellow learner-artist, and friend for many years. I am among.

At the end of the day, I am crafting the participants stories through my lens. Everything is meditated through me, which partially contributes to my sense that this inquiry might be (at least in part) an unavoidable autoethnodrama. As Miller (1998) notes: "The researcher's voice is not necessarily privileged in dramatically scripted research, but because the researcher's process, procedural decisions, and experience are central to the study, the researcher's voice is not ignored" (p. 71). From the interviews, I chose what was prioritized, what was shared, and how. Regardless of how much I tried to involve these participants in the process of crafting their monologues and to solicit their ideas/feedback on the creation of the play, I cannot pretend that these participants had equal influence or power in the creation of the play. However, my approach to autoethnodrama is in service to something beyond self – "a willful embodiment of 'we'"

(Spry, 2016, p. 15)—which is also the heart of the critical lens. Spry (2016) cites Jones’ (2005) *autoethnographic ensemble text* in saying we can be “open to hearing and singing a note made with Others” (p. 31). This ethnodrama is not simply a collection of individuals, but, as I have mentioned often, a cohort of participants. In answering Saldaña’s questions of “Whose story is it?” and “Is my role as essential?”—I respond through this metaphor: As a choir performs, whose music is it? Who determines to whom does this music belong? In this inquiry, I may stand in front as the conductor of the work, but we are all co-composers and co-performers of this music, and as a true constructivist, I have invited all stakeholders to contribute its preparation. Perhaps in many ways, it is a collective determination, a collective ownership, a collective creation after all? My stories could never be completely mine—just as theirs will never be completely theirs. We are all protagonists of our own journeys. Then the stories of these journeys come together to weave something even more meaningful, even more complex. In this way, my presence in the script or onstage does not weaken or steal the conversation—it adds to its complication.

There is precedent in research-informed theatre for the researcher-playwright to play a significant role within their work, for example, Carlos-Manuel’s (2011) *Vaqueeros*, Doug Wright’s (2005) *I Am My Own Wife*, and Alecky Blythe’s (2014) *Come Out Eli*. Blythe (2008) has often included herself as a character in her plays. She finds this sometimes allows the audience “behind the scenes...involving them in a way they weren’t used to” or othertimes gives the narrative “a stronger arc” and sharpens it “in ways that are often impossible otherwise” (p. 89). Blythe’s verbatim theatre colleague

David Hare agrees, but warns: If you plan on putting yourself in a show, then “you have to get yourself right” and “decide who you are” (Hare & Stafford-Clark, 2008, p. 68).

Crafting Flowers in Detroit II

For my participant-character in this ethnodrama, I name myself as these participants, my former students, have named me—a flexible, rhizomatic identity of former teacher/mentor, unknown researcher, and fellow artist/friend. I am the A/r/tographer.¹⁶⁶ As A/r/tographer, I technically have only one monologue in the show—but in truth, it is only one of a pair of monologues with text from two different origins.

The monologue in the digital ethnodrama is titled: *Flowers in Detroit II*, which I will speak of in an upcoming section. *Flowers in Detroit I*, which does not appear in the digital ethnodrama, was crafted during StoryCenter’s “Introduction to Digital Storytelling” workshop in fall 2020. This monologue was crafted from personal reflective journal entries I wrote from 2010-2019. It served as a deep exploration into my research bias, specifically as a White woman who grew up in the northern Metro-Detroit suburbs in the 1980’s-1990’s and learned a very specific narrative about the history and people of Detroit. Although the monologue nor the digital story built from it appear in the ethnodrama itself, the text can be seen in Chapter Four under the subheading “Detroit.”

Flowers in Detroit II was crafted from responses I gave to questions asked by these participants during the fall 2020 follow-up interviews. I realized that if I insist on becoming a part of this ethnodramatic work, then the only way to equalize power and to unify the methodology was to repeat the inquiry process for myself as much as possible.

¹⁶⁶ As described in depth in Chapter Four.

Therefore, I invited each participant to ask me a question that they had about my journey. All nine participants chose to ask me an interview question about my undergraduate experience, my struggle with coming to professional musicianhood, coming to work in Detroit, and/or teaching in the Marygrove Music Department. My responses to their questions have provided the content of *Flowers in Detroit II*. Further, once the follow-up interviews were transcribed, I sent the participants a copy of all my responses and invited them to underline any lines within those responses that stood out to them and that they would like to see appear in the monologue. With the crafting of *Flowers in Detroit II*, I have done my best to honor those indicators.

“Called to the Conversation” opens with the participants entering and claiming the performance space—first with the sound of their voices in a recording from the 2017 focus group gatherings, and second with an asking of the questions they posed to me during the follow-up interviews. This first asking uses modified/reduced questions that appear to be directed to the audience so they might begin considering their own journeys before receiving the stories of others. The second asking returns the questions to their contextualized wording as they are infused within *Flowers in Detroit II* to prompt the A/r/tographer’s responses shared through the monologue.

Resonant Threads as Spoken Word Chorus

The resonant threads identified through the one-on-one interviews and expanded through the question prompts and discussions in the focus group have come together into four main themes: *Calling*, *Conversation*, *Collision*, and *Journey*.

Having dialogue within a play is powerful because it is a playwright’s way of showing interaction, reaction, and interplay between multiple characters (Saldaña, 2005).

However, dialogue in ethnodrama can be a “slippery modality” because the majority of data is often collected through one-on-one interviews or personal journals (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 99). Some ethnodramatists have resolved to create “dialogue” between characters by weaving responses from one-on-one interviews together to make it appear as though these individuals had been in conversation with one another at the time. As someone dedicated to authentic conversation and considering that “conversation” is a primary theme within this inquiry, I was wary of this approach.

As an alternative, and to serve the request by these participants that I demonstrate the close nature of their relationship, I have instead crafted “Spoken Word Choruses” for the ethnodrama. Primarily using the responses from the focus group (with some additional unused material from the one-on-one interviews), I have generated four unique works of group-speak about these key topics so the audience can gain deeper insights on their perspectives. Inspired by the traditions of spoken word poetry, I have worked to place a strong emphasis on rhythm, lyricism, and direct engagement to promote a communal sense of audience.

Further, I realized upon reviewing the completed monologues that each could be sequentially divided into three sections of *Calling* (Called to the Adventure), *Collision* (The Ordeal), and *Conversation* (post-Ordeal realizations and reflections). As the reader will see, this has created an interesting structure for Movement I in the ethnodrama. The final spoken word chorus, *Journey*, provides a closing to the ethnodrama as a final reflection point. Like the monologues, each spoken word chorus is approximately 550 words.

Arriving into Digital Ethnodrama as Hybrid Form

Originally, *Called to the Conversation* was conceived as a different iteration of a live, staged production. The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020 cancelled all on-stage, live-audience artistic presentations for the foreseeable future. At the insistence of study participant Angel, I joined other professional performing arts community members in seeking options in online/digital performance. I discovered and then became enamored with digital storytelling process—and after engaging in digital storytelling workshop through StoryCenter in fall 2021, I reformatted the ethnodrama plan into a cohort-style digital storytelling video. However, with public distribution of the vaccine in winter 2021, I felt called to consider theatre beyond the pandemic. Saldaña (2011a) notes that a live performance event “makes real life things seem more real” and has the power to “heighten the representation and presentation of social life” (p. 15). Therefore, this final concept of *Called to the Conversation* looks to a return to live theatre gatherings, but with an infusion of digital media and a nod to continued attention for social distancing.¹⁶⁷ This hybrid form has inspired what I have termed: *digital ethnodrama*.

While still informed by digital storytelling, digital ethnodrama is more intimately connected to the idea of a *digital performance*. For Dixon and Smith (2007), a digital performance invites technology to play a key role (rather than an ancillary one) in the “content, techniques, aesthetics, or delivery forms” of the theatre work (p. 3). These types of works may include live theater, dance, and performance art that incorporate digitally

¹⁶⁷ Both with the reduced number of players on-stage as well as logistics planning for simultaneous live and virtual audience.

created or digitally-manipulated projections, virtual reality performances, artistic installations, and/or performance activities that appear through a computer screen. While for many performance creatives digital technologies remain “tools of enhancement and experimentation,” Dixon and Smith envision a “radical engagement” that reconfigures artistic and/or social ontologies between virtual and live performance (p. 8). From their definition of digital performance as an “additive process” (i.e., technology is added authentically through extra effects, interactions, bodies, etc.), I view the new iteration of *Called to the Conversation* as a form of digital performance (p. 28). Granted mine is a mild form because I am new to the inclusion of technologies, but my intention for technology to play a foundational rather than secondary role is true.

I wish to coin the term *digital ethnodrama* for my final research form.¹⁶⁸ I envision *digital ethnodrama* as a combination of Saldaña’s ethnodrama, collaborative digital storytelling, and digital performance practices. Whereas digital storytelling is traditionally a short video narrative authored and narrated by one individual, my version of collaborative digital storytelling is the creation of a larger digital story with contributions from several authors working in collaboration: for example, a group of students (Di Blas, 2016, p. 330). Like ethnodrama, my digital ethnodrama has involved a deep research and analysis process involving narrative and performative ethnography approaches. However, the final form will include digital/recorded components on equal footing with live elements.

¹⁶⁸ I did extensive searches for use of the term “digital ethnodrama” and have found none.

Structure of the Work

The final factor of the bricolage within this study is the influence of key structural elements for bringing the monologues and spoken word chorus together into a unified digital ethnodramatic work: the function of What and How questions, the process of currere, and considerations of performability.

What and How Questions

Qualitative research inquiry typically focuses on either “what” questions or “how” questions. The “what” questions, which are descriptive and exploratory, seek to describe social phenomena and their meanings to the participants in the study (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p. 14). On the other hand, the “how” questions are *explanatory questions* and are more interested in how meaning is literally constructed by participants in the study context (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 47). Ethnography most often attends to the “what” questions, and narrative inquiry studies often attend to the “how.” Ethnodrama opens opportunity for the audience to explore both.

In this study, I have actively examined the “what” questions (content of meaning) through the data collection and initial analysis process (performance ethnography). I have also striven to preserve and explore the “how” (how meaningful realities have been composed) through the construction of verbatim pieces such as the monologues and spoken word choruses (narrative inquiry).

A Complicated Conversation: Currere

Currere, the Latin infinitive form of *curriculum*, views curriculum as a living inquiry process focused on the interplay (or *complicated conversation*) between individuals as learners, individuals as more knowledgeable others, content, and context

(Pinar, 2004, 2012, 2019). These elements are viewed as socio-politico-culturally situated and in constant flux. All knowledge and all knowers are constantly “animated by ethics, history, politics, race, gender, and spirituality” which highlights “the immediacy of the historical moment, the particularity of place, and the singularity of one’s own individuality” in any learning moment (Pinar, 2019, p. xii). Currere is a perfect partner to a critical constructivist approach to teaching and learning because it also assumes a pluralistic, relativistic, and holistic transactional subjectivism within the educational experience.

Currere encourages all learners (especially educators) to embark on an autobiographical examination toward self-understanding in relation to learning and knowing. Through this process, “one analyzes one’s experience of the past and fantasies of the future in order to understand more fully, with more complexity and subtlety, one’s submergence in the past” (Pinar, 2004b, p. 4). We become “temporal” by living simultaneously in the past, present, and future. By returning to the past (the “regressive” moment) and imagining the future (the “progressive” moment), we generate an expanded understanding of the present in which we reside (the “analytical” moment) and can better engage in informed and effective action (the “synthetical” moment) (Pinar, 2019, p. 4). Pinar believes that the process of currere, informed by academic study, has the potential power to “enable us to find our way out of a foreclosed present” (p. 4).

While I was constructing the monologues, I began to make connections between their self-reflective process and the autobiographical process of currere. Within the conversations we had had and through the steps of analysis, I saw the participants story their past (regressive), voice aspirations and intent for the future (progressive), use these

perceptions to reflect upon the present moment (analytical), and begin to make plans according to these new understandings.

In the ethnodrama, I have decided to enhance the process of *currere* that I saw happening gently and naturally among these participants. The three sections, or “movements” of the digital ethnodrama correspond with the steps of *currere*. Movement III continues the “analytic” and moves on to the “synthetic” as the character-participants come together during a Talk-Back Session to converse about the “now” and new perspectives of past and future as a result of the play performance itself. Further, I see the autobiographical process of *currere* creating an informative intersection with elements of the hero’s journey story arc (both the Known World and the general retelling of the overall journey as regressive, *Calling* as progressive, the storied nature of the personal myth as analytic, and any conversations or actions resulting from the telling as synthetic.

Regressive: Monologues and Spoken Word Choruses

Through the lens of *currere*, Movement I focuses upon the “regressive” step through the sharing of monologues crafted from past life episodes relating to development of professional musicianhood and framed by the thematic spoken word choruses of *calling*, *conversation*, and *collision*.

Progressive/Analytical: Life Curriculum Trajectory Mapping

Movement II attends to a blend of the “progressive” and “analytic” steps as the participants outline their life trajectories from current moment to an imagined future, then lay the groundwork for a plan connecting these two points with strategic personal/professional moves. Viewing this study as a form of living inquiry, I felt it was important to acknowledge the ongoing lived experiences of these participants. The 2017

interviews were used to craft monologues in 2020, but what have these participants been doing and thinking since then—and where might they go next?

I have centered Movement II around an activity that I call: *Life Curriculum Trajectory Mapping*. This idea comes from an in-class exercise that I would use with freshmen in my Professional Musicianship I course at Marygrove. On one side of a worksheet, students would create list all the skills/knowledge/personal attributes/resources they currently held related to pursuing a career in professional musicking (Point A). On the other side of the worksheet, they would describe their ideal professional life 10 years in the future (Point B). Then we would discuss what actions would need to be taken, resources gained, or checkpoints accomplished (trajectory) for them to be able to travel from Point A to Point B. Finally, we would walk through their course schedules to see what first steps could be gained in their first semester. I have translated this activity for the stage within Movement II of the ethnodrama.

A note about my use of the phrase *life curriculum*: I use this concept slightly differently than Aoki's *curriculum-as-lived* (2000/2005) or Clandinin's *curriculum of lives* (Huber & Clandinin, 2005; Clandinin et al., 2006). Both Aoki and Clandinin are still attending primarily to praxis within the classroom setting. My use of *life curriculum* does not create a boundary between informal, nonformal, or formal education. Our life curricula encompass all forms of learning, learning settings, content, and assessment/evaluation without privileging institutional curriculum and instruction. As discussed in Chapter Three, formal music instruction can be extremely valuable, but prior knowledge and experience for professional musicking can happen anywhere, everywhere, and always.

Analytical/Synthesis: Talkback Session

A *talkback* is a type of community conversation that happens between those involved in the execution of a performance (e.g., actors/musicians/dancers, directors, composers/playwrights, choreographers, design team, crew/staff) and the audience (Ellis, 2000). Miller (1998) views this type of “action step” in the performance process as giving opportunity to discuss audience reactions, to explore creation/research behind the work, and to “pursue further understanding of the area under investigation” (p. 72). Brooks (2005) says after-play events that invite audience members into a structured dialogue add “ownership and transformative power to the theatre experience” (p. 60). The level of structure and formality for these talkbacks is flexible and depends upon the desired goals for and engagement style of the session. Storytelling performances which end with opportunities for observers to engage with artists are “purposefully challenging the passivity of audiences” (Ellis, 2000, p. 92). For theatre producer Tim Sanford, talkbacks can spark conversations that dig more deeply into the themes presented so that “the afterlife of the play” might exit the theatre with each audience member (Reid, 2018, para. 12). These performances not only share an artistic work, but also become a catalyst for involving audiences in dialogue precipitated by the performance itself. Building from Boal (1979/2008), Miller (1998) notes that post-performance discussions can examine the stories received, highlight important issues, emphasize key points, elicit audience reflection, build reflexivity and recursively into the creation/research process, and affect future performances of the work (p. 73). Further, the concept of performative *space* is activated through these types of multivocal engagements. Talkbacks can push the

boundaries of “space in time” for a performative moment by extending the physical and imaginary space of the theatre experience for all involved (Miller, 1998, p. 90).

Ellis advocates for talkbacks that go beyond a simple praise or an observation of storied/theatrical elements into an invitation for personal contextualization connected to the audience’s frames of reference. Toward this, she recommends the following:

1. The talkback occurs within the performance space immediately following the performance. This helps reinforce the intimate relationship between art and audience, and makes the talkback part of a single event instead of separate happenings.
2. All audience members who witnessed the performance are welcome to participate. There is no special knowledge or prior experience required.
3. No one (whether on-stage or in the audience) appears as an expert. Every participant in the dialogue enters on equal footing “with no waving of credentials or establishment of expertise” which “invites a full and personal response” (p. 93).
4. Within the dialogue, artists may participate less than audience members, and audience members might be encouraged to also speak directly to each other.

For *Called to the Conversation*, I took #1 a step further to place the talkback session within the formalized three-movement structure of work. I also embraced the ideas of #2 and #3, but instead of asserting that no one is an expert, I would say that everyone appears as an expert when it comes to their own experiences, philosophy, and perspectives. For this work, I did not follow #4 because my goal is to continue giving the participant-characters-performers center stage. This talkback is more of a question-and-

answer-session, which is not only about the performance of an artistic work, but concerns a performance ethnography of stories lived and shared by these individuals. It is their time to speak—both to reflect on the experience of performative storytelling (regressive) and to voice their continued journeys (progressive) in relation to their current process. However, the audience is invited to make connections to their own stories and experiences and to continue conversations beyond the performance space.

Brooks (2005) describes a talkback model which is also part staged event and part improvisation—where the actors stay in character and respond as such. She compares this to a dance performance, because of the elements of improvisation that encourage “an exploration of ideas, values and ethics” while still being “tightly structured to provide a safety net for audience and performers” (p. 59). Importantly, the talkback is never “lesson-driven” nor leads to a “predictable outcome” because it must allow each audience member to reach their own conclusion (p. 59). This is not dissimilar to *Called to the Conversation* simply because the performers have the unique experience of playing their 2017 selves in Movement I and engaging in a demonstrative discussion of the future as their current selves in Movement II. Movement III (as talkback session with audience) provides the opportunity for the audience not only to ask questions inspired by their observation of the work, but also to help the participant-character-performers make connections between these two performative experiences. For this reason, the talkback will be framed in such a way as for participant-character-performers to receive questions and comments from the audience related to the stories shared, the performative experience itself, and the four main themes of calling, collision, conversation, and journey.

Finally, it is important to note that the A/r/tographer (myself) will plan to act as the *facilitator* of this talkback session. Facilitation of talkbacks is a “complex balancing act between asserting a structure for dialogue and simply acknowledging, affirming, listening” as well as adapting to the performance context. They “utilize different forms of communication in order to break up habitual scripts, to level power dynamics, and to encourage deep dialogue” despite any “counterproductive audience resistance” (Armstrong, 2013, p. 122; also Boal, 1979/2008). Across my years as a performer, music director, outreach coordinator, and audience member, I have had a fair amount of experience with talkbacks in youth, amateur, theatre education, and professional productions. However, it is not my intent to maintain absolute power as the sole threshold guardian between audience and participant-character-performers. I would hold conversations with the participants prior to performances to gain their insights on what types of questions they would be interested in answering. Additionally, if performances of this work continued past the initial few, I would be very happy to share the responsibility of this facilitation with these participants, either in part or completely.

Finally, I have decided to incorporate Mosio as a (secondary) digital means to gather questions and comments from the audience to share with the participant-character-performers.¹⁶⁹ First, this technology will enable our virtual audience members to also engage in the talkback by submitting their questions and comments electronically. Secondly, I have seen many introverted or sensitive audience members shy away from (and later regret not) asking questions or making comments out loud. Having the option

¹⁶⁹ Mosio is a text messaging software, especially popular for clinical research.

to submit questions and comments through Mosio might encourage more individuals in our live audience to share and participate. Further details of how Mosio will be utilized in the production may be found in Chapter Seven.

Performability

Performability has been a key element of consideration since the beginning because of my experiences creating and producing *Cinderella Through the Kaleidoscope* (Sievers-Hunt, 2015) for the Marygrove College Visual and Performing Arts Division.¹⁷⁰ *Cinderella* needed to be built in such a way as to accommodate the busy schedules, heavy life responsibilities, and/or transport limitations of our student population. Creative casting, strategic scene planning, and constant communication allowed each department to prepare their pieces of the performance puzzle on their own schedule over several months. We then required only one week of evening rehearsals with the full cast to bring the show together before opening night.

Initially conceptualizing the dissertation ethnodrama, I recognized that scheduling nine individuals to not only rehearse a non-paid stage production together, but to also give a series of performances would be extremely difficult. Having fewer characters in the ethnodrama would be much easier, however:

1. Cutting participants as characters is not an option because each participant wishes to participate, and I cannot prioritize one set of stories over another.

¹⁷⁰ Four of the nine participants were a part of this production (both its creation and performance).

2. Combining participants into composite characters (Saldaña, 2011) goes against critical methodologies of celebrating people of color as individuals first.

I wondered how I might utilize a construction strategy similar to that of *Cinderella* with this dissertation ethnodrama.

My first thought concerned the number of performers onstage. I felt that we would be able schedule four performers (of nine) for each performance. Therefore, I began to craft a theatrical work that could be performed by any combination of four performers, plus myself (researcher). Making connections to *living inquiry* (Irwin & Springgay, 2008), the idea of a show which changed with every performance as different small groups of participant-character-performers shared their stories intrigued me. It drew me to make connections to and take additional inspiration from aleatory music practices.

In *aleatory music*, elements of composition, production and/or performance is left undetermined by the composer in some way (Griffiths, 2001). The term became popular after Pierre Boulez titled his 1957 *Nouvelle revue française* article, “Alea,” which means *dice* in Latin. It indicates “an element of freedom of choice for interpreters of compositional texts” and could include varying the order of precisely structured events or determining the contents of events themselves (Whittall, 2011, para. 1). Griffiths (2001) noted the ways in which the composer could make “a deliberate withdrawal of control” (para. 2) are:

- using random procedures in creating fixed compositions;
- allowing performers to choose among options during the performance; and/or
- using notation that leaves exact sounds open to performer choice or chance.

After exploring a number of possibilities, I settled on four major features to underscore this approach to *aleatory theatre*:

1. Each performance will use varying combinations of live performers on-stage.
2. The flexibility of this casting ensures ongoing flexibility in the selection of monologues/incidental lines and the order in which they are presented.
3. There is a large improvisational element in Movement 2
4. There is a semi-structured talkback session in Movement 4.

Participant-Character-Performers

Nine participants took part in this study and agreed to have an ethnodrama crafted from their interviews. At this point, the participants became participant-characters—representations of their 2017 selves in theatrical form. Because these participants are all performers and/or professional orators themselves (e.g., singers, actors, dancers, ministers, teachers), it made sense for the participants to play themselves in a performance of the ethnodrama. As study participant Ti stated: “Who else would be a better me than me?” In this way, the participant-characters would become participant-character-performers.

Considerations of Interest and Availability

Even though all participants originally indicated a verbal interest in performing the ethnodrama, I do recognize that interest and availability can change over time. Therefore, I have crafted an ethnodrama that will allow each individual to decide how they wish to participate in any future staged productions of this work. For example: a participant may only choose to appear in the recorded sections of the script (i.e., the opening video, “Flowers in Detroit II,” and the four spoken word choruses) or to also

prepare a live performance of their monologue and engage in the life-curriculum trajectory mapping and talk-back sessions.

If a participant wishes for only their voice to be heard in the video portions and not their face to be seen, we could work to design costume and/or setting which helps obscure their identity.

If a participant does not wish to appear in the videos of the stage production in any way, I am able to edit “Flowers in Detroit II” and the spoken word choruses so as to remove the contributions of that participant-character and not diminish the artistic and academic quality.

If a participant does not wish to perform/appear in the staged production but still wants their monologue to be shared, there is also the option of providing a written copy of the monologues to the audience following the performance.

Describing Participant-Characters

Often in dramatic scripts, audience-readers are provided with a basic description of each character. These character descriptions contain information the author wants the audience to know about the characters before the show begins. Rather than describing the participant-characters myself, I asked each participant: “What would you like the reader-audience to know about you before they hear what you have to say?”

The participants then chose which descriptors would be used to identify their characters in the script (e.g., personality, age, occupation, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, personal history, interests/goals). I also did the same for myself as “A/r/tographer.”

Movement I costumes are also outlined for each participant-character. They are based on outfits worn in a group photograph taken during the July 2017 Focus Group.¹⁷¹

Elements of Artistic Analysis

In the next section, I describe various elements of artistic analysis which will transform the research texts into a theatrical work.

Influence of Digital Storytelling

Similar to Dana Atchley's (1991) original digital storytelling piece, *Next Exit*, all participant-character monologues in *Called to the Conversation* will feature a live speaker performing against a backdrop of meaningful projected visuals and recorded sounds. Each monologue will have its own *companion video*, which will be crafted from photographs, short video clips, sound effects, and incidental music inspired by the words of the monologue and selected by the participants themselves. For example, a companion video might include personal photographs from the life episode described (e.g., the participant singing in church at 4 years old), stock photographs of places or objects (e.g., a barbershop he visited, a keyboard she learned to play on), sound effects (e.g., sounds of the city, applause), clips of songs referenced in the one-in-one interviews, or recordings of the participant her/them/him-self performing back in the day. As it will be described in an upcoming section, this video will be carefully crafted from these materials that it aligns with the timing and inflection of the participant-character's delivery.

When I first had the idea of shifting the final research project into a digital story, I planned to have the participants select and share these visual and aural elements during

¹⁷¹ Melody was not in attendance at the focus group due to professional obligations, but we selected an outfit she may have worn to the gathering from a 2017 personal photograph.

the inquiry process. However, with the transition into a digital ethnodrama format, I decided to focus predominantly on the overall structure of the theatrical work and its interview-centered components (e.g., monologues, spoken word choruses, Musical River 313 Mixtape). These components will remain more fixed within the production because the words and songs themselves will not change across time. On the other hand, the theatrical interpretation or *moments* (as described below) will remain flexible as a part of the living inquiry. Once the initial audio/visual template is set for the monologue companion video, the participants may request that images, sound effects, and music be swapped out across the performances as insights and perspectives on their 2017 words shift. NOTE: All audio/visual elements used in the companion video must be copyright free or fall under the Fair Use guidelines. Photographs (and other visuals) and sound effects may come from any such source. However, any incidental music selected for use must be associated with the participant's own one-on-one interview, either:

- a musical work or song they referenced within the interview; or
- a personal recording of their own performance from an episode shared.

Scenography

When describing the ethnodramatic process, Saldaña (2005) references *sceneography*, which he defines as “the total visual and aural conception for theatrical productions” (p. 27). Naturally *sceneography* could include scenery, set, props, costume, makeup, sound, lighting, and other technological means to establish time and place of a play, evoke a particular mood, and serve the actions of the characters onstage. My direct experiences with sceneography in theatre have most often equated to consulting on lighting for an actor to be seen, placing a functional prop in her hand, a costume

appropriate to time and place upon their body, and providing underscoring music to enhance the physical or emotional moment. But there is a significant difference between utilizing sceneography as a responsive means of supplying the needs of the drama and crafting sceneographic ingredients to articulate thematic meanings found in inquiry. What does it take for narrative data to transcend the spoken word and to become truly theatrical? Where does one begin?

Reading through a variety of theatrical and playwriting literature, I discovered Kaufman and McAdams' (2018) *Moment Work*. Through their work with the Tectonic Theater Project and inspired by their former professor, Mary Overlie (NYU), they have experimented with the idea of viewing theatrical elements and elements of the stage (e.g., set pieces, costumes, props, lighting, non-vocal sound, smell, space, movement, technology, casting, spectacle, audience involvement) as having the same discursive potential as text/spoken word.¹⁷² The monologues and dialogues (in conjunction with referential, coordinated staged movements) form the dramatic narrative, which includes elements such as conflict, character development, plot, and dramatic tension. However, there is also a theatrical narrative to consider (e.g., scenic design, costumes, lighting, sound, props) which, if employed purposefully and skillfully, can have equally “evocative, poetic, and aesthetic impact” (p. 12). Examining content and form as equals enables Kaufman, McAdams, and their colleagues to engage in *theatrical conversations* about the subject matter they tackle (p. 22). They ask not only: “What’s at the heart of the story”—but also: “How do we tell this story onstage?” In suggesting that theatrical

¹⁷² The Tectonic Theater Project is best known for *The Laramie Project* (2001), a play about the people of Laramie, WY reflecting on the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard.

narratives (moments) may be created through a wealth of expressive devices beyond the spoken word, Kaufman and McAdams' challenge playwrights to consider the possibilities of "writing performance" rather than "writing text" (p. 29).

Unfortunately, even standard theatre equipment (e.g., dedicated lighting and sound design) and architecture (e.g., wings, curtains) will most likely not be available for most performances of this dissertation ethnodrama. Fortunately, the Tectonic Theater Project bases its approach to "making moments" through *moment work* techniques using simple, everyday objects. For example, demonstrating how the simplicity of a suitcase, a string of Christmas lights, or the sound of footsteps in the darkness can be just as powerful theatrically as the most sophisticated theatre technology. Reading examples of their moment work, I was inspired by their creativity and innovation. I returned to the participant interviews to see what types of theatrical opportunities I may have missed during my initial narrative transcription.

I discovered, for example, the significance of place referenced in the stories had much more potential beyond the naming of location. In his one-on-one interview, for example, Jeriel referenced his barbershop several times as playing a significant role, both literally and figuratively, in his desire to attend college and to enhance his ability to not only enter conversations, but to lead them. I began to wonder how the setting of this barbershop might be represented through a simple yet clever shift in the set design, props, and movements.

I noted gestures and actions related to identity that were buried in the words and in my knowledge of these participants. All of the characters could stand and deliver a monologue, but what would it bring to the moment to have Ti sit at the piano and quietly

play or improvise as she shares her insecurities of entering her freshman classroom at Detroit School of the Arts; or to see Angel take the podium as she does every Sunday while preaching at her father's church? What storied aspects could speak through these meaningful actions in conjunction with the text?

Most importantly, prior to any live performances, each monologue will be built into a *moment* in a collaboration between participant-character-performer, a/r/tographer, and other production team members (e.g., director, technical designer). This would include both live acting and audio/video performances. To reflect this intent and because *Called to the Conversation* is a form of living inquiry, most of the stage direction and additional underscoring music is not specifically written into the script. The dissertation process required me to demonstrate my research process, but moving forward into a production, I wish for these elements to be done in collaboration with the participant-character-performers. I have provided as much detail in the script as possible, but some details cannot be worked out until the company comes together with a dedicated plan toward performance.

In addition, the theatrical elements of both companion videos (described in previous section) and live acting (staged monologue with costume, prop, and set) developed in collaboration with the production team, including the a/r/tographer. All companion videos that accompany live performances would be crafted in such a way that the live performance would time against it (like a song against a pre-recorded accompaniment created specifically for that performer's needs and preferences of timing). However, if performances continued and the performer wished, edits could be made to reflect continued growth in performance.

Sets

To help make the clear connection between the participants and a higher music education setting, I set the stage production in a typical college music lecture hall.¹⁷³ This type of space will provide an open area at the front, seating for an audience, and easy access to basic technology (e.g., projection of video or slides, speakers for sound, WiFi for livestreaming). The set pieces would be items commonly found within a music department lecture hall (i.e., classroom chairs, table, a piano, a whiteboard, a projection screen with projector).

Predominately, the videos used as a performance element within the stage production will feature a Zoom-type format.¹⁷⁴ The Zoom Gallery layout seemed especially apt as it has become a symbolic element that epitomizes part of the American experience of the 2020/2021 COVID-19 pandemic. For these videos, each of the participants will be asked to choose and/or create an indoor setting that represents themselves as this character and to record their spoken portions in this setting (e.g., sitting at a keyboard in their home music-making space, sitting in a pew at their church, sitting at their desk at work). Each of these Zoom background settings will be unique to the participant-character-performer and may help provide even more insight into their stories and words shared.

¹⁷³ A lecture hall has been specifically chosen for this ethnodrama despite concert halls, recital halls, and theatres potentially being available. Institutions have become quite comfortable allowing Others to present types of music and stories on a stage that they would be hesitant to allow in other curricular learning spaces. To help disrupt grand narratives in music departments, these stories need to be shared directly into the curricular spaces where these narratives are perpetuated; into classrooms where stories of musicians like these may not often be heard (if ever).

¹⁷⁴ Zoom is a cloud-based communication platform provided Zoom Video Communications, an American technology company. It became an essential tool during the COVID-19 pandemic for companies, educational institutions, health and social services, and families/friends.

Lighting, Sound, Technology Components

Because the performance will take place in a standard music lecture hall, lighting design will most likely not play a factor in this production (house and stage lighting being provided by standard classroom lighting fixtures for the purpose of visibility). However, participants may choose to incorporate strategic lighting choices in their Zoom setting.

The performance space will need to have adequate speakers for the audio/video components of the production. Microphones for the performers will most likely not be necessary due to the size and acoustics of a standard lecture hall.

A standard lecture hall will provide the production with the necessary technology (i.e., connecting our laptop containing the file library to the projection and sound equipment). Naturally, someone familiar with the ethnodrama will need to be on-hand and on the prompt book to cue up the various slides, music recordings, and video recordings at the correct times.

For the third movement, we will use Mosio, a text-messaging software that will allow audience members to contribute to the Talk-Back Session.¹⁷⁵ A slide with the Mosio number and special keyword will be projected. Both live and virtual audience members may text this number for access to submit questions to the cast. These questions will come directly to A/r/tographer's cell phone (as prop) and allow her to relay them to the participant-character-performers.

¹⁷⁵ Or a similar text messaging software.

Costumes, Props, and Staging

As stated above, the costumes for each character in Movement I are based on a group photograph taken after the July 2017 Focus Group. Participants would then be asked to select one item to remove (e.g., baseball hat), change (e.g., a blazer replacing a casual sweater), or add (e.g., a wedding ring) which would best reflect their 2021 selves for Movements II and III. Participants will be advised that any change to costume will be done quickly in full view of the audience. NOTE: For any future staged productions of the work, the participant-character-performers will be able to base their Movement I costume on a different 2017 personal photograph if they wish.

There will not be any props mentioned for any of the participant-character-performers in this version of the script. NOTE: For any future staged productions, the participants will have the option to select and utilize one prop that helps tell their monologue story if they wish.

Stage action will not be outlined in the script for the participant-character-performer monologues. NOTE: For any future staged productions, each participant-character-performer will work with a director to devise staging specific to their monologue and in relation to the basic set pieces and performance space. The transition from monologue to another will need to be examined strategically before each performance to make sure the different stagings of its collection of participant-characters make sense.

Musical River 313 Mixtape

One of the most common questions from friends and colleagues interested in my dissertation work had been: “But how will you incorporate the music?” When I would tell

them that I was planning a straight play with no music, the response was usually some version of: “But it’s a dissertation about musicians learning to be musicians... How can it not have music?!” I pondered what music could be had. I am not a composer by any means, and I was never looking to invite these participants to compose music upon or in response to their narratives. Looking through the lens of *moment work*, however, I suddenly saw my answer and an amazing opportunity I had nearly missed.

During our doctoral course on Musical Identity and Music Education, Professor Sharon Davis engaged us in a creative self-reflective project called, *The Musical River*. The origins of the project stemmed from Davis’ own work as well as a study conducted by Pam Burnard (2000) examining how children ascribe meaning to their compositions and improvisations. Davis’ (2018) project had a similar premise as she asked us to examine the music that had flowed in and through our lives to tell our unique musical story. Her aim was help us think and reflect upon the role that music has played in our lives and to broaden our awareness of music related to self-hood. It had been a meaningful project for us all and the experience had now led to a very different inspiration than perhaps Dr. Davis had envisioned.

The heart and soul of this ethnodrama are the narrative monologues shared by the participants. As I read back through the transcripts of this study, I noticed how much music it actually contained. Nearly every episodic narrative shared by the participants contained references to a musical work, composer/songwriter, or music performer that held significance within that story. For example:

Ten-year-old Jeriel singing and dancing along to R&B and new jack swing in the backseat of his father’s car with his siblings.

Baby Angel crawling at her mother's feet in the choir stall of her father's church as the gospel singing resounded around her.

16-year-old LaNyck counting the rising number of YouTube views after her high school ensemble posted a pop tune they had arranged and recorded together.

Angela speaking with reverence of the influence of fellow Mississippi native, Leontyne Price singing operatic arias as a strong and proud Black woman.

Ti expressing how meaningful it was to close her senior recital with a song she had composed in high school before knowing she would attend college for music.

There are 75 musical compositions, composers/songwriters, and performers that were noted by the participants as influential to their prior experience and musicianhood in their one-on-one interviews and in the focus group. The list (which may be found in Appendix F) includes artists and sources such as: The Clark Sisters, Britney Spears, Leontyne Price, Disney's *High School Musical*, Tye Tribbett, Celine Dion, DMX, Imogen Heap, Bell Biv DeVoe, Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and Alicia Keys.

The theatricality of ethnodrama and the multimedia components of digital ethnodrama opens the door for the use of additional media elements to supplement these narrative monologues. From these 75 musical references noted by the participants, we will craft a *Musical River 313 Mixtape* for the ethnodrama.¹⁷⁶ This Mixtape will be utilized as an Interlude between Movements I and II. In this way, the concept of the *musical river* will not only represent the musical references made within the life storying of the participants' journeys to professional musicianhood, but also the final product of the *Musical River 313 Mixtape*.

¹⁷⁶ 313 is the area code that serves Detroit. It has inspired the construction parameters for the Mixtape.

While I could happily create a definitive Mixtape, I would prefer to invite the participants to craft their own versions, if they desired. Having several versions of the Mixtape could add another ever-shifting element of living inquiry to the ethnodrama since each performance could utilize one of the collection. However, anyone creating a Musical River 313 Mixtape would need to follow these specific guidelines:

1. The final mixtape must be exactly 3 minutes and 13 seconds in length.
2. You will choose 20 pieces of music from the collection of 75 musical references made by the participants (See Appendix F). These selections should be a good representation of the diversity of the overall list (e.g., genre, style, mood, tempo, instrumentation).
3. From each of these 20 pieces, select a brief audio clip that is no shorter than 3 secs and no longer than 13 seconds. When possible, use a familiar portion of each piece to give the audience the best chance for recognition.
4. Trim and weave these clips together into a musical river (3:13 in length) and submit it in a single digital file.

I am thrilled to be able to find an authentic, meaningful way to include the participants' musical influences in this final research form.

Sample Programs

Putting all of these pieces together, *Called to the Conversation: A Digital Ethnodrama* is comprised of three movements, plus a prelude and an interlude. The different performance elements of these sections include different combinations of live and digital components as seen below in Table 3:

Table 3. Called to the Conversation—Live and Digital Components

SECTION	PERFORMANCE ELEMENT	DIGITAL OR LIVE
Prelude	A Gathering	digital
	An Acknowledgement	live with digital elements
	An Inquiry	digital
Movement I	Four participant-character monologues (TBD)	live with digital elements
	Three spoken word choruses (Calling, Collision, Conversation)	digital
Interlude	Musical River 313 Mixtape	digital
Movement II	Life Curriculum Trajectory Mapping	live
	Flowers in Detroit II	live with digital elements
Movement III	Talk-Back Session	live with digital elements
	One spoken word chorus (Journey)	digital

Figure 7 will show how these elements come together into the basic program format of the digital ethnodrama. The participant-characters' names have not been specifically identified because they would change for each performance. The different combinations of participant-character-performers alongside the real-time trajectory mapping and talk-back session means that every performance is a unique work of living inquiry. An example of a program with four randomly selected participants appears in Figure 8.

The *Prelude* brings the audience into the research-based theatrical context with a digital gathering of the Cohort, a contextually situated land and water acknowledgement by the A/rt/toographer, and a posing of key journey-related questions by the Cohort.¹⁷⁷

Movement I is constructed of four participant-character-performers delivering monologues crafted from their 2017 one-on-one interviews. Each monologue is shared in three sections to highlight the three spoken word chorus themes of *calling*, *collision*, and *conversation*. The spoken word choruses were pre-recorded by the whole cohort and edited by the researcher into an artistic format.

The *Interlude* is the *Musical River 313 Mixtape* comprised of clips from a diverse collection of musical artists that participants noted as influential during their interviews.

Movement II is an ad-lib discussion with two of the participant-characters about their desired futures and mapping a trajectory from the monologues they just shared to

¹⁷⁷ These questions are decontextualized versions of the questions that participants asked the researcher (toward construction of her own monologue) in their follow-up interviews.

Prelude	
A Gathering	Cohort
An Acknowledgement	A/r/tographer
An Inquiry	Cohort
Movement I	
(Monologue 1 TBA): Part A	(Participant-Character 1 TBD)
(Monologue 2 TBA): Part A	(Participant-Character 2 TBD)
(Monologue 3 TBA): Part A	(Participant-Character 3 TBD)
(Monologue 4 TBA): Part A	(Participant-Character 4 TBD)
<i>Calling: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort
(Monologue 1 TBA): Part B	(Participant-Character 1 TBD)
(Monologue 2 TBA): Part B	(Participant-Character 2 TBD)
(Monologue 3 TBA): Part B	(Participant-Character 3 TBD)
(Monologue 4 TBA): Part B	(Participant-Character 4 TBD)
<i>Collision: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort
(Monologue 4 TBA): Part C	(Participant-Character 4 TBD)
(Monologue 3 TBA): Part C	(Participant-Character 3 TBD)
(Monologue 2 TBA): Part C	(Participant-Character 2 TBD)
(Monologue 1 TBA): Part C	(Participant-Character 1 TBD)
<i>Conversation: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort
Interlude	
<i>Musical River 313 Mixtape</i>	
Movement II	
Life-Curriculum Trajectory Mapping	Full Live Cast
<i>Flowers in Detroit II</i>	A/r/tographer with Cohort
Movement III	
Talk-Back Session	Full Live Cast with audience
<i>Journey: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort

Figure 8. Called to the Conversation—Program Format

Prelude	
A Gathering	Cohort
An Acknowledgement	A/r/tographer
An Inquiry	Cohort
Movement I	
<i>Show Yourself Approved</i> —"Ever since then..."	LaNyck
<i>Hone into Your Own</i> —"God spoke to me..."	Melody
<i>The Bittersweet Breakdown</i> —"She learns fast for a little kid..."	Ti
<i>Here I Am</i> —"It just made sense..."	Rei
<i>Calling: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort
<i>Show Yourself Approved</i> —"She a mess..."	LaNyck
<i>Hone into Your Own</i> —"Not good enough..."	Melody
<i>The Bittersweet Breakdown</i> —"Don't tell me to sing high..."	Ti
<i>Here I Am</i> —"Hypercritical, self-conscious..."	Rei
<i>Collision: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort
<i>Here I Am</i> —"Affirmed and reaffirmed..."	Rei
<i>The Bittersweet Breakdown</i> —"Let everybody see the full you..."	Ti
<i>Hone into Your Own</i> —"There's no limits..."	Melody
<i>Show Yourself Approved</i> —"Music was for me..."	LaNyck
<i>Conversation: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort
Interlude	
<i>Musical River 313 Mixtape</i>	
Movement II	
Life-Curriculum Trajectory Mapping	Full Live Cast
<i>Flowers in Detroit II</i>	A/r/tographer with Cohort
Movement III	
Talk-Back Session	Full Live Cast with Audience
<i>Journey: A Spoken Word Chorus</i>	Cohort

Figure 9. Called to the Conversation—Sample Program

stories they hope to be telling within 5 years. Whereas the first movement recounts the past, the second movement looks to the future and begins to connect the two points. I have called this: *Life Curriculum Trajectory Mapping*. The movement then closes with the a/r/tographer's monologue, *Flowers in Detroit II*, which shares the a/r/tographer's journey through her responses to the participants' questions as well as helping transition the performers and audience into the third movement.

Movement III is a talk-back session between the participant-characters and A/r/tographer with the audience. The audience will have the opportunity to submit their questions via Mosio or similar mobile software. Movement III then ends with the full cohort delivering their final Spoken Word Chorus: "Journey."

A Portrait of Stories: A Poetic Transcription

The following is a re-voiced, contextually altered poetic transcription created from the "Afterword" of Moises Kaufman, Barbara Pitts McAdams, and the Tectonic Theatre Project members' (2018) *Moment Work* (pp. 295-296). Their words so beautifully and accurately express a sentiment that resonates with my a/r/tographical journey and process. I beg these authors' indulgence as I borrow their words to craft this final poetic transcription for the closing of this chapter:

*One of the perils of memory
is that it inevitably tries to compress
our messy human experiences into coherent narratives
(and often narratives of success).*

*In order to make the progression clear and useful
to the reader,
I have perhaps oversimplified and streamlined the details
of how things happened.
Hence this [chapter] has not fully captured the turmoil,
the uncertainty,*

*and the self-doubt I often experienced.
Nor has it catalogued my innumerable failures.*

Perhaps that's ok.

*But I would be remiss if I didn't at least mention
that much of what comes across as straightforward
was anything but
as it was happening.
But if this process teaches us anything,
it should be that delving in
is enough.*

*This [dissertation]
is a portrait of stories shared by [my former students]
and my work in the current moment.
It offers a glimpse of where I am today,
both in [my a/r/tographical] interests
and in my process.
As my work continues to evolve,
it is natural that my way of creating work
will change as well.*

*But this
is where I am
now.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONTENT: CALLED TO THE CONVERSATION— A DIGITAL ETHNODRAMA IN THREE MOVEMENTS

*Theater is ultimately also about community.
We are a community of people dealing with each other,
challenging each other.
The theatre is about how individuals in communities function in concert.
We live only in relation to one another.
Other people and our traffic with them is what makes us who we are.
While all art concerns the interconnectedness of the universe,
the theatre has to do with the interconnectedness of people.
The content of theatre is other people.*

A poetic transcription created
from Bogart's (2007)
And Then, You Act (pp. 106-107)

A/r/tographer's Notes

Called to the Conversation is a digital ethnodrama in three movements. It is the final research product from a series of interviews with nine graduates of the Marygrove College Music Department (2013-2016) as conducted by their former professor for her doctoral dissertation. While transcribing and exploring the nuclear episodes from these participants' interviews, I discovered that a calling to professional musicianhood plus the pursuit of an undergraduate music degree professional calling led to a narrative structure similar to that of a hero's journey. Methodological, structural, and artistic-theatrical influences behind this work have created a bricolage of narrative inquiry, performative ethnography, currere, a/r/tography, verbatim rhythmic transcription, digital storytelling, digital performance, and narrative monologue—all grounded in a paradigm of critical constructivism, a philosophy of musicking, and a sense of relational ethics.

Called to the Conversation is a hybrid of a live, staged theatre production and audio-video recorded performance elements. In spring 2020, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic cancelled all on-stage, live-audience artistic presentations for the foreseeable future. However, the broad distribution of vaccines in spring 2021 inspired me to consider theatre beyond the pandemic. This final concept of *Called to the Conversation* looks to a return to live theatre gatherings, while taking into account the continued realities of social distancing and taking advantage of available digital media. This hybrid form has become what I have termed: *digital ethnodrama*.

Through a performance of this digital ethnodrama, the original study participants, who became participant-characters through the creation of monologues and spoken word choruses from their interview texts, would now become participant-character-performers as they share their performative selves to live and virtual audiences. As both the primary investigator and a fellow participant, I then become “A/r/tographer” in this work—artist, teacher, and researcher in rhizomatic relationship. Although nine participants originally engaged in the research process, *Called to the Conversation* has been crafted in such a way that various combinations of four participant-characters perform together live during any individual performance. These live performances (four participant-characters plus A/r/tographer) will work in collaboration with recorded elements. Wherever “Cohort” is referenced on the program, the full cohort of nine participant-characters will appear through audio-video recording.

Participant-Character Descriptions

The following participant-character descriptions (Figure 10) were all written by the participant-characters themselves for themselves. These statements represent the

Angel—Full of hope and faith of things not seen, she is loving, loves, and is loved well. She says: “Whatever you are dreaming of—believe well!” She wears a gray t-shirt with “Believe” on a Christian cross, dark skinny jeans, kitten heels, round-rimmed glasses, and a wedding ring.

Angela—35-40 years old, she is a beautiful and stylish African-American. She wears a silk black button-down shirt, black slacks, black/cream dress loafers, a long gold necklace, and a wedding ring.

Jeriel—A Black/African-American native east-side Detroiter in his 20’s. He is outgoing and determined to share his God-given gifts in music and dance. He wears a white t-shirt with “Detroit 1701” in large black letters, dark khaki cargo shorts, and a black baseball hat.

LaNyck—Funny, outgoing, passionate, and vocal about what she wants. She wears a fitted white t-shirt with “Hustle hard. Work harder.” in pink/black lettering, green shorts, teal sneakers, and rectangle glasses.

Melody—Always an open book; transparent and honest about how she feels. She celebrates her growth since the vulnerable time these stories were lived. She wears a white tank top, black jazz pants, soft suede olive ankle boots, and a gray wrap cardigan tied around her waist.

Nora—A Black/African-American woman in her 20’s. She wears a black crop top, olive green jogging pants with a black cord tied at the waist, black flats, and round-rimmed glasses.

Rei—Black, queer and in their late 20’s. They are humble yet fierce and a passionate activist-advocate. They wear an open bleach-splattered denim shirt over a gray t-shirt with pastel horizontal stripes, gray cotton shorts, and black sport slides with black socks.

Sherry—Very down-to-earth, a very hard worker, and a southern girl at heart. She’s very well-educated and smart, married with five kids. She wears a white/black V-neck top, a Kelly-green cardigan, black dress pants, black dress shoes, oval-rimmed glasses, and a wedding ring.

Ti—A Black woman who honors and celebrates the most important things in her life: God, family, and music. She wears a blue top with a cream-colored sweater, dark jeans, and navy/beige canvas sneakers. She also wears square-rimmed glasses and a small silver pendant necklace.

A/r/tographer—A White woman who was a music professor at Marygrove College when each of the participant-characters attended and attained their degree. She wears a black/white wrap dress with low dark red heels, a green pendant necklace and a wedding ring.

Figure 10. Participant-Character Descriptions

information they felt the reader-audiences needed to know about them as individuals before receiving their monologues and spoken word choruses. The costume descriptions reflect outfits worn by the participants in a photograph of the 2017 focus group or an alternate 2017 photograph. These costumes will appear as described in Movement I. The participant-character-performers will then have opportunity to change, add, or remove a costume piece to reflect the shift into present-day self.

Production Notes

To help make the clear connection between the participants and a higher music education setting, I have set the stage production in a typical college music lecture hall, which should include the following: (e.g., projection of video or slides, speakers for sound, Wi-Fi for livestreaming) as well as the set pieces listed below:

- Five (5) standard classroom chairs
- A standard rectangle classroom table
- A piano (baby grand preferred)
- A whiteboard with dry-erase markers (upstage center)
- A projector with projection screen (upstage center)

Specialty lighting design is not expected, but other technology requirements include laptop connection, projection capabilities, adequate speakers for the audio/video components, and Wi-Fi for live-streaming,

In the third movement, Mosio, a text-messaging software, will assist both live and virtual audience members in contributing to the Talk-Back Session. A slide with the Mosio number and special keyword should be projected during this portion of the production.

Costumes for each character in Movement I are listed alongside the Character-Participant descriptions. Participants will need to change/add/remove one item after Movement I to reflect the transition from their 2017 selves to current day.

Props are not required unless a participant-character-performer wishes to utilize one prop to help tell their monologue narrative.

Some general stage action is outlined in the script for scenes, but additional staging (especially for the monologues) should be individualized and flexible for evolving interpretation.

Monologues

Four of the following monologues will be shared during each performance. The combination of participant-characters and the monologue order will change depending on the performance.

The monologues have been formatted using a *verbatim rhythmic transcription* process, which attempted to capture the original performative aspects of the participants' spoken words, specifically the rhythmic aspects of phrasing, space, and stress. Text has also been justified in places to make a distinction between different storied voices used by the participant-character (i.e., self-narration, inner voice, another person).

Each monologue has been titled using the participants' own words as a form of thesis statement for the monologue. Each monologue has also been divided into three sections which align with one of the three spoken word chorus themes of: *calling*, *collision*, and *conversation*.

In reading through the script for *Called to the Conversation*, reader-audiences will need to return to this Monologue section to read portions of monologues as required by places indicated in the script.

Not-Knowing Knowing (Angel)

A: *Born in the choir stand...*

I believe I was born
in the choir stand.

My mom and aunt
singing in church.
My father in the pulpit.

All of my life.

In rehearsals,
you either got it
or you didn't get it.
They might put somebody else in your spot.

But,
me...
I don't know I just got it.

I got it,
caught onto it,
loved it.

Yeah,
I've got uncomfortable because:

“Well, Angel can do it.”

Uncomfortable
where...
I might lose a friendship
cause they're not too happy that I'm singing
their song now.

High school choir
is when I first encountered
"Every Good Boy Does Fine"
treble clef, bass clef.

We would make new songs,
practice our intervals.
That opened up a whole new world for me.

I still sat to the back though.
I didn't want
solos and things of that nature.

Being the pastor's daughter was always about
the church.
It wasn't about
me singing or being in the spotlight.
I'm not performing for anyone
but
God.
I know he loves me.
He made me.
But performing and being
analyzed by people...
Very uncomfortable for me.

Then
there was this one talent show.
I sung the theme from "Titanic."
Celine Dion.

I was nervous.
But I did it.
And it felt like...
a release.

It wasn't that I needed
everybody
to love my voice.
I just needed them know that
I sing.

I can sing.

B: *Am I breathing right?...*

Once I got into Marygrove,
making music at church was difficult from a vocal standpoint
because I started to become more aware of what I was doing.
That kinda
messed me up sometimes.

I started to overthink things.

"Am I breathing right?
Am I singing too hard?"

I would be warming up
before service.
That was unusual.
Different registers,
tongue trills,
things of that nature.
The Praise Team is like:

"What.
Are you doing?"

Rehearsals for my praise team
became almost like a voice coaching.
Some drew to it.
Some moved to different ministries.
And then some people actually said:

"I can't sing with you.
You sing too good."

I sing too good
so you can't sing with me?!
That's one thing I never wanted.
God gave you your voice.
Sing!

C: *Once you become certified...*
Everybody knows me as
Angel,
the pastor's daughter that sings.
But now she's teaching me?
Where does that come into play?

It's a very thin line once you become
certified.
You want the respect.
I'm educated.
This is what I do.
But we're still on the same praise team.
Still going to the same church.

I did notice that people were,
you know,
looking up to me (*laughs*);
wanting that
sound,
that schooling.
Even the little ones.

(*high voice*) "Will you teach me how to sing?"

I'm approaching it with a lot of fear,
but good fear.
To know I can do it.
You might mess up.
We might not end up with the exact answer
today.
But...
we'll find it.
We're going to grow and we'll find it.
That's what I rely on.

Being comfortable
not-knowing
knowing.

You study.
You find out.
You second-think yourself.
You know.

Everything is just done like that.
I don't know,
but I know.

At one point I was doing it blindfolded.
Now I can see.
And I still don't know where I'm going.

But it's not a bad thing,
because you're doing it.

What Lives Within (Angela)

A: Her voice went to the core of my soul...
Growing up in Mississippi,
me and my brother would watch PBS

to get experience of other things.
That's actually how I got introduced to classical music
and Leontyne Price.

They gave an introduction of her
being from Mississippi.
It blew my mind.

And when she came onstage and sung,
her voice
went to the core of my soul.

Eight years old
and I was like:
"I supposed to do that."

In high school,
wasn't a program out I didn't participate in.
I didn't even have to be onstage.
I could sing behind the curtain
because my voice was so loud.

The Whitney Houston of my school
and a cheerleader on top of it.

They offered me
full scholarships to six colleges for voice.
Even the same school Leontyne Price went to.
I was like:

“Oh!
My dreams are...
right here.”

So
I was cheering.
Having rehearsals.
Getting hoarse.
Pushing.
Not knowing that
you can have vocal issues.

Then one morning, I got up.
I couldn't talk.

Couldn't say anything.
No sound.

I go to the doctor:

“Your vocal cords are swollen.
You can’t sing
for a year.”

(Stammering and gasping)

“Iwa—

Huuh—

What am I supposed to do now?
That’s all I know how to do!”

My fall from grace.

Well, if I can't sing,
let me get a degree in being a wife.
I went into an HBCU,
found my husband,
and left it all behind.

B: *Raspier and raspier...*

Twenty years later,
I had to end up going to work because of the economic downturn.
The worst location.
Dirty and dusty.
My voice raspier and raspier
because the air quality was so bad.
I went to the doctor:

"You have a polyp.
We could cut it off Friday,
you'll be back at work Monday."

I was like:

"Excuse me?
You're talking about my voice."

Long story short:
I ended up going to a specialist
and with a voice teacher.

After a couple of years,
my teacher says

“It's time to go to school,
if you really love singing.”

I was praying about it,
and the Lord said:

“You're going to Marygrove.”

I said:

“What's a Marygrove?”

It was God-ordained.

C: Destined to do this...

Before my junior recital, I was feeling these chills
“Ooo, what's that?

Can't be nerves.
I'm not nervous.”

I came out to sing,
and all the sudden—
my voice was
leaving.

“Are you kidding me?!
We're in the middle of a concert!
What is wrong with you?
I know it's the Devil.”
I gotta keep going.”

But the more I sang, the worse it was going.
When we went to the back after the Handel,
I was like:

“I need to stop now.”

I was starting to hurt.

I went to the doctor:

“You got an infection!
I'm glad you stopped.

It could've caused some situations up in there.”

I hated that I didn't finish that recital.
I know they wanted me to push through.
But I don't want to lose my voice.

Again.

I'm going to find out what's wrong,
identify the problem,
and take it from there.

I don't let things destroy me like I used to.
You know?

I was destined to do this.
It was in my heart,
burning,
in that little secret hole
that you place your treasure in.
Now it's being unlocked,
exposed
because I have an opportunity
and the support.

Beyond the Clap (Jeriel)

A: *Secretly, I wanted...*

Secretly,
I wanted to be a singer.

I remember saying that to my teacher
in 10th grade.
He was like:

"Well, if you can't sing in front of us,
you can't ever do it."

I kept that internally.

"You're right, I might not."

In senior year, I got the opportunity.
Every student challenged to sing in front of the class.
Two minutes.
Song of your choice.

All I remember is my legs shaking so bad.
All I could see was people's faces.
I sang it as I shuddered.

The director says: "You were scared, but
you did excellent."

So he started putting me in the forefront,
giving me solos,
sing-a-grams for Valentine's Day.

It woke me up like:
“This is who you are.”

I felt visible.
Alive.
Feeling my worth.

It's something I had to conquer because
I always was hiding
part of me.

B: *Hindered, Quiet*

I didn't do well as a student.
I didn't understand definitions or
instructions.
Afraid to read in front of people
because of the taunting or teasing.
It really hindered me as a kid,
kept me quiet.
I couldn't
feel that I would ever be right in a conversation.

Over time,
I figured out my own way.
To memorize
visually.
To
“fake the funk” until you get through.
Nobody knows what you struggle with until you tell them.

I always
wanted to feel smart in a
room
of people.
Just being able to
talk to somebody,
understand them and be understood.
I realized
until you educate yourself you won't really
be in the conversation.
That's what sent me to college.

Music was my talent.
I'm gonna do that when I go.
But I really went for confidence building
in myself.

My biggest challenge at Marygrove was
to actually learn and not
just coast off of my
ability to
perform.
My professors picked up on the fact that I could
fake my way through.

It messed my head up that
people can tell
when it's not real.

You can't just stand there and vocalize,
you have to engage.

You have to buckle down and
master this thing.
Not just get an
A in class because I did the paperwork right.

You have to take
constructive criticism
and
sometimes let those hits sink in.

C: Change the Atmosphere

I started to
give it everything I had.

By the time senior recital came,
it represented being able to say:
“You're qualified.”

Qualified to be deemed as smart,
as gifted and talented,
as worthy of choosing what you want to do in life.

This charisma everybody tell me I have now?¹⁷⁸
I didn't have that
back in the day.
It was something God revealed to me.
He said:

"When you're You,
then you don't apologize for it."

I had to learn how to continue to be me even when
the haters come.
To finally dance my dance and sing my song.
I don't do music to impress people.

When you're trying to
show everybody what's so gifted in you,
it starts to become a show.
It leaves people feeling empty,
because it's about applause,
a reaction.
It's not resonating in a life-changing way.

But when I go in with an intention not to receive a clap,
but to change the atmosphere,
then my gift actually becomes a tool.

And I can talk to the world.

Show Yourself Approved (LaNyck)

A: *Ever since then...*

I was four
when I got my first solo.
Went into rehearsal
and
the Minister of Music asked me to get up.
I told him
I didn't want to.

And I sat down.

¹⁷⁸ Pearl Shinn Wormhoudt (2001) says: "It is not easy to describe charisma though we surely recognize and respond to it...Charisma is not something we can work for directly...[Through] devoted work toward ...confidence, concentration, consistent and evermore creative performance, the singer becomes more powerful, more expressive, more impressive. He or she lights up the stage" (p. 156).

I'm tired.
Friday.
6 o'clock.
I don't feel like singin'.

He was like:

"Is she going to sing Sunday or not?"

It got to service.
Right up to the time...

I got up.
I got the mic.

And ever since then...
I was singin'.

I sign up for high school choir
thinking it's like
regular choir I been doing forever.

Aaaand
it.
was.
not.

I could not sight-read.

I knew if note went up,
the vocals go up.

Key signatures,
solfege.
I would ignore.

With the help of my classmates,
I could figure it out.
Pretty much.
I would "fake the funk"
all the way up
to junior year.
Varsity Choir auditions.

The director was like:

"You don't read music."

I vouched for myself:

"I'm a fast learner.
I could tape it."

I did not.
Get in.

I cried...
forever.

And
it
triggered me to
work hard
that next year.

When it came time to audition again,
I got in!

"Show yourself approved"
I guess.

B: *She a Mess...*

I ran into some...
trouble stuff
when I got to Marygrove.

I had
got assaulted
(*sniffs*)
here on campus.

I had a fractured jaw
My mouth wired shut.

Couldn't sing.
Couldn't eat.
Six weeks.

Everybody was like:

"Here is this freshman.
We never heard her sing.
She got this whole trouble thing going on.
She a mess!"

My whole first semester
was
a downfall.

That spring
we did "The Magic Flute."
I was in the chorus.

Then I get this
call:

"LaNyck, we need to start rehearsing.
One of the Spirits dropped out.
We open in two weeks."

"What?"

So
I got the music.
And I just drove myself,
and drove myself,
and drove myself.

It challenged me.
But I learned it.
Two weeks.

I.
Did not like to practice.
At all.

I felt like music came to me naturally
and I didn't have to.

I know how to sing.
I don't wanna do all that.
I just...
want to perform.

My whole diva-ism
had to be diminished.
My voice teacher made that clear:

"You think you're a diva,
but you're not.
You still in school.

You have to
start here to get there.”

It opened my eyes.

C: *Music Was for Me...*
(breathes in)
HMMMMM....

My recital was...
something that has my name stamped on it.

People on-campus knew me
based off bad situations that happened to me.
Whereas
my music
spoke for who I was.

Like,
I didn't really have
anybody I could instill trust into.
So I got...
stuck with the wrong crowd.

I opened up too much,
and they bullied me.

It was a situation I
really wish did not happen.

People in high places
were notified.
Nobody was listening.
At first
I was just gonna...
sit back,
but...

I was the first college graduate
in my family.
A role model for my sister.
I couldn't let her see me quit.

It made me want my education.
Made me
want something for myself.

And music was for me.

Yeah,
I've been through some things.
But I knew who I was
and it channeled me.

So I fought.

And ever since then...

I've been fighting.

Hone into Your Own (Melody)

A: God spoke to me...

I knew
when I was dancing with Aretha.

I looked out from the stage
and saw all the people.
Right in that moment,
I felt like God spoke to me
and said:

“You’re supposed to sing.”

Singing was always something I really, really did enjoy.
It wasn’t that I was discouraged,

but
people was like:

“Ooo! Girl, stick to dancing.”

“Stick to dancing.”
Cause singing wasn’t it for me.
And I believed that.

I started attending a dance studio
when I was 9.
My dad bought me
a corsage for my first ballet class.

Ballet
taught me discipline,
structure,
technique.

It exposes you to classical music
which I studied when I played violin.
They're like sisters.
The counting.
The fact that it's placed.
That you can't go off and just do your own thing.
It creates balance.

My dance talent
allowed me to be exposed to a lot.
I loved it and soared forward.
When I graduated high school,
I started dancing for Aretha Franklin
and
it changed.
I went from being
the focus of the attention
to where
I never got picked.
That's when I started losing...
confidence in myself.

I didn't think I was good enough for the real world.

B: *Not good enough...*

Marygrove was an accident.
I had no idea what I was getting myself into.
This was the first time I felt like the weak link.

“Why is she here?”
“She's not good enough.”

All of those things used to go through my head.

Everything had come easy to me.
Academics.
Dance.
Music theory.

Honestly,
the only thing that has ever come hard
was transitioning into being a vocalist.

It was a consistent
battle,
mentally and spiritually.

I feel very strongly
God is telling me to pursue this.
I just didn't understand why it was so hard.

My recital was the moment for me.
Right before,
I feel like it was a shift.
When it came to singing,
I don't think it was the ability,
it was just my confidence.

Confidence comes with
owning
what God gave you.

Every time I opened my mouth to sing
I would be in my head,
never in my heart.
Being in my head is what beat my confidence down.

Performance is vulnerable,
transparent.
You have to open up to your emotions.
But I would just think about the sound.
Not about what I'm singing,
not making a connection with people.
I look at this career
as my ministry.
How am I supposed to reach people.
if I'm blocking my heart
and not letting them in?

C: There's no limits...

Once I graduated,
the cruise ship gave me confidence.

Doing shows
seven nights a week,
you're just
naturally
able to push yourself
and deliver
at a high level
at all times.

I never compromise my technique.
But...
sometimes it takes away
from being authentic.
Trained singers
sometimes
don't take risks
because it's so choreographed,
so placed.

I always try to maintain a balance.
Able to utilize technique
while being edgy and relatable.
A true artist in your craft.

There's no limits to my gift.
I'm capable of singing everything.
I don't need to be apologetic.
It's what God gave me.
All I need to do is
let it out.
So if I go to New York,
I'm not gonna be playin'.

I earned
where I'm goin' next.

A Focus of Me (Nora)

A: I would picture myself as a soloist...
It's very different being from the family I'm in.
There's 10 of us.
Everybody loves music.
They're all outgoing.

I'm the only introvert.
Socially awkward.
Even in music.

It's a lot of people
watching
when you're singing.
The audience could be
rooting for you or against you.
In their own world
or paying attention to see if
you're messing up.

It's weird.

I was five
when I made up my mind.
Hearing my older brother sing,
I'm like:

“That's what I want to do!”

I started singing in church first.
I preferred to be in the choir.
Even though
I would picture myself as a soloist,

In choir,
I get to sing
but
the eyes aren't
directly on you as an individual.
It's easier to hide,
blend in.
I would sing around the house,
getting yelled at for singing so loud.
But the times I did sing in front of people,
I was up there just shell-shocked.

It was good to where
I'm doing what I want to do.
My main goal
was and is to perform.
But bad because:

“How do I get over this fear?”

B: *Up there by yourself...*

At Marygrove,
it was crazy
getting up in front of everybody
for recitals.
Up there by yourself.
Thinking on the spot.

“How am I going to do this?”

Trying to remember words.
Singing in a different language.

“You got through it.
Keep going.”

Then walking out
and
(*big sigh*).

It was overwhelming.

I thought it was just physical demand—
going class to class,
performing so much.
It was mentally
a lot to deal with too.
Rushing to get where I needed to be...
but I was there already.
Third year,
I literally thought
for months:

“I could just leave right now.
No harm no foul.”

But...
I don't know.
Something wouldn't let me.

C: *The giving of the experience...*
The recital was like my baby.

I had notes of
everything I wanted.

Singing.
Dancing.
Visual arts.

Shared experiences with other people

Little surprises
that keep people on their toes.

The giving of the experience.

I'm like:

“They're not going let me do it,
but I'm going to write it anyway.
Why not go crazy?
After that,
let's see how different everything will be
cause everything's changing anyway.”

I did about 90 percent of what I wanted.
I was really happy about that.

The audience was respectful
and they were definitely friends.
Especially because I had
other people on stage with me.
If I have other people,
it's not
entirely a focus of me.

Some doubt is there
and...
still being nervous.
But I know what I'm doing vocally.

I learned more weaknesses than anything
but in knowing weaknesses,
you know how to overcome stuff
or how to
make it better.

Having the confidence of
knowing that you can do
what you know you can do.
But also knowing that you can learn more.

I can sing.
But I'm not Whitney.
(whispered)
"Rest in peace, girl."

I don't think I'll ever be at a point
where I'm singing
just because somebody is like:
"Sing me something."

I'm going to stay quiet.
unless I feel the need to get up
and sing.

It's not for you.
This was for me.

So
regardless of
all the nerves
and everything...

I get up there
nervous every time
and
work through it...
because
it's mine.

Here I Am (Rei)

A: It just made sense...
My original major at Marygrove was not music.
It was Health Science for a semester
with a minor in Math.

I was taking an 8:30
biology course
that I could never get up for
and three GenEd music classes
I enjoyed.

I had played violin in school,
trombone.

I sang in church,
community concert choir,
and a college acapella group...¹⁷⁹

So I already had the idea I wanted to go into music.
But I
felt like if I said it,
it would just
be bad.

So, yeah...
In November,
I realized.

So I said it.
It just made sense.

I wanted to be
musical.

B: *Hypercritical, self-conscious...*

The first challenge was feeling
comfortable enough to open up
my voice.
It was something I wanted to share,
but it still felt very personal to me.
I didn't want anybody to say anything bad or critique it,
cause it would hurt my feelings.

Music always
brought a more vulnerable side out of me.
Not too many things make me feel shy or bashful,
so it was easy to assume that's the type of person I was.
But
outside of music,
I was not like that.

Even in my voice lessons,
I was hypercritical,
self-conscious.
Whatever I

¹⁷⁹ The vocal group used this Americanized spelling of "a cappella" in their description.

dealt with in my lesson,
I took with me
for the rest of that week.
Really happy moments,
like hitting that note you wanted to hit.

Little depressive moments,
because of so many little things being
wrong.

I would notice growth in others,
but not
in myself.

Studying music,
especially at the college level,
made me really focused on
being a musician.

In my mind,
it was never if I was good or bad,
it was:

“Am I a real musician or not?”

or

"How much of a musician am I?"

C: Affirmed and Reaffirmed...

It takes a lot to come into an identity

In my life,
I've had to deal with identity in a lot of different ways.
This was just another way.
For other people who
don't have to deal with identity
the same way I did,
maybe it's a different route.

When people
start to
acknowledge you as
a musician,
then slowly
you have that identity
for yourself
and to the community.

It was not a 'time' when I said: "Now I'm a musician."
There were a few different points.
Affirmed and reaffirmed.

Like,
even if
a studio class didn't go the way I wanted it to,
the fact that I did it
made me feel more and more like:

"This is what it is to be a musician.
It's living musicianship.
If you wanna be good, you gotta
try and you gotta
take criticism."

If I
hadn't had the hypercritical stage,
I wouldn't be able to understand that,
to even fathom it.

But when I was really
just like:

"This is happening.
This is happening"
was the night of my senior recital.

I got there.
I sang on the stage
and got the feel for the room.
Then when I got dressed,
I was no longer nervous.
I was...
ready.

More ready than anything.
I have
never been so ready for something in my life.
Even with
the slip-ups that I had,
I didn't feel so
critical of myself.

It was like:

"Here.
Here I am.
Take it, leave it, do what you want.
I worked hard.
I struggled through.
So, here.
Listen."

The Depth of It (Sherry)

A: I just knew...

Every Friday,
I would walk
7 miles from Gratiot
to Mound
to meet my cousin.
The older one, who played guitar and sang.
I would go to church with him
and attend all the youth functions.

My uncle
taught me
the first three chords.
The pastor's son
gave me a vintage
Yamaha electric.
It wasn't long before I was leading worship
and singing in a band.

When I got older,
I remember praying like:
“What am I supposed to do?”

Then
I just knew He'd told me
I was going to be a music teacher.

Marygrove had
a Music Ed. degree.

Twenty minutes from the house.
I can be home to get dinner started.

So that's what I did.

B: *Two separate voices...*

Coming to Marygrove,
I fell in love with music theory.
The rules and structure.
The challenge of counterpoint.
But when I started voice lessons,
I hadn't bought in.

Everything was very...
technical.
Classical.

"I don't want to sing like this."

For musicians
in the church,
the whole idea is that
you're praising
God with the gift He
gave you.

It was
a heck of a lot easier to
connect with songs in praise,
than it was a woman scorned by her lover.

Especially
being someone who was dating at 14
and married that same guy.
It was a lot of acting,
whereas music has been real my whole life.

By that time the band had exploded.
We were travelling
and singing for big conferences.
Twenty thousand people.
I don't have time for this other stuff.
I mean,
I got five kids!

After that semester,
I started realizing that even though
I could sing well,
there was much more I could do with my voice.
I just thought what came out, came out.

But now
I could hit these really high notes.

I hadn't connected it yet
so I had two separate voices:
lower and higher.
After a while I started to
pull the voices together.
Into not so well sounding
ways,
but it was happening.

It was a very messy thing.
But
once you got messy,
you knew what to clean-up.
It was like "organized chaos"
whereas before
it was just a mess.

C: *When the deep stuff starts...*

When I look back on my recital,
I think:

“Who was that chick?”

I was in a daze.

Trying to throw in every tool you got.
Feeling very inconsistent.
Thinking I wasn't good enough.

I wasn't going to be to stop myself from worshipping
in the contemporary half.
That's what I always do.
My family wouldn't expect anything different.
But to do that in a secular setting
in front of professors?

Then
to be stoic and relate to characters in
the classical pieces
was what my professors and friends were used to seeing,
but not my family.
It wasn't a blending.
It was a "head-on collision!"

When you're coming from
an informal education,
you don't understand
how far you can actually get into music.

People who
sing with the radio
or can play a couple songs
on the guitar
think:
"I'm going to school for this.
I'm pretty good!"

You have no clue.

You're told about it,
but you don't realize the depth of it until...
Well, for me, it was
informal training,
then formal training,
and now
I'm teaching it.

And that's when the deep stuff starts.

The Bittersweet Breakdown (Ti)

A: She learns fast for a little kid...

At three,
I got my
first drum set.
A Christmas present
from my mom and grandparents.

My cousin came over
regularly,
showed me the basics.

And then,
he just stopped.
He was like:

"I don't know what else to teach her.
She learns fast
for a little kid."

So that was that.

Around fifth grade,
our church
didn't have a drummer.
My Mooma volunteers me.

I didn't want anybody to know I could play drums
for some reason.

Sixth grade, I picked up my auntie's old keyboard
to teach myself
"Stand by Me"
Right hand.
One finger.
I mastered it
and put a bass to it.
One finger.
I stayed on that song for seven months until I was able
to play chords.

Seventh grade,
my school was doing
an American Idol.
I don't want nobody to know I sing.
But my mom
threatened
to take all my gadgets away if I didn't do it.

I was so nervous.
Straight-face singing
"Can't Take My Eyes Off You."

They announced the winner.

It wasn't me.

Come to find out another mother had
cheated!
My family was upset:

"You got a voice!
You shoulda won!"

I'm like:
"Nah, I'll stick with drums and piano."

B: *Don't tell me to sing high...*

After high school,
I told my mom I'd rather work than go to college.
She was like:

"That's not happening in this household."

Marygrove is west side.
I'll pick that.

I loved theory and ear-training,
but I didn't like
voice lessons.
I was used to singing with choirs
at DSA.¹⁸⁰

I didn't care
to be the center of attention.
And don't tell me to sing high.

I was very stubborn
my freshman year.
Mentally I wasn't in the headspace.

My grandfather passed away
two months before I started college.
I just did what I had to do so I could go home and
soak in my
misery.

Mooma was like:

"Would your granddaddy want you to act like this?
Straighten up.
Fix your face.
Do it for him."

That was my motivation to keep going.
Because if I thought about doing it for myself,
Ti would'a quit.

C: *Let everybody see the full you...*

In junior year,
my teacher asked me:

¹⁸⁰ Detroit School of the Arts

"What would happen
if you let everybody see
the 'full you'?"

That stuck with me for a minute.
I just...
(*big sigh*)

Without being overconfident,
I wanted people
to see what
I really am capable of doing.
Not just showing them I can play, but
my passion for it,
my emotion in it.

Before
I didn't want anybody to know
I was an emotional person.
All they saw was...
the solid, stern
Me.
If they know that I'm
truthfully
like a little baby girl
when I really get playing,
how would people think of me?"

My recital was bittersweet.
Sweet because
it was ultimately my challenge.
Bitter
because my grandparents couldn't be there.

A lot of my family thought all I sang was gospel.
That was sad!
I wanted to show everybody
I can sing that AND more.
All these different genres.

With my recital.
I finally started to
do something
for Ti.
I started off doing it for my grandfather,

but
along the way, it began
to be about me.
Not in an egotistic kind of way, but...
my change definitely came.
Musically,
mentally,
vocally.

And I had to show everybody.

So...
(*softer*)
that was that.

Script: Called to the Conversation¹⁸¹

The performance space is a standard music department lecture hall. There are five chairs against the walls off-SR, a table sits UC, a podium at DSR, and a piano (preferably a baby grand) on DSL.¹⁸² A projection screen, with a white board behind it, serve as backdrop. The screen is down at the start of the show.

The music playing as the audience enters are – a playlist of musical works, shows, composers and/or artists noted by the participants in their interviews.¹⁸³

Fade out music.

Enter: Venue Host to welcome for the live and virtual audiences and to give an introduction. If a program is not distributed, the Venue Host will read portions of the **A/r/tographer's**

¹⁸¹ The formatting of this digital ethnodrama follows the *Dramatists Guild Modern Play Format* (<https://www.dramatistsguild.com/sites/default/files/2019-12/modernformat-New.pdf>).

¹⁸² SR=stage right; SL=stage left; C=center; D=downstage; U=upstage. Example: DSR = downstage right.

¹⁸³ See Appendix F for musical works referenced by the participants in their interviews which may be used for the 313 Mixtape.

Notes to provide the audience with context.¹⁸⁴

Exit Venue Host.

Prelude

Fade in: **Focus Group Recording** (A recording of the Cohort having an upbeat casual conversation during a break at the July 2017 focus group.

Sound cue: In the recording, 2017 A/r/tographer says: “**Ok. Let’s get started.**” Recording ends.

A Gathering

Cue: **Opening video.** The screen transitions into a 9-square Zoom room (gallery layout). The backgrounds of all participant-character-performers (P-C-Performers) may be seen with their chosen names in the lower corner of their individual windows.

One by one, the participants enter their Zoom windows and sit down in front of their cameras in silence. They remain seated, listening.

Enter: The A/r/tographer walks to CS and speaks the **Acknowledgement** without introduction.

An Acknowledgement

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Both Oakland University and the former campus of Marygrove College sit on traditional and ancestral lands and waters of the Anishinaabe, specifically the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi, aligned under the Niswi-mishkodewinan, or Three Fires Confederacy.

¹⁸⁴ Found earlier in this chapter.

I acknowledge the land in this way because growing up as a settler in this area, I never heard the traditional names of these territories and learned little of their People. I recognize that my privilege of teaching, learning, researching, and creating in this space is a result of the forcible removal of these Native and Indigenous peoples.

In a similar spirit, I also wish to acknowledge those individuals and families who reside in this territory as a result of being displaced from their own ancestral lands by Others who brought industrial expansion, political conflict, warfare, and/or enslavement upon their communities.

As a scholar-artist and activist, I commit myself to aligning my work with acts, words, and deeds that illustrate my solidarity with and acknowledgment of those who continue to struggle against systems of oppression that have dispossessed them of their lands, marginalized and minoritized their cultures, and denied their human rights.¹⁸⁵

*The A/r/tographer enters a brief moment of silent lament and reflection. Her head gently tilted with chin to chest so her eyes are just below horizon from parallel; her eyes are a soft gaze down the tip of the nose but not closed; relaxed hands rest at the side of her body.*¹⁸⁶

*Crossfade: **Main title card** (“Called to the Conversation: A Digital Ethnodrama in Three Movements”)*

Exit A/r/tographer.

*Cue: **Inquiry video.***

An Inquiry (video)

In the video, each member of the Cohort appear center-screens (with their names in the lower corner) as they ask their questions. They appear to be asking their questions of the audience.

¹⁸⁵ This statement was created in collaboration with Dr. Megan Peiser (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) and Linda Grussani (Kitigan Zibi Anishinabekwe)—further inspired by Amnesty International Canada (2019, December 30). *Land, water, and territorial acknowledgements*. <https://www.amnesty.ca/blog/land-water-and-territorial-acknowledgements>

¹⁸⁶ Position description provided by Cierra Valles, trauma-informed yoga specialist (personal communication, July 26, 2021)

NOTE: This sequence of questions and all spoken word choruses are performed by the cohort of participant-character-performers (P-C-Performers) through pre-recorded video. The four P-C-Performers at the venue will not perform this piece nor any of the four spoken word choruses live. All Cohort portions of the program are presented through video.

ANGEL

What was the hardest point you had to go through
to get to where you are now?

JERIEL

How did you end up here
when you could've been anywhere else in the world?

ANGELA

What led you to college
and made you stay until the end?

LANYCK

What made you say: "This is what I want to do.
This is who I want to stick my interest into"?

REI

Did you ever get to the point to where
people's understandings were completely different
from what you intended them to be?

NORA

Have you ever thought: "Oh, this'll be easy"
and was it ever easy?

SHERRY

Is *doubt* something that everyone goes through
or is it just me?

TI

How did your life and your mindset
change over the years?

MELODY

What is your perception of the journey
from the beginning to now?

*The screen fades to black as
(Participant-Character 1 TBD) enters
the stage.*

Movement I

*Cue: **Monologue 1A companion video**
which opens with title, sub-title, and
participant-character 1 name).*¹⁸⁷

Monologues: Part A

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 1 TBD)

(Monologue 1 TBA: Part A)—*choose a monologue from pp. 429-462*¹⁸⁸

*(Participant-Character 1 TBD) exits;
(Participant-Character 2 TBD) enters.*

*Cue: **Monologue 2A companion video**
which opens with title, sub-title, and
participant-character 2 name).*¹⁸⁹

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 2 TBD)

(Monologue 2 TBA: Part A)—*choose a second monologue from pp. 429-462*

*(Participant-Character 2 TBD) exits;
(Participant-Character 3 TBD) enters.*

*Cue: **Monologue 3A companion video**
which opens with title, sub-title, and
participant-character 3 name).*¹⁹⁰

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 3 TBD)

(Monologue 3 TBA: Part A)—*choose a third monologue from pp. 429-462*

¹⁸⁷ Example: *The Bittersweet Breakdown* (Ti)—“She learns fast for a little kid...”

¹⁸⁸ Page numbers for Part A of all monologues are: Angel (p. 429), Angela (p. 432), Jeriel (p. 436), LaNyck (p. 439), Melody (p. 444), Nora (p. 447), Rei (p. 451), Sherry (p. 455), Ti (p. 458).

¹⁸⁹ Example: *Beyond the Clap* (Jeriel)—“Secretly I wanted...”

¹⁹⁰ Example: *What Lives Within* (Angela)—“Her voice went to the core of my soul ...”

*(Participant-Character 3 TBD) exits;
(Participant-Character 4 TBD) enters;*

*Cue: **Monologue 4A companion video**
which opens with title, sub-title, and
participant-character 3 name).¹⁹¹*

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 4 TBD)
(Monologue 4 TBA: Part A)—*choose a fourth monologue from pp. 429-462*

(Participant-Character 4 TBD) exits.

*Cue **Calling: A Spoken Word
Chorus video**, which opens with title.*

*NOTE: All Cohort portions of the
program will be presented through pre-
recorded video, which includes the
spoken word choruses. For clarification,
the four live P-C-Performers will not
perform any of the spoken word
choruses live.*

Calling: A Spoken Word Chorus (video)

LANYCK

Passion is what you love.
Purpose is what you want.
Calling is what is given.
Intertwined and so much a part of me that I do it for God.

REI

Sometimes we search our whole lives
trying to find or figure out our purpose.
Calling is the thing we feel pulled to do.
A "self" thing—whereas anointing is God-given.

ANGEL

Purpose and Calling can be confused, yet connected.
What you are Called to do is your purpose.
Once Called, you receive an Anointing for it.
Anointed to do what you were Called to do.

¹⁹¹ Example: *A Focus of Me* (Nora)—"I would picture myself as a soloist..."

SHERRY

If you're fulfilling your Calling,
following the will of God for your purpose in life,
then He puts an Anointing on you.
The more you grow in faith, the more your Anointing grows.

MELODY

Calling is feeling you have a difference to make in the world
and passion is your fuel.
Everybody possesses an Anointing.
It's just whether you want to access it or not.

JERIEL

Passion is an internal drive that will never die.
You know your Call through that gifting.
I feel it each and every day I get up.
I can't rest until I fulfill it.

NORA

Passion is something outside of you calling to something inside (and it fits).
You didn't necessarily pick it—it picked you.
Purpose is realizing you are meant to do something more.
Calling is hearing God ask.

TI

Calling is spiritual—purpose, God-given.
Passion is what you love.
A lot of people love their craft, but it's not their purpose.
My passion is music, but my purpose is music too.

*Cue monologue companion videos for
each monologue as before.*

Monologues: Part B

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 1 TBD)

(Monologue 1 TBA: Part B)¹⁹²

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 2 TBD)

(Monologue 2 TBA: Part B)

¹⁹² Page numbers for Part B of all monologues are Angel (p. 430), Angela (p. 434), Jeriel (p. 437), LaNyck (p. 441), Melody (p. 445), Nora (p. 449), Rei (p. 452), Sherry (p. 456), Ti (p. 460).

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 3 TBD)
(Monologue 3 TBA: Part B)

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 4 TBD)
(Monologue 4 TBA: Part B)

*Cue: Collision: A Spoken Word
Chorus video, which opens with title.*

Collision: A Spoken Word Chorus (video)

REI

Collision:
the point of holding myself accountable
to the life I told myself I want to live.

TI

My family knew I could sing.
But they had never seen what I could DO.
Like, for real.
Like, everything.
Like, SANG.

SHERRY

Worried about what the people you love think.
My voice wasn't as nice as my sister's.

"Am I good enough?"

JERIEL

Afraid to be myself.
To be extremely gifted and talented.
It intimidates people.

"You think you all this, that, and the third."

TI

All of a sudden it's...

"You think you know everything.
You think you're better than us."

Treating me differently
when I was doing this before I even started going to school for it.

MELODY

Leaving and coming,
you gain, you lose,
you leave things behind.
I've been forced to let go of a lot.

ANGELA

Separated from my voice for so long
and then I come back to singing?
Oh my God!

JERIEL

My professor picked up on the fact that I could coast
through things.

LANYCK

Your professors know when you don't practice.
Cause you go in there
making the same errors and the same mistakes.

JERIEL

“You didn't go home and study this.
You just matched the pitch
and memorized it that way.”

That hurt my feelings at the time.

LANYCK

It was a rude awakening.
Cause I know how to sing.

ANGELA

Dealing with the faculty is where I found my challenge.
I had my own mind,
things I had done.
I was grown.
I have experienced LIFE.
They had their degrees and I'm trying to get mine.

SHERRY

My teacher told me
I wasn't an alto,
I was actually a soprano.
It blew my mind.
I had a hard time with that.

ANGEL

Becoming more aware of what I was doing
messed me up.

REI

"Oh my God, you always messing up.
Just get it together, get it together!
You know this!"

But I didn't.

NORA

Massive stage fright.

ANGEL

Analyzed,
Criticized.
That becomes
very uncomfortable.

REI

Singing for smaller groups made me
more nervous than anything.

SHERRY

With large audiences,
there's more of a chance that SOMEBODY would like me!

TI

As long as I was singing in churches I felt safe.
Big crowds are not for Ti.

LANYCK

I just crash and burn in auditions.

SHERRY

I can do it at home a hundred times perfectly.
But in front of people judging the little things,
I freeze.
And there's no over-practicing out of it.

MELODY

"Why does this come so much easier to other people?"
"Why am I putting myself in this situation?"

JERIEL

"You're wasting your time.
"You're going to always be struggling."

ANGELA

"You don't have to sing so loud all the time.
Why don't you just bring it in?"

TI

An emotional roller coaster.
(softer)
So many times I wanted to leave
and never come back.

NORA

"I need to get out of here.
It's too overwhelming."

LANYCK

I had to push myself to keep going.

TI

Glad I stayed.
I learned a lot.
It got me out my shell.
Out of my box vocally.
On a whole 'nother level mentally,
musically.

NORA

But if I wasn't here for myself,
I would have left.
Because it gets that crazy.

SHERRY

The moment of collision:

REI

Where you did what you could
to achieve your dreams.

*Cue monologue companion videos for
each monologue as before.*

Monologues: Part C

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 4 TBD)
(Monologue 4 TBA: Part C)¹⁹³

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 3 TBD)
(Monologue 3 TBA: Part C)

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 2 TBD)
(Monologue 2 TBA: Part C)

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 1 TBD)
(Monologue 1 TBA: Part C)

***Cue: Conversation: A Spoken Word
Chorus video, which opens with title.***

Conversation: A Spoken Word Chorus (video)

JERIEL

Coming into the conversation musically
is what I offer the world.
My expression as a songwriter,
an artist-performer.

REI

Almost everything music is a conversation.
An interpretation,
a bargain.
a three-way conversation between performer, composer, audience.

NORA

Explanation before definition.
Weird cause I didn't know how to apply it.
Music was something I held to myself.

REI

A conversation with self.
Sitting with feelings, experience, inspiration.
Letting those things shape my art.

¹⁹³ Page numbers for Part C of all monologues are Angel (p. 431), Angela (p. 435), Jeriel (p. 438), LaNyck (p. 443), Melody (p. 446), Nora (p. 449), Rei (p. 453), Sherry (p. 457), Ti (p. 460).

MELODY

Asleep, I dream about a melody or a song—
having to get up and write it.

Dealing with life, upset about what I went through—
having to get up and write it.

It's a way to cope.
To express myself in a healthy way.

SHERRY

Coming into conversation.
Joining new conversations.

The more that you grow in knowledge,
the more questions you ask.

The more questions you ask,
the more things you seek out.

The more things you seek out,
the more confidence you have.

TI

Being aware of the way you talk musically.

Uncomfortable in a room full of country singers;
no knowledge of what they're talking about;
their lingo of music different from the lingo of neo-soul, of gospel.
The only thing we have in common...
Is.
music.

Just always be aware.
Have a little knowledge.
Find the words.

JERIEL

Fake it til you make it.

TI

Like when we went to the opera with the president's wife.
They're singing a whole 'nother language.

I'm sitting there confused, like:

Imma just use what I already know;
feed her what I think is happening.

“Yeah.
Their melismas are
nice.”

REI

No shade.

NORA

Introduced to different points of view,
music of all types,
older music that people are still talking about,
there have literally been conversations
before I was even born.

ANGEL

I saw myself in conversation with Puccini and why.
Mozart and why.
Why, why, why?
In conversation with the songs themselves.
Getting the depth of it
the history,
the dimensions—
to more understanding.

SHERRY

Cause the more conversations I could have,
the more confidence I had,
the more comfortable I felt.

ANGEL

Even with people from different genres.
I understand what you're talking about
if you're talking about emotion,
a feeling,

how much you love it,
how it's changed your life.

All that
is universal
in music.

Without music,
maybe I wouldn't have been able to engage in a conversation because
that person, their life, their background,
is so much different than mine.
But because of our passion for music,
it opened a conversation.

ANGELA

Using music to hear
and understand.
It's the heartbeat that brings everyone together.
If we could just sing through everything,
we probably wouldn't have some of the issues we have.

ANGEL

The humanity of music helps us to connect.

REI

That's
the sharing piece.

JERIEL

And now
I'm part of the list of great writers and composers who made a difference in the world,
touching people,
building empathy,
helping shape the minds and hearts of those
who listen.
Influencing.
Just like how music influenced me.

NORA

Coming to my own as a musician,
I have things to say.

JERIEL

And when I release my body of work,
I'll be a part of the conversation too.

Interlude: Musical River 313 Mixtape

*Cue: **Musical River 313 Mixtape** audio*

*The Mixtape is constructed from any
combination of 20 songs from*

APPENDIX E. It includes a diverse mix of song clips (e.g., genre, style, mood, tempo) which are between 3 seconds and 13 seconds in length, and is exactly 3 minutes and 13 seconds in total length.

If a visual component is desired during the Mixtape, it should be something simple so as to keep the focus on the music (e.g., an artistic collage of song titles, artists, or relevant imagery).

During the Mixtape, the cast will prepare the performance space for Movement II. The podium is moved off SL and four of the five chairs moved in front of the screen (facing up-stage on inner-facing diagonal; 2 on USR and 2 on USL).

When everything is set, the four P-C-Performers take a seat in the chairs and the A/r/tographer waits just off-stage until the end of the Mixtape.

Movement II

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Could we raise the projection screen, please?

The projector is turned off and the projection screen rises to reveal the white board.

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Thank you!

[Participant-Character 2] and [Participant-Character 4],
could you make sure everyone receives one of these?

A/r/tographer passes them a stack of 5x8 notecards with golf pencils attached to distribute to the audience.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Alternatively (especially if a larger audience is anticipated), the notecards could be distributed as the audience enters or the back of the folded program (if printed on card stock) could be used. Then, in this moment, the P-C-Performers could only distribute pencils to audience members who need them.

A/R/TOGRAPHER

For those who are joining us virtually today,
please find something to write on
and write with.

*Ad lib until P-C-Performers 2 and 4
return to their seats with
notecards/pencils of their own.*

Life-Curriculum Trajectory Mapping

*For the rest of this section, the
A/r/tographer is addressing both the P-
C-Performers and the audience as
members of her classroom.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Alright.
So if you remember the last time we met,
we were talking about all of the knowledge, skills, credentials, tools, and resources
that you have gained through your lived experience.

Today we're going to continue examining your *life curriculum*
by moving our attention from the past and present
into the imagined future
so we can start to prepare a trajectory to get there.¹⁹⁵

Could we have two volunteers
to map their trajectories on the board
while the rest of us use our notecards?

*[Participant-Character 2] and
[Participant-Character 4] indicate
interest.¹⁹⁶*

¹⁹⁵ This activity directly connects to and is inspired by Pinar's autobiographical method of *currere* (which I addressed in Chapter Six). I have also referenced my concept of *life curriculum*, which I will address in Chapter Seven.

¹⁹⁶ As a note, all participant-character-performers have prepped for this activity. They have all practiced mapping their trajectories prior to the performance for ease and efficacy in the moment. However, because this is living inquiry, the P-c-performers are very welcome to shift their responses to whatever strikes them in the moment. Whereas the monologues are fixed words in time, these words should come organically as true process, not prepared speech.

A/R/TOGRAPHER

[Participant-Character 2] and...
[Participant-Character 4].
Excellent! Grab a marker.

Alright.
On the left side, make a dot.
This is point A.
Point A is where you are now
and where all those lovely resources from your prior experiences live.

We made fairly comprehensive lists last week,
which included not only your education, training, knowledge, and talents;
but also things like:
the support of family/friends,
hard life lessons learned,
your personality traits,
or your mentality, philosophy, or faith.

We don't need to write all of those again right now,
but let's list four resources that you consider very important
as a reminder
and a starting point
before we move on.

*The P-C-Performer volunteers write
their four resources on the board under
Point A. The other two P-C-Performers
write theirs on notecards which
hopefully prompts audience members to
consider the same.*

*The A/r/tographer can ad lib
encouragement and/or answer any
questions.*

*The A/r/tographer asks for the P-C-
Performer volunteers to share what they
have written. Ad lib conversation with P-
C-Performer volunteers.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Now let's move into the future.
Five years.

So today is [CURRENT MONTH/DAY and YEAR].
Please write that date above Point A.

Now imagine that you are suddenly transported to...
[CURRENT MONTH/DAY and YEAR+5 years].

Draw a Point B on the right side
and write that date above it.

*The P-C-Performer volunteers draw a
Point B on the right side*

Keep your pen or pencil on Point B.
Take a moment and imagine yourself waking up on that date:
Where are you?
Who is with you?
What do you have planned for today?

What does a day in the life of “Future You” look like?

Take a moment and jot down a few bullet points.

*The P-C-Performer volunteers draw a
Point B on the right side and write their
four resources underneath. The other
two P-C-Performers write theirs on
notecards which hopefully prompts
audience members to consider the same.
The A/r/tographer can ad lib
encouragement and/or answer any
questions.*

*The A/r/tographer asks for the P-C-
Performer volunteers to share what they
have written. Ad lib conversation with P-
C-Performer volunteers.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Our next step will be connecting these two points:
A and B.
Present to Imagined Future.

*The A/r/tographer goes to the
whiteboard and draws a curved line*

*between point A and point B on one of
the P-C-Performer's displays.*

We begin this process by setting *waypoints*
which are intermediate points along a line of travel¹⁹⁷
to guide us.

*The A/r/tographer draws several points
along the curved line.*

So before the next time we meet...

I'd like you to think deeply about who you would need to be,
what you would need to do,
or what you would need to have...
to aim your trajectory from point A (today)
to point B (your imagined future 5 years from today).

Is there a credential you believe you would need to have in hand?
A skill you need to strengthen?
A mentality you need to develop or shift?
A habit you need to break?
A belief you need to change?

Each of these things will be potential *waypoints*
along that journey.

Next time, we're going to craft a comprehensive list.
But in this moment, to get you started...
Could you think of one thing that would help set your trajectory?
One important waypoint
to aim you toward the day in the future you described?

*Ad lib conversation with P-C-Performer
volunteers as they share.*

A/r/tographer addresses audience.

If you have identified a waypoint,
I invite you to speak it into existence.
Feel free to share your waypoint
with someone sitting nearby,
or in the chat if you are online.

¹⁹⁷ *Waypoint* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Cue: Lower the projection screen during this sharing time.

The A/r/tographer addresses the audience.

Obviously, life is unpredictable,
but in assessing where you are,
and setting intention for where you would like to be,
you can make a start in the direction you wish to go.

As the A/r/tographer speaks, the live P-C-Performers remain facing upstage toward the screen, sitting with their backs to the audience. The A/r/tographer walks past them, down to CS.

That's the amazing thing about journeys.
You never quite know where you have been going
until you can pause
and reflect
on where you have been.

During this upcoming monologue, the cohort appears on-screen to ask their questions of the A/r/tographer. As the live P-C-Performers see their recorded selves ask their question and receive an answer from the A/r/tographer, she/they/he will stand slowly, pick up their chair, and walk downstage past the A/r/tographer to create a semi-circle facing the audience in DC with the other live P-C-Performers. During the monologue, some questions are paired. It does not matter if two P-C-Performers rise and move together.

Once they arrive into the semi-circle, the P-C-Performers will sit fairly attentively—their faces reflecting whatever their natural responses to the A/r/tographer's words may be.

They may also mime a whispered conversation amongst themselves.

*Cue: “**Flowers in Detroit II**” companion video, which opens with a title card. The video will show a single or split screen of cohort members as they ask their questions, then changes to display photographs and other graphics/sounds during the monologue sections.*

Flowers in Detroit II

MELODY and ANGEL appear on-screen in a two-person Zoom format.

MELODY

In your perception of your musical journey,
what was your biggest challenge?

ANGEL

What was the hardest point that you had to go through
to get to where you are now?

*MELODY and ANGEL fade.
Companion video for Part I begins.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

I came into music at four
with private piano lessons.
Classical.
Reading notation
at the same time I started to read English.

I learned that music
was something to get right;
a reproduction of
something a master had created.
Flawless as possible.

Church choir,
school band,
voice lessons,
my undergraduate performance degree
reinforced this idea too.

Music was absolute,
box-like,
linear.
A closed way of seeing and doing.
Get it right.
Do it right.

But then I started putting myself in teaching situations where
there was
a constant re-challenging of:
“What do I believe when it comes to my students?”

And the idea of
right and wrong being the most important thing in music
started breaking down.
Crumbling away.

At Marygrove,
working with all of you,
I finally realized that:
“Yes,
having the chops,
the notes,
the technique is important...
But that's just
phase one.”

Then:
Where is the humanity?
What is your role?
Who is your audience?
What is the message?

It finally
put the "Get-It-Perfect" in its place.
Maybe that's a starting point
but it's not the heart of it.

That's not why we music.

That was my hardest journey.
The longest journey.

And I'm still unpacking that.

ANGELA appears on-screen in a single person Zoom format.

ANGELA

What led you to Marygrove
and what made you stay until the end?

*ANGELA fades. Companion video
for Part II begins.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Right after my Masters,
my voice professor said:
“Higher ed is where you belong.”

But most colleges want you to focus on one area.
I loved to do
so many things
in performance and education.
I didn't want to pigeonhole myself.

Then literally a week later,
I saw the job posting for Marygrove
which
sought someone who could do many things!

So I applied.

Coming into Marygrove was
a cultural awakening.
I came in with a lot of incorrect assumptions—
musically, academically, socially—
and I needed to check myself.

But I just
fell in love
with
this little school with big dreams
of urban leadership.

With students who maybe
didn't have
the assumed background of a music major
but
who had many different strengths than I did.

I loved the conversations we had,
building curriculum together,
combining our ideas
to make something completely unique and new.

You guys were always pushing for "next."
Like, Nora announcing:
"The theme of my recital is Red!"

I'm like: "I don't understand that!
You don't have themes for senior recitals!"
But...
Alright, we'll figure it out."

I loved those challenges.

When they announced Marygrove was closing...
I don't know.
I just—

I felt like I owed that
little department so much.

It was a sense of honor
to help close it out.
With respect.
For all of us.

*JERIEL and LANYCK appear on-screen
in a two-person Zoom format.*

JERIEL

How did you end up in Detroit
when you could've been anywhere else in the world?
How did you get to a point where you wanted to invest
into the Black urban community?

LANYCK

What drew you to that lane and made you say:
"This is the particular set of people I want to stick my interest into"?

*JERIEL and LANYCK fade. Companion
video for Part III begins.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Growing up in the suburbs,
I learned very specific things about
Detroit.
There were riots.
It's very dangerous now.

There's north of Eight Mile where we live
and there's Detroit where they live.

That's the narrative I knew
as I left
for college.

After teaching two years in rural Ohio,
I interviewed at a high school outside D.C.
99 percent
African-American.
At the interview, the principal says:
"You're a ridiculous choice.
You have no experience with Black students.
But I'm meant to hire you.
So...
congratulations."

I walked in there
with the White girl audacity of:
"I can do this!"
Thrown into Black culture.
In the minority for the first time ever.

I loved it
and was terrified at the same time

I had never envisioned myself
teaching in predominantly Black institutions.
But I don't know.
I guess that's what calling is.
It's not always something you...
Well, it was things I chose obviously,
but
it wasn't planned.

Marygrove was the same serendipity,
the same calling,

It's just where I was meant to be.
The path I was meant to take.

Now there were days where I would drive to work thinking:
"What the hell am I doing?"
I'd cross back and forth over Eight Mile
and wonder;
"What right do I have
to pretend I have anything to contribute when
these students' stories are so rich,
they're facing things I've never faced,
and they want to pursue music that I'm brand new to.

I can't answer a lot of their questions
with the knowledge I have.

You pointing out
this inherent disconnect
between music students and the curriculum.

You all pushed me hard.
And at every step,
it challenged me.

There were many days I asked myself:
"What do I have to give here?"

The answer that came
was:

"Because you are learning how to cross-over and cross-back
authentically.

And that's what these students want too."

Crossing-over.
And crossing-back.

That's where I came to.

*SHERRY and NORA appear on-screen
in a two-person Zoom format.*

SHERRY

When you came out of college and were in our shoes,
did you consider yourself a professional musician?

NORA

Did you ever think like:
"Oh, this'll be easy"
and was it ever easy?

SHERRY

Is doubt something everyone goes through
or is it just me?

*SHERRY and NORA fade. Companion
video for part IV begins.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Coming up through
K-12,
things came naturally to me,
easy-ish to me.
I was successful in school
and in my musicking.

In sophomore year,
my voice teacher said:
"You're gonna go sing at the Met and be famous.
We're going to get you into the top schools."

I was like:
"I'm going to go to the Met!
I don't know what that is...
but that's amazing!"
I got pretty cocky
when I auditioned for schools
and got in all of them.

I'm like:
"See, getting to the Met will be easy.
Besides,
who sings opera?!
This will be smooth sailing."

At conservatory,
reality
slapped me in the face.
There were such talented, talented people
and I was no longer a big fish.
I lost a lot of my confidence,
thinking
"Well...
I don't have a shot at getting to the Met now."

That's what I knew as
being a successful singer.
If you couldn't sing at the Met,
then
maybe you didn't deserve to be a professional—
which is so sad.

I actually stopped performing after undergrad
and committed myself to teaching instead.
I felt qualified to do that
with my certification.

Really,
I didn't come back to performing
until
six years later.
I stumbled in the right studio
and my now-mentor listened,
looked at me,
and said:
"I like your musical soul.
I'll work with you."

Nothing about my technique.
No promises.
Just: "You have something to say.
Let's do this."

Over the next five years,
we rediscovered,
remapped my voice.
And that's—
that's when I claimed myself
as a professional singer.

I claimed it.

And I'm to the point now
where nobody can take that from me.

TI and REI appear on-screen in a two-person Zoom format.

TI

You and I had a language barrier,
because I was from this musical culture and you were from that musical culture.

REI

Were our understandings ever completely different from what you intended?
What was it like navigating through those frustrations?

TI

How has your life and mindset changed during the Marygrove years?

TI and REI fade. Companion video for Part V begins.

A/R/TOGRAPHER

What encapsulates my entire
journey of teaching at Marygrove
is
unsettling what I thought was
set or truth or...
right?

Most times
when I was trying to convey something unsuccessfully,
it would fall under that category of:
"Oh, we're defining words differently."
or
"We've had different experiences."
or
"The advice I'm giving doesn't work for this situation."

It was very frustrating at first
because I'm like:
"These things aren't translating!
I don't understand where the disconnect is!"

I had to learn
to listen better,
to see better,
to expand my vocabulary,
to open myself up
to a more pluralistic understanding.

It was on me to
reassess what is truly needed here.
And how can we foster better conversation?

I started conservatory training
when I was four.
It was:
“Here's the score, learn it, memorize it, perform it perfectly.”

But when we rehearsed for Coffeehouse concerts at Marygrove,
I would ask: “When will this R&B song end?”

"Well, the song will end when it ends."

“No.
A song has designated sections.
You sing them
and it ends!”

"No, I've got to feel it.
Maybe repeat the chorus or modulate
if I feel like it."

WHAT?

I would go home and grapple with these kinds of things,
because there's established voices in your head that shout:
“No! THIS is truth.
THIS is how things are done.”
But it wasn't.

It is so much more complicated
and messy
and wonderful
and real.

Projection screen fades to black.

As the A/r/tographer ends the monologue, all live P-C-Performers are now sitting in a downstage-facing semi-circle. They whisper and indicate agreement to one another.

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 1 TBD)

Ok.

(gestures for the A/r/tographer to join them)

Let's get started.

The P-C-Performers move their chairs to make space for one more on DSL. A/r/tographer grabs the 5th chair. She joins the four P-C-Performers in the semi-circle.

Movement III

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 2 TBD)

In this final movement,
we'll have a talk-back session about this ethnodrama,
the stories shared within it, and its creation.

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 3 TBD)

We would like to invite the audience,
both live and virtual,
to ask our cast a question
or share something about the ethnodrama that resonated with you.

*The talkback session with the audience will be supported through Mosio.¹⁹⁸
The A/r/tographer will use a cell phone to receive and share these questions.
Cue: **Slide with the Mosio number and keyword.** Both live and virtual audience members may text this number for access to submit questions to the cast.*

(PARTICIPANT-CHARACTER 4 TBD)

If you want to participate,
we ask that you text this key word on the screen

¹⁹⁸ Or a similar text messaging software.

to the Mosio number beneath it.
(points to screen)
Then you can text the A/r/tographer directly
without your personal cell number being shared.

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Not all questions may be answered,
but we will do our best because we love to hear from our audiences.

Talk-Back Session

A/R/TOGRAPHER

As you ponder and submit your questions through Mosio,
I have a reflection question for our participant-characters to get us started.

First: “What was the experience of performing today?
Any new insights you have about your 2017 selves?”

Space for P-C-Performer responses.

“Did any of your 2017 words strike you in unexpected ways?
Would you change any of the words used?
Tell any of those stories differently?”

Space for P-C-Performer responses.

“Have any of your perceptions changed or expanded
in relation to any of the four themes:
Calling, Collision, Conversation, or Journey?”

Space for P-C-Performer responses.

*Three questions have been listed above
in case the audience is hesitant—but not
all need to be asked. As the
P-C-Performers are giving their
responses, the A/r/tographer can
monitor the audience questions coming
into Mosio and jump into those at any
time.*

*After the audience questions/comments
have been shared and commented upon
[or 15 mins max], the A/r/tographer
moves into the final portion.*

A/R/TOGRAPHER

Thank you to everyone who submitted their questions!
As we wrap up our ethnodrama, I have two final questions for the cast.

“Do you have any advice for current music students in our audience?”

Space for P-C-Performer responses

“Do you have any advice for music professors and staff sitting in our audience?”

Space for P-C-Performer responses

Thank you for joining us on this journey this afternoon/evening!

*A/r/tographer gestures to the screen
as she and the P-C-Performers stand,
pick up their chairs, and exit SR and SL.*

*Cue: **Journey: A Spoken Word
Chorus** video.*

Journey: A Spoken Word Chorus (video)

JERIEL

If God has a greater plan for you,
there's nothing until you agree to open that door.

SHERRY

There were times throughout the journey,
I'd feel like I could take on anything.
“I'm going to finish no matter what.”

JERIEL

But as you go through it,
there can be challenges.

SHERRY

Then you're like:
"Man,
am I going to be able to do this?"

JERIEL

Trying to get over a mountain,
a bumpy plain,
a flat plain,
a river....

SHERRY

You go through ups and downs.

JERIEL

That's just how life happens
in college.

MELODY

You know how they say it takes a village to raise a child?
It takes a village to nurture a gift.

JERIEL

Professors and instructors
who saw my potential,
my intention,
my gift,
my worth—
and wanted to invest in it.

LANYCK

And having somebody who's actually going through the same thing.
To talk to about our problems, hurdles, journeys...

"How are you decipherin'?"

"How are you juggling?"

To talk to about anything or whatever
and just rock with it.

MELODY

You can't do it without people helping you get there.

REI

There's never enough preparation
to understand the journey you're going to go through.
Especially as a music major.

NORA

A quick trip won't try you in the same ways that a journey would.

TI

It's a struggle.
Very frustrating at times.

REI

I was warned.
But there's nothing
anyone could say.

You just have to do it,
experience it, feel it.
Because if you don't,
it's nothing you'll be able to understand.

TI

So give it a whirl.

SHERRY

Start where you're at.
See where you go.

TI

Take everything that you've learned from
elementary, middle school, high school, college...

SHERRY

Have fun.
Fall on your face.
Get back up and keep walking.

TI

...because if it wasn't for those experiences
you wouldn't think the way
you think about music now.

NORA

Don't get turned around.
Even if you need to slow down or take a rest,
don't stay there.
Keep the end in mind while making your way through.
Even if you can't quite see it.
Onward thinking and motion.

SHERRY

Cause you're going to end up somewhere,
and it's going to be somewhere good.

NORA

You may even be further along than you think.

TI

On a whole 'nother level now.

MELODY

Know what your strengths are;
what makes you look amazing.
Know who you are.

Those people you look up to,
aspire to,
you never know what that person went through
to get where they're going.

LANYCK

What they had to go through to get what they wanted.

ANGELA

I have completed this part of my journey
and there's much more I need to learn.
Maybe next year I could be a little better.
Just as long as I continue.

ANGEL

Cause the journey is like building a house.
Foundation
a roof,
flooring,
pipes,
wiring,
The journey has built me.

Now I'm at a point like:
"Let's have an Open House!"

REI

This is a journey.
It looks different for everybody.
and you're going to go about it the long way around.

But every experience can teach you something,
if you really want to learn.

*At the conclusion of this spoken word chorus, bow music begins.*¹⁹⁹

The Cohort remains on the screen as the live P-C-Performers and A/R/TOGRAPHER reenter the performing area and take a group bow with the Cohort recording (on a cue from music). The live P-C-Performers gesture to the technology manager (on a cue from music) and all take a second full group bow (on a cue from music). The Cohort rise from their chairs and exit their screens as the live performers also exit the performing space.

*Cross-fade: **Main title card.***

Screen fades to black.

Music continues through audience exit.

¹⁹⁹ Ideally, the bow music would be a recording of participant-characters performing together in a gospel jam or other musical gathering. Otherwise, the Cohort would select a song from Appendix E.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A TIME FOR DISCUSSION

*Time is a vital ingredient in the recipe
of making the music more intense.*

*The treatment of context, articulation,
intention, attention,
magnetism, attitude,
and content
are all contingent to your relationship to time—
the time of a project,
the time span of a relationship,
your time on earth,
and so on.*

*The art of time is intuitive.
Sense when to wait and when to plunge,
and be brave enough to articulate in the face of transient experience.*

If you hesitate, you will miss the boat.

*You cannot force things to happen at a particular time,
but you can prepare and pave the way for the eventuality of expression
in the same way that you pave the way for visits of inspiration in your daily life:*

*You create the proper conditions and circumstances.
And then,
you act.*

A poetic transcription created from Bogart's (2007)
And Then, You Act (p. 139)

In the final chapter of a qualitative thesis, a researcher typically reiterates findings of the inquiry, offers implications of the data analysis, indicates lessons learned in the conduct of the study, and/or suggests further research that might follow from the methods used or the findings discovered (Silverman, 2020). While the task is straightforward, I have found myself hesitating.

In an earlier chapter, I posed the question: “What happens to meaning when purpose is gone?” This question has returned and become even more pointed as I prepare to conclude this document. Originally, this study was intended to further inform our curriculum remapping within the Marygrove College Music Department. Following a complex bricolage of data collection through interviews, multiple forms of narrative analysis, and ongoing narrator checking, “Called to the Conversation” has been offered as a theatrical narrative constructed from the personal myths of nine alumni of the program (and one former professor) who each shared a self-cultivated collection of stories. Those stories represent:

- reflections upon prior experiences (e.g., tangible skills, known facts, explicit and tacit knowings, social-emotional strengths and weaknesses, socio-cultural and religious philosophy/theory, “common sense” and taken-as-shared understandings, values and beliefs, personal goals and interests) gained in the Known World prior to coming to college, developed in the Otherworld during college, and earned in the return to the Known World (or in transition to the next Journey); and
- key events and episodes had along the journey which had been deemed as significant (especially in relationship to the prior experience types listed above) as well as in connection to identity development (especially as it relates to a sense of professional musicianhood).

As a faculty member and co-chair of the Marygrove Music Department, I would have brought these new insights about the process of gathering and analyzing these stories to my colleagues; asked them to consider the significance that a similar course of action

could bring to our work with the Marygrove music students; and potentially initiated conversations about how we might infuse curricular elements of our performance degree programs with life-storying and self-reflective activities.²⁰⁰ As explored in Chapters Two and Five, the experience of crafting, sharing, and receiving such stories can be extremely powerful for everyone involved. Especially when those stories are shared by individuals whose experiences and perspectives are not often heard within a particular context and are then received in attentive consideration by those whose stories often are (Delgado & Stefanie, 2017).

However, there is no more curriculum nor department nor college to inform as Marygrove has been a long time closed now. So, what is to be done with this work, this study, this process, these stories of journey, risk, and change in relation to the research question posed?

A Complicated Conversation

Over the course of my time at Marygrove and through the process of this study, I have come to see *curriculum* as something beyond a checklist of graduation requirements, a plan of work, an assessment process, an inventory of reading materials, or even a calendar of performances. Just as music is not a collection of pitches, rhythms, harmonies, and techniques—neither is curriculum the sum of its courses, assignments, grading procedures, and timelines. Like music, curriculum is so much more.

²⁰⁰ The idea of infusing courses with self-reflective activities is not new to music education degree programs (Blair, 2013; Schön, 1984; Schön, 1987). This was a significant element in my undergraduate pre-service teacher program experience.

Curriculum is a flexible, ever-evolving, iterative process. It is a complicated conversation (Pinar, 2012) between learner, more knowledgeable other(s), peers, content, and context—all of which are influenced by one another’s constantly changing social, political, and cultural aspects. As the former Marygrove Vice-President of Academic Affairs Jane Hammang-Buhl shared, curriculum is “a living lab” which demands space and time for individuals to inquire together through an interactive, interdependent process (personal communication, August 24, 2016). It is my subjective “I-in-my-world” coming into “dialectic relationship” with your “I-in-my-world” (Aoki, 1980/2005, p. 104). Then, through these types of conversations, we “turn ourselves about” to both converge and transform (Doll, 2002, p. 49). In this complex, dynamic, and generative space, the components “never quite lock into place, and yet never quite dissolve into turbulence” which supports a milieu that is “spontaneous, adaptive, and alive” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 25). Curriculum in this sense is “inquiry enfolding in a learning environment”—a “journey of exploration” where learners “travel to places in text, in conversation, and in action” and with the resulting path of happenings creating a curriculum (p. 40).

Because of this fluidity and subjectivity, curriculum is bricologian in nature. Drawing from our wealth of prior knowledge, we explore the unknown or perhaps even more difficult, challenge the known. The trajectory of this learning adventure is our curriculum—autobiographical, contextually informed, and occurring anywhere and everywhere. Because, despite academia’s claim, formal education does not have a monopoly on learning and knowledge. However, formal settings can be a formidable gateway into efficient systems thinking; into deep, challenging, and meaningful assessment; into a remarkable collective of peers and more knowledgeable others; and

into a compendium of resources, tools, and activities that one may not have access to within their current Known World.

As teachers in formal and nonformal settings, we have opportunities to foster adventure in learning; to help students discover and better utilize their own unique voices in their co-constructed nature; to gain insight, confidence, and acuity in the challenging task of negotiating the complicated conversation. We have potential for introducing an intensity, focus, and rigor that students may not have yet experienced in a particular field of study (e.g., music). However, in partnership with these things, we must embrace from whence students have come and where they see themselves going; to nurture their curiosity for what lies beyond, a sense of adventure, and the agency to achieve; to foster a continued awakening—to the world, to perspective, to possibility, to self, and to other—for lifelong learning. In higher education, there is the added challenge of helping students prepare for a potential career or vocation.²⁰¹ But what if we abandoned the idea of the conservatory curriculum as a historical, traditional, “fixed and ready-made” plan—and instead allowed it to react, flex, and dance in response to the students for whom it is intended? (Dewey, 1902/1981, p. 11). Could this open the door to a sense of curriculum that Latta (2013) calls “a continuous reconstructing movement” of “making and relating, perceiving and responding, and connecting and understanding” to the individuals who walk through our doors? (p. 47).

²⁰¹ At Marygrove, I heard much debate about the role of liberal arts colleges in career-preparation vs. developing an educated citizenship. I will not enter this discussion here, but I will assert that during my seven years in the Marygrove music department, students entered our program with a strong expectation of gaining skills/knowledge/experience to reenter the world as young professional musicians and/or professional music educators upon graduation.

I never intended this dissertation to be about curriculum. Although perhaps it is not. In this context, perhaps I am speaking more broadly of the concept of a *life curriculum*.

A Continuous Life Curriculum of One

*Our shared stories are powerful exemplars of experiences as learners,
each singular and one of a kind.
Important to the present work is the concept of one
according to the individual specialties
and potential of each learner.*

*As their teachers,
we are mindful that the students we teach
are seekers and beholders
in
a continuous life curriculum of one.*

A poetic transcription from
Danette Littleton's (2015)
When Music Goes to School (pp. xvii-xix)

In this study, I have begun to examine the variations of what I have termed a *life curriculum* of professional musicianhood.²⁰² The episodes and reflections shared by the participants in their interviews were not simply an example of topical life storytelling—but of a continuous curricular journey in music from their earliest musical memory to the present moment. Within these life curricula, the significance of a musical learning moment that occurred while crawling on the floor of the church choir stand, or while watching PBS television, or while restocking the aisles of a Target can carry equal weight to any classroom, rehearsal, or performance moment within an accredited institution.

²⁰² Similar to an individual having multiple identities within self, I see humans as having multiple lines of life curricula, which all weave and influence one another.

Life curriculum is a form of personal *living inquiry* (Springgay & Irwin 2008) connected to the autobiographical process of *currere* (Pinar, 1975, 2004b, 2012, 2019). Our learning journeys within any sphere (e.g., musicianhood) are reflected through the self-storied, co-constructed episodes of life curriculum which illuminate our past, define our present, and guide our future trajectory. Currere encourages all learners to embark on an autobiographical examination toward self-understanding in relation to learning and knowing. Through this process, “one analyzes one’s experience of the past and fantasies of the future in order to understand more fully, with more complexity and subtlety, one’s submergence in the past” (Pinar, 2004b, p. 4). As described in Chapter Six, William Pinar describes the methodology of this process as “returning to the past (the ‘regressive’) and imagining the future (the ‘progressive’)” so they are understood (the ‘analytic’) in such a way so that the self becomes expanded, complicated, and mobilized (the ‘synthetical’ moment) (p. 5). Wiggins and McTighe (2005) also speak of bringing the imagined future into the present in relation to localized, operational curriculum design. However, Pinar (2012) expands the scope of temporal significance into a curricular messiness by infusing an almost Whovian sense of time and space.²⁰³ He believes curriculum should not only be focused on one’s knowledge and achievements of the past, nor of their aspirational goals for the possible future, but on the impacts of their co-informed meaning upon the present. It is an expansive view of educational experience, which neither begins nor ends with the past; but instead embraces holistic accounts of learning across the lifespan. These accounts are formed by series of experiences that have been self-identified and

²⁰³ Doctor Who is a BBC science fiction television show which premiered in 1963 and shares the adventures of a Time Lord and his companions exploring the universe in his time-travelling spaceship.

valued as playing key roles in “my” learning and growing and are assessed through self-reflection shared with both self and others. As Pauline Sameshima voices: “Currere is *living pedagogic inquiry*—finding location of self in relation and iterating moments as knowledge construction along the path of the dynamic process” (p. 31). Like narrative psychology, these stories of the past deeply inform both our views of the present and our trajectory for the future (McAdams, 1997) because how we choose to story our stories can result in very different perceptions of the present and/or trajectories for the future.

Lifelong learning has become a popular post-baccalaureate term (typically applied to 25+ year-olds to ensure professional success for college alumni and to market institutional graduate and post-baccalaureate offerings for all). However, lifelong learning does not start *after* schooling—it begins with birth and ends with death (or perhaps not)—and is inherent throughout human existence as we continue to learn throughout our lifetimes. It is not simply what we know and prove, but who we are and how we live. Over a lifetime, curriculum shifts from the developmentally-focused pedagogy of youth to the motivationally-centered andragogy (Knowles, 2020) of our adulthood. However, this does not affect the significance of continued learning at every stage of life.

Especially for professional musicians, learning is a lifelong journey—a “conceptual framework” which not only considers musicianship, musicality, and musicianhood, but also practical professional matters, such as a musician’s employability, adaptability, and personal/professional development across a lifetime of musicking (Smelde, 2005, p. 3). This study has examined a significant sub-journey within the lifelong journey—the hero’s journey of pursuing an undergraduate music degree.

Hero's Journey in Education

The participants in this study heard a *Call to Adventure* (i.e., pursuing advanced or professional musicianhood). As a result, they chose to leave their *Known Worlds* to enter a strange new land (e.g., the Marygrove College music department) to face scary dragons (e.g., insecurity, unfamiliar performance practice, advanced music theory, performance anxiety, vocal issues) to attain the grail/elixir they sought (i.e., knowledge, ability, and identity of professional musicking). I am curious if other music professors and voice degree graduates have noted similar patterns both within their students and themselves. Have they also seen student-musicians grapple with *threshold guardians* (e.g., auditions, introduction to theory classes, freshman juries), *tests*, and *shadow* fears as they pursued their *Calling*? Have they noted how fellow heroes, *Allies*, *Mentors*, and *Heralds* have aided these students when they became trapped, lost, or despondent along the way? Have they, as a *Witness*, observed the collision of *Calling* and *Shadow* come to a climax as a student-musician, with tools and knowledge in-hand, bravely faced their central *Ordeal* (e.g., preparation for or execution of a capstone recital) alone? Or seen recent graduates struggle to reenter and successfully inhabit the Known World after having conquered the *Otherworld* and claiming their *Reward* (e.g., recital, degree, self-confidence)? If so, and if this might be considered a useful interpretation of the journey, then how might purposefully relating the story arc of the hero's journey to the pursuit of an undergraduate voice performance degree (and their intersection with self-reflection) affect the perspectives and agency of our students?

After coming to this idea, I discovered Randles (2011) has made a similar connection between preservice music teachers and their journeys to professional identity.

Connecting to Barrett and Stauffer (2009), he notes how constructing versions of experiences and events through storytelling may help us see that careers “are a part of a much larger more innate cycle, one that can be seen through time and within vastly different locations” (p. 8). My application of this idea to the professional journey of voice performance majors is in a similar vein.

Hero’s Journey as Educative

Mayes (2010) views the hero’s journey as fundamentally educative—a symbol of “emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth of the individual as he or she goes beyond the narrow confines of family and immediate environment in order to seek, find, and ultimately act on a new vision of self, society, world, and cosmos” (p. 11). He asserts that the result of such journeys is to both ask and answer “the big questions” of:

- Who am I?
- Where do I come from?
- Where should I go from here?
- What is my purpose?
- What do I believe?

How might we adjust our approach to curriculum if we embraced concepts such as Calling (e.g., Where did this motivation originate from and why?, Of what do you dream and where do you see yourself headed?) and Shadow (e.g., What scares you and holds you back?, What do those negative voices say?, Where/when/why did that originate?). Could higher music education then become a type of “heroic journey of individuation” (or a form of “transformative education”) that aspires to help music performance majors strive for individuation through the medium of curriculum and

within the socio-cultural context of classroom, community, and the world? (Mayes, 2010, p. 38).

Hero's Journey as Self-Authoring

Or perhaps departments could actively make space for the birth of *self-authorship*. Self-authorship is where an individual can reflect and learn so as to “develop an internal foundation” that will provide her with “a sense of direction” in her life journey (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. xix) and move internal authority to the foreground to help “mediate external influence” (Boes et al., 2010, p. 14). In an educational setting, learners are encouraged to self-author by integrating ways of “knowing, being and interacting with others into...the capacity to internally define their own beliefs, identity, and relationships” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. xvi). It is a pedagogical and autoethnographic concept with connections to constructivism, narrative inquiry, and the analytical lens of intersectionality (Jones, 2010). Akin to these three approaches, self-authorship also focuses on identity as “multiple, layered, and entangled” within social communities, structures and systems and foregrounds “the lived experience of one’s full sense of an authentic self” (pp. 226, 227).

Weller (2012) sees self-authorship emerging in a pre-professional musician’s journey when that individual begins to demonstrate a growing self-confidence that balances academic training (*composed* elements) with interactions within a professional musical environment (*improvised* elements). It is the balance of these ‘composed’ and ‘improvised’ components that “begins to set one apart as an independent artist” and defines a “musical self-authorship” (p. 51). By encouraging these learner-musicians to reflect their “temperament, personality and style, skills and attributes, strengths,

weaknesses, likes and dislikes,” higher music education professors may not only help students’ develop the skills and knowledge of a professional musician, but also “a clear-headed self-awareness, a flexible and adaptable outlook, a developing savvy for the music world as a whole, and the interpersonal skills to put it all together” (p. 147).

At Marygrove, we slowly came to the realization that without actively fostering a sense of individuation or self-authorship, we were going to continue to “go through the motions dictated by predetermined codes and scripted agendas that distance themselves from learning as integral to whom [we] are and might become” (Latta, 2013, p. 73). Our new curriculum, like currere, “privilege[d] the concept of the individual” by celebrating that each of us, though informed by culture and social interaction, are distinctive (Pinar, 2015, p. 111). In so doing, we sought to “free the life process” for our students which we hoped expanded meaning and increased ownership of the endless subsequent experiences to come (Dewey, 1902/1981, p. 17).

Artist-Educators as Facilitators of Journeys

As an educator, an artist, and a researcher, I have come to embrace that perhaps our primary role is not to be masters of knowledge, but facilitators of journeys. As facilitators, we may endeavor to:

- provide those on the journey with company, encouragement, tough love, and a kick-in-the-pants when needed;
- share new maps and assist with how to read them by indicating key elements of the topography, pointing out some standard pathways and important stops

along the way, explaining how the GPS works, and advising who/how to ask for help if there are questions;²⁰⁴

- advise travelers when to slow down, when to take more risks, when to take a break, and when to be more mindful of others; and
- help those who get confused, stuck, or overwhelmed along the way by sharing stories and wisdom from those who have walked similar journeys before.

(Baxter Magolda, 2004)

If the Marygrove Music Department had carried forward, I would have sought to initiate conversations about becoming facilitators of journeys with my colleagues. I envision suggesting prompt questions such as:

1. How do we, as educators and mentors, become more aware of each student-musician's personhood by setting intentions to become both "mind-full of and care-full toward" their identities, needs, problems, and desires? (Elliott & Silverman, 2015, p. 11).
2. Through the lens of curriculum-as-living-inquiry, how can we help students better come to know their *theories of musicking* (e.g., values, identities, objectives, and preferred aesthetics in music) (Small 1998) and the Known Worlds in which they were built?
3. How could we come to view each student-musician's *theory of musicking* as a critical philosophical statement (informed by self-storied episodes in their life

²⁰⁴ Connecting to Goodman's worldmaking, Leeten (2012) says a map in this context does not copy or represent a fixed world, but rather, simplifies and organizes the basic topography of an otherworld for a newcomer. Critically, students enter college with many maps in hand from other lands—this is simply one more in their satchel.

curriculum) that provides a foundational lens (e.g., values, identities, purpose, quality in music) that informs and guides her within and through all new musicking experiences? If we embraced theory of musicking as a key form of prior knowledge at the curricular level, how might we then improve scaffolding at the curricular level in our higher music education institution? With awareness of these theories, could we, as professors, lower the risk of inadvertently running roughshod over the unique musical identities of our students—and as a result, might the students come into a “better position to take control of their musical lives?” (Small, 1998, p. 13).

4. How could we engage student-musicians in a number of *reflective conversations* throughout their time in our program—from helping incoming freshmen shift their perspectives, consider their habits, and to develop a sense of ownership in the learning process (Renshaw, 2007) and in supporting outgoing seniors to develop career awareness and agency in their ability to “transfer and acquire the skills and knowledge they need to survive and thrive” as professional musicians engaged in meaningful work across the lifespan of a career? (Bennett, 2016, p. 392). Reflective practice invites musickers to strengthen their “inner listening,” which, in turn, develops their attention to and awareness of their motivations, their tacit understandings, their relationship with their own musicking, and their sense of identity as musicians within a larger community (pp. 3-4). Could we engage students in ongoing deep-thought questions across the curriculum timeline, such as:

- How and when does someone become a professional musician?
 - Do you have a sense of professional musicianhood? What would you need to think, feel, know, do, and/or believe to strengthen this sense?
 - What role will the skills and experiences learned during your degree help you in initiating your career after graduation?
5. How might we introduce and sustain the idea that developing yourself as a professional musician is a lifelong journey rather than a piece of paper bestowed? As Allsup (2016) shares:

The aim of university music education is not performance expertise. It should be openness, straying and muddling, the disposition to search and wander, and the pleasure of problem posing. Characterized by Deweyan notions, like: independence of mind and ability the enlargement and enrichment of individual capacity, loyalty, and adventure imagination and creativity critical thinking and understanding of self and others (p. 109).²⁰⁵

6. How can we seek a balance between the structure of the *official curriculum* of the college and the department, the character of each professor's unique interpretation within their classroom/studio/rehearsal space (*operational curriculum*), and the meanings and feelings experienced by a student-musician within both (*subjective curriculum*)? (Mayes, 2010, p. 50). Toward this, how much space is made and protected for student-musicians' subjective curricula? If the official and operational curricula inform the students' subjective

²⁰⁵ This quotation segment has been crafted as a poetic transcription.

curricula, then when/how does subjective have opportunity to influence the official and operational in return?²⁰⁶

7. How might we strengthen the links between our student-musicians' formal, informal and non-formal music experiences? These varying musical practices and settings often intertwine and overlap on a continuum across lifelong music journeys (Veblen, 2018—also citing Folkestad, 2006). Could we find ways to unpack the qualities and distinctions of different types of musical contexts and explore ways they inform one another? (Andang'o, 2019).
8. How could we rethink the first-year experience as beginning a conversation with future professional music colleagues? To help incoming student-musicians better understand the world they are entering? To inspire them to come into conversation with self, with peers, with those who have already walked a similar path, with the music itself, with scholarly literature, with practitioner accounts, with recordings, with parents and family members who may have varying opinions about the pursuit of a music degree, with audiences, and between their past and future selves?
9. How might we shift our audition process, so it is no longer simply an assessment of ability and a checklist of required experiences, but also of musical ways of being, doing, and thinking as it relates to their “why?”

²⁰⁶ Upon reflection, this is what our student roundtables at Marygrove facilitated: opening the doors for all stakeholders (i.e., prospective students, current students, alumni, faculty, staff, administration, the college mission, the professional world, and accrediting bodies) to have the power to influence and inspire aspects of institutional curriculum.

In asking and beginning to answer these questions, faculty, staff, and department administration may be called upon to make their own hero's journeys, just as we did at Marygrove. Brown and Moffett (1999) say that educators sometimes choose to undergo both a personal and professional quest to gain "a higher level of self-knowledge and a deeper and more reverent understanding of the individuals, community, and world around us" (p. 17). This quest may be for the immediate benefit of their own students and/or in contribution to a collective journey to affect organizational renewal within educational policy, curriculum, pedagogy/andragogy, and praxis.

Shifting the Puzzle not the Purpose

In Chapter One, I shared the question which sparked this dissertation study: *How might the curriculum of a college music department be meaningfully informed by examining the musicianship journeys of its alumni?* I have since learned that my wording for this question is incorrect in relation to my inquiry puzzle. First, it is not curriculum to be informed, because curriculum is not a thing, but a conversation. Instead, the process of this study informed me, as an educator, as a researcher, as an artist, as someone involved in curricular conversations. It has also informed the participants and helped them become more aware of their life curricular journeys (both inside and outside of Marygrove College). Secondly, I would use the term *musicianhood*, which is centered in identity and informed by musicianship, musicality, and a theory of musicking. Thirdly, I would assert that although this study has focused on the alumni of our program, there would have been great benefit to have known of these stories while these participants were still students. For as much time I spent with these participants when they were enrolled at Marygrove

and for as many casual, informal conversations we had, I was still surprised by much of what I learned through these formal interviews and discussions.

At this point, a more accurate iteration of this research question may be: *How might those involved in conversations about curriculum in a college music department be meaningfully informed by examining the musicianhood journeys of its current students and alumni?*

The Grail

Coming to the end of this story, I admit freely that although I speak nostalgically and lovingly of the Marygrove music department, our curriculum remapping process, and the final written construction, they/we certainly were not flawless. We were a little music department in a small college with big dreams of an urban leadership mission. Although we had already begun to infuse many pieces of the new curriculum map (e.g., new courses, policies, performance events), the undergraduate programs were closed in the semester following full approval by the curriculum committee and faculty assembly. Therefore, we never had the opportunity to take the completed curriculum structure for a full “test drive” if you will.

I suppose the letter that follows is a small piece of research fiction—but perhaps somewhere out in the multiverse, this letter was sent and received:

Dear Future Marygrove Voice Student,

Congratulations on being accepted to the Marygrove Music Department! We are so thrilled that you will be joining us next semester to pursue a music degree. I wished to take a moment to share some insights about this new journey you are about to enter into.

The goal of an undergraduate music performance degree is for musicians to cross the threshold into a sense of professional musicianhood. Our job, as faculty and

staff, is to facilitate this by helping you discover what it means to perform at a level of professional musicianship with a deep sense of professional musicality. Professional musicianhood is the pursuit of an ever-evolving, ever-complicating musical identity that we develop through conversations with more knowledgeable others, fellow artists, the music itself, our audiences, our communities, and the world. These conversations will be initiated from the experiences and knowledge that you bring into the program.

The collection of courses, performances, and projects that you will be asked to complete over the next few years represent our institutional curriculum. However, the richness of the learning, knowing, and being within those experiences will become part of your musical *life curriculum*—the sum of meaningful lessons and reflections throughout their lives. Although you will receive a physical diploma at the end of your time here, the music degree you will complete is less of an object and more of a *journey*.

Here at the beginning, you will transition from the musical learning spaces you have known into a new music learning space—and your decision to make this transition is significant. We wish to know why you have chosen to pursue a degree, what you expect to learn, and where you expect to head next at the end. This will be a big journey—and a very challenging one at times—but adventure awaits! Along the way, you will most likely grapple with a *threshold guardian* or two (but you can handle that because you already conquered a big one—your audition!). There will be a few *tests* and you might have to face a few fears, but you won't be alone. There is a whole cohort of fellow adventurers who are entering into their own journeys alongside you, not to mention the mentors and allies you will discover on the way.

Perhaps you are coming with dreams of being a professional performer, a director/conductor, or songwriter/composer. Perhaps your calling combines music with another field such as education, ministry, or psychology. Perhaps you simply love music and wish to push yourself further as you pursue another field as your full-time career. Perhaps your plans and goals will change a few times during your time here. Regardless of your whyever and whatever, we cannot promise it will be easy (most likely not, because this journey is not for everyone)—but if you are committed, we promise to walk with you, advise you, push you, and support you as best as we can.

I leave you with these words to consider:

*The grail you seek is not a thing
but a journey of see and do,
of hearing whispers from your heart
and choosing to pursue.*

*This journey is for anyone
who dares take up the Call
and dreams of what lies waiting
beyond familiar walls.*

*You cannot know if you will claim
the prize that you have sought,
but better to have forged the quest and faltered,
than have not.*

*For the grail you seek is not a thing.
It's a journey of See and Do—
what got you here won't get you there,
and the only way is through.²⁰⁷*

Welcome to the Marygrove Music Department!
We cannot wait to be a part of your story.

Sincerely,

Professor Tara Sievers-Hunt

And the Meeting Place Is Conversation: A Poetic Transcription

*The diverse idioms of utterance
which make up human intercourse
have some meeting-place.*

*And this meeting-place is
conversation.
In conversation,
there is no 'truth' to be discovered,
no proposition to be proved,
no conclusion sought.*

*Utterances may differ
without disagreeing.*

*In conversation,
thoughts of different species take wing and play round one another,
responding to each other's movements,
and provoking one another to fresh exertions.*

²⁰⁷ I originally wrote this small poem during my dissertation writing process (June 2020) to motivate myself to keep going when times got hard.

*Conversation is not
a contest where a winner gets a prize.
It is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure—
impossible in the absence of a diversity of voices.*

*Voices which speak in conversation do not compose a hierarchy.
For conversation appropriated by one or two voices
will not only make it difficult for another voice to be heard,
but also make it seem proper that it should not be heard.*

All utterance should be relevant.²⁰⁸

*As human beings, we are the inheritors
neither of an enquiry about ourselves and the world,*

*nor of an accumulating body of information,
but of a conversation.*

*Both public
and within ourselves;
begun in the primeval forests,
and made more articulate in the course of centuries.*

Education is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation.

*Each voice
learning to understand itself conversationally
and to recognize itself as a voice among voices*

*in the conversation of mankind—
the meeting place.*

A poetic transcription from Oakeshott's (1959)
*The voice of poetry in the conversation
of mankind* (pp. 10-15)

²⁰⁸ Relevant: "Having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand; affording evidence tending to prove or disprove the matter at issue or under discussion" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Please note that relevance does not necessarily infer ethicality, morality, legality, justness, or integrity behind utterances.

APPENDIX A
INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD
EXPEDITED REVIEW APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

DATE: September 19, 2016

TO: Tara Sievers-Hunt, PhD
FROM: Oakland University IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Journeys of Learning toward Professional Musicianship
REFERENCE #: 935300-3
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: September 19, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: September 18, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 6 and 7
IRB MEETING DATE: September 29, 2016

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Oakland University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The submission packages include the following approved documents:

- Application (IRBNet # 935300-3)
- Consent Form Version 09/19/2016 which has been published as a Board Document under Reviews in IRBNet. **The IRB approved version of the consent form MUST be used in recruitment and consent of participants in the research.**
- Telephone Script (IRBNet # 935300-3)
- Questions for Qualitative Interviews (IRBNet # 935300-1)

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and assurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure. Do not collect data while the revised application is being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this committee. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of September 18, 2017.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

Please retain a copy of this correspondence for your record.

If you have any questions, please contact Kate Wydeven M.S. at (248) 370-4306 or kwydeven@oakland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Oakland University IRB's records.

APPENDIX B
INITIAL CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Journeys of Learning towards Professional Musicianship

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by researchers from Oakland University. This study is being done by Tara Sievers-Hunt under the direction of Joseph Shively, Associate Professor of Music Education, the research study advisor for this project. This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for a PhD in Music Education. The purpose of this consent form is to let you know more about the study so you can decide whether to participate in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about why the research is being done, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a participant, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. You may talk with your friends and family about this research study before making your decision. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study. This process is called 'informed consent.' If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this research study is to understand how music degree graduates from Marygrove College developed their professional music making skills. The study seeks to examine the musical practices and communities in which the participants have been engaged, the experiences of transitioning between these musical practices and communities, and how they now use these experiences in professional music making.

Who can participate in this study?

Individuals who have graduated from Marygrove College with a music or music-related degree within the past 10 years.

Who is sponsoring this study?

None.

Where is this study being done?

This study is being done through Oakland University at meeting places convenient for the participant throughout Metro Detroit.

What procedures are involved with this study?

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in 1-2 one-on-one interviews with the researcher.
- Participate in 1-2 focus groups with the researcher and other participants.
- The interviews and focus groups will consist of open-ended questions regarding your musical experiences from your youth, through college and into present day. The interviews and focus groups will take place at a location selected by participants, usually a public space within the Metro Detroit area. Your interview will be audio- and video-recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis.
- If necessary during the transcription of the interviews, I may contact you for clarification on your responses.

How long will participation in this study last?

Participants will be asked to engage in 3-4 interviews over the course of the next year. The total amount of time will be approximately 5-6 hours over the next year. If needed for clarification during the transcription process, I may contact you with a few questions by phone or email.

How many people will be participating in this study?

No more than fifteen participants will be interviewed for this study.

What are the risks, side effects or discomforts that can be expected from participating in this study?

The primary risk is a breach of confidentiality since the interviews will be recorded to help the researcher accurately capture the information shared. Appropriate safeguards will be set in place to protect confidentiality (e.g., researcher's office is secure, and computers and external storage devices are password protected). No one but the researcher will view or listen to the recordings. Participants may also experience mild emotional distress if any of the memories shared evoke feelings of embarrassment, frustration, sadness, etc. Participants will be invited to only share memories/stories/thoughts they are comfortable sharing. No participant will be pressed to answer questions, if he/she does not wish to.

All participants have the right to be assigned or to select a pseudonym, which would be used during the transcription of the interview and in the final documents. Your name will not be used, and any identifying information will be deleted from the transcripts and will not be reported in the results.

Are there any known benefits from taking part in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, the results of this study may benefit others in the future.

What are the alternatives to participation in this study?

You may choose not to participate in this study.

What are the costs of taking part in the study?

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

What compensation is being provided for participation?

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

What are your rights if you participate in this study?

Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. You may choose to leave the study at any time, or refuse to answer any questions that may be asked during the study. You will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and your decision will not affect your present or future relationship with Oakland University, the researcher, the Music, Theater & Dance department; or Marygrove College. If you become a student or employee at Oakland University, or at Marygrove College, your decision about participation will not affect your grades or employment status. Your decision about participation will also not affect any future professional connection (e.g. letters of recommendation) with the researcher.

If you would like to stop participating in this study, you should contact the researcher, Tara Sievers-Hunt at XXX-XXX-XXXX, who will provide instructions on how to withdraw from the study and any potential consequences for withdrawal.

Any new information that may affect your willingness to participate in the study will be provided to you as soon as possible.

What will be done to keep my information confidential?

Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential.

Personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by law. Also, your research records may be reviewed by the following groups:

- Regulatory authorities involved in the oversight of research (Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies);
- Members or representatives of Oakland University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (in order to ensure that your rights as a research participant are being protected);

When study results are presented at professional conferences or published in professional journals, your personal name will not be used unless indicated as preference above—and even then, only your first name would be used.

What do you do if you have questions about the study or the rights of research participants?

For questions about the study, you may contact the researcher, Tara Sievers-Hunt (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or her advisor, Dr. Joseph Shively (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

For questions regarding your rights as a Marygrove College alumnus, you may also contact the chair of the Marygrove IRB committee, Dr. SXXX HXXX (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

For questions regarding your rights as a participant in human subjects research, you may contact the Oakland University Institutional Review Board, (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

Signing the consent form

You have read (or someone has read to you) this form. You are aware that you are being asked to participate in a research study, and you understand the possible risks and potential benefits. You have had the chance to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

You are not giving up any rights by signing this consent form. You will be given a copy of this form.

Print name of participant

Signature of participant

Date and time AM/PM

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Signature of person obtaining the consent

Date and time AM/PM

Print name of person obtaining the consent

APPENDIX C
FOLLOW-UP CONSENT FORM

Follow-Up Consent Form
Called to the Conversation: A Digital Ethnodrama

Introduction

The purposes of this form are to provide you, a current participant, with additional information regarding this research project and to document your level of consent for new elements of the research report that may affect your anonymity and/or your emotional/personal comfort.

In 2016, you agreed to participate in a research project led by Tara Sievers-Hunt. The purpose of the research is to explore how music degree graduates from Marygrove College “story” their journeys to professional musicianhood. You have participated in a one-on-one interview, a focus group interview, and post-interview interactions through text or email. As discussed, the stories and information you provided are the data that will be used in the construction of the final report.

The researcher (Tara Sievers-Hunt) has determined that this research would be best presented as a *digital ethnodrama*. An ethnodrama is typically a staged play constructed using words spoken by real people. The researcher as playwright crafts a performance narrative from the participants’ original words and knowledge. Because of COVID-19, it will be impossible to produce a live staged performance so instead the ethnodrama will be a video comprised of a series of video/audio-recorded monologues combined with music, sound effects, photographs, and/or stylized text slides (similar to *digital storytelling*).

At the end of this document, you will be asked to indicate your level of consent for appearing in the ethnodrama that may affect your risk and confidentiality in the creation and presentation of this new ethnodramatic work. You will also be asked to give general consent for one follow-up interview and may be invited to a post-performance group reflection. The consent options and process are as follows:

1. You will indicate your preference for how your name will appear in the ethnodrama and the final dissertation text. All participants will have the right to either elect to use their own first name (no last names will be used), OR to select a pseudonym. The option with the least amount of risk is to elect to use a pseudonym. Your real first name would not appear in the play script itself, the dissertation, or in any published supporting documents. Risk for breach of confidentiality and emotional discomfort would be slightly higher if you choose to use your real first name.
2. On this form, you also will indicate your preference for how you and your stories will appear in the digital ethnodrama. You have three options with varying amounts of risk:
 - a. Option A is to have interview quotes be displayed on stylized slides. In this case, you would not record an audio and/or video performance so your voice and face would not be public. The researcher would select a few of your quotes that fit with the themes of the ethnodrama. Option A contains the least amount of risk.
 - b. Option B is to do an audio-recording only, which would allow the public to hear your voice as you perform your monologue, but they would not see your face.
 - c. Option C is to record an audio/video performance of your monologue, which would allow the public to hear your voice and see your face as you perform the monologue. Option C contains the most amount of risk.

If you select Option B or C, a draft of a 3-4 minute monologue will be crafted from your interviews. You will be asked to give feedback on this draft and share any thoughts, ideas, or concerns toward an agreed final version of the monologue. You will then be asked to self-record your audio/video performance at home (or an alternate safe, social distancing location). *Please note this study does NOT require you to place yourself in any location or situation that might expose you to COVID-19.* You will receive an instruction form that gives recommendations on selecting a home performance space, and how to record/send your monologue. A smartphone or audio/video recorder will be required to complete this recording. This recording will need to be completed and sent to the researcher within 3 weeks of receiving the final monologue copy.

If you select Option A, a monologue will not be created from your interview transcripts and no recordings are required.

3. The researcher would like to hold a follow-up interview (30 mins) with you on Zoom before beginning work on this digital ethnodrama. This one-on-one **follow-up interview** allows you to:
 - a. share your perspectives and concerns about how your stories are used in the ethnodrama.
 - b. share ideas and concerns on how the ethnodrama will be constructed and shared.
 - c. select which name/pseudonym will represent your stories in the ethnodrama
 - d. give your thoughts on a few follow-up questions related to key themes that have arisen.This interview will be recorded through Zoom and data may be used for the digital ethnodrama.

4. If you select Option B or C, the researcher will also be inviting you to a **post-performance discussion** on Zoom with other interested participants after the recordings have been received. This group discussion is optional, but would allow you to:

- a. reflect on the experience of sharing your monologue from your “2017 self”
- b. share how you could see this monologue changing for your “2020 self”

Reflections from this group discussion may be used in the *implications* section of the dissertation and could inform new actions in policy, practice, theory, and subsequent research beyond the study itself. NOTE: If a participant does not wish to attend the group gathering but still wants to share thoughts, she/they/he may email written reflection responses to the researcher instead.

Confidentiality and Risks

Currently, all original interview recordings and transcripts obtained in this project remain strictly confidential. The researcher, Tara Sievers-Hunt is still the only person with full access to this data. The researcher will act as the playwright to craft portions of the one-on-one and peer group interviews into monologues and then the digital ethnodrama.

The primary risks still remain as:

- A breach of confidentiality since direct quotes from the interviews will be used as monologues in the ethnodrama script.
- An experience of mild emotional distress if any of the personal stories selected and shared evoke feelings of embarrassment, frustration, sadness, anger, etc.

Levels of these minimal risks will vary depending on how you wish to be involved in the construction of this ethnodramatic work.

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Consent Version Date: 08/10/20

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One important element to consider is that the final digital ethnodrama will be posted on Vimeo, which is an online video streaming site that allows for strong privacy controls. The video (portions or entirety) will need to be shown during the dissertation defense, a viewing party for participants and invited guests, and during any professional presentations given by the researcher. There will also need to be an indication for how the video may be viewed by readers (e.g., Vimeo link, contact email) printed within the final dissertation text. During the **follow-up interview**, you will be able to voice your thoughts on how the video should be shared (e.g., full video, individual parts). However, as you are deciding how you want to appear in the digital ethnodrama, you should assume it could be seen by anyone in the public as the researcher cannot assure absolute control over privacy of the video once it is shared for scholarly purpose.

Regardless of your choices, it is important to note that:

1. No one but the researcher will view or listen to the original recordings
2. No story will appear in the ethnodrama without approval from the participant who shared it.
3. The researcher will honor consent given and privacy concerns shared, but she will be responsible for final creative decisions including poetic transcription of the data and construction of the work.
4. The name “Marygrove College” will be used in the dissertation which could affect anonymity.

Benefits and Costs

There are still no direct benefits or costs to you for participating in this study. You will still not be paid for participating in this study (including any related performances or presentations).

Withdrawal Privilege

Participation in this project is still completely voluntary. You may choose to opt out of the ethnodrama entirely and leave the study at any time. If you choose opt out, you will not appear in the ethnodrama and none of your words will be used in the research. For any questions you may contact the researcher, Tara Sievers-Hunt (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or her advisor, Dr. Deborah VanderLinde (XXX@oakland.edu).

Giving Consent

1. **General Consent:** Please indicate your consent by initialing the line.

I consent to complete a **follow-up interview** through Zoom (30 mins) with the researcher. I understand this Zoom interview will be one-on-one with the researcher to share my thoughts on the intent and construction of the play as well as answer a few follow-up questions related to emerging themes. I also understand it will be recorded through Zoom. _____

2. **Selective Consent:** Please indicate your consent by checking one box and initialing the line. Before selecting your option, please consider carefully that this video will be shared as described above.

a) Selecting a name for your participant-character. Please check one box and INITIAL the line opposite.

☐ I give consent for Tara Sievers-Hunt to use my real first name for my character in the ethnodrama. **Last names will not be used.* _____

☐ I prefer to keep my anonymity and for Tara Sievers-Hunt to use a self-selected pseudonym (TBD) for the name of my character. _____

b) **Selecting how you would like to appear in the video of the digital ethnodrama. Regardless of which option you choose, your words will also be printed in the researcher's final printed dissertation text. Please check one box and INITIAL the line opposite.**

- ☐ Option A: I prefer not to record an audio or video performance of a monologue. I wish to only have a few written quotes appear in the ethnodrama on stylized slides (labelled with my name or a pseudonym) as the researcher chooses. *If you have selected this option, you may go directly to signing your name below.* _____
- ☐ Option B: I prefer to create an audio-only performance of my monologue because I wish to have my voice be heard in the ethnodrama, but not to be seen on video. _____
- ☐ Option C: I prefer to create an audio/video performance of my monologue because I wish to have both my voice and image appear in the ethnodrama. _____

3. If you have selected Option B or C, please indicate your understanding by initialing the line.

I understand the researcher will also be inviting me to a **post-performance group discussion** on Zoom along with other participants after the recordings have been received. I understand that this final group discussion is optional—and if I do not attend, but still wish to share thoughts, I may email my written reflection responses to the researcher instead. _____

Signing the Consent Form

Participant

You have read (or someone has read you) this form. You are aware of the different involvement options, and you understand the possible risks and potential benefits. You have had the chance to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction. You voluntarily agree to all options checked above. You are not giving up any rights by signing this consent form. You will be given a copy of this form.

Signature of participant

Printed name of participant

Date and time AM/PM

Researcher

I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Signature of person obtaining consent

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Date and time AM/PM

APPENDIX D
LETTER FROM MARYGROVE COLLEGE

September 17, 2019

Institutional Review Board
Oakland University
Rochester, MI 48309

Via email

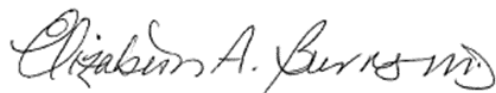
Dear Colleagues,

I'm writing at the request of Ms. Tara Sievers-Hunt to indicate the College's support of her dissertation research and work. While she was a faculty member here at Marygrove, her colleagues were supportive of her work to attain an advanced degree. The nature of her project was understood. Ms. Sievers-Hunt has assured me that no faculty, staff, administrators, or students outside of the study will be named. We have no objection to her using the name of the College or the names of location on campus.

Marygrove is a very unique institution. It has had an impact on all who have gone through her gates, including Tara.

We wish her well and look forward to the successful completion of this dissertation and her graduation. Please feel free to contact me at 313-927-1208 if any questions remain.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth A. Burns, MD, MA
President

APPENDIX E
FAIR USE STATEMENT

This dissertation contains copyrighted material used in accordance with the fair use doctrine, section 107 of the copyright law. This exception provides for limited use of copyrighted works for educational and research purposes without obtaining permission from the work's owner for the purpose of criticism, comment, news, reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research. for the purposes of education and research purpose.

This material has been presented in an effort to advance understanding of critical constructivist educational practice within higher education settings or toward the creation of a digital ethnodrama which faithfully and authentically represents the storied experiences of these study participants. These portions have been narrowly tailored to the research purpose and could not be used to duplicate the original work. All poetic transcriptions shared in this dissertation also use only a small portion of the published work(s) and function to transform the original material for research and education purposes.

APPENDIX F
MUSICAL WORKS REFERENCED
IN PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

- Al Green. (1971). Let's stay together [Song]. On *Let's stay together*. Hi Records.²⁰⁹
- Alicia Keys. (2003). You don't know my name [Song]. On *The diary of Alicia Keys*. J Records.
- Anita Baker. (1988). Giving you the best that I got [Song]. On *Giving you the best that I got*. Elektra.
- Aretha Franklin. (1967). Respect [Song]. On *I never loved the man the way I love you*. Atlantic.
- Aretha Franklin. (1972). Amazing grace [Song]. On *Amazing grace*. Atlantic.
- Ashman, H., & Menken, A. (1991). Something there [Song recorded by Paige O'Hara and Robby Benson]. On *Beauty and the beast: Original motion picture soundtrack*. Walt Disney.
- Avril Lavigne. (2002). Complicated [Song]. On *Let go*. Arista.
- Barber, S. (1964). Adagio for strings, Op. 11 [Work recorded by Leonard Bernstein and The New York Philharmonic]. On *Romantic favorites for strings*. Sony BMG Music Entertainment. (Original work published 1938).
- Ben E. King. (1961). Stand by me [Song]. On *Don't play that song!*. Atco Records.
- Bell Biv DeVoe (1990). Poison [Song]. On *Poison*. MCA Records.
- Beyoncé. (2003). Dangerously in love [Song]. On *Dangerously in love*. Columbia; Music World.
- Boyz II Men. (1997). Can you stand the rain [Song]. On *Evolution*. Motown.
- Brian Courtney Wilson. (2016). Worth fighting for [Song]. On *Motown gospel presents I mic I take*. Motown Gospel.
- Britney Spears. (2004). Toxic [Song]. On *In the zone*. Jive.
- Britten, B. (2016). A charm of lullabies, op. 41: V. The nurse's song [Song recorded by Maureen Forrester]. On *Portrait: Maureen Forrester*. Audite. (Original work published 1949).

²⁰⁹ If an artist, musical, or opera alone was mentioned in the interview, I asked for a specific song during the member checking.

- Caldara, A. (2010). Alma del core [Aria recorded by Roland Hayes]. On *The art of Roland Hayes: Six centuries of song*. Preiser Records. (Original work published 1710).
- Carrie Underwood. (2014). How great Thou art [Song]. On *Greatest hits: Decade #1*. Arista Nashville.
- CeCe Winans (1995). Because of you [Song]. On *Alone in His presence*. Sparrow.
- Celine Dion. (1997). My heart will go on: Love theme from Titanic [Song]. On *Let's talk about love*. Columbia; Epic.
- Rufus and Chaka Khan. (1983). Ain't nobody [Song]. On *Stompin' at the Savoy*. Warner Bros.
- Ciampi, F. (2016). Quella barbera catena [Aria recorded by Maria Laura Groppi]. On *Il 700 musicale Italiano*. Vedete Records. (Original work published c. 1700).
- The Clark Sisters. (1981). You brought the sunshine [Song]. On *You brought the sunshine*. Sound of Gospel.
- Commissioned. (1989). Ordinary just won't do [Song]. On *Ordinary just won't do*. Light Records.
- Clay Crosse. (1994). I surrender all [Song]. On *My place is with you*. Reunion.
- DMX. (1998). Slippin' [Song]. On *Flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood*. Ruff Riders; Def Jam.
- Donna Summers. (1978). Last dance [Song]. On *Thank God it's Friday: Soundtrack album*. Casablanca Records.
- Dorinda Clark-Cole. (2002). I am still here [Song]. On *Setlist: The very best of Dorinda Clark-Cole live*. Zomba Gospel.
- Ella Jenkins. (1974). Patty cake [Song]. *Nursery rhymes: Rhyming & remembering for young children & for older girls & boys with special language needs*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.
- En Vogue. (1992). Free your mind [Song]. On *Funky divas*. East West.
- Eve. (1999). Love is blind [Song]. On *Let there be Eve...Ruff Ryders' first lady*. Powerhouse Studio.
- Fantasia. (2010). Bittersweet [Song]. On *Back to me*. J Records.

- Flaherty, S. & Ahrens, L. (1998). Your daddy's son [Song recorded by Audra MacDonald]. On *Ragtime: The musical (original Broadway cast)*. BMG Entertainment.
- Franck, C. (1994). Panis Angelicus [Aria recorded by The Choir of Trinity College]. On *Allegrì-Miserere*. Conifer Records.
- Fred Hammond & Radical for Christ. (2000). You are the living word. On *Purpose by design*. Jive/Reunion Legacy.
- Handel, G.F. (1980). Where'er you walk [Aria recorded by Leontyne Price]. On *Great soprano arias from Handel to Britten*. (Original work published 1744).
- Handel, G.F. (1987). Rejoice greatly, o daughter of Zion [Aria recorded by Kathleen Battle]. On *Handel: Messiah*. Capitol Records. (Original work published 1767).
- Houston, J. (2007). You are the music in me [Song recorded by Vanessa Anne Hudgens and Zac Efron]. On *High school musical 2: An original Walt Disney soundtrack*. Walt Disney.
- Imogen Heap. (2005). Hide and seek [Song]. *Speak for yourself*. Megaphonic.
- James Cleveland and the South California Community Choir. Please make me better Lord [Song]. On *It's a new day*. Savoy Records.
- John, E. & Rice, T. (1994). Circle of life [Song recorded by Carmen Twillie and Lebo M.]. On *The lion king: Original motion picture soundtrack*. Walt Disney.
- John P. Kee. (1991). Jesus is real [Song]. *Wash me*. Zomba Recording.
- John P. Kee. (1992). I do worship [Song]. *Set list: The very best of John P. Kee*. Zomba Recording.
- Kander, J., & Ebb, F. (1993). Money money money [Song recorded by Alan Cumming and ensemble]. On *Cabaret: The new Broadway cast recording*. Masterworks Broadway.
- Kanye West. (2004). Through the wire [Song]. On *The college dropout*. UMG Recordings.
- Karen Clark Sheard. (1997). Jesus is a love song [Song]. On *Finally Karen*. Island Black Music.
- Karen Clark Sheard. (2003). God is here [Song]. On *The heavens are telling*. Elektra.

- The King's Singers. Jingle bells [Song]. On *Christmas with the King's Singers, vol. 1*. Aabaa Records.
- Krieger, H., & Eyen, T. (1982). Move (You're stepping on my heart) [Song recorded by Jennifer Holliday, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Loretta Devine]. On *Dreamgirls: Original Broadway cast album*. Geffen.
- Lauryn Hill. (1998). Can't take my eyes off you [Song]. On *The miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. Ruffhouse Records.
- Leigh, M. (1965). The impossible dream [Song recorded by Richard Kiley]. On *Man of La Mancha: A Decca Broadway original cast album*. Decca; Verve. (Original work published 1965).
- Lil' Kim. (2000). No matter what they say [Song]. On *The notorious K.I.M.* Undeas Recording.
- Mahalia Jackson. (1966). The old rugged cross [Song]. On *Garden of prayer*. Columbia Records.
- Mary Mary. (2005). Yesterday [Song]. On *Mary Mary*. Sony BMG.
- Michael Jackson. (1987). Dirty Diana [Song]. On *Bad*. Epic Records.
- Monica. (1995). Don't take it personal (Just One of Dem Days) [Song]. On *Miss thang*. Rowdy; Arista.
- Mozart, W.A. (1997). Die Zauberflöte, K.620/Act 2: Bald prangt, den morgen zu verkünden. [Aria recorded by Kathleen Battle] On *Mozart: Opera arias*. Deutsche Grammophon. (Original work premiered 1791).
- Nas featuring Lauryn Hill. (1996). If I ruled the world (Imagine that) [Song]. On *It was written*. Columbia.
- Panic at the Disco. (2005). I write sins not tragedies [Song]. On *A fever you can't sweat out*. Fueled by Ramen; Decaydance.
- Prince. (1984). Purple rain. On *Purple rain*. Prince and the Revolution.
- Russell, B., Willis, A., & Bray, S. (2005). I'm here [Song recorded by LaChanze]. On *The color purple, a new musical (Original Broadway cast recording)*. Angel Records.
- Sacco, J. (1998). Brother Will, brother John [Song recorded by Anthony Brown]. On *Embracing American song*. Brown Bergman. (Original work published 1947).

- Schubert, F. (1986) Du bist die ruh, op. 59, no. 3, d. 776. [Song recorded by Barbara Hendricks]. On *Barbara Hendricks: Schubert lieder*. La Voix De Son Maître. (Original work published 1823).
- Shirley Caesar. (1983). Jesus, I love calling your name [Song]. On *Jesus, I love calling your name*. Sony.
- Shirley Caesar. (2005). This Joy I Have [Song]. On *Higher ground hurricane relief benefit concert*. Blue Note Records; EMI Music Distribution.
- Strauss II, J. (1992). Die Fledermaus/Act 2: Mein Herr Marquis (Adele's laughing song). [Aria recorded by Kathleen Battle]. On *Kathleen Battle at Carnegie Hall*. Deutsche Grammophon. (Original work premiered 1874).
- Tye Tribbett. (2013). What can I do? [Song]. On *Greater than (live)*. Motown Gospel.
- Usher. (2004). Confessions, Pt. II [Song]. On *Confessions*. Arista.
- Verdi, G. (1996) La forza del destino/Act 4: Pace, pace, mio Dio [Aria recorded by Leontyne Price]. On *The essential Leontyne Price*. BMG Entertainment. (Original work premiered 1862).
- Vivaldi, A. (1992). Sposa son disprezzata [Aria recorded by Cecilia Bartoli]. On *Arie antiche: Se tu m'ami*. Decca. (Original work published 1734).²¹⁰
- Waller, F. & Razaf, A. (1957). Keeping out of mischief [Song recorded by Dinah Washington]. On *Dinah Washington sings Fats Waller*. Mercury Records. (Original work published 1932).
- Webber, A.L. (1990). Phantom of the opera [Song recorded by Colm Wilkinson & Rebecca Caine]. On *Phantom of the opera: Canadian cast recording*. Polygram. (Original work published 1986).
- The Whispers. (1983). Keep on Loving Me [Song]. On *Love for love*. Solar Records.
- Whitney Houston. (1986). Greatest love of all [Song]. On *Whitney Houston*. Arista.
- Whitney Houston (1990). I'm your baby tonight! [Song]. On *I'm your baby tonight*. Arista.
- Whitney Houston. (1992). I have nothing [Song]. On *The bodyguard: Original soundtrack album*. Arista.

²¹⁰ Attributed to Antonio Vivaldi on this album, but was composed by Geminiano Giacomelli.

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