DIALOGIC INTERACTIONISM: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SELF IN THE
SECONDARY CHORAL CLASSROOM

Stuart Younse, B.M.E., M.A.

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
August 2004

APPROVED:
Debbie Rohwer, Major Professor and Chair of
the Ph.D. Program in Music Education
Hildegard Froehlich, Committee Member
Penelope Hanstein, Committee Member
Warren Henry, Chair of Music Education
James Scott, Dean of the College of Music
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

Examined in this hermeneutic phenomenological study is a transformation in the researcher’s choral music teaching in which students’ abilities to construct self emerged organically from interactions, or dialogues, that took place among and between the students, the teacher, and the music being studied. To allow for such interaction to emerge organically and meaningfully, students and teacher both shared in the power needed to construct a classroom environment in which the localized issues of the classroom and the specific contexts of students’ lived histories were maintained and encouraged. This process of interaction, based upon dialogue among and between equal agents in the classroom, is described in the study as dialogic interactionism.

In order to examine the concept of dialogic interactionism, three constructs upon which dialogic interactionism is based were developed and philosophically analyzed. They include the construction of self through the construction of self-knowledge; the localized reference system of the classroom, and the issue of power. Each construct is considered within the context of extant writings both in general education and music education philosophy. Following the analysis, a theoretical description of the dialogic interactive choral classroom is given as well a description of how such ideas might be realized in practice. The study concludes with issues for further study.
Copyright 2004

by

Stuart Younse
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank: my graduate committee, Debbie Rohwer, Hildegard Froehlich, and Penelope Hanstein for their guidance, patience, and wisdom; my colleagues, Susan Wharton Conkling and Kathlene Goodrich, for their help and support; my parents and my teachers who have inspired, taught, and loved me; all of the students without whom this project would never have happened; Stephanie Rauch for her patience and support; and finally, my best friend, Charles Harrill, whose belief in me has helped to make my dream a reality.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................... iii

I. UNDERSTANDING MY PRACTICE OF CHORAL MUSIC EDUCATION .................. 1
   Stories of My Teaching ............................................................................................... 5  
      Narrative One ......................................................................................................... 5  
      Narrative Two ...................................................................................................... 10  
      Narrative Three .................................................................................................. 13  
      Narrative Four ................................................................................................. 18  
   Reflections on My Practice ..................................................................................... 22  
   Organization of the Study, Research Purpose, and Questions ......................... 27

II. THE CONSTRUCTION OF SELF THROUGH SELF-KNOWLEDGE .......................... 33  
   An Analysis of My Narratives .............................................................................. 33  
      Synthesizing the analysis .................................................................................. 40  
   Analyzing the Literature on Self .......................................................................... 43  
      Active Engagement with the Environment Through Problem-Finding, Problem-Solving, and Reflection ................................................................. 44  
      The Social Aspect of Self-Construction ........................................................... 65  
      Knowledge-Construction as Transformation ............................................... 74  
   Toward a Definition of Self .................................................................................. 83

III. THE LOCALIZED REFERENCE SYSTEM OF THE CLASSROOM .................... 88  
   An Analysis of the Narratives .............................................................................. 88  
   Analyzing the Literature on Localized Reference System ............................... 94  
   Toward a Definition of Localized Reference System ........................................ 103

IV. THE ISSUE OF POWER ...................................................................................... 105  
   An Analysis of the Narratives .............................................................................. 105  
   Analyzing the Literature on Power ..................................................................... 113  
   Toward A Definition of Power .......................................................................... 122
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V. BENNET REIMER AND THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing Reimer’s Aesthetic Theory of Music Education</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Concept of Self</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Localized Reference System</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Issue of Power</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Critical Analysis of Reimer’s Work Writing</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Concept of Self</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Localized Reference System</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Issue of Power</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. MUSIC MATTERS: THE PHILOSOPHICAL WORK OF DAVID ELLIOTT</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing Elliott’s Praxial Theory</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Construction of Self</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localized Reference System</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Issue of Power</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Critical Examination of Elliott’s Theory</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Self and Praxial Music Education</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localized Reference System</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Issue of Power</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. WAYNE BOWMAN: ESSENTIALISM, RELATIVISM, AND MUSIC EDUCATION</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing the Theoretical Writings of Bowman</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Concept of Self</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism and Music Education</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Critical Examination of Bowman’s Theoretical Writing</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism, Praxis, and Self</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Localized Reference System</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism and Power</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. ESTELLE JORGENSEN: SEARCHING FOR AND TRANSFORMING MUSIC EDUCATION</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing the Work of Jorgensen</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorgensen’s Philosophical Ways of Thinking</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Concept of Self</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Localized Reference System</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Issue of Power .................................................................................................. 218
A Critical Examination of Jorgensen’s Work ............................................................. 221
Dialectic Process and Synergism ............................................................................... 222
The Concept of Self ................................................................................................ 227
The Localized Reference System ............................................................................ 229
The Issue of Power .................................................................................................. 231
Summarizing the Critical Examination of the Music Education Philosophical Literature ..................................................................................................................................... 232

IX. UNDERSTANDING DIALOGIC INTERACTIONISM............................................ 237

The World-view of the Dialogic Classroom ............................................................. 237
The Human Agents of the Classroom: The Students and Teacher ......................... 240
The Music ................................................................................................................... 244
The Localized Reference System ............................................................................ 246
The Issue of Power .................................................................................................. 254
Power and the Human Agents In the Dialogic Interactive Classroom .................... 254
The Power of Music ................................................................................................ 257
The Power of Interaction ......................................................................................... 262
The Issue of Trust ..................................................................................................... 263
Describing the Dialogic Interactive Classroom ....................................................... 265
The Role of the Teacher in the Dialogic Interactive Classroom .............................. 268
The Role of Students in the Dialogic Interactive Classroom .................................... 270

X. DIALOGIC INTERACTIONISM AND THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING .......... 272

Principles of Dialogic Interactionism Applied to Teaching: Snapshots of Practice... 275
Transcending Musical Skill in Music Teaching ........................................................ 275
The Dialogic Interactive Choral Rehearsal ............................................................ 280
The Needs of Students and Curricula ..................................................................... 287
Dialogic Interactionism and Assessment ................................................................ 291
Dialogic Interactionism and Planning For Instruction ........................................... 295
Trust and the Dialogic Interactive Classroom ......................................................... 299

XI. ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ................................................................. 306

The Examination of Other Writings in Music Education ......................................... 306
Empirical Studies of Students Engaged in Dialogic Interactionism .......................... 307
Future Teacher Preparation ..................................................................................... 308
The Politics of the Choral Classroom .................................................................... 310
The Issue of Curriculum ......................................................................................... 312
CHAPTER I

UNDERSTANDING MY PRACTICE OF CHORAL MUSIC EDUCATION

During my nineteen years as a professional music educator (choir director), I have noticed changes in the way I view the teaching/learning process, the way in which I interact within the classroom environment, and the types of experiences with which students and I find ourselves involved in the choral classroom. As I lived through these years, the changes seemed subtle. As I reflect upon my career to this point, I have become aware of how much change has actually occurred.

The manner in which I find myself in the classroom today has raised questions about the interactions I experience with students and music, the manner in which we maintain and share power, the structure we have established for our learning environment, and the types of knowledge we have come to construct as a result of our interactions. As such, it has become important for me to probe these questions in the context of selected philosophical literature in both general education and music education to see how others have addressed these same questions. In doing so, I seek meaning of my experiences in ways that will help me to articulate what I have come to know as choral music education.

The type of research in which I engage is known as hermeneutic phenomenology that, according to Van Manen, seeks to make sense out of the world as we experience it.¹

He states:

Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology asks, “What is this or that kind of experience like? It differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it. So phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world.3

More specifically, for the educator, Van Manen suggests that such a pursuit is about making sense of pedagogy as it is experienced in the lived world with students.3

Though hermeneutic phenomenology does not follow a specific or prescribed methodology, it involves:

(1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
(2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
(3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
(4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
(5) maintaining a strong oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
(6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.4

In other words, the phenomenological researcher describes the phenomenon under consideration through writing (often through the use of narrative or anecdote);5 develops a set of themes that emerge from the analysis of the narrative;6 and through critical analysis of these themes, makes reasoned interpretations as a way of understanding more

---

2 Ibid., 9.
3 Ibid., 8.
4 Ibid., 30-31.
5 Ibid., 111-133.
6 Ibid., 53-76.
fully the experience that has transpired. In this way, the process of phenomenological research becomes a type of action research in which the researcher makes meaning of lived experience that, in the case of the teacher, becomes a clearer understanding of pedagogy. Van Manen states:

If we think of phenomenology as a kind of action oriented research, then an intimacy between research and life immediately suggests itself. Phenomenological human science is not external, top-down, expert, or contract research. It is done by rather than for the people, as critical theorists would say. Phenomenological engagement is always personal engagement: it is an appeal to each one of us, to how we understand things, how we stand in life, how we understand ourselves as educators, etc. Even to the extent that we are as authors/readers dialogically involved with human science literature, we are involved with it hermeneutically: personally, biographically, situationally, that is, as parent or teacher of this child or these children.

The body of this chapter consists of four chronological narratives from separate periods in my teaching in which I describe the phenomenon under examination. The first narrative is representative of my early teaching at a suburban high school. The second narrative is taken from the same school environment and illustrates the beginning of what I call my transformation. In the third narrative, taken from my teaching at a woman’s university, I begin to experience major changes in the types of interactions I have with students and music in the classroom. Taken from the same university teaching experience, the fourth narrative explores these changes in the context of the choral rehearsal.

From these narratives, I develop three themes, or constructs, which guide the study. The remainder of the research involves my thematic analysis as a process that

---

7 Ibid., 77-110.
ultimately has lead me to a deeper understanding of my teaching, my interaction with students, and my continued practice in the classroom as music educator.

It might be said that the transformation to which I refer could have been the result of changes in the teaching and learning environment because I had shifted from teaching in a high school setting to a collegiate setting. While it is true that changes in environment, expectations of curriculum, maturity of students, and the like have played a role in my personal growth as a teacher, I do not think that the transformation which I describe in the four narratives is necessarily the result of changing environments alone.

As it becomes clear in Narrative Two, the transformation in my teaching began while I was still working in the high school setting. It was this transformation and the questions that emerged from my teaching experiences that eventually led me to pursue the university job and to begin my doctoral studies in music education. While I was teaching at the collegiate level, I had the opportunity to direct a fifth grade honor choir in a local school district. The transformation of which I speak proved to be as relative to my younger students as it was to my adult students. The experience that I had with these young musicians, along with other previous experiences I had with middle school and high school singers during these years, leads me to suggest that such experiences may have important implications for students of all ages.

After showing the types of experiences I have had in the choral classroom, I then explore the areas of my teaching in which I see the most transformation and propose the questions that lead to their phenomenological examination.

---

8 Ibid., 156.
Stories of My Teaching

Narrative One

As the bell rang to begin class I thought to myself how proud I was of my students. Each was in her or his assigned chair, folder in hand and with a pencil! This had not been an easy task to accomplish. Over the past weeks, I had several discussions about the importance of timeliness and preparedness. I had even implemented a reward/consequence program to help motivate the students to be prepared for class by the ringing of the bell. It had taken much training, but it seemed to be working; the students were ready even though one of the tenors had slid into his chair as if he were making a home run. All was in control and we could begin.

The class started, as it always did, with warm-ups. I had prepared a vocalise routine for the students that started with physical stretching, concentration centering, and breathing. The students knew the routine and performed it well. “Breathe— 2—3—4—5—6—7—8,” I said in the most relaxed voice I could muster. The students went routinely about their exercises except for the two girls on the back row of the alto section that were carrying on a conversation in whispers. “Stop! Did I ask you to talk,” said I. “No,” replied one of the girls. “We were just talking about how deep our breath was today,” she blurted. “It doesn’t matter what you are talking about. I plainly said that there is to be no talking during warm-ups. This is not only an issue for you but for your friends, as well. How can they be expected to concentrate when you are making noise?” The other students listened as they always did. Some were continuing to breathe and never opened their eyes. Some just looked at the two girls, not surprised at the daily
reprimand. Others had sat down and begun fumbling through their folders. “All right, “ I said, “let’s return to our warm-up.”

We proceeded to practice our hum exercise and our vowel routine. Today, though, I had a new exercise to present. During the past few days of rehearsal, I had become aware of the difficulty the students were having with ending consonants in the piece, Sing Unto God. I had this licked. I had gone home and designed an exercise that stressed the ending consonants by taking a nonsensical limerick and putting it to music. I was so proud of my little composition and just knew the students would love it—and that our consonant problem would be fixed once and for all.

I asked the students to sit and I played the song for them. Several students got tickled. “You want us to sing that!” they said in an unapproving tone? “Of course I do”, I said. “Most of you have been having problems finishing words like Go-d, ear-th and na-m(uh). “My job is to see that this gets fixed. You want to be winners, don’t you? A winning choir does not forget ending consonants.” The students acquiesced. But the back row of basses kept jabbing each other in the side.

As we finished the warm-ups, we moved on to our daily announcements. “Candy money is due Wednesday. Your first trip payment is…” the two altos were talking again. “That’s it,” I said. “You to my office and you in the hall. Don’t leave this room until we have had a talk.” The girls, heads bowed, walked into their respective places to await their on-coming punishment. I proceeded with the announcements. “Your first trip
payment is due Friday. Remember to bring a check or cash in an envelope with your name and the amount of the payment written on the outside. I will give you a receipt on Monday.”

The students had been sightreading so well over the past few days that I decided to skip this section of class for today. Besides, we were performing our contest literature for the parents in just three days! “Take out the Palestrina,” I said. The students did as told and began to sing. “Sopranos, you have the melody here. You need to be louder and altos need to be softer. The sopranos can only sing so loud, altos!” I said in a teasing tone. The altos laughed! Just as we came to the end of the first section, Quiana raised her hand. “Mr. Younse, can we get soft here? It seems like it would be sound better if we were not so loud,” she offered. “No,” I said, in a half-teasing half-condescending way. The students laughed. “You know that in Palestrina dynamics follow the shape of the line. We are moving upward and we need to get louder here. We talked about that yesterday. Do you remember?” “Yes,” she said. “It just doesn’t sound good to me. It is like we are all trying to out sing each other.” “Thank you for your input, Quiana but it is my job to determine dynamics. You do your job and I will do mine,” I said as politely as possible.

The rehearsal continued as normal. I listened to the rest of the Palestrina and offered just two more suggestions about their legato singing. They incorporated the suggestions really well. “Good,” I said. “We are making progress.” I asked Naomi if she wanted to go to the board and mark off the two legato suggestions that I listed in the
Anticipatory Exercises section of the blackboard before class. I asked them to put the Palestrina away and to get out *Sing Unto God*.

As they began to sing, I decided not to remind them about ending consonants. I wanted to see if my little warm-up had worked. And, of course, it did not. “Sing, sing unto Go. Sing, sing we heavens and ear. Sing, sing to the lor.” “Stop! I said, rather sharply. What did we just practice?” Jennifer raised her hand. “I know you know, Jennifer. You always know. I want to see more hands than just Jennifer’s.”

Tom raised his hand. “Ending consonants, Mr. Younse. But I am not sure how you want us to do them. If we pronounce them too loudly, you say we’re wrong. And if we are more subtle, you say we aren’t doing them. What do you want?” “Good question, Tom,” I said in an approving tone (but I thought to myself, “How else can I say it—in French?”) We had gone over and over this. It was so frustrating to me to constantly drill these little picky things. I wanted to blow up and just lash out at the kids. But I knew that would accomplish nothing. So I put on my pleasant teacher voice and said, “I want them to be in the spirit of the song. You know, sing, sing unto God. Earth. Lord. Can you do this?” The choir nodded and tried but they still looked at me with puzzled faces. It was as if they were saying, “what do you mean by the spirit of the song?” Of course they had to understand, I thought. We had been singing the song for weeks and it sounded really good. “Well it was better. We will get it—just remember, in the spirit of the song.”

It was almost time for the bell and I could tell the students were fidgety. I was concerned that I had been too picky with them about their music-making. But I had to fix the mistakes, I thought to myself. If anyone knows Palestrina it is our judge, Dr. Tanly
from the local university. I certainly did not want him to think that I was unaware of renaissance style. I decided that the students needed some reinforcement so that they would not leave the rehearsal with a bad feeling. I could hear the voice of my teacher in college—“never let them leave with unfinished business!” So I put on one of my best pep talks. “You are getting so much right and you really do sound good. It’s just the little things that have to get fixed. If they don’t, the judge will hear them. Remember, your parents will love this but a judge may not. We want to impress the judge. We want to be winners!” The bell rang just as I finished.

Another class was finished except for the two altos that were waiting for me. I escorted both of them into my office. Shatiyona had started to cry. “Ok,” I said. “Where do we start? It is like this every day. I ask you to be quiet and you don’t. What else can I do to get you to behave?” I said in a very agitated tone. Shati looked up at me and said, “I’m sorry, Mr. Younse. It is just that my cat died last night and I don’t really feel like singing.” Great, I thought. Now I have caused permanent emotional damage. “Shatie, I had no idea. I am sorry about your cat. I know how that feels. But we still can’t have talking in class,” I said in my most sympathetic tone. “We just have too much to do to waste our time talking. If you want to talk to me about something like your cat, come see me before or after school. I will be happy to listen then and to help you in any way I can. But not during rehearsal.” She looked up at me and said, “I know. I’m sorry.” The other girl apologized and I sent them onto their next class.
Narrative Two

I was sitting in my office when Suzy appeared at the door. She looked upset—her head was bowed and her shoulders were sunken. I could tell by her posture that whatever was wrong was very troubling. As she was one of my favorite students, I was quick to usher her in to the office and ask her what was wrong. She wouldn’t talk at first. She fidgeted with her hands and looked at the floor. I again asked her what was wrong. She looked at me and said, in the shakiest of voices, “Mr. Younse, I have decided to quit choir.” “What?” I asked. “We are doing our schedules for next year and I have decided that I am not going to sign up for choir. I knew you would be upset and I thought that it would be best for me to come and talk with you about it,” she explained. “I don’t understand.” I said in a very concerned voice. I suddenly felt a wave of feeling move across my chest, up my neck and across my face. I was in a state of shock—what could be wrong was all I could hear in my mind. She was always one of the students that I could rely on to be a leader with the other students. We had such a history together. She had been one of the students that had followed me from the junior high when I moved to teach at the high school. I had known and taught her since she was in the sixth grade. “It is just that I find that choir is not exciting to me anymore. I want the chance to try other classes. I have been thinking about being a fashion designer when I grow up. I figure that an art class or a sewing class might help me with my future goals.”

Something was really wrong. This was not the Suzy that I knew and taught everyday. “Are you sure that this is what is best for you,” I asked. “Think of all the fun experiences that we have had together. Think of the contests that we have won, the trips,
the musical that we just finished. You always seem to have a great time.” There was no change in her face. She just looked at me with this expression that cut through my heart.

“Has someone said something to you that has offended you?” I asked. I was going through all of the real reasons I had discovered with other students in the past who were going to quit because choir was no longer fun. “Have I said something that has offended you?” “No, no,” she replied. “I just don’t enjoy choir anymore. I want to try something new. I knew that you would be upset and I don’t want to hurt your feelings. But that is all I know to say.” With that, she looked at me one more time, turned around and left the office.

I sat there for a long time wondering what had just happened. I had that same shaky feeling I felt when an angry parent called to question me or to express their dissatisfaction with some interaction I had with her or his child. I began my list of defenses in my mind: the choir program was one of the strongest in the area of the state in which I taught; the students seemed to love what we did each day; students were constantly telling me how much that choir meant to them; and so on. Certainly other students had left the program and I had understood. But this was one of the leaders—one of the ones that hung around after school—one of the students you could depend on whenever you needed something done. I picked up the phone and called her mother hoping that she would have some insight. I found her mother as bewildered as myself.

“All she said was that choir was not fun anymore,” her mother replied. “It breaks my heart because I know how much it means to her. I have tried to talk with her but it
doesn’t seem to have any effect on her,” she offered. “I will talk with her tonight,” she promised.

That day passed and Suzy indeed did not enroll in choir for the fall. It bothered me—I could not find any explanation for what seemed like such a rash behavior. I finally dismissed it thinking that it was one of those moments in life that has no resolution. It was just something I had to accept and to not question. Little did I know that I would later learn what was really going on with Suzy.

The explanation came in November of that next year in about as shocking a way as it had the day Suzy came into my office. I was checking my mailbox when I noticed a piece of wrinkled paper folded up in the corner of the box. I opened it and saw that it was a note from Suzy, a note that I read, re-read and have read over and again in my mind. The tone of the letter was loving—not in any way hostile. In it she tried to explain to me that the reason she left choir was because there was no place in the choir for her. She felt as though I was asking her to do things that were contrary to who she was, to accept a role that she did not agree with and to behave in such a way that, for her, felt wrong. She explained that she tried to always think for herself and that, for her to be asked to lose herself within a group or to go along with what the group thought was right, for her, was simply a wrong choice and made her feel bad. She also explained that she had, on several occasions, tried to reach out to me and ask for help in learning how to find her place. She claimed that I had been unwilling to listen or to try and understand her needs. She assured me that she loved music and loved to sing and that she wished the best for the choir. She thanked me again for being her teacher and wished me the best.
And she closed by saying that she hoped I understood her position and would find a way to respect it.

I took that letter and showed it to several of my close colleagues. They looked at it and tried to help me make sense of it. “She is just a teenager,” they said. “You have not done anything wrong.” But somehow I felt as though I had. I didn’t understand it but I had this strong, gut feeling that something I had done was keeping a student from being comfortable with or from wanting to participate in music-making. As this wave of emotion passed over me, I could almost see the face of one of my teachers that had treated me the same way—a teacher who, because of my experiences with him made me never want to make music again. I had vowed to myself then that I would never do the same to a student. And I did not know that I had—but something I had done had turned Suzy away from the classroom. It was an experience that, to this day, is painful to face.

**Narrative Three**

The students gathered around the piano. They had prepared individual lines of text during the last class each having something to do with color. They were eager to share their work with their friends. Some had notebooks with them filled with writing, others had large pieces of white paper on which they had written, scribbled and drawn. Our task today was to take their lines of text and, together, set it to music. They were excited, as was I. But, I was also scared. I had never done something like this before. Oh, I had written the obligatory composition in theory class while in college, and I had done a fair amount of arranging for my choral students, but I had never charged into writing a song with fifteen students.
Needing a place to start, I asked a student to throw out a line of text. The line came quickly—“red, yellow, blue and green.” “Ok,” I said. “Can someone take those words and sing them to a melody?” The students looked at me as if I had asked them to build a house right there in the classroom. We waited in silence while we each were trying to figure out what to do—the students were trying to hear music in their heads and I was trying to figure out what to do if they had nothing to offer. It was a tense moment that seemed to go on for hours. Just about the time I was going to suggest a melody of my own, one of the students sheepishly sang out—“lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah.” “You may all think this is stupid,” he said, “but it fits with the words.” “It is not stupid,” I replied, and I meant it. It was good! I took his melody and added some chords to it. I watched as his face lit up like a child who discovered a new puppy sitting under the Christmas tree. “Wow,” he cried. I was as excited as he was.

“Ok,” I said, we have a first line. Where do we go from here?” The students quickly began looking over their papers. “become brick, banana and aquamarine,” one yelled out. “What does that mean?” another student asked. “I don’t know, but it rhymes,” the first student said. We all laughed. “Let’s go with it and see where it leads us,” said my colleague, a dance teacher who was one of the three facilitators in the class. “Ok,” I said, “where does the melody go from here?” “Lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah, lah,” sang one of the women in a loud voice. “Wow,” said another student, “you are good. I didn’t know you could do that.”

As the class continued, we talked, sang, talked, sang, talked, and sang. As if it were magic, a song began to emerge in front of our eyes and ears. I cannot explain the
energy or excitement that happened in that room that afternoon. Everyone of us was, all at once, talking, figuring, singing, tearing up our paper to see how words fit together, moving around the room, dancing—anything to figure out the next line or melody. As we finished sections of the song, we stopped and rehearsed it so that we could all sing it. We were afraid that we would forget something, so one of the students went and got a tape recorder so that we could document our work as we went. Another took out a piece of large white paper and began to transcribe the words we had written. I quickly jotted down melody notes and chord progressions so that I would not forget what we had just done. We had to document—there was so much energy and so many ideas in the air that melodies and text went as fast as they came. It was almost as if these melodies and words were snowflakes falling around us. We were struggling to keep up with catching them and holding onto them.

“That line doesn’t make sense,” one woman said. “Neither does that part of the melody,” said another. “It should go up here like lah, lah, lah, lah.” “I agree,” said another. “If we are talking about Van Gogh’s blues, it doesn’t make sense to go down—his blues were in the sky,” she explained. “You’re right,” said another. “So let’s change it,” I said. For nearly two hours we went back and forth like this. It was exciting and exhausting.

As we neared the end of the class, we sang through all that we had done. We really liked most of what we had but we knew that next time we would have to re-work this line or that melody. My colleague left the room and came back with several people she rounded up in the hall. “Let’s sing our song for them,” she said. As we sang, the
students performed like I had never seen students perform. They were so proud of what they had done. Our impromptu audience was amazed. “You wrote that,” one of them replied. “Yes,” my colleague from drama (our third faculty facilitator) said, “and in the last two hours!”

That class was followed by many more classes of the same—working, reworking, brainstorming, improvising, questioning, discovering, imagining, and negotiating. As the semester neared its end, we decided to present what had become about an hour of music, text, and dance (all centered around the concept of color), in a small public performance that was to be both a performance and a lecture/demonstration about how we had developed the piece. As the night of performance neared, we rehearsed, re-wrote and made hard decisions about what would and would not be included in the demonstration.

On the evening of the performance, we all came to the theatre early to warm-up and do our last minute preparations. There was an excitement in the air that was made up of both joy and fear. We were excited to present our work but we felt unprepared. It had taken us so long to get to that performance and we had made so many changes that we were not sure we all knew what was going to happen. “Just trust your instincts,” said my dance colleague to the group. “You wrote the words and music and if you get stuck tonight just keep on writing.”

The audience entered for the event with the same kind of feelings we had—excitement and fear. They had no idea what to expect. They came because the students and faculty had invited them. We were all so excited about what we had done that we wanted to share it. They seemed intrigued but skeptical. One of my music colleagues
had stopped me in the hall earlier that day to say that he was coming but really wanted to know what it was all about. “I just don’t know what we are going to see,” he said, “is this a performance or what?” I didn’t really know how to answer him. Yes, it was a performance but nothing like anything I had ever performed before. I assured him that he would love it and asked him to decide what it was about after he came.

The house lights went down and we took our places. The music began and the students started singing and dancing—“red, yellow, blue and green become brick, banana and aquamarine. To color in the lines used to matter, ’til Jackson Pollack taught me to spatter. Rubik’s and Picasso’s cubes, Dali’s clocks and Van Gogh’s blues—these are the colors of our lives.” The voices rang through the house with confidence. At the close of the first song the audience cheered and cheered. The students stood there, basking in the applause and a little uneasy because it never seemed to stop.

The evening continued with song, monologues, dances, scenes and so on. After the performance of the piece, the two colleagues and I began to talk about how the group had gone about writing the piece. As we talked, the students demonstrated what we had done. We improvised a short piece for the audience, we improvised a short dance for the audience and we brought to stage all of the stuff that we had used in writing the piece—large paper, notebooks, crayons, markers, found objects, pictures, books, and a host of other goodies.

As we finished the demonstration, we concluded the evening by asking the audience if they had questions they wanted to ask. The students sat across the front of the stage. There were so many questions that it went on for over an hour. As a question was
asked, several students would answer, in turn. I was amazed at how they answered those questions. They talked about their experiences in a way that I had never seen students talk before. They laughed, they cried, they talked, some sang. Their faces were so animated as were their bodies. They wanted, more than anything, to help the audience understand what they had experienced. It was a night that I will never forget.

**Narrative Four**

Ana, one of the sopranos in the choir, approached the group to conduct a warm-up that I had asked her to prepare. “Let’s begin with breathing,” she said. “Breathe in-2-3-4, out-2-3-4, in-2-3-4, out-2-3-4.” The members of the choir were busy executing their exercise. She proceeded with exercises to work on vowel shapes, high singing, low singing, and agility. As she finished her warm-up, Swadi blurted out, “Ana, I don’t feel warm in my high range. Can we do another couple of high exercises?” “Sure,” Ana replied, “what do you want to do?” “Let’s do the zi-ah-oh exercise.” “No,” said Akadenna, “I have a new exercise I want you all to learn. I learned it last night at my Sweet Adeline rehearsal.” Dena proceeded to come to the front and demonstrate the exercise. “You start low and jump to the top, like this, Ahh-ooo, and then you slide down to the middle of the range and finish with a turn. It is really cool—it made me aware of moving in and around the different parts of my register.” She gave a pitch and the students began to learn the exercise. At first, they were not able to execute it, so Dena stopped and re-demonstrated. Little by little, the ladies began to sing through the exercise with ease. “Be aware of the changes in your throat as you go up and through the registers,” Dena suggested. “Wow,” replied Jenny, “that is really cool. I have had
trouble smoothing through my upper break. My voice teacher has really been working on that with me. This really helps me feel the way I control my voice as I move through my range.”

Having moved through what I thought was an excellent warm-up, I asked the choir to pull out the Spanish piece we had been rehearsing. The piece by Villa Lobos was one that they had chosen to perform in an evening of multi-cultural music on a concert in April. “Let’s sing through this and see what happens,” I said. The choir sang through the piece with ease, maneuvering through the tricky melismatic passages. As we finished, Sara blurted out, “you guys, this is just boring. We know the piece, but there is no life to it.” “What do you mean, Sara,” I asked? “Well listen, it just seems so mechanical. We have mastered the notes and we are doing what is on the page, but it is not exciting. I don’t know much about Spanish music, but what I do know about the Spanish culture is that they have lots of life.” “I think you are right,” I said, “how can we find that spirit that you talk of?” “Let’s look at the text again,” said Katrinia. “It always seems to help me when I think of how the music and text come together.” “Good idea,” I said.

As we began to explore the text, I was aware that Maria was sitting on the back row looking “vacant.” I stopped our textual analysis and asked her what she was thinking. “Well,” she said, “I think our problem is that we aren’t moving with the music. I am Spanish and, though I don’t know much about Villa Lobos, I know that my grandmother always used to say that music is no good unless you move to it.” She stood and began to sing the song and demonstrate a dance she had known as a child. Suddenly,
the others began to join her moving around the room and singing. Magically, the room was alive with energy. “Wow,” said Elizabeth, “that’s it. I can’t explain it, but something is different about the way I feel this piece. I have really not enjoyed working on this piece until today. I like this.” “Should we move when we sing this,” I asked? “I don’t know,” said Natalia, “I thought we had agreed that we would only move in the last part of the concert during the more folk music section.” “Yea,” said Miriam, “but it doesn’t hurt us to rehearse this way. Who knows, we may want to move just a little when we sing this tune.”

As we finished rehearsing and moving, Ana raised her hand. “You know,” she said, “the center section of this piece is marked piano. When we just sang through, we were singing forte and I liked it.” “Yea, I did too,” said Laura, “and it seems to fit the text better. We are talking about the mundaneness of sewing in this section and the louder sound seems to remind me of that oppressive feeling I have when I do something over and over.” I talked a little about why Villa Lobos might have chosen to mark the section soft but I reassured the women that if a different volume worked better in the context of what we were doing, we certainly could justify our choice. “I think it makes most sense for what we are doing,” said Lisa. “Then that is what we will do,” I said, “mark your scores.”

Lisa suddenly threw up her hand with excitement. “Hey guys, I have this really cool piece of poetry that would go great with this piece. I think it is even by a Spanish poet. What would you think about reading it before we sing this song?” “Bring it in and
let us hear it,” I said, “that might be a really fun thing to do throughout the concert.”

With that, we moved on the African piece and the rest of the rehearsal.

As the students left the rehearsal room, they dutifully placed their attendance cards/journals on the piano. This procedure with attendance cards I had instituted to help check roll. More importantly, though, on these cards students were asked to engage in critical reflection about their daily learning, and then, at the end of the semester, to reflect upon each of these writings when they used their cards to write a paper concerning their growth throughout the course.

I was as amazed as always when I looked at the cards. What had been a collective event for all of us was translated into as many different examples of learning as there were students in the choir. One student had written about how much she admired Dena for taking over the rehearsal to teach a new vocal technique. She commented that she wished she had the courage to do the same. One student remarked about the vocalise that Ana had taught. She commented that she had been having trouble maneuvering through her upper passaggio in her private lessons. “Suddenly, I felt exactly what I think my teacher has been trying to get me to understand. It was cool,” she wrote. Another student remarked how much working on the Villa Lobos reminded her of what she had just studied in English that morning. “It is from a different culture than the poem we read, but it speaks to the same ideas. I think it is great to see how a feeling can transcend what seems like a cultural boundary,” she commented.

One by one the students made meaning of the learning that had transpired during the rehearsal. For some the meaning was uniquely musical. For others it was personal.
And still for others it was academic. From one rehearsal, in which we accomplished much musically as a group, came a very diverse and personal quest for learning both about music and about each person’s individual journey.

Reflections on My Practice

As I reflect upon these four different moments in my career, I am aware of just how differently I now view the teaching and learning process in the choral classroom. It is interesting for me to see the amount of control that I sought in my early teaching both over the classroom environment and the types of experiences that I would allow to transpire in the rehearsal. I viewed my role of teacher as the keeper of knowledge and the initiator of behavioral change in the students. As Suzy taught me, however, I was not as effective as I thought. In retrospect, Suzy was not alone. I can name many students that were disenfranchised by the manner in which I structured the learning environment. They had but two choices: acquiesce to my structure or leave. There was little room in-between.

I also was unaware or unwilling to acknowledge the individual situation of students in the choir. It was not that I was a dictator; I was a very caring and genuinely concerned teacher. I decided, through my diagnoses, where the students were and where they ought to be. As such, the students in the class had little or no voice in how or what we considered in rehearsals. I made the decisions about what to study, how to study, and what changes were needed in order to help the students become good musicians. I was certainly not a strict behaviorist, for I tried diligently to involve the students in problem-solving. I knew, intuitively, that they must come to answers for themselves. I chose
those questions that supported what I thought was best and denied them the opportunity to look beyond the task that was at hand.

During these early years, I was working from what I knew, from what I had been taught, and the expectations of me, as I understood them, from both the school in which I was hired and the profession in which I was a member. I began teaching in the middle of the accountability movement in education (1980s) and, consequently, was a product of this ideology. I had a real desire to be able to say that students were making observable changes in their learning. I sought order in curriculum and tried, as best I could, to show how students met the expectations of such a plan of study.

In contrast, my most recent years of teaching have been marked by much more fluidity. I no longer seek to control every answer and action and no longer worry about the consequences of actions initiated by me, as teacher. I no longer teach toward a series of behavioral objectives that I have outlined prior to the rehearsal. Though, interestingly, through informal observation, I have noticed that my students cover as much or more material than my earlier students did. I have let go of control so that the students can become involved in making decisions about what to learn and how to learn. Most importantly, everybody, the students as well as I, learns as we strive to achieve a good musical product. I am a participant in the learning process as much as are the students—only in a different way. I have come not only to be comfortable with ambiguity, I have come to seek ambiguity as a sign of successful teaching because my role as educator in the choral classroom has become that of participant and facilitator. My role is to engage the students and myself in the ongoing construction of group-knowledge, of self, and of
self-knowledge within the context of the music-making environment. This individual/social construction of knowledge and of self is grounded in three important, albeit interrelated, themes that emerge from the descriptions of my classroom. These themes become the core of this study.

First, as I have just suggested, I have come to understand that not only are students constructing musical knowledge as a result of their interactions in my choral classroom, they are also in the process of constructing their intimate knowledge of self through their construction of self-knowledge. The students in Narratives Three and Four commented regularly about how their experiences in these classes helped to shape their concept of self, the manner in which they viewed their learning, and the ways in which they chose to interact in the world. Many described these changes as a personal transformation. I also suggest that a transformation occurred in me that changed my understanding of self and the roles that I play in the teaching and learning process. I call this theme, the construction of self through self-knowledge.

Second, I have learned to view each class as a unique social system comprised of the individual students, myself as teacher, and the music being studied. This social system is contexted within the larger systems of the choral program, the school, the community, and the music education profession at large. By shifting my perspective toward a local view of the classroom (embedded in a global system), I have become more aware of the individual needs of students (like Suzy) and have been more capable of encouraging their individual pursuits of self-knowing and learning. I call this theme, the localized reference system.
Finally, the players within each class are given an equal opportunity to share the power within the classroom. As such, the members of the group construct each localized environment in a much less hierarchical manner than the traditional classroom model of teacher-controlled or music-controlled learning. What has emerged in my classroom is a highly dynamic and shifting power structure among and between students, the teacher, and the music in which different members influence the experiences that we share at any given time. In this way, students are given the authority to engage in the construction of self as they interact with the other members of the group.

As the power and influence are constantly shifting and changing, the localized reference system itself remains open to new and unknown possibilities, not closed to possibility as it had been in my earliest teaching. Within each class period I have an idea as to how we will proceed to improve performance and enhance musical learning, but I have no a priori insights as to the ways that we will actually proceed or where we will be at the close of the class. As the students, the music, and I (as teacher and conductor) engage in the dynamic dialogue of the classroom, our collective path takes many unusual, but conscious, turns and detours, as do our individual paths toward knowing and the understanding of self. I call this theme, the issue of power.

Freire describes the educational process in ways that are similar to what I have seen emerge in my own classroom. For Freire, at the heart of education is the process of dialogue.9 Dialogue, in the manner in which he describes it, can only happen between

---

equal humans. If one speaks and the other is not allowed to speak, domination occurs in the place of dialogue. So, for Freire, the relationship between student and teacher is not mutually exclusive but interrelated in an equal way. Thus, he describes the teacher as teacher-student and the student as student-teacher. Through dialogue, the inter-relationship of human to human within the context of “background awareness” (lived experience), student-teacher and teacher-student work along side one another to solve problems presented in experience through reflection-upon and action-upon reality (a concept he calls praxis). Learning is individual and collective as the learners solve problems and discover new problems that emerge from the existing solutions. As such, Freire’s system of dialogue, problem-solving, and re-problematizing is inherently open-ended. He states:

Authentic education is not carried on by “A” for “B” or by “A” about “B,” but rather by “A” with “B,” mediated by the world—a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it. These views [lived experiences and constructions of self], impregnated with anxieties, doubts, hopes, or hopelessness, imply significant themes on the basis of which the program content of education can be built.¹⁰

In summary, I have come to know the classroom as a unique reference system in which the construction of self through self-knowledge occurs within an open and changing environment. To this phenomenon I attach the title *dialogic interactionism* which I borrow from the spirit of the writings of Freire. It is this *dialogic interactionism* in my classroom that I seek to understand further as I engage in a hermeneutic analysis of my teaching.

¹⁰ Ibid., 74.
Organization of the Study, Research Purpose, and Questions

As stated above, with this study, I engage in a hermeneutic phenomenological reflection of my narratives in order to place my observations of teaching into the theoretical language that emanates from certain educational philosophy and music education philosophical literature. Not only have the meanings I have learned to make of theory and practice helped me to better understand choral teaching and learning but this systematic reflection also has served as a model of how theory and practice work together to inform my personal approach toward teaching.

I have identified three pervasive themes, or constructs: the construction of self through self-knowledge, the localized reference system of the classroom, and the issue of power. I examine these themes and define them both in terms of their meaning for me and how they resonate with key theorists in music education. These inter-related themes and the ways they function to shape an open and dynamic classroom, go to the essence of the phenomenon I describe as *dialogic interactionism*.

My ability to recognize such themes as they have emerged from my reflections of teaching in the narratives has been influenced by the work of several writers from both inside and outside of music education. From outside of music education, writings in the area of critical theory (Giroux, Freire), feminist epistemology and pedagogy (Belenky et al., Hays & Flannery, hooks), constructivist theory (Glaserfeld, Fosnot), and the existential phenomenological writings of Maxine Greene have been influential.

In Chapters II, III, and IV, I explore the constructs of the construction of self through self-knowledge, the localized reference system of the classroom, and the
issue of power, respectively. In order to develop philosophical definitions of these terms, I engage in deconstruction and re-construction; I deconstruct my experiences as described in the narratives, and through critical discussion based upon the related literature outside of music education, re-construct my theoretical descriptions of each. Specifically, I look only at writings in the area of constructivist theories of learning, educational philosophy, critical theory, and feminist theory as they relate to the themes of the study. There are four exceptions to this limitation, however. They include the writings of Popper, Popper and Eccles, Lakoff and Johnson, and Berger and Luckmann. Although these writers have not written in the context of the educational setting, their work is important to this study.

Lakoff and Johnson argue for an embodied way of knowing that is related and crucial to the argument for the construction of self through self-knowledge in the music classroom. Likewise, Popper’s writings are contexted within the realm of scientific philosophy and weigh heavily on both cognitive understanding as well as the nature of the physical universe. In my readings, it was Popper’s work that initially provided me a foundation on which to make sense of experience. His ideas about self, as an individual actively engaged with other individuals, and the more abstract qualities of thought resemble the types of experiences I had over and over as I watched and interacted with students engaged in constructing knowledge through personal, social, and ideological

---

interaction. In addition, in his work *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Popper extends his scientific philosophy into a social context. Finally, Berger and Luckmann articulate in great detail the concept of reality as a social construction. Much of the analysis in Chapter II is based upon this theoretical idea. As the work of Berger and Luckmann is pivotal to this sociology of knowledge theory, it is fitting that I reference their writings here.

In Chapters V, VI, VII, and VIII, I examine my constructions of these themes as they have been articulated by writers inside music education. These include Reimer, Bowman, Elliott, and Jorgensen, respectively. Each writer’s work has had an influence on my world-view as teacher. Reimer’s work had a strong influence upon me as an undergraduate—during the critical years in which I was learning to teach. Elliott’s work influenced me as a young teacher in the classroom as I began to negotiate practice with my students. Both Bowman and Jorgensen’s work has influenced my learning as a graduate student in ways that have helped me to analyze critically my pedagogical practice. Certainly, the work of these four philosophers does not represent all that music education discourse has to say about the themes of this study. I chose to examine these four because their ideas work immediately resonated with what I was observing in my classroom.

I begin these chapters by reviewing those parts of each writer’s theory that speak to the themes of the study. Then, engaging in critical examination, I suggest the ways in

---


12 Popper, *The Open Society*. 

---
which each author’s work is similar to or different from my own understandings of the themes of the study. This articulation of distinction, rather than oppositional positioning, serves to further define my own ideas leading to an understanding of how my work uses current theory in music education philosophy as an integral aspect of critical self-reflection on practice. Doing philosophy, as Fiumara points out, should abandon the metaphor of argument as war and proceed in a principle of charity.\(^\text{13}\) It is this principle of charity in which my work is articulated.

Having completed my examination of each theme in the context of related literature, in Chapter IX, I use my thematic analysis of the first part of the writing to develop my ideas about dialogic interactionism. This phenomenon seeks to explain the transformation in my teaching that I have described—a transformation that is intimately connected to the themes examined in the body of the study. In Chapter X, I extend the theory of dialogic interactionism to practice in order to offer specific illustrations of how such ideas might be realized in the classroom. I conclude the study in Chapter XI by suggesting several topics for further study.

Like all fields of endeavor, music education is dynamic and generative. Current ideas as well as extant writings emerge that have import for studies such as this one as they extend into the future. Through the process of conducting this research, my context of understanding has shifted. I am now aware of other writers whose work resonates with the meanings I have constructed here.

Two of those writers, who I would like to acknowledge, are Regelski and Small. At the time I began the study, I read both in hopes that their ideas might bring meaning to my analysis. However, I simply did not understand how their ideas intersected my experience as a teacher. Having finished the study, I now understand that Regelski’s notion of praxis and Small’s invented term of musicking, speak directly to much of what I have written.\textsuperscript{14} I wish to acknowledge their contributions and suggest that, in my future research, I will embrace their work and that of others in order to understand how their ideas can extend my own.

The following questions serve to guide this study:

1. How do the analysis of literature and my reflections on practice connect to shape my understanding of the construction of self through self-knowledge?

2. How do the analysis of literature and my reflections on practice connect to shape my understanding of the localized reference system of the classroom?

3. How do the analysis of literature and my reflections on practice connect to shape my understanding of power in the choral classroom?

4. How do these themes, as constructed from observation and philosophical examination in the literature, help to explain the phenomenon of dialogic interactionism?

5. In my work as a teacher of teachers, what implications are imbedded in the way I approach choral music education practice?
CHAPTER II

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SELF THROUGH SELF-KNOWLEDGE

In the following three chapters, I engage in the thematic analysis of the constructs of this study: the construction of self through self-knowledge, the localized reference system of the classroom, and the issue of power, respectively. I begin each chapter by analyzing my teaching experiences as articulated in the narratives offered in Chapter I in order to describe each construct as I observed it in my classroom. Then, through the analysis and critical discussion of literature outside of music education, I describe each construct as others have written about it. I conclude each chapter by defining the construct being examined as it is to be used for the purpose of this study, a definition derived from a synthesis of both my self-analysis and the analysis of literature.

An Analysis of My Narratives

In reflecting upon the narratives in Chapter I, I am arguing here for a constructed view of knowledge. Suzy was the first to alert me to this understanding. Students in Narratives One and Two were constructing knowledge without my knowledge but very much in response to my interactions with them. Once I became aware of my role as a teacher in the process of knowledge construction, I used the class time purposefully to actively engage the students in the construction of their knowledge, gauging at all times how what I did or said resonated with the students in their responses. This means that I actively controlled the social and physical environment of the classroom in ways that allowed students to connect what I wanted them to learn to their individual life histories and perspectives. The way I constructed the environment in the
later classrooms, as described in Narratives Three and Four, (through sharing power with students and assuming a localized view of the classroom) allowed me to give students the freedom they needed to place what I had to say to them into their own contexts and level of understanding.

This contextualized knowledge construction that I speak of grew out of a process of problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection in connection with the individual perspectives of the students involved. Critical to such a process was the notion that both the students and I were actively participating in and physically engaged in the interaction that transpired in the classroom.

First, neither the students nor I were passive in our pursuits to construct knowledge. The manner in which we placed ourselves in the room, the physical ways in which we played out our thoughts and ideas, and the ways in which the actual environment limited or guided our interactions had an impact on the problems that arose and our subsequent solving of those problems. In Narrative Four, the students were constantly engaged physically with both the environment and with each other. Often, the students and I would leave the choir room to find other spaces around the campus that offered different types of acoustical properties in order to develop new ways of solving issues of tuning, blend, and balance. Such pursuits were not solely theoretical. The students all had a notion of what was meant by the terms tuning, blend, and balance, but until they were able to physically experience sound in new acoustical spaces, they were...

---

15 As stated in Chapter I, the class I described in Narrative Three was taught by myself and two of my colleagues. While they should be given credit for their contributions to the learning process, I can only...
unable to solve their own limitations in these areas. Likewise, they were unable to own
their theoretical notions of tuning, blend, and balance until they were able to physically
manipulate sound in several spaces. Each space revealed new problems and offered new
ways of understanding these concepts in the context of the students’ voices, the ways
these voices worked together as a group, and the physical variables that students could
consciously control to achieve the sound desired for any given song.

Second, in Narrative Three, the students did not merely sit around and talk about
ideas. They would physically engage themselves with the environment in order to
experiment with possible solutions to a problem. Often, when a problem would emerge,
my colleague from dance would facilitate a movement improvisation with the students in
order to try different solutions to the problem. For instance, at one point in a class, the
students were playing around with the metaphor of being bound by societal rules and
regulations. My colleague emerged from her office carrying a long rope with which she
physically bound four students. The others watched and observed the ways in which
these students struggled within their physical limitations. Such engagement began to
help them understand the metaphor of being bound at deeper levels and ultimately helped
them develop lyrics for a song about social pressures that had personal meaning, not only
linguistically but in the students’ bodies as well.

What I began to realize as I observed students in situations like these is that the
ownership of understanding and knowledge-construction was a physically active process

---

speak, in this context, from my personal perspective. So as not to try and speak for them, I will use the
term “I” when speaking of the teacher in this classroom.
within the context of the environment. Students were not merely reading about life or passively considering the problems that arose theoretically. They were actively, physically engaged in experiments with the environment in order to find possible solutions. More importantly, it became obvious to me through my observations that in those instances when students were less physically involved, as in times when they sat and recalled their lived histories in the process of problem-solving, that most of their memories were directly linked to a past physical engagement with the environment. For instance, when they talked about color, the metaphor upon which they finally chose to base their finished musical piece entitled *Colours: A musical allegory*, their psychological understanding of the experience of different colors stemmed from physical interactions with these colors from childhood. Students would describe how raw umber reminded them of making mud pies as a child. They commented that the mud was not really brown nor was it black. It was somewhere in between. Seeing the color raw umber evoked an understanding and emotional experience that had been created through their earlier physical interactions with the environment. These prior experiences brought meaning to their present engagement with color.

By active problem-solving, I mean that students and I were seeking problems that arose within the context of our interactions, and we were developing probable solutions to these problems. These *hypotheses* were then tested by applying them to the situations. Through reflection upon the results, using informal criteria designed by the members of the class, students would determine that the problem was solved and that they could continue to the next discovery of a problem; or they would determine that the solution to
the problem had, indeed, created a bigger problem. In some instances, the solution was simply not producing the desired results, and the students and I had to go back to the original problem and try again. In other instances, the solution created a new problem that sent us off in another direction with a new focus of inquiry.

In both of these classes, I most often resisted the urge to lecture, in the traditional sense, or to offer, a priori, a set methodology with which to proceed like I had in my earlier classrooms. As problems arose, the students and I would offer suggestions about how similar problems had been solved by other people whom we had studied in the past or how we had solved a similar problem in a different context. These suggestions, arising directly out of the context of the problem at hand, would sometimes offer a different way of approaching the problem or a starting point from which to launch a new way of thinking about the problem. Often, on their own volition and outside of class, students would seek information about a problem by consulting reference sources in the library, on the internet, or in other materials that they felt related to the issue. They would come to class eager to share their findings and to shed a different perspective upon the topic being considered. Only occasionally, when I felt most guilty about not acting in the traditional role of teacher as information-giver, would I lecture about a given topic. In these moments of monologue, the students would often find ways of asking me to stop so that they could get back to their work.

These classes were not unplanned; the students and I had goals and deadlines such as an impending concert or a date by which a certain amount of material had to be written. Often I found my role to be facilitator, the one who would keep the group
focused and moving forward. At times, and usually to the dismay of the students, they had to abandon a problem and simply accept that the work would have to be performed as it existed; time simply began to rule classroom interactions. These problems were usually the ones that students wanted to revisit after the concert or in the context of the next project in which they were involved.

This type of working in the classroom did not come easily. Initially, students were suspicious and either accused me of not knowing my subject matter or not being capable of disseminating information. They had expectations of my role as teacher and probably would have been quite happy to act in a passive role as receiver of knowledge. As the process wore on, however, they began to relish more and more the ways in which they interacted with music, with each other, with information, and with me. Often students would comment that they wished all of their classes could be taught in a similar manner.

As I observed the students working together, I began to realize that much of the success in the classroom depended upon each individual in the group and, at the same time, upon the group as a whole. The ability to find and isolate problems as well as offer possible solutions almost always stemmed from each student’s individual life experiences. They were able to articulate problems and offer possible solutions because members of the class would have encountered similar types of problems in their past, or they were able to formulate a problem/solution by modifying some aspect of their lived experience. Sometimes the problems that I encountered reminded me of situations in music history that I had studied previously, so I would offer my knowledge as a way for
the class to evaluate the problem. Likewise, one student felt that an idea we were working with would best be presented in the form of a protest poem. His own knowledge and prior reading of protest writings of the 1960s allowed him to offer such a suggestion to the group.

While individual identity in the classroom was important, it was the negotiation of ideas within the group that helped to shape the ways in which the students and I made meaning of problems and solutions, consequently turning them into songs and theatrical scenes. These multiple perspectives added a depth to problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection that simply would not have happened had the group not existed. While negotiating ideas within a group was sometimes frustrating, more often it was exhilarating and productive.

In addition, being a member of this pluralistic group of individuals became a transforming experience for me and, according to what students told me, to several of them as well. As the class negotiated ideas, the solutions discovered allowed different participants to transform their own individual perspective. For me, watching students engage in problems so passionately that they sought out information on their own changed the way I had always viewed students. I began to realize that the quest for knowledge seemed to thrive when students could engage in learning on their own terms. This realization not only excited me, it began to influence the way in which I interacted with students, not only in this class but in the other classes that I taught.

On several occasions, some of the students would share with the class different ways in which our time together had helped them to grow as both a person and a
musician. These sharing sessions were often emotionally charged as the students discussed their new personal realizations. One student in particular asked early on in the class if we would be studying any *real music*. Interestingly, at the end of the semester, the same student asked if she could address the class. In her address, she apologized for the earlier comments. She proceeded to tell us that her view of music had changed. The type of music that we were making in this class had become *real* to her because she was able to experience it at its inception. She went on to talk about how much the class had meant to her personally and how different it was from other music classes she had taken previously. While she at first had been dubious, she was now filled with visible excitement and elation.\footnote{While I certainly cannot claim that every student had some type of transformation, I can say that almost every one of them, in their own way, took the time to discuss with me the influence the class had upon}

*Synthesizing the analysis*

In synthesizing this analysis of Narratives Three and Four, three salient ideas become important that help to explain the manner in which I observed students constructing knowledge in the classroom and, subsequently, constructing or transforming the way in which they talked about their sense of self. They are 1) active engagement with the environment through problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection; 2) the social aspect of self-construction; and, 3) knowledge-construction as transformation.
1.) Active engagement with the environment through problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection

The active engagement with the physical and social environment through problem-finding and problem-solving combined with constant reflection was a way of constructing both personal and group knowledge. The physically active engagement with both the environment and with each other created experiences from which students were able to frame emerging problems. Then, as they were physically and actively engaged with the environment and with each other through reflection, they were able to find probable solutions in the process of trial and error through problem-solving. Likewise, as they were physically and actively engaged in experimenting, it was through reflection that they were able to recognize that a solution had been found. Many times such a solution would lead toward a new problem. It was also reflection upon such problem-solving in the context of individual lived experience that helped students to create, not only group knowledge, but individual knowledge. They were able to make conscious each person’s place within a somewhat chaotic and circular process and to articulate that which each had come to know.

2.) The social aspect of self-construction

The construction of knowledge was at once personal, in that each participant was processing the situation from her or his own perspective, and social, in that personal ideas and constructions were negotiated by interactions and dialogues with other members of the group. Student’s lived histories and experiences prior to entering into the learning them.
environment provided a point of entry for each to interact in the process, and these past
experiences helped to guide the ways in which they went about problem-solving.
Students often would comment upon ways in which their personal perspectives began to
shift as ideas were negotiated among the group.

3.) Knowledge-construction as transformation

I often became aware that this knowledge-construction, both individual and
collective, led to the sense of transformation in the ways with which the students and I
continued to learn and construct self. Students were not simply learning content-
knowledge or appropriating sets of facts. They were involved in great risk-taking, of
putting ideas, personal feelings, and thoughts into a forum for criticism, alteration, and
transformation. They seemed to become personally invested in the work that they were
doing, and talked about experiencing varying degrees of personal transformation as a
result of their interactions. Students often would comment that such a process of learning
helped them not only to learn more about music but to learn more about their own lives.
Students also commented that the influence of these interactions was creating changes in
the ways they viewed learning in other classes, learning in general, and meanings they
constructed in other areas of their lives beyond school.

Summary

Active engagement with the environment through problem-finding, problem-
solving, and reflection; the social aspect of self-construction; and knowledge-
construction as transformation were all somehow intermingled in our shared musical
experiences. I use the word intermingled to suggest that these three ideas are not mutually
exclusive; they are, in fact, integrally dependent on each other. For example, the development of a sense of self can be seen as the result of active problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection in the context of both personally and socially constructed knowledge. Similarly, the social and personal interactions with each other and with the music created the context for active problem-solving. Experiencing the phenomenon of transformation, in turn, created the desire to want to continue in the process of problematizing.

The ideas presented here are neither hierarchical nor sequenced. They influenced each another in many different and, at times, surprising ways. However, the linear quality of language necessitates that each idea be considered in some kind of an order. Such limitations, caused by discussing these ideas in language, in no way suggest the separateness of these ideas. In fact, in living within the moment of one of these classes, I would have found it hard to make such a separation. Having made these observations through analysis, I now turn to the related literature to see how others have discussed similar ideas.

Analyzing the Literature on Self

In this section, I use the three themes of the synthesis of my narratives above to guide my review of the literature on self. These themes include: Active Engagement with the Environment through Problem-Finding, Problem-Solving, and Reflection; The Social Aspect of Self-Construction; and Knowledge-Construction as Transformation. The first of these themes is quite complex in that it is comprised of active engagement, problem-
finding and problem-solving, and reflection. In order to make sense of these inter-related aspects, I will consider each term separately in light of the literature being examined.

Active Engagement with the Environment Through Problem-Finding, Problem-Solving, and Reflection

The idea that learners learn through active engagement with the environment and through problem-solving is not a new idea. This concept is the cornerstone of the constructivist paradigm in general education and can be traced historically, as Glaserfeld suggests, to the work of the 18th century Neapolitan philosopher, Giambattista Vico.\(^{17}\)

Other constructivists credit the origins of the theory to the works of Piaget and Vygotsky.\(^{18}\)

In defining the concept of constructivism, Fosnot states:

Learning from this perspective is viewed as a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality as a human meaning-making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate.\(^{19}\)

Likewise, she defines the constructivist classroom as:

a minisociety, a community of learners engaged in activity, discourse, and reflection. The traditional hierarchy of teacher as the autocratic knower and learner as the unknowing, controlled subject studying to learn what the teacher knows begins to dissipate as teachers assume more of a facilitator’s role and


\(^{19}\) Ibid., ix.
learners take on more ownership of the ideas. Indeed, autonomy, mutual reciprocity of social relations, and empowerment become the goals. As such, the learner is engaged in the development of knowledge through “activity, discourse, and reflection” as he or she “struggles with the conflict between existing personal [and social] models of the world and discrepant new insights.” In other words, the student is actively engaged in problem-finding and problem-solving which ultimately leads toward the construction of new models for making meaning of and living in the world.

The idea that learners construct knowledge through active engagement with the surrounding environment can be seen in the general education philosophical literature, the feminist epistemological literature, the critical epistemological literature, the scientific philosophical literature, and the biological/cognitive literature. The principles of constructivism have been adapted in the areas of science education by writers such as Shapiro, in mathematics education by writers such as Schifter, in language education by writers such as Gould, and in nursing education by writers such as Peters.

---

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
A review of the many permutations of this theory in various disciplines is too extensive to include here. Suffice it to say that the concept of constructed knowledge has been discussed in the discourse of many disciplines. What is important to this study, however, is to examine selected literature related to my analysis of the narratives and to synthesize it into its broader conceptual ideas.

As I described in the analysis above, the students and my knowledge-construction was based first upon our active engagement with the environment through three distinct processes: problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection. Before a problem can be solved, it must first be articulated as a problem and framed in a way that the parameters of the problem are clearly defined. This process which I have described as problem-finding is the first step in enabling learners to develop probable solutions or hypotheses to be tested within the context of the problem being considered. Such a process emerges from active interactions in the environment between the people involved and the music being studied. Likewise, as a problem is found, probable hypotheses must be developed and tested in order to find the best possible answers. This is the process that I have described as problem-solving. Finally, through the process of reflection, the learners evaluate the new solutions in order to decide that the problem has indeed been solved or that the new solution has, in turn, created another permutation of the original problem or created an entirely new problem that must be considered. This process can be seen as

---

circular in that reflection often leads to more active engagement with the same or new problems as the process of finding, solving, and reflecting continues.

I examine this circular process—problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection—as it has been articulated in the literature. Before I consider these processes, however, I examine how the literature defines the concept of active engagement within the environment, since it is through such active engagement that the problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection processes are possible.

Examining the term “active”

Glaserfeld suggests that learning is not a passive process. He describes learning as an active process of making sense of new interactions with the environment by connecting them with past knowledge existing within the learner’s lived history, a concept that he explains through his interpretation of Piaget’s schema theory. A learner’s past experience, or schema, is the only context from which he or she can make sense of new experiences in both the physical and social environment. As these new experiences are linked with existing schema, this active process not only produces meaning for the learner but also allows her or him to adapt existing schema to the new knowledge. In this way, the learner is in the active process of constructing knowledge. Glaserfeld suggests that this concept of the construction of knowledge is a departure from the more traditional view of learning where objective knowledge is transmitted from teacher to student.

---

Similarly, Popper suggests that each individual acts in the world with a set of expectations or theoretical plans that he or she modifies based upon the way in which experiences match or do not match expectations. Popper implies that such learning can happen only if the learner is active, “if they have aims or preferences, and if they produce expectations.” In other words, the learner must be actively engaged in problem-solving based upon her or his pre-existing theories or world-structures which are reshaped through active engagement.

Finally, Lakoff and Johnson write about what they describe as the untruths of faculty psychology. According to them, the basis of faculty psychology is the idea that people have a faculty for reason (and thus learning) that is separate from the body. In other words, the ability to reason or to learn transcends physical being and actions in the world. Similar to the schema theory of Piaget and Glaserfeld, Lakoff and Johnson suggest that people reason through the process of categorization that emerges from the ways in which they live physically in the world. In other words, individual categories stem directly from a person’s embodiment in the world. They state:

Most important, it is not just that our bodies and brains determine that we will categorize; they also determine what kinds of categories we will have and what their structure will be. Think of the properties of the human body that contribute to the peculiarities of our conceptual system. We have eyes and ears, arms and legs that work in certain very definite ways and not in others. We have a visual system, with topographic maps and orientation-sensitive cells, that provides structure for our ability to conceptualize spatial relations. Our abilities to move in the ways we do and to track the motion of other things give motion a major role in our conceptual system. The fact that we have muscles and use them

---

26 Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 16-20.
27 This idea is commonly known as the body/mind split or the Descartian split of body and mind.
to apply force in certain ways leads to the structure of our system of causal concepts. What is important is not just that we have bodies and that thought is somehow embodied. What is important is that the peculiar nature of our bodies shapes our very possibilities for conceptualization and categorization.\(^{28}\)

The idea that a person can only reason within the limits of the physical body and that all reason is a manifestation of the physical process of neural sensory-motor movement supports the concept that learning is both experiential and active. If the premise that reason is embodied is accepted, then all learning would have to emerge from active and physical engagement with the world. Learning simply could not be a passive act. Lakoff and Johnson offer the following six ideas concerning embodied reasoning:

- **Embodied Concepts:** Our conceptual system is grounded in, neurally makes use of, and is crucially shaped by our perceptual and motor systems.
- **Conceptualization Only Through the Body:** We can only form concepts through the body. Therefore, every understanding that we can have of the world, ourselves, and others can only be framed in terms of concepts shaped by our bodies.
- **Basic-Level Concepts:** These concepts use our perceptual, imaging, and motor systems to characterize our optimal functioning in everyday life. This is the level at which we are maximally in touch with the reality of our environments.
- **Embodied Reasoning:** Major forms of rational inference are instances of sensorimotor inference.
- **Embodied Truth and Knowledge:** Because our ideas are framed in terms of our unconscious embodied conceptual systems, truth and knowledge depend on embodied understanding.
- **Embodied Mind:** Because concepts and reason both derive from, and make use of, the sensorimotor system, the mind is not separate from or independent of the body. Therefore, classical faculty psychology is incorrect.\(^{29}\)

In summary, learning can be viewed as the inter-relationship between the knower and the ways in which he or she is actively involved in the physical and social

---

\(^{28}\) Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 18-19.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 555.
environment in which he or she lives. This active living in the world is given meaning as the learner interprets such action in light of her or his existing schema, concepts, experiences, or expectations. Through the process of making meaning, these schema, concepts, experiences, and expectations are in turn transformed by the assimilation of the novel experience in the world. Likewise, learning cannot transcend the physical body. It is, indeed, limited to the peculiarities of the body and therefore cannot be a physically passive act. Nor is it, as Freire suggests in his banking metaphor of learning, a situation in states, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.”

Examining the terms problem-finding and problem-solving

Inherent in the discussion on active engagement with the environment is the idea that the learner is involved in problem-finding and problem-solving. I will begin this discussion by examining Popper’s thoughts on the nature of both problem-finding and problem-solving, but, to understand Popper’s view of such knowledge-construction, it is first necessary to understand his theory of Worlds 1, 2, and 3.

Popper developed a model that describes three worlds into which each person is situated. World 1 is the physical world, the environment which surrounds humans comprised of physical objects, air, water, and so on. World 2 is the personal world of each human and is centered in phenomenal and subjective experience. It is in World 2 that learners construct the experience of self and from which each person enters the

---

30 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 53.
physical world, or World 1. It is also from World 2 that each learner develops theories and expectations for engaging in the physical world through active participation. Popper goes on to describe a World 3 comprised of human thought that exists decentralized or beyond the location of each person centered in World 2. It is made possible by the ability of humans to reason abstractly through the use of language, symbolic representation, metaphor, and so forth and includes such products as theories, myths, mathematical explanations, scientific discoveries, and human constructions of expression, such as art, music, dance, or theatre. World 3 is, if you will, a theoretical body of knowledge that exists, outside of the realm of experience, in which all that has been thought throughout the history of humankind resides. Popper names such knowledge in World 3 as *objective knowledge*.

The idea that there exists a body of knowledge disembodied and objectified from the position of the self in the world seems antithetical to everything that I have argued thus far and to all of the literature that I have examined in this chapter. I suggest that such a construction is not necessarily in opposition to the idea of constructed knowledge; in fact, it is a metaphor that is helpful in making sense of lived experience.

As Lakoff and Johnson suggest, the ability to reason and conceptualize is an embodied process. However, they also acknowledge that humans have developed a metaphor of a separate mind and body stemming from the perception of experiences within daily life. Through routine interactions with the world that happen through the senses, humans are often not aware of their senses when in the act of perceiving. This
gives the illusion that the mind exists separately from the body while, in fact, the organs of the body collect the data of thoughts. They state:

In virtually all of our acts of perception, the bodily organs of perception (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin) are not what we are attending to. For example, when we walk down the street and look at a house, we are normally not attending to our eyes, much less to the visual system of our brains. The fact that what we attend to is rarely what we perceive with gives the illusion that mental acts occur independent of the unnoticed body.31

Such is the case with Popper’s World 3. When a person begins to reason abstractly or interact with other people’s theories and thoughts, he or she has the experience of transcending the body and meeting such thinkers in an ethereal place where both can interact and share. In reality, though, even the interactions with thoughts read in books are embodied in that the agent is actively using her or his eyes to read the text. The understanding of the text is tied to the conceptual structures which have been constructed from experience. Fosnot explains this same phenomenon in a similar way.

All cultures represent the meaning of experience in some way; through symbol, music, myth, storytelling, art, language, film, explanatory ‘scientific’ models, and/or mathematical forms. Decentering from experience, representing experiences and ideas with symbols (itself a constructive process), allows the creation of ‘semiotic spaces’ where we can negotiate meaning. I cannot understand in the same way as another human who has had different experiences, but with language, with stories, with metaphors and models, we can listen to and probe one another’s understanding, thereby negotiating ‘taken-as-shared’ meanings. Decentering by constructing representations empowers us 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.32

---

31 Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 555.
Popper’s metaphor is helpful in that, though humans are still entering the world of thought from the embodied perspective of World 2, they are able to interact with others’ thoughts, construct their own thoughts, and metaphorically objectify them so that they can critique, reflect upon, and revise them. Considering World 3 as a construction or metaphor in and of itself is useful and helpful to make sense of what is really embodied experience. If, however, the idea of objective knowledge in the more historical sense of determinism is considered, that there exists a body of knowledge that is fixed, universal, natural, or divined, it becomes antithetical to this discussion. Because the term objective has become both theory and value laden over time, I will use the term decentralized when discussing World 3. In this way, World 3 can be used as a metaphor and be independent of the assumptions of determinism.

How does Popper view the construction of knowledge through problem-finding and problem-solving? He suggests that all knowledge stems from previous knowledge that has either been inherited through genetic patterning or that has been acquired through active problem-finding and problem-solving. He further suggests that “all knowledge, whether inherited or acquired, is historically a modification of earlier knowledge; and all acquired knowledge can be traced back, step by step, to modifications of inborn or instinctive knowledge. The importance of acquired information lies almost entirely in our inborn ability to use it in connection with, and perhaps as we make changes to our unconscious hereditary knowledge.”

33 Popper and Eccles, The Self and Its Brain, 121.
As humans live in the world by interacting from the perspective of World 2 in the World 1, and bring to consciousness experiences through theoretical explanations of World 2 experiences in World 3, discrepancies arise between theory and experience that are perceived as problems to be solved. The ability to recognize and articulate such discrepancies is what I call problem-finding. Having found and framed such problems, people then are able to go about the business of solving these problems by evaluating theoretical explanations or hypotheses in light of experiences, action programs, and expectations. Through the critique of theories in the context of conscious reflections of experience, coupled with the intuitiveness of unconscious hereditary knowledge, humans are able to find errors in such theories and redefine or reshape them through, what Popper calls, “conscious criticism.”34 This redefinition of theoretical models becomes what is known as acquired knowledge in a World 2 sense and thus becomes new knowledge for both further action in the world and future problem-finding and problem-solving. Popper offers the following epistemological equation:

\[ P_1 \rightarrow TT \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2 \]

“That is, we start from some problem, P1, proceed to a tentative solution or tentative theory, TT, which may be (partly or wholly) mistaken; in any case it will be subject to error-elimination, EE, which may consist of critical discussion or experimental tests; at any rate, new problems, P2, arise from our own creative activity.”35

---

34 Ibid., 122.
There are some important observations to make about Popper’s equation. First, as the equation is circular, P1 is bound by past knowledge-construction (the P2’s of past experiences); acquired knowledge becomes evolutionary and open-ended. Such knowledge is always in the process of becoming. Second, as humans engage in problem-solving, they also are engaging in the process of problem-finding; solutions to one problem often lead to the next problem. As such, though problem-finding and problem-solving are in one way separate processes, they are at the same time integrated one within another. Third, it is the human ability to make experience conscious by decentralizing from experience or action in the world, or, in Popper’s terms, the ability to think in a World 3 manner. If people did not have such ability, they would live life without being able to change or reshape action programs; in short, they would not be able to learn.

Fourth, the ability to think in World 3 terms not only allows humans to construct personal knowledge in a subjective World 2 sense, it also allows them to interact from the perspective of a personal knowledge base with others’ theories and articulations of the world. For instance, I can interact with the theories articulated by Newton, not just to memorize them, but more importantly, to critique them in light of my own knowledge-base acquired through heredity and experience. In this way, all of knowledge progresses as individuals find problems in pre-existing models of the experienced world and offer new interpretations from a World 2 perspective. Popper suggests the body-of-knowledge that humans call scientific or historical knowing is not a fixed set of absolute truths, but a collection of hypotheses and theoretical structures offered by humans throughout the course of time. Articulated in this manner, such models, scientific theories, musical
compositions, historical facts, and so on can become the P1 of active problem-finding and problem-solving in the world and not mere facts to be passively accepted. Finally, Popper states,

What characterizes the self (as opposed to the electrochemical processes of the brain on which the self largely depends—a dependence which seems far from one-sided) is that all our experiences are closely related and integrated; not only with past experiences but also with our changing programmes for action, our expectations, and our theories—with our models of the physical and the cultural environment, past, present, and future, including the problems which they raise for our evaluations, and for our programmes for action. But all these belong, at least in part, to World 3.

So, through active problem-solving, individuals gain a sense of on-goingness and continuity to their lives as both knowers and people living in the world.

Similarly, Dewey suggests that learners learn through experience. Dewey’s theory also is based on a scientific experimental model of learning, that he calls empirical or experimental. He states that, “Intelligent activity is distinguished from aimless activity by the fact that it involves selection of means—analysis—out of the variety of conditions that are present, and their arrangement—synthesis—to reach an intended aim or purpose.” Again, learning is the result of active problem-finding and problem-solving as a means toward constructing knowledge. For Dewey, such experiential learning must derive from the everyday experiences in which the learner finds herself or himself. In essence, as in Popper’s model, learning must arise out of the interaction of

---

37 Ibid., 147.
39 Ibid., 25
Worlds 1 and 2 if it is to catch the attention of the learner and create in the learner a desire to construct knowledge.\footnote{Ibid., 84.}

This calls for the examination of Dewey’s term *purpose*. Purpose, for Dewey, begins with a learner’s initial impulse to want to learn, a desire to bring into consciousness what can be gleaned from an experience. However, as Dewey explains, such a desire does not, in and of itself, constitute a purpose; it is only the spark that begins the process of developing a purpose. He states, “The formation of purposes is, then, a rather complex intellectual operation. It involves (1) observation of surrounding conditions; (2) knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past, a knowledge obtained partly by recollection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have had a wider experience; and (3) judgment which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify.”\footnote{Ibid., 73.}

What Dewey has articulated is the formulation of a problem or the process of *problem-finding* based on a desire that is both reasoned and methodical. In Popper’s terms, the learner is interacting in both Worlds 2 and 3, based on an intuitional hunch stemming from unconscious knowledge and, through logical reasoning, is formulating the P1 of the problem-solving equation. Inherent in this process of problem-finding is the act of bringing into consciousness, through reflection and abstract reasoning, the discrepancy...
in experience with which the learner begins the process of problem-solving and, ultimately, knowledge-construction.\footnote{Ibid., 68-69.}

From a feminist perspective, Belenky et al. describe the problem-finding and problem-solving process as the development of \textit{frames of reference} used to construct knowledge.\footnote{This idea is similar to the concept of equilibration as explained by Piaget.} It is through these frames or, as Popper would suggest, theoretical models of the world, that the knower comes to understand and acquire knowledge as a constructed phenomenon and not a universal or absolute truth. The frames, or previously constructed knowledge, become the context for both immediate and future action in the world and, thus, create an intimate relationship between the knower and what is known. In addition, Belenky et al. suggest that “Once knowers assume the general relativity of knowledge, that their frame of reference matters and that they can construct and reconstruct frames of reference, they feel responsible for examining, questioning, and developing the systems that they will use for constructing knowledge.”\footnote{Ibid., 68-69.}

In summarizing this section discussing the construction of self through self-knowledge, problem-finding and problem-solving can be seen as the processes through which learners come to articulate discrepancies that arise among their past knowledge, their inherited knowledge, their action programs, and their expectations in the context of their active engagement with the physical world. These discrepancies in turn are developed into a purpose, the articulation of P1 or a frame of reference, with which the learner begins to experiment through active participation in the environment. Reflection
upon these new experiences or experiments leads to the revision of frames of reference and, thus, the acquisition of new knowledge that, in turn, begins the process again.

There are three other important conclusions that can be drawn from this discussion: 1) knowledge is contextual in that it is relative to the situation of the learner in the environment and her or his past knowledge-construction; 2) knowledge is evolutionary, in the process of becoming, and thus is open-ended; and 3) though there does exist a body of knowledge collected in books, artworks, and other sources of documentation, these are neither absolutes nor natural laws. The ideas and concepts inherent in such works can and should be viewed as theoretical models, created by people in the process of knowledge-construction, that are capable of being tested, critiqued, and transformed by other learners.

*Examining the term reflection*

Inherent in the discussion of problem-finding and problem-solving is the concept of reflection, the ability to think about actions in the world in the context of theories and expectations in order to revise and adjust continued action in the world. Such an ability, according to Popper, is based upon the idea that humans can, through language, decentralize from experience and make their experiences the object of inspection.\(^{46}\)

For Popper, the concept of reflection is tied to consciousness. Popper suggests that the largest part of experience happens below the level of consciousness.\(^{47}\) It is this unconscious memory that gives a feeling of continuity, a sense that life is progressing

\(^{44}\) Belenky et al., *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, 138-139.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
from moment to moment. People have the ability to call to consciousness, at will, past experiences in the form of what Popper describes as a *disposition*. As such, humans have a sense that their lives are anchored in time; they live from moment to moment and can recall those moments and relive them as they have happened in the past. Likewise, humans are anchored in World 3. Theories, world-views, action programs, and expectations can be called to consciousness and be considered in light of immediate experience.

For Popper, it is salient that people have this ability to decentralize from experience and call to consciousness, at will, the very actions that they make in the world. Popper states:

> It is only by formulating them [dispositions to call into consciousness past experiences] in language, by making them World 3 objects, that they can become objects of inspection, of consideration, and or rational criticism. As long as our conjectures are part of ourselves, there is a great likelihood that, if they are not well adapted, we shall die with them. It is one of the main biological functions of World 2 to produce theories and conscious anticipations of impending events; and it is the main biological function of World 3 to make it possible for these theories to be rejected—to let our theories die in our stead.

So it is reflection, through consciousness, that allows people to critically analyze their theories and expectations in order to adapt continuously to the environment and move ahead in the process of learning to live in the world. In this way, people are not bound to repeat their past mistakes; they have the ability, if they use it, to alter action programs and theories in an active adaptation to the environment.

---

48 Ibid., 131.  
49 Ibid., 138.
For Greene, the process of reflection also is based on consciousness. Such consciousness arises directly from actual, specific experiences and must be seen within the context of the lived experience of the learner in the process of reflection. She suggests that:

Consciousness thrusts toward the world, not away from it; it thrusts towards the situations in which the individual lives her or his life. It is through acts of consciousness that aspects of the world present themselves to living beings. These acts include imagining, intuiting, remembering, believing, judging, conceiving and (focally) perceiving. Alone or in collaboration, they bring individuals in touch with objects, events, and other human beings; they make it possible for individuals to orient themselves to, to interpret, to constitute a world.  

For Greene, consciousness is the process of critical reflection, a process of making sense of the world through active participation in it. She describes such critical reflection as emancipatory and suggests that it transcends passivity. But learners must choose to be “wide awake,” as Greene calls it, to such active meaning-making. This happens, Greene suggests, when learners are allowed to ask their own questions and critically investigate the world in which they have a sense of belonging, a world that is contexted in their lived experiences, lived histories, or what she calls, their “landscapes” for learning. Therefore, as with Popper, reflection is consciousness chosen at will by the learner in the context of her or his lived life experience.

For Freire, the process of action and reflection cannot be separated. He states, “To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn

---

50 Greene, Landscapes of Learning, 14.
51 Ibid., 2.
reappears to be namers [sic] as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection.”

The basis of Freire’s pedagogy is the concept of praxis, the inexorable link between thought and action or to use his terms, word and work. Learners name the world through action, and action, in turn, creates the need for renaming the world; one cannot exist without the other. Similar to the discussion of action and problem-solving, people engage in the world in action through the lens of their theories, action programs, and expectations. These are shaped by action and, consequently, action is shaped by theories. They simply are, according to Freire, synonymous.

He goes on to suggest that the concept of word can be broken into two constituent but “radically interactive” parts: action and reflection. One cannot exist without the other. Action without reflection becomes activism—action for action sake. Likewise, reflection without action becomes verbalism—meaningless and empty words. Therefore, through action/reflection exists the *word*. The word, in turn, is synonymous with work and, in this union, becomes the concept of praxis. He offers the following diagram:

```
| Action | Reflection | word = work = praxis
```

---

52 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 68-69.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 68.
Praxis, then, becomes “the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.”

While this articulation of action/reflection by Freire may seem circular, and confusing, it is, I suggest, his attempt at putting into words the phenomenal experience of active problem-solving. In this way, it is similar to the type of reflection-in-action that Schön suggests.

Schön describes such knowing-in-action as tacit knowing or the idea that “knowing is in our actions.” As humans interact in the world, some of their knowledge cannot be articulated in language. Much of what a person knows about living in the world is embedded within their physical body and the manner in which this body moves, acts, and reacts within the world. Likewise, people can reflect-on-action in order to decentralize from action and consider possible solutions to and methods for experimenting in action. Schön suggests that such reflection-on-action can take place after the experience has been completed and can help revise future action. It also can take place in the moment of action. Schön states, “When the phenomenon at hand eludes the ordinary categories of knowledge-in-practice, presenting itself as unique or unstable, the practitioner may surface and criticize his initial understanding of the

---

57 Ibid., 60.
59 For example, an experienced driver does not think about the process of driving linguistically as he or she drives (look left, turn the wheel left, push the gas pedal, etc.). An automatic task such as driving is embedded within the body as the driver is in the process of driving. The ability to drive, survey the road, respond to stimulus, etc. is embedded within the physical actions of the body.
phenomenon, construct a new description of it, and test the new description by an on-the-spot experiment.”

Both the works of Freire and Schön suggest that reflection is linked to action. It is through such reflection that people are able to redefine action, either in the moment or afterwards, and, as such, develop the ability to construct knowledge and meaning in the world.

In summary, reflection is the final element of active problem-finding and problem-solving in the construction of knowledge from experience. Through reflection, humans are able to bring into consciousness their theories, world-views, and action programs in light of the experiences with which they are engaged. As such, through critical reflection, they are able to revise and refine such theories in the process of adapting to the environment. Such reflection, as Greene suggests, is heightened when people view their reflection within the context of their lived lives. And, as Freire and Schön suggest, reflection is linked with action and both problem-finding and problem-solving.

What begins to emerge is the idea that leaners construct a sense of self through the construction of knowledge, sense-making, or meaning-making of interactions with the world. Such knowledge-construction is the result of active problem-solving and reflecting both in and on experience within the context of past experiences or World 2. The concepts of active participation, problem-finding and problem-solving, as well as reflection are mutually dependent on each other.

---

The Social Aspect of Self-Construction

As I have described above, knowledge of self arises out of problem-finding and solving as the individual learner interacts with her or his environment. This environment in which each learner is contexted not only assumes the natural environment, but must take into consideration the social and cultural environment, as well. Berger and Luckmann state, “The developing human being not only interrelates with a particular natural environment, but with a specific cultural and social order.” The formation of the self, then, also must be understood in relation to both the ongoing organismic development and the social process in which the natural and human environment are mediated through the significant others [parents, family, friends, etc.]. It is to the socio/cultural environment that I will now turn.

Berger and Luckmann suggest that reality, the reality experienced in everyday conscious life that is shared with others in the here and now, is a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon. Such construction takes the form of institutions through which interactions are formalized in the social world. Institutions are born out of habituation. As humans act in the world, they tend to repeat certain actions that prove to be efficient. Over time, such ways of acting become embedded in routine providing a sense of order and a narrowing the many possibilities with which action could occur.

---

62 Ibid., 50.
63 Ibid., 47-128. They suggest that everyday reality is not the only reality in which we exist. We can move into a reality of dream states, the reality of play or an altered reality characteristic of mental impairment.
64 Ibid., 53-67.
These routine ways of acting allow individuals to systematize certain actions, thus freeing them to deal with novel situations that arise in experience.

Although, over time, such routines become second nature to the individuals involved at the inception of an institution, they always maintain some original meaning as a way of acting in the world to solve an encountered problem. As such, the actors in the institution internalize these routines of action. As new generations are born into such institutions, however, they are not privy to the original meaning of the routine as they were not present at its inception. Thus, newer generations must be socialized into the institution most often through social canons that retain little of the original context for the action. The newer generations must take for granted that such a behavior is a social norm that they must accommodate into their own repertoire of behaviors and routines. In this way, institutions provide a social order that maintains control over the individuals of a society even though the individual members have little or no conscious understanding of why they must act in such a manner. The further the institution evolves from its inception, the more of a history it maintains and the more abstracted from its origin it becomes.

Fully realized institutions not only have a history and a set of laws that control social action, they also are maintained in a symbol system (most usually language) and a collection of theories and shared meanings that form the base of knowledge necessary for future generations to internalize as members of the institution. In this way, institutions

---

65 Ibid., 67-72.
66 Ibid., 79-104.
become reified and appear as though they are naturally divined. They are decentralized, or as Berger and Luckmann say *objectified*, from each individual’s subjective experience in that they most often pre-date the individual’s birth, will outlive the individual, and maintain control over the individual’s social interactions. The ways in which such institutions develop specifically in different geographic regions of the world in relation to the specifics of the natural environment become what we know as cultural institutions.

There are many different types of institutions that exist alongside one another, in connection with one another, and in opposition to one another. Clashes from both within and without each institution maintain the evolution of institutions. Such change, however, is usually gradual and often rejected by the members of an institution. Most institutional traditions and canons tend to be rigidly maintained by the constituents.

It is into this social order of institutions that children are born with both organismic and social potential.\(^{67}\) The new-born child has an intrinsic sense of action in the world created by her or his genetic code: e.g. crying, moving, and so on. Early on, however, these biological functions become regulated by the social structure in which the child has been born. With age, biologically based action increasingly becomes guided by social structure. In short, the child’s actions must be appropriated to follow the rules of society by her or his significant guardians (parents, family members, and so on).

In primary socialization, the first stage of socialization happening in early childhood, the child learns to internalize the world of her or his significant others.\(^ {68}\) The

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 129-137.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.
significant others’ views of the world become the only reality that the child knows. The individual variations of the way the parents or guardians view society at large, their roles in society, their own individual perspectives, and so on mediate the social world into which the child must be socialized. Later in life, the child may realize that his parents or guardians’ world is distorted or limited and that the significant others have been acting as institutional agents all along. Such a realization is not present, however, during primary socialization. This primary world into which the child is inducted becomes, for her or him, the basic structure on which all future socialization will happen and the world in which the initial concept or identity of self is developed.

As the child inter-relates with the parents or guardians both cognitively and emotionally, he or she identifies with the significant others in many different ways. The child assumes the roles and attitudes of the parents or guardians and makes them her or his own by internalizing them. Through this process, the child begins to develop a sense of identity; a sense that he or she exists, just like the significant others exist, as a separate and unique entity. This realization that the child is, indeed, a unique self becomes one of the most important aspects of primary socialization. When the child realizes that he or she exists separate from yet in relation to others and that the specific roles he or she has internalized as a result of primary socialization comprises a world in which he or she can participate, the child is ready to move beyond the family unit and begin assuming a role in the larger society. This starts the process of secondary socialization that usually begins as the child enters school.
During secondary socialization, the child begins to internalize the specific sub-worlds of different institutions, a process that continues throughout the life of the individual. This internalization is marked by the acquisition of skills, vocabulary, symbolization, and the theoretical understanding needed to assume a specific role in society. As with schooling, secondary socialization involves the acquisition of bodies of knowledge, professional examinations, and adherence to institutional standards. Much of this type of socialization is much less personal than in primary socialization and allows the individual the ability to develop a professional self and reality that is separated from the personal self and reality.

Secondary socialization always presumes that primary socialization has occurred; the learner has formed a sense of self and a world perspective from which he or she will interact in the larger social arena. It is against this backdrop that the professionalization of secondary socialization occurs. Berger and Luckmann state:

The original reality of childhood is “home.” It posits itself as such, inevitably and, as it were, “naturally.” By comparison with it, all later realities are “artificial.” Thus the school teacher tries to “bring home” the contents he [sic] is imparting by making them vivid (that is, making them seem as alive as the “home world” of the child), relevant (that is, linking them to the relevance structures already present in the “home world”) and interesting (that is, inducing the attentiveness of the child to detach itself from its “natural” objects to these more “artificial” ones).

Throughout an individual’s life, their subjective identity is both strengthened and challenged through the process of secondary socialization. The self-identity developed by the individual during primary socialization is strengthened as the individual

---

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 143.
encounters institutional situations and other individuals with similar beliefs and routines of acting in the world. For instance, the routine of driving to work in the morning and watching others drive to work strengthens the individual’s identity as an employee. As well, the act of casual conversation strengthens the identity of the individuals as they refer to those aspects of the world they both have taken as routine.

Conversation also can create shifts in identity as one person interacts with another and considers differing opinions. Such differing opinions bring to consciousness those aspects of identity that have been internalized through routine. As such, certain aspects of identity are changed, reconsidered, or altered in some way. The person is said to have a transformation, the result of which is determined by the degree of modification caused by the discrepancy between identity and the social structure encountered. When a person is suddenly thrust into a new social structure as the result of secondary socialization (a job change, a move, studying a new institutional sub-structure, or some other major life change), an alternation is said to occur. Alternations, or major shifts in subjective reality, create the need for re-socialization; a conscious re-ordering and re-naming of the embedded and routine identity that may affect changes in the individual as far back as her or his primary socialization identity. Such shifts create major changes in the consistency of the individual’s identity and result in changes in the individual’s subjective reality for acting in the world. Thus, subjective identity is formed, strengthened, and transformed through social interaction. Likewise, the individual’s subjective reality helps to shape the social structure in which he or she lives. As such, subjective reality is a dialectical and evolutionary process.
As with Berger and Luckmann, Tarule\textsuperscript{71} and Freire\textsuperscript{72} also acknowledge the role of conversation, or dialogue as they describe it, in the formation of knowledge. Tarule suggests that “dialogue is making knowledge in conversation.”\textsuperscript{73} She describes this process by including a quote from Sarah, one of the interviewees from the Women’s Ways of Knowing study:

Class [was] more . . . a discussion, you know, a conversation between all of us. Um, I didn’t feel, I felt like whenever [the teachers] offered [their] opinion, interpretation, whatever you want to call it, that that’s just how it was supposed to be taken, as what [the teachers] thought, not as this is true, this is the way it is. And if we disagreed, fine. If we agreed, fine . . . it was just a really, like a racquetball court where all these different—where all of our opinions were just being bounced around in a very benign sort of way and it wasn’t threatening or anything.\textsuperscript{74}

For both Tarule and Freire, however, socially constructed knowledge is more than just the formation of knowledge. It is also the formation of the subjective self that arises out of these dialogues in the social world. Freire states:

If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity. And since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person’s “depositing” ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be “consumed” by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between those who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others.

\textsuperscript{72} Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
\textsuperscript{73} Tarule, ”Voices in Dialogue,” 280.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 280-281.
It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind.\textsuperscript{75}

So for Freire, the people engaged in dialogue must see each other as equal, accept each other’s understanding of the world, and honor each other’s position in the conversation. When this does not occur, Freire suggests that the people involved in the conversation are relegated into an oppressor/oppressed relationship in which neither the oppressor nor the oppressed are able to reach their full potentiality of selfhood and self-understanding.

Likewise for Tarule, the positionality of each person either inhibits or enables the full participation of that person in the conversation.\textsuperscript{76} Referring to the different ways of knowing established in the \textit{Women’s Ways of Knowing} study, Tarule suggests that a silent, received, or subjective knower will interact within a conversation in very different ways. In turn, it is also through conversation that a knower can view herself or himself in relation to other knowers and begin to shift positionality from a received knower to a subjective knower.

As discussed thus far, the role of the social environment plays a large part in the formation of the self, be it through the socialization of formal institutions such as the family, church, school, or society at large, or in the more informal conversations and dialogues that happen each and every day in the lives of people. But, if the constructivist idea that the relationship of the knower to the known is both individual and intimate is

\textsuperscript{75} Freire, \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}, 69-70.
assumed, where does socially constructed knowledge enter? Is self-hood an individual or social phenomena? Is it both?

Such a question is posed by Fosnot in the context of a debate that has been pursued between constructivists who align themselves more with Piaget and Cognitive Constructionism and those who align themselves more with Vygotsky and Social Constructionism. Fosnot suggests that whether cognition or social influence is paramount is not as important as understanding the inter-connection or synthesis of the two. She states:

When physicists (e.g., Heisenberg, Bohr) studied the particulate nature of the atom, they concluded that subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities. To the extent that a particle can be studied in terms of its placement in the atom, the momentum becomes ambiguous—and vice versa. Particles are now understood as waves dancing between states of mass and energy. . . So, too, with cognition. We cannot understand an individual’s cognitive structure without observing it interacting in a context, within a culture. But neither can we understand culture as an isolated entity affecting the structure, since all knowledge within the culture is only, to use Cobb’s terminology, “taken-as-shared.”

For Fosnot, as humans act in the social world they construct the self which, in turn, acts on the social world. The intimate positionality of each self is in a constantly fluctuating and dynamic relationship with both the physical and social environment. Likewise, the social environment is constantly in the process of developing as a result of individuals acting upon it. So, each individual has a unique and personal position within a larger world, be it social or natural. The ability to make meaning and to know are ultimately

78 Ibid., 23-24.
unique and, at the same time, shared. Both the self and the larger society are constantly in the state of becoming.

In summary, much of the development of self depends upon the interaction of the individual with a socially constructed world. The experiences and the problems solved within the natural and social world construct the lens or World 2 perspective with which each person enters the world. Likewise, the social world (and much of the natural world) is shaped by the individuals who enter it. Even two siblings who spend most of their lives together will each have a unique perspective. But such a perspective will not, necessarily, be idiosyncratic as they have both constructed the social world in which they have shared from their respective unique positions.

*Knowledge-Construction as Transformation*

Transformative learning has been discussed in the literature, especially in the disciplines of education, feminist pedagogy, and critical pedagogy. Brooks defines transformative learning as “learning that leads to some type of fundamental change in the learners’ sense of themselves, their world-views, their understanding of their pasts, and their orientation to the future.”

She goes on to suggest that such transformational learning for women, in particular but important to men as well, happens through the process of storytelling. As individuals narrate their experiences to others, they begin to make sense of experiences in relation to the social structures within which they find themselves. Such narrative is the process of coming to terms with the limitations

---

experienced in the social world of past lived history and the possible ways in which future life can be transformed. Brooks goes on to state that such transformation through narrative has some special qualities: “1.) it occurs interactively on personal and social levels; 2.) it occurs as a by-product of personal story sharing; 3.) it requires that the learner think both generatively and critically; 4.) it requires the sharing of particular experiences and the collaborative development of abstract concepts; 5.) it includes a moral dimension as the narrator weaves a criticism of the past and implies an idea of a better future; and 6.) this transformative process engages us not only mentally, but emotionally, spiritually, and physically.”  

Quite similarly, Greene suggests that active participation in the arts (writing, painting, musicing, acting, and storytelling) opens people to the possibilities of ways in which they can be more fully aware, alive, and human. She states, “participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed.” For Greene, it is the process of writing in which she becomes conscious of her world, her self, and the interaction of herself within that world. In discussing an historical novel that she wrote upon her graduation from Barnard with a specialization in history, Greene explains that:

Something very important happened for me in mediating great events through a single consciousness, viewing the personal in relation to the public, the public from a private point of view. I was beginning to recognize the importance of

---

183, 140.

80 Ibid., 152.

vantage point when it came to the dialogue that is history. As time went on and I came closer to discovering my own “voice,” meaning my woman’s voice, through the writing I was doing, I learned much more about vantage point and more about history.\textsuperscript{82}

For such transformation to happen, however, Greene suggests that teachers must create an environment in which all students have the opportunity to tell their story and to shape such stories in the context of that which they already know. She talks about the political nature of an educational system that does not allow many students the chance to tell their story because their life situation is not a part of the status quo as a result of the child’s race, gender, economic situation, and so on. Likewise, the favored children, those whose lives are part of the mainstream of curriculum, seldom are challenged to “question the language of dominance or efficiency or efficacy in which they were reared. . . .”\textsuperscript{83} As such, Greene goes on to suggest a democratic classroom in which all students have equal access to the conversation that occurs within. She states, “I want them [the students] to make their perspectives available so that both I and they can see from many vantage points, make sense from different sides. I want us to work together to unconceal what is hidden, to contextualize what happens to us, to mediate the dialectic that keeps us on edge, that may be keeping us alive.”\textsuperscript{84}

hooks, like Greene, suggests that for transformative education to occur, teachers must develop classrooms in which all students feel the need to contribute to the conversation.\textsuperscript{85} She describes such a classroom as a community in which all involved

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 107.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{85} hooks, \textit{Teaching to Transgress}, 39.
commit to a common good. She warns that such a classroom is not easy to develop nor easy to maintain as it takes “some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches.”

She does state, however, that “the exciting aspect of creating a classroom community where there is respect for individual voices is that there is infinitely more feedback because students do feel free to talk—and talk back. And, yes, often this feedback is critical.”

Central to Freire’s concept of emancipatory education is the idea that education must help to free people to transform their lives into a more human existence. In order to achieve such transformation, Freire suggests that learners must be engaged in both thought and action—what he calls praxis—in this quest for transformation. Passiveness, according to Freire leads to inhumanity. He states that “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.” He goes on to state:

It is as transforming and creative beings that humans, in their permanent relations with reality, produce not only material goods—tangible objects—but also social institutions, ideas and concepts. Through their continuing praxis, men and women simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings. Because—in contrast to animals—people can tri-dimensionalize time into the past, the present, and the future, their history, in function of their own creations, develops as a constant process of transformation within which epochal units materialize. These epochal units are not closed periods of time, static compartments within which people are confined. Were this the case, a

---

86 Ibid., 43.
87 Ibid., 42.
88 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
89 Ibid., 53.
fundamental condition of history—its continuity—would disappear. On the contrary, epochal units interrelate in the dynamics of historical continuity.\textsuperscript{90}

Much like Greene and hooks, Freire also suggests that while transformative education is humanizing, and thus should be a primary goal of education, it is most often not achievable in the current institution of education. Freire suggests that our current system of education, what he calls the banking concept of education, is based on an oppressor-oppressed relationship between the institution of education and its students.\textsuperscript{91} As such, he calls for a revolution of students (the oppressed) against the oppressor (the institution) in hopes of reclaiming each person’s inalienable right to freedom which comes only through an on-going praxis toward realizing full human potential.

At the core of the study conducted by Belenky et al. is the idea that as women construct knowledge, they go through transformational periods marked by new ways of knowing the self, perceiving their self-knowledge, and understanding the relationship of self to the knowledge appropriated.\textsuperscript{92} The study suggests that there are as many as seven different perspectives from which women view themselves as learners, each marked by a specific transformation or change including: 1) silence; 2) received knowing; 3) subjective knowing (the inner voice); 4) subjective knowing (the quest for self); 5) procedural knowing (the voice of reason); 6) procedural knowing (separate and connected knowing); and, 7) constructed knowing (integrating the voices). On the surface, these perspective ways of knowing seem hierarchical in that a knower moves

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 53.
through them in a sequence. However, as Goldberger suggests, these ways of knowing are not necessarily hierarchical, and, as such, the knower may find herself in several different levels at any one time in her life.\(^9^3\)

Belenky et al. describe the transformations in learning among the different levels of awareness. For the silent knower, there is little awareness of self; these types of learners seem to have no voice of their own.\(^9^4\) Learners in the received ways of knowing depend upon experts and knowledge from others to define self—self is a passive experience given to the learner by expert others.\(^9^5\) Subjective knowers are aware of self and, though they still see the world in absolutes and listen to the voice of experts, they are in the process of coming to trust their own voice and to reject those voices with whom they do not agree. Subjective knowing is marked by action; subjective learners are in the process of actively constructing selves.\(^9^6\) Procedural knowers tend to learn in both received and subjective ways, but they begin to abandon some of their absolutists thinking and replace it with critical reflection. As with received knowers, external voices are prominent in the lives of procedural knowers, but procedural knowers are in the process of defining how their subjective voices or selves align with or are different than other external voices.\(^9^7\)

---

\(^9^2\) Belenky et al., *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, 3-20.
\(^9^4\) Belenky et al., *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, 23-34.
\(^9^5\) Ibid., 35-51
\(^9^6\) Ibid., 52-86.
Constructed knowers attempt to integrate both what they know personally, their own voice, with the voices of others, or knowledge that comes from the interaction with external sources (experts, institution, and so forth). Constructivist learners, as defined by this study, tend to understand the relative and contextual nature of knowledge that is intimately connected with the knower. Constructed knowing is critical of expert authority, not in a sense of rejecting the expert, but in a sense of evaluating such knowledge within the context from which it was developed. Most constructivists tend to accept experts who understand the complexities of context and who speak from an humble position. Constructivists are passionate knowers who value “real talk” that attempts to communicate and reject what the authors describe as “didactic talk,” or talk for talk’s sake. Constructivists actively seek to have their voices heard as they reach out to others in their lives. Their relationships are based on caring and understanding of others’ personal contexts. Constructivist learning is based on question-posing and critical evaluation. Finally, constructivist learners are committed to action; they seek to bring about change within their world. The authors conclude:

Constructivist women aspire to work that contributes to the empowerment and improvement in the quality of life of others. More than any other group of women in this study, the constructivists feel a part of the effort to address with others the burning issues of the day and to contribute as best they can. They speak of integrating feeling and care into their work—“using my mind to help people” (in careers in human services, psychotherapy, education, child and women’s advocacy antipoverty legislations), “cradling the environment” (through social action and work in environmental protection agencies and antinuclear

---

97 Ibid., 87-99.
98 Ibid., 131-152.
movements), and “humanizing cities” (via city planning and community cooperatives).  

Finally, Mezirow has developed a rather thorough theory of transformation in the context of andrologic curricula. This theory suggests that adults make meaning out of sensory experience through both meaning perspectives and meaning schemes, constructed from assumptions that have been accepted from past experience in the world, both subjective and social. Meaning perspectives, the general frames of reference or world-views held by learners, and meaning schemes, the more specific beliefs, attitudes, and judgments that comprise general meaning perspectives, serve as the set of lenses through which humans engage in meaning-making. He states:

Meaning perspectives are not simply categories for understanding; they also significantly influence and delimit the horizons of our expectations. These abstract, paradigmatic meaning perspectives become articulated in a meaning scheme—the specific set of beliefs, knowledge, judgment, attitude, and feeling which shape a particular interpretation, as when we think of an Irishman, a cathedral, a grandmother, or a conservative or when we express a point of view, an ideal or a way of acting. Meaning schemes are specific belief systems.

Personal transformation occurs as we engage in reflection upon our meaning perspectives and schemes. Reflection upon specific content and procedures of a meaning scheme, such as the content and procedures we employ in active music-making, helps to transform the specific beliefs, judgments, and attitudes held about the manner in which

---

99 Ibid., 152.
101 Ibid., 43.
music should be made.\textsuperscript{102} When such action/reflection causes one to reflect upon the major assumptions that have formed original meaning perspectives, a profound personal transformation can occur. Such personal transformations come in the form of paradigm shifts that mark major changes in the understanding of self and self within the world.

Mezirow suggests that these transformations are not limited to intentional and rational cognition. Often it is the imagination, dreams, intuitions, and emotions that influence rational thought. Through the use of both symbolism and metaphor, such tacit ways of knowing creep into conscious and intentional meaning-making.\textsuperscript{103} Likewise, such meaning-making is marked by risk-taking and emotional commitment. Mezirow states,

Transformative learning, which may involve a reassessment of one’s self-concept, as is often the case in perspective transformation, is threatening, emotionally charged and extremely difficult. It is not enough that such transformations effect a cognitive insight; they require a cognitive and emotional commitment to act upon a new perspective as well. Transformative learning involves movement from alienation to agency, and “centering,” movement from a lack of authenticity, being true to one’s self, to authenticity.\textsuperscript{104}

Finally, Mezirow argues that for such transformational learning to transpire, it must happen within an environment which fosters critical reflection upon assumptions, a quest for unearthing underlying biases behind knowledge claims, the freedom to argue and reason with others in hopes of finding consensus, and a power structure in which all participants are free to engage in such critical reflection.\textsuperscript{105} In short, Mezirow calls for a

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 48.
“participatory democracy as both the means and social goal [of transformational theory].”

In summary, the writers I have examined here suggest that transformation in learning is related to active participation in the learning environment coupled with critical reflection upon action. Although they have different names to define the manner in which transformation occurs, they agree that significant self-transformation can be the result of praxis. They also suggest that for such transformation to occur, the learning environment must be one that encourages participation, freedom to question, and a decentralization of power in ways that allow for the hermeneutic pursuits of every individual in the classroom. Such emancipatory transforming learning is never easy but fraught with risk, emotion, commitment, and caring.

Toward a Definition of Self

In synthesizing the work of the writers analyzed above, several salient points become clear. First, whether it is called a modification of conceptual structures, as in the work of Glaserfeld, learning through invention and re-invention, as in the work of Freire, or stepping in and out of frames of reference, as in the work of Belenky et al., all of these writers suggest that the concept of self is constructed through the development of self-knowledge made possible by active interactions with the physical and social world. At the start of life, each person begins the quest for self with the establishment of a frame of reference, or world-view, which Popper as well as Berger and Luckmann suggest is

104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., 67.
both inherited and assumed as the individual interacts within the immediate physical world and the social family unit. As Popper suggests, this World 2 of the individual becomes the perspective from which he or she will continue to interact in the world. Berger and Luckmann describe this initial stage as primary socialization, a process that is influenced both by nature (those aspects that are inherited through genes) and nurture (those aspects that are accepted from the influence of the family). It is at this stage in the development of self that Popper suggests we have learned to be a self.

Once the self is discovered, the individual will continue to acquire new knowledge as he or she actively interacts with an increasingly larger physical and social world. As Popper suggests, this new knowledge often creates a disjuncture between the new experience or construction of knowledge and the expectations held in the World 2. This disjuncture is recognized as a problem to be solved. As individuals seek resolution to these differences, their ability to consciously reflect allows them to modify or change existing self-concepts. Likewise, the passion or risk with which they are willing or allowed to engage in such problem-solving creates a feeling of transformation—a realization that growth has occurred. The process begins again and again continuing throughout the life of the learner; the self is always in the state of becoming.

Second, if it is accepted that the self is constructed through continuous modification of the initial self-concept, it also must be accepted that the relationship between the knower and the known is highly personal. No two humans have exactly the same experiences or the same World 2 perspectives, and thus, no two will make meaning

106 Ibid., 66.
of experience from the World 2 in quite the same ways. The initial perspective from which humans engage in the world is uniquely individual in that it is constructed from both inherited and experiential traits. This perspective, in turn, grows to be even more individual throughout life. As Fosnot suggests, because many experiences are similar to all people within the environment, humans are able to communicate and accept common experiences as *taken-as-shared*. However, an individual truly can never know what another person knows; each life history is particular to its individual context.

Third, if the acquisition of knowledge is inherent upon the modification of context, knowledge is, by its nature, relative to this context. To accept such a relativistic stance does not suggest that the world is without order. As Fosnot suggests, there are many taken-as-shared experiences within any society or social institution. These taken-as-shared experiences give the illusion that absolute truth exists in that people within a social reference system tend to act in similar ways and uphold similar norms and values. As Berger and Luckmann suggest, these norms and values often tend to regulate action and thought within a reference system. Upon closer inspection, however, these same norms and values that often create the various disjunctures with which people continue to develop self-knowledge. Though people may accept a way of behavior in order to survive in a given social environment, part of self-growth, as Berger and Luckmann suggest, is coming to terms with the idea that such norms and values are socially constructed, and, as Popper suggests, merely a collection of theories and hypotheses. While some may uphold these ideas to their deaths and be unaware or unwilling to accept the social constructivist nature of such ideas, each person makes meaning of them in very
personal ways. One may choose to accept a way of behavior uncritically or may, as Belenky et al. suggest, learn to step in and out of such frames of reference. From an individual perspective, the meaning made from interacting within such groups is highly personal, because the context for making meaning is highly personal.

Finally, as the critical and feminist pedagogues suggest, for the self to grow and prosper, each person must be allowed the freedom to interact with the world from her or his unique context. This is what Greene means when she suggests that learners must be given the opportunity to recognize their own landscape in the process of learning. As Freire, hooks, Belenky et al., Greene, Hayes and Flannery, and many others suggest, the power structure within any given social institution often inhibits constructive self-growth. Power and institutional control must constantly be critiqued to insure that learners are allowed the opportunity to construct the self in the interactions within which they engage. This critical reflection upon institutions is, in a way, part of the process of developing self. It is a way of finding the problems that exist within social institutions and working to solve such problems. Similarly, such institutional critique is on-going and open-ended just as is the construction of self. There exists no utopia in which such tensions, power structures, and controls are ever perfect; they are a result of the interaction of the distinct individuals that comprise such groups. As such, they also are bound by context. In this way, the issues of power and context are inexorably linked with the construction of self, a point I will revisit later in this chapter.

For the purposes of this study, I will define the concept of self as an on-going and open-ended individual construction of lived experience that becomes, for each individual,
the frame through which he or she interacts with the world. This *self-frame* is constantly reconstructed, adjusted, and revised as the individual engages in active problem-finding, problem-solving, and critical reflection in both the physical and social worlds. Such reconstruction often results in a feeling of personal transformation, or substantial shifts in perspective, that perpetuates this cycle of growth. The self-frame cannot be divorced from the context of which it is derived, and, consequently, such a context and the resulting knowledge gained from active engagement is highly personal to the individual and relative to her or his perspective. Finally, the issue of power, especially from the social world of the individual, is somehow inexorably linked to the ability of the individual to engage in self-construction.
CHAPTER III

THE LOCALIZED REFERENCE SYSTEM OF THE CLASSROOM

As I stated in Chapter I, the concepts of self, localized reference system, and power are interrelated. For instance, as I described in the analysis of literature on self in Chapter II, writers such as Greene, hooks, Belenky et al., and Freire suggest that the manner in which power is maintained within the classroom has a direct impact on the ways in which individual learners construct both self-knowledge and self-concept. Likewise, the way in which the teacher and students perceive the classroom, from a local, global, or embedded perspective, and the importance each attaches to that perspective, influences the types of interactions that can take place, thus impacting the ways in which students will engage in self-construction. Therefore, to examine the construction of self, it is also necessary to examine both the context of the classroom (reference system) and the political systems therein. Each of these factors (as well as many others beyond the scope of this investigation) impacts the development of self in some way. In this chapter, then, I look at the concept of the localized reference system in the choral classroom.

An Analysis of the Narratives

In Chapter I, I established the concept of localized reference system as a way of talking about the perspective with which I viewed each classroom— from a local, global, or embedded perspective. I suggested a shift in my perspective that happened between Narratives One/Two and Three/Four. In Narratives One and Two, I tended to view each class in a global or standardized way, in that I perceived my students not as individuals with distinct and unique lived histories but rather as the prototype students
that I had learned about in my undergraduate studies. In true behaviorist style, I wrote my daily plans (the learner will. . .) and, armed with an arsenal of standard behaviors that I had been taught to expect from the learner, filled in the blank with whatever skill or concept I expected the learner to do during that hour. In my mind, students assumed roles in one of the many categories of learners that I had studied in school and behaved (or were supposed to behave) according to the expectation of those roles. Although I was cognizant of the individuals within my classes (especially after class), during the choral rehearsal they were objectified and defined by their role as alto, bass, sightreader, vocal technician, et cetera. The level with which they achieved what I knew to be standard for the age determined what I taught or re-taught in future lessons. My own studies and my interactions with other choral musicians helped me to establish what was accepted practice in choral music teaching which became my litmus test for diagnosing students. Thus, my role as teacher was to socialize students into appropriate behaviors needed to develop what the profession considered an outstanding choral ensemble.

When students did not behave in expected ways, students like Suzy, their deviant behaviors were perplexing to me. In those early days of my teaching, I would justify such behaviors as either a lack of experience, a discipline problem, or an untalented student. The students who excelled were the ones who conformed their behaviors to my expectations. The deviants were challenging to teach.

In retrospect, what I had done was appropriate a context for my classroom from the profession of choral music education that I perceived was standard for good choral music learning. This globalized context had very little to do with my students or their
unique life situations. It had to do with a hypothetical or, as Greene calls it, *mystical* acceptance of social norms that tended to support the ongoing traditions and heritage of the dominant social class, in this case Western musical tradition. Because of this standardized view of my classroom and students, I could not understand the mother who complained that her daughter did not like nor understand all of our singing in Latin, or the African-American student that wanted to sing something less “white,” or the many students who came from a lower socio-economic background that found it demeaning when they could not afford the required uniform. I expected my students to be something that they were not and asked them to respond in a manner that was foreign to their experience. Had it not been for the fun times that we had together after class, the times when I acknowledged their situations, limitations, and desires, I do not think that students would have continued to sing. The classroom was all business; after school was much more humane.

In Narrative Two, I described students like Suzy who began to question the ways in which I expected them to behave in the rehearsal. Although it might have been easy to justify Suzy’s behavior as just another student who needed re-teaching, disciplinary action, or some other treatment that would bring her behavior into the norm, her behavior was shocking to me. As I said, she was one of the best students I had, a student who was willing to play along with my expectations in class. When she mustered up the confidence to confront me, it took me by surprise. The disjuncture between what she was saying to me and the way in which I perceived her did not make sense to me. Coupled

---

with the fact that I had begun to feel as though I were being put into a mold by my
administration and many of my colleagues, I began to critique my role as teacher and the
manner in which I viewed the classroom. Certainly, this is an over-simplification of my
shift in perspective; neither one student nor one experience reshaped my world-view nor
did my transition happen so easily. The shift that I described began during this time in
my career and continues through today.

In Narrative Three, I described what I call a paradigm shift. The nature of the
class in which I was involved completely changed my perspective of students. As I
suggested, my colleagues, students, and I entered into this class as an experiment and,
consequently, purposefully changed the expectations of the classroom. As the work we
were doing was original and new to the school in which I taught, there existed no pre-
conceived standards that we were expected to meet. Nor did I as instructor enter into the
class with preconceived ideas of how the students would respond. We simply jumped
into our work and began. Little by little I came to appreciate what each student had to
offer. It was often the individuality of the students and their perspectives that provided
new possibilities for classroom work. Time and again students surprised me by offering
ideas, solving problems, and taking on responsibilities that I simply had never seen
students accomplish before. Though this process was equally enjoyable, frustrating, and
overwhelming, it was the night of our public demonstration in which I realized that what
had happened among us was very special.

What became clear to me was that the system that was created in my classroom
was both particular and authentic. The students and teachers, our individual perspectives,
the ways in which we interacted, the materials with which we worked, even the room in which we met, all helped to shape how we proceeded and what we took away from the experience. As such, I began both to view and to value this classroom as an intact reference system, connected to the larger society of the department, university, and community, but specific unto itself and complete with a political system, norms, references, and values. As students acknowledged the questions that stemmed from their own experiences, I observed that they were able to define problems in their own terms. Then, as I stated in Narrative Three, both the students and I could look beyond the local system to discover how others had solved similar problems.

It was exciting to realize that students understood the relevance of looking at Beethoven’s problem-solving methods in that these methods directly related, in a very authentic way, to their own localized context. It was also exciting to watch many of the students go to the library and to the internet, on their own volition, to seek such lessons from sources other than our group. By acknowledging and honoring the particular situation of the classroom and allowing the students to interact in ways that were authentic to their own context, I was more able to involve them in the traditional modes of learning than I had ever been able to do, when to involve them in this way had been my goal.

Having never considered context in this manner before, and especially never in a choir setting, I set out in Narrative Four to see what would happen if I changed my perspective of choir. It came as no surprise to me that finding ways to capitalize upon the individual context of a group of singers was rewarding. Facilitating such a shift in
perspective was challenging, however. In this classroom setting I was faced with many clearer boundaries and expectations. The students were not composing their own music; they were singing music from the standard repertoire, complete with the traditions of performance practice that had been established throughout history. In addition, there were certain expectations that the students, my colleagues, and our audience had of the choir as a performing ensemble in a Department of Music.

The students and I struggled with the disjuncture that was created between ways of working that were specific to the choir and the expectations that we perceived were put upon us as a choir. This struggle consumed much of classroom interaction and became the problems for which students sought answers. Although it certainly never felt as though such tensions had been solved completely, students did articulate their excitement in discussions when they felt as though they had been successful. Many of them talked about how new these ideas were to them and how intriguing they were. That semester was certainly a turning point for the choir that created a new mode of interacting that continued until I left the school for another teaching position.

The teaching as described in Narratives Three and Four, as well as my subsequent teaching, has brought me to the understanding that each classroom in which I teach is individual and must be allowed to work in ways that give credence and authenticity to the local reference system. At the same time, the classroom is also part of a larger set of systems that includes school, community, and the music education profession at large. The tension that exists between the local and global systems provides a wealth of
possibilities for constructing both knowledge as a group and as individuals. I have come
to appreciate these opportunities.

I also have come to view these systems, both the local and global, as open
systems. As students and I engage in finding and solving the different problems that
emerge, both in the local reference system and between the local and the more global
systems in which the classroom is embedded, there continue to be possibilities. These
interactions continue to shape and reveal an ongoing quality of systems in construction.
Certainly, for me, I no longer see the music of the past or a score as a finished product. I
have begun to realize that music and all of its participants are involved in a long process
that will continue until the last human utters the last musical sound. It becomes exciting
to realize that I have a part in this evolutionary process as do the students with whom I
work daily.

Analyzing the Literature on Localized Reference System

Writers such as Greene, hooks, and Giroux have written about the struggle
between authentic interactions within the local reference system of a classroom and the
power and domination imposed upon that system from without. I explain, especially
using the writings of Giroux, how such social domination is a covert way of maintaining
the power of the dominant society through the standardization of norms and values to the
exclusion of alternative perspectives. None of these writers use the term reference
system. This is a term that I have appropriated, not to dichotomize the local system from
the global, but to try and define boundaries, permeable though they may be, in the hope
of understanding the embeddedness of individuals within the larger society.
I begin by sharing a narrative told by hooks in the opening of her book, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. In this narrative, hooks articulates quite directly and profoundly the importance of considering the local reference system in the classroom.

Almost all our teachers at . . . were black women. They were committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers—black folks who used our “minds.” We learned early that our devotion to learning, to a life of the mind, was a counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization. Though they did not define or articulate these practices in theoretical terms, my teachers were enacting a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was profoundly anticolonial. Within these segregated schools, black children who were deemed exceptional, gifted, were given special care. Teachers worked with and for us to ensure that we would fulfill our intellectual destiny and by so doing uplift the race. My teachers were on a mission.

To fulfill that mission, my teachers made sure they “knew” us. They knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family. I went to school at a historical moment where I was being taught by the same teachers who had taught my mother, her sisters, and brothers. Certain behaviors, gestures, habits of being were traced back.

Attending school then was a sheer joy. I loved being a student. I loved learning. School was the place of ecstasy—pleasure and danger. To be changed by ideas was pure pleasure. But to learn ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone. Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else’s image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self and, through ideas, reinvent myself.

School changed utterly with the racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-black school. Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle. Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us. Too much eagerness to learn could easily be seen as a threat to white authority.

When we entered racist, desegregated, white schools we left a world where teachers believed that to educate black children rightly would require a political commitment. Now, we were mainly taught by white teachers whose lessons reinforced racist stereotypes. For black children, education was no longer about the practice of freedom. Realizing this, I lost my love of school. The
classroom was no longer a place of pleasure or ecstasy. School was still a political place, since we were always having to counter white racist assumptions that we were genetically inferior, never as capable as white peers, even unable to learn. Yet, the politics were no longer counter-hegemonic. We were always and only responding and reacting to white folks.¹⁰⁸

The overt racism of segregation provided hooks with the opportunity to understand how education could be emancipatory. Teachers, concerned with and aware of the individual situations of the learners in their classrooms, encouraged their students to become critical thinkers, students who were allowed to transcend their situations through ideas and through an understanding of how their unique position in a segregated world was the place of departure for their own growth and change. This understanding and acknowledgment of the local position of the learner and learners within a classroom was lost in desegregation. Not only did segregation continue, ideologically, but the entire notion of education changed as well. In the white school, the position of the learner was not considered. Learning meant assimilating sets of facts that had little to do with students’ lives or situations, white or black.

hooks goes on to acknowledge that both her undergraduate and graduate years were as frustrating as the white school had been. She learned from teachers whom she describes as unexciting and unaware of the liberating quality of education. She describes learning again as the assimilation of facts and the intense expectation, especially of marginalized students, to conform and to be obedient.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 2-4.
These situations led hooks to deconstruct her teaching and to develop a different way of instructing as she began her career as a college professor. As a teacher, hooks sought to make learning exciting, flexible enough to allow for shifts of focus, interactive, and applicable to individual needs of each student. She describes learning as the building of a community in which all learners share an interest in each other, in recognizing that all members of the class are important, and in becoming involved in the learning process. She states:

Pedagogy [must] recognize each classroom as different, that strategies must constantly be changed, invented, reconceptualized to address each new teaching experience. Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom.

In developing this learning space, cognizant of the individuals and context from which it comes, hooks suggests that learning has the potential to be emancipating.

Likewise, Greene also discusses the importance of recognizing the individual perspective of persons within the larger society. She appropriates the term “mystification” from Marx to describe the ways in which the norms and values of the global society are upheld at the expense of the needs and desires of those individuals that make up a society. Such mystification, according to Greene, not only imprisons its members, it also creates the illusion that these global norms and values are natural or law-like. This illusion facilitates individuals within society to support and feel comfortable

---

109 Ibid., 4-6.
110 Ibid., 7-12.
111 Ibid., 10-11.
112 Greene, Landscapes of Learning, 53-55.
with the very ideas that repress their own freedom. In her terms, individuals are kept from being wide-awake to their own needs, desires, and hopes. For Greene, one major goal of education is to emancipate the individual by helping each learner to become critical of her or his situation and to become wide-awake to the possibilities that exist within this situation as it is embedded in the larger structure of societal norms. She states:

I want to propose that one of the responsibilities of teacher educators is to work for “a more authentic speaking,” to combat mystification. Traditionally, teacher education has been concerned with initiating the “forms of life” R.S. Peters describes, or the public traditions, or the heritage. Even where emphasis has been placed on the importance of critical thinking or experimental intelligence, there has been a tendency to present an unexamined surface reality as “natural,” fundamentally unquestionable. There has been a tendency as well to treat official labelings and legitimations as law-like, to overlook the constructed character of social reality.

My concern is with the creation of the kinds of conditions that make possible a critique of what is taken to be “natural,” of the “forms of illusion” in which persons feel so “completely at home,” no matter how alienated they are or how repressed. I am concerned as well with enabling individuals to reflect upon their own lives and the lives they lead in common with one another, not merely as professionals or professionals-to-be, but as human beings participating in a shared reality.  

Greene redefines the relationship between the individual and global worlds. By shifting the emphasis from the needs of the group to the needs of the individual, the concept of community becomes a shared existence of individuals interacting one with another rather than a reified and oppressive entity that seeks to control its constituency. In this way, the global situation is constantly in the process of becoming as the individuals within it interact one with another. This does not suggest that such on-

---

113 Ibid., 54-55.
goingness is without struggle. But such struggles, as least for Greene, become opportunities for possibility.\textsuperscript{114}

Giroux suggests that the ability of an individual to make meaning of her or his individual reality and to be able to change such a reality in the presence of societal domination has been suppressed by the acceptance of positivistic thought in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{115} He makes such claims by employing many of the basic tenets of the Frankfort School whose focus was placed upon “how subjectivity was constituted, as well as on the issue of how the spheres of culture and everyday life represented a new terrain of domination.”\textsuperscript{116}

According to Giroux, the positivistic scientific paradigm that has been accepted in the twentieth century separates fact from any social or historical context and reduces a learner’s ability to make meaning of fact to the rules of scientific process.\textsuperscript{117} As such, in the classroom, students are rarely asked to think critically about how knowledge is contextualized within social or political constructions of reality, two important ways of thinking that help learners bring meaning to knowledge. Thus, knowledge is often presented objectively, in an ahistorical or universal way, giving the illusion that knowledge exists separate from or beyond human control.\textsuperscript{118} In this objectivism, often students are objectified themselves; they are robbed of the experience of making meaning of knowledge within the context of their own lives or of understanding critically how

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 69-71.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 21.
knowledge is inexorably linked to power by the dominating social class.\textsuperscript{119} In turn, they become passive receptacles for the accumulation of bodies of knowledge and, consequently, are controlled unconsciously by the norms and values of the larger society. In addition, the teaching of such objective facts creates a condition Giroux calls cultural hegemony.\textsuperscript{120} The institutionalization and objectification of knowledge, abstracted from the context of the learner, creates a situation in which such knowledge legitimizes the dominant view of society and seeks to control what the learner is allowed to consider. In presenting knowledge as sets of facts to be learned, knowledge is often simplified and trivialized in order to make it digestible to learners. There is also a censorship that occurs in seeking to maintain what can and cannot be taught.

Giroux calls for the development of critical education that is grounded in an understanding of the dialectical relationship among knowledge, the ideologies from which knowledge stems or is contexted, and the power structures that such knowledge creates.\textsuperscript{121} Critical education allows students to expose the covert assumptions and power relationships upon which a traditional view of knowledge is based. Such exposure allows learners not only to understand how knowledge is related to the situations of their own lives but also to understand how such a view of knowledge can lead toward both individual and social freedom.\textsuperscript{122} Likewise, he calls for teachers, conscious of their own local context, to be allowed to perform their tasks as intellectuals and not merely as

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 25.  
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 6-15.  
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 19.  
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 102.
technicians who implement instruction handed to them by curriculum specialists. The local context of the lives of the students and their teacher in a classroom setting becomes an important consideration for learning and teaching critically. Giroux states:

Students cannot learn “usefully” unless teachers develop an understanding of the various ways in which subjectivities are constituted through different social domains. At stake here is the need for teachers to understand how experiences produced in the various domains and layers of everyday life give rise to the different “voices” students use to give meaning to their own worlds and, consequently, to their own existence in the larger society. Unless educators address the question of how aspects of the social are experienced, mediated, and produced by students, it will be difficult for radical educators to tap into the drives, emotions and interests that give subjectivity its own unique “voice” and provide the momentum for learning itself.

Much like Greene, Giroux suggests that critical education is a transformative process that is always seeking to make a better world, a world that is always in the process of becoming. The rejection of positivism is, in its very nature, a rejection of a closed social system. The acknowledgment that knowledge is socially constructed and the consistent attempt to critique knowledge within the context of the social and power structures from which it emerges are grounded in a commitment to the ongoing construction of society. To this end, Giroux suggests that critical education “openly takes sides in the interest of struggling for a better world.”

In summary, Giroux, Greene, and hooks maintain that knowledge is socially constructed. In accepting such a premise, each in her or his own way rejects the notion of knowledge as a predefined truth or as an objective body-of-knowledge that exists outside

123 Ibid., 103.
124 Ibid., 110.
125 Ibid., 43.
126 Ibid., 44.
of the context of the learner’s situation. As such, the local context, be it the individual or a group of individuals (a classroom or a choir), becomes paramount to the construction of knowledge.

The local context is the point of entry into the world and the perspective from which each learner or group of learners makes meaning of experience. When knowledge is abstracted from the learner’s context, as we saw in the case of hooks, learning becomes both anesthetic and sterile, which for her, lead toward imprisonment rather than empowerment. For Green, it is necessary that learners be allowed to view their learning within their own context and to be wide-awake to the ways in which they might be kept from doing so. Giroux suggests that in order to reveal learning’s true potential, learners must be critical of the notion of objective knowledge through constant critique. They also must acknowledge the ways in which knowledge is socially constructed and the ways in which society uses such knowledge as a way of maintaining power. Learners can only engage in such critique from their unique context. Thus the local context of the individual, or in the case of schooling, the individual and the classroom, must be the point of entry for critical education.

Finally, in rejecting the objectification of knowledge and accepting the constant struggle for knowledge-construction, all of these writers suggest that knowledge is constantly in the process of becoming, or is an open system. At any level, then, (individual, small group or society as a whole), knowledge is not a fixed or complete entity. To accept such a claim places the learner in a passive role and as hooks suggests, dehumanizes and decontextualizes both the learner and her or his lived life.
Toward a Definition of Localized Reference System

Writers such as Giroux, Greene, and hooks assert that the focus upon the local context of the classroom and its individuals is important to learning in that it serves as the point of entry for the learner into the construction of knowledge. The question becomes, then, to what extent do we localize such knowledge—to the level of the individual within the classroom, to the classroom, to the school, and so on? Certainly the context of the situation at hand would provide parameters for making such a decision.

In this study, the individual within the classroom becomes crucial if we are to talk about the construction of self. But to limit the term localized reference system in this study to the level of each individual does not take into consideration the social construction of self that happens through the interaction of individuals in each classroom. In addition, in the context of choral music education, it is the specific choir in which an individual belongs that often becomes the system in which self can be constructed through interaction with choral music, other students, and the teacher. By limiting the term localized reference system to the level of each specific classroom, it also becomes possible to delineate each specific choir from larger reference systems in which the choir is embedded, be that the choral program, the school, the community, the profession of music education, and so on. Therefore, for this study, when I speak of a localized reference system, I am speaking of a specific classroom setting for choral learning. When the need arises to speak about specific members within the reference system, I shall use the term individualized reference system. Should the need arise to discuss one of the
more global levels of embeddedness, I address that level by name (e.g. school, community, music education at large, and so on).

For the purposes of this study I define the local reference system as a perspective of the choral classroom, assumed by teacher and/or students, in which the context of each specific choir and its individual members becomes the point of entry for knowledge-construction both locally, within the context of individual and group lived experience, and globally, within the many layers of social context in which the choir is embedded. Such a perspective may not be shared equally by all members of the group, nor may such a perspective be shared by the larger global contexts within which the choir exists. As such, there is an ongoing struggle to define such a perspective and to mediate differing perspectives from within and without. In this way, both the local and global systems are constantly in the process of becoming. In essence, these are open systems.
CHAPTER IV

THE ISSUE OF POWER

The issue of power is intimately interwoven into the fabric of the choral music classroom. As Giroux, Greene, Freire, hooks, Belenky et al., and others have suggested, for education to be both emancipatory and transformative and to allow students to construct self and self-knowledge, they must have the freedom to be allowed to experience the world in the context of their individual landscapes and the social landscapes that emerges from their localized reference systems. As we have seen, however, there are power relationships that exist both from within and from without the local reference system that, unchallenged, have the potential to control what and how students can learn, or at best, relegate the construction of self-knowledge to a counter-hegemonic act within the classroom. As many of these writers have suggested, it is through critical reflection that both teachers and students can become aware of such power issues and can consciously choose ways in which to overcome such obstacles for learning.

An Analysis of the Narratives

In my teaching, as described in Narrative One, the issue of power was not something that I thought of or considered much. As the teacher, I had the institutional power to control my classroom as long as such power was congruous with the demands of the school, community, and profession of music education at large. As a young teacher, I certainly wanted to be successful and, for me, success meant that I upheld the mores of the institution in which I was employed. There were certainly struggles
between what the profession called good teaching and what my principal saw as good teaching or what my school district described as successful education in comparison with what many parents felt was successful education. As such discrepancies arose, I learned to negotiate among and between these differing power struggles in order to survive and feel good about the work I did in the classroom. I do not know that I ever considered any of these issues to be power issues. For me, they were more a question of cultural experience. If the principal did not approve of something that I did, I did not see her complaints so much as an act of power as I saw her actions as a lack of understanding of the ways in which music is taught in the public school choral classroom. Instead of fighting, I often took the approach that I would try and educate her by bringing in evidence from the profession, calling in the music supervisor to talk with her or inviting her to my classroom to see how I was approaching the issue at hand. If she did not change her opinion, I changed my behavior in the manner that she expected.

As far as my students were concerned, they had little voice in the ways in which we proceeded in the classroom. My job was to decide what was best for them, negotiate among competing ideological positions within the school and community, and require that they acquiesce to the structure that I had set in place for them. Those that chose not to conform were dealt with in ways that were outlined by the school disciplinary plan or, in extreme cases, were asked to leave the choir all together and take another class. In reflection on my teaching today, I find that much of my behavior with certain students during these early years is not something of which I am proud. I acted as an extension of
the institution of school and, although I often felt personally at odds with the behaviors I had to display, I had been given a job to do and I did it without hesitation.

In Narrative Two, there had been a change in the way that I viewed my position as teacher within the institution. Having taught for several years, I had become disillusioned by the conflicts that arose among the classroom, the school, the district, the community, and the profession at large. By this time, I had been through enough of these power struggles to realize that they were often driven by the agenda of a small group of people, be they administrators, parents, school board members, state education officials, et cetera. These struggles often got in the way of the things that I thought were best for the students in my classroom. The dutiful attitude that I had displayed as a young teacher, a manifestation of the manner that I had been raised to respect authority, increasingly diminished. I began to fight for the things that I believed were important for my students’ learning. If I felt that a demand was irrational, I found ways around conforming to the demand. Without ever becoming militant or subversive, I became quite creative at playing the system, most often with few negative repercussions.

It was during this time in my teaching that students like Suzy began their own revolutions within my classroom. For the first time in my career, I began to understand and sympathize with their position. Although this sympathy caused me to deviate little from my authoritative presence in the classroom, I began to consider the limitations that my actions placed upon the learning environment. In many ways, these limitations were similar to those that I had begun to feel as a teacher in a world of demands from forces outside of my classroom. Although I wanted to make changes to aid students like Suzy,
the possibility of negotiating power within the classroom was simply not an option to me. It was not that I was power hungry, I could not conceive of a way to change the power structure that would ensure success in the classroom without creating what I feared might become chaos.

During the time that elapsed between Narratives Two and Three, I left the public school classroom to assume duties at a university at the same time that I began taking classes leading toward the doctorate in Music Education. My decision to pursue the higher degree was spawned by questions that had arisen from my early teaching. I sought answers to conflicting situations that I had experienced in the classroom. Among the issues at hand was this issue of power and ways in which I might reconceive the political system within the classroom in the hope of opening students to possibilities rather than limiting their pursuits.

As I have said several times, Narrative Three became a perspective shift for me, a paradigm change. In establishing the classroom environment as I did, not only did I change the ways in which the students and I worked together, I also changed the political system of the classroom. Consciously, I chose not to establish rules for the class. I did not establish a syllabus or make a priori assignments for the semester. I simply stated that students must attend class and engage themselves in the process. I suggested that grades would stem from such behaviors. Again, as this was an experimental class, I was allowed the possibility of making such a change in structure, not necessarily from the administration, but from the students.

With the lack of an established hierarchy for the classroom, it became clear early
on that the students and I would have to establish a political system. Immediately 
problems began to emerge between students. Differing opinions, attempts to control the 
interaction in the classroom, and personal agendas soon created obstacles that stood in the 
way of progress. Interestingly, as these issues arose, so did the willingness of the 
students to establish a system for resolving such conflicts. While we, as instructors, 
offered advice, we had no more answers than the students. The students and instructors 
all began to experiment with different ways of negotiating the classroom. The students 
devised systematic ways in which to resolve conflict. Often these methods were couched 
in a democratic system, a vote was taken and the majority ruled. Not surprisingly, such a 
method was not always successful. Just because the majority voted to accept an idea did 
not mean that people with differing ideas simply accepted the group’s decision. The 
manner in which the class proceeded was often frustrating, time consuming, and quite 
frankly—annoying.

Something was happening within the group, however, that kept the students and 
teachers coming back. For the first time in my career, I felt as though the students and 
faculty were engaged in a process of learning in which we shared not only the fruits of 
our labor but the responsibility, as well. For the first time in my teaching career, the 
burden of being responsible for learning, motivation, discipline, and outcome did not fall 
solely on my shoulders. This, in and of itself, was emancipating for me. I observed a 
change in the students, as well. With the exception of students who graduated and left 
the school, most of the students continued to sign up for the class semester after semester, 
long after they ceased receiving credit toward their degree. They seemed to be
comfortable with negotiating progress with one another and with the faculty. For the first
time, I truly began to feel a respect for students as my equal, not my protégé or
apprentice. Certainly, I had more experience than they had, but I did not have any more
claim to the answers that were found to be successful within the localized reference
system. Students increasingly were successful at framing problems, exploring solutions,
and reflecting upon actions. Interestingly, to this day, several of these students still
phone me regularly both to talk about their current experiences and to problem-solve with
me. I also contact many of them for the same reasons. We became allies in the pursuit of
building knowledge—a pursuit that created a bond between many of us that continues
today.

Not only did I become aware of the ways in which power was manifested among
the members of the class, but I also became aware of the need for critical reflection.
This, in turn, allowed the students and I to begin to recognize power issues that existed
beyond our immediate group. The class became more and more successful and the
number of people that attended our demonstrations and concerts increasingly grew in
number. However, not everyone in the larger community of the university was happy
with the work being done in the class. For several educators within the university, such
work was outside of the mainstream protocol for learning within the institution. A few of
these individuals were administrators who had the power to control these types of
classroom interactions. I perceived many of their actions as hostile.

A few administrators tried to control the work being done in my classroom. They
were politically savvy enough not to attack the class outright. The students involved in
the class regularly voiced their excitement to be in the class, and such enthusiasm spread throughout the department. An attempt to stop the class would probably have resulted in a mini-revolution from the students involved. What the administrators did do was to begin to find covert ways of limiting what was going on in the classroom. Attempts by me to create new classes based upon this novel way of working were not denied, but were never approved. Semester after semester, attempts to begin new courses were tabled and left for future consideration. The entry of our work, *Colours*, into a collegiate competition was met with resistance. Having finally convinced administrators to allow us to enter the competition, our successes were greeted with further obstacles. There was not enough money for us to continue to progress in the competition. Continuing in the competition meant that other agendas in the department would have to be tabled due to the resources of money and time. Rehearsal schedules that were established and agreed upon by administrators to prepare the work for competition ultimately were shortened by the same administrators. Invitations to perform from groups within and outside of the university were denied. And, in the most outright show of power, the faculty involved in this class were given guidelines that we had to agree to and sign limiting future projects in which we could participate. Luckily for us, the president of the university became intrigued with our endeavors and gave our work her support. Her actions not only allowed us to continue our work by making the political environment more complex (administrators did not want to upset the president), but also her support ultimately gave us the freedom needed to continue the class.
As a faculty member, I tried to keep much of this resistance from the students. Ultimately, however, it escalated to a degree that the students began to figure out what was happening. They became quite aware, through their critical discussions, of the power struggle that existed within the department. As they had been able to establish ways of negotiating disagreements among themselves, they began to find solutions to many of these obstacles. Ultimately the ability to participate in and become successful as part of the theatre competition, for instance, was made possible by the students who took it upon themselves to find solutions to administrator’s demands. In essence, they were able consciously to work within the parameters established by the administrators in ways that ultimately allowed us to succeed.

So the issue of power was manifested in two ways within the classroom: 1) as a political system among the members within the localized reference system; and 2) as power issues resulting from the localized classroom and the larger context in which it was embedded. These two representations of power were not mutually exclusive. The power structure that students and I developed within the classroom created power demands within the department. Likewise, the ways in which the students and I were able to negotiate the demands of the department necessitated changes in the localized power relationships. These changes, in turn, allowed us to influence the larger department in order to keep the project and the learning environment alive. At the same time, our awareness of and strategies for dealing with such external power helped us to grow in our own understanding of the ways in which we chose to work with one another and our art-making process.
In both cases, dealing with such issues of power successfully took a willingness on the part of the students and faculty to critically reflect upon the issues at hand and consciously make decisions as to how we would interact within such political systems. In many ways, negotiating the manner in which we worked, or were allowed to work, became a process that was similar to the musical learning in which we engaged; we had to articulate the political problem at hand and find creative solutions for addressing the problem. And, much like the knowledge that was being constructed during our daily interactions, the political knowledge we were constructing, as well, proved to be open-ended, process-oriented, and transformative for us as students and teachers.

Analyzing the Literature on Power

The concept of a liberating pedagogy, a pedagogy that resists the imposition of static forms of objective knowledge transmitted from teacher to student, can be seen in the work of Dewey.\textsuperscript{127} Dewey quite eloquently argues for a pedagogy based upon lived experience in which learners actively engage in the construction of knowledge in shared social experiences with peers and teachers. Within such learning environments, Dewey imagined classrooms in which all members of the group (students and teachers) share equally in the process of problematizing. He states, “The conclusion is that in what are called the new schools, the primary source of social control resides in the very nature of the work done as a social enterprise in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute and to which all feel a responsibility.”\textsuperscript{128} He goes on to state, “When education

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 56.
is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities.”129

Likewise, several contemporary theorists view the political system of the classroom as an equally democratic endeavor. Freire likens the traditional relationship of teacher and student to that of master and slave. For him, true learning cannot stem from a system in which the student is dominated by the teacher’s control of the social situation or by a pre-set curriculum that is transmitted from teacher and consumed by students. For Freire, learning stems from the dialogue between students and teacher in the process of critical reflection upon their lived life situation that, in turn, manifests itself in transformative action upon that situation. For dialogue to take place, Freire maintains that the relationship between teacher and student must be equal in nature, not dominated by one or the other, and must exist upon love, humility, and faith between each other.130 As such, Freire suggests that teachers “must be partners of the students in their relations with them,131” not dominating forces who act upon the learners. He states:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teacher. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [sic] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on “authority” are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are “owned” by the teacher.132

129 Ibid., 59.
130 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 70-72.
131 Ibid., 56.
132 Ibid., 61.
Likewise, Freire suggests that knowledge stems from a process in which teacher-student and students-teacher engage in critical reflection upon their lived experience, within the context of such experience, in order to understand and transform the world in which they exist. Here, learning is not viewed as the acquisition of a priori facts transmitted by expert teachers and consumed by passive students, but rather a process in which students and teacher engage in “problem-posing education” that is, at once, both theoretical and action-oriented, or as Freire refers to it, as praxis.¹³³

Shor describes a similar dialogical pedagogy in which discussion among the teacher and students (equal in their relationships) works to develop knowledge out of the context of their experiences together. Shor extends the conversation by giving specific examples of how such dialogue can and has occurred within his own classroom as well as offering reasons that cause educators to resist such dialogue.¹³⁴ He suggests that teachers tend to avoid such collaborative learning examples with their students because of their own socialization to teaching in traditionally-based universities; their lack of power within schools to control schedule, curricula, class size, and bureaucracy; their own insecurities about standing in front of students whose backgrounds are different from their own; and because of their inability to conceive of a way to teach the subject matter dialogically.

Each of these authors suggests that power relationships within the local reference system should stem from the necessities of the situation. Students and teachers, equal in

¹³³ Ibid., 64.
¹³⁴ Ira Shor, Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change (Chicago: University of Chicago
power within the reference system, negotiate power relationships daily within the process of interaction with one another and with the music being studied. In short, the classroom becomes a democratic playing field on which the political implications of interaction are developed simultaneously as both self and group-knowledge are constructed.

This leads the discussion now toward the types of controls and power relationships that influence the interactions within the classroom from the larger reference systems in which the classroom is embedded. While some of these influences are easy to recognize, such as the restrictions placed upon the classroom by administrators in Narrative Three, others are more covert and, as several authors have suggested, must be brought to consciousness through critical reflection.

Giroux’s development of a critical pedagogy is grounded in the development of democratic classrooms where students have the opportunity to develop their own voice and personal agency in the struggle against domination by the ideologies of an oppressive larger society. Giroux develops such a pedagogy based upon critical theory as articulated by the Frankfurt School, the liberation theory of Freire, and Postmodern Feminism. He quite eloquently demonstrates how the ideology of the dominant social voice seeks to control classroom interactions and possibilities as students and teachers negotiate meaning based upon their assumptions and prejudices which they bring to the classroom from their lived experience within other social systems.

In his reflection upon and critique of positivism, Giroux demonstrates how such
an ideology held by the dominant society can control the interactions and discourse within a classroom. As I discussed above, Giroux contends that our culture’s acceptance of both positivism and scientific reasoning, a product of Enlightenment thinking, has created a one-dimensional ideology of the nature of knowledge, a knowledge assumption of the larger society assumed by both student and teacher usually with little or no examination or critique. In addition, he contends that such a unified and universal assumption of knowledge has tended to divorce fact from the social and human context from which it originates. As such, this narrow view of knowledge tends to alienate those voices from the margins of society that tend to make meaning of life situations in ways other than scientific verification. He states:

Wrapped in the logic of fragmentation and specialization, positivist rationality divorces the “fact” from its social and historical context and ends up glorifying scientific methodology at the expense of a more rational mode of thinking. Under these conditions the interdependence of knowledge, imagination, will, and creativity are lost in a reduction of all phenomena to the rule of the empirical formulation.

Rather than comprehending the world holistically as a network of interconnections, the American people are taught to approach problems as if they existed in isolation, detached from the social and political forces that give them meaning. The central failing of this mode of thinking is that it creates a form of tunnel vision in which only a small segment of social reality is open to examination. More important, it leaves unquestioned those economic, political, and social structures that shape our daily lives. Divorced from history, these structures appear to have acquired their present character naturally, rather than having been constructed by historically specific interests. In this manner, Giroux contends that much of the discourse and procedures used by students, teachers, and textbooks within classrooms tend to be guided by such a positivistic methodology. Knowledge is objectified and becomes something that exists

\[135\] Giroux, Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope, 13.
outside of the lives of both students and teachers. In order to learn, students must be consumers of such a body of knowledge even though they do not see a relevance of this objectified knowledge in their daily life situations. Knowledge that stems from non-scientific processes is usually not considered by the institution of school.\textsuperscript{136}

Giroux suggests that through critical reflection upon such knowledge assumptions in the context of the students and teachers’ daily life experience, such power and ideological agendas can become clear. In this way, both students and teachers are able to challenge claims of authority that are linked to knowledge as they make their own decisions about the way in which they choose to live their daily lives within the world. Such understanding also allows students to become proactive in seeking to make changes in society that will allow for a better world in which all people can make meaning of their lives. In this way, Giroux, like Dewey, Greene, and others, redefines the classroom as a democratic playing field on which humans struggle to understand their own lived experience and forge a better world. He states, “teaching for social transformation means educating students to take risks and to struggle within ongoing relations of power in order to be able to alter the grounds on which life is lived.”\textsuperscript{137}

Just as Giroux uncovers the power and control that positivism holds over learning within our social and educational systems, feminist writers such as Belenky et al. and

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 9-10. Howard Gardner makes a similar argument about the narrow recognition of knowledge by the institution of school as he justifies the need for acknowledging and educating differing types of learners. He states: “in modern secular educational settings, logical-mathematical knowledge is at a premium, and certain forms of linguistic competence are also of value; in contrast, the role of interpersonal knowledge is generally reduced, even as intrapersonal forms of understanding may loom much larger.” See Howard Gardner, Frames of Mind (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 337.

\textsuperscript{137} Giroux, Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope, 103.
Hayes and Flannery seek to uncover ways in which a patriarchal society has affected the nature of women’s lives and roles through the influence of the educational system. Hayes states that, “In formal education, the term *hidden curriculum* has been used to describe the implicit messages (such as the need to obey authority) conveyed by the organization and practices of schooling. Other social settings convey a similar hidden curriculum through the organization of social relationships, the value placed on certain kinds of knowledge, and so on.”¹³⁸ Hayes suggests that women’s access to formal education, the ways in which women are depicted within texts used in the classroom, and the ways in which women are allowed to interact within the institution of school have all had an influence on how women view themselves, their lives, and their possibilities for success within the society.¹³⁹ Likewise, Belenky et al. state that their goal in writing is to “examine how the two institutions primarily devoted to human development—the family and the schools—both promote and hinder women’s development.”¹⁴⁰ While hooks also examines the role of women as learners, she extends the conversation to include a critical reflection on the ways in which race and class also have become power issues within the systems of schooling.¹⁴¹

The writings examined here attempt to demonstrate the kind of control that the larger society can and does have over the interactions that take place within the classroom. As Giroux suggests, without critical reflection upon and recognition of such covert power issues, the interactions among students and teachers are controlled in ways

¹³⁹ Ibid., 23-34.
of which students and teachers are unaware. To this end, Giroux develops his radical critical pedagogy in a theory he calls Border Pedagogy.\textsuperscript{142}

Giroux describes Border Pedagogy as “the opportunity to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural codes, experiences, and languages.”\textsuperscript{143} Based upon the postmodern idea of the disintegration of a universal or unified view of the world, as Giroux describes earlier in his critique on positivism, border pedagogy seeks to help learners cross over borders as they examine their own assumptions about the nature of knowledge. In such examinations, learners are empowered to discover pluralistic ways of understanding and constructing self-knowledge. Giroux suggests that border pedagogy is constantly in the process of redefining, remapping, decentering, and shifting the borders of knowledge as learners connect knowledge to historical, political, and ideological contexts.\textsuperscript{144} As such, learners begin to understand how issues of domination, difference, class, race, gender, and sexual identity can influence learning and enhance or suppress self-understanding.

Giroux’s border pedagogy not only demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which the larger society influences interaction within the classroom through the assumptions that students and teachers bring to classroom interactions, but also it demonstrates the emancipatory quality that learners can have on themselves, each other, and those social systems that exist beyond the classroom. Just as in my critical reflection

\textsuperscript{140} Belenky et al., \textit{Women’s Ways of Knowing}, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{141} hooks, \textit{Teaching to Transgress}.
\textsuperscript{142} Giroux, \textit{Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope}, 147-163.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
upon Narrative Three, my own students did not allow themselves to be controlled by the restrictions made by administrators from outside our classroom. Through their critical reflection, the examination of their own assumptions, and their choices for action, they were able to “remap” the ways in which we were allowed to work within the department. As such, our work was allowed both to continue in the competition which we had entered and subsequently to be seen by people as a different way of learning. So, as Giroux suggests, the students were able not only to change the interactions within the classroom, they were able to change the local society around them which, in turn, emancipated them and helped them to make a better immediate world. To this end, Giroux states:

What classroom teachers can and must do is work in their respective roles to develop pedagogical theories and methods that link self-reflection and understanding with a commitment to change the nature of the larger society. There are a number of strategies that teachers at all levels of schooling can use in their classrooms. In general terms, they can question the commonsense assumptions that shape their own lives as well as those assumptions that influence and legitimize existing forms of public school classroom knowledge, teaching styles, and evaluation. In adopting such a critical stance while concomitantly reconstructing new educational theories and practices, classroom teachers can help to raise the political consciousness of themselves, their fellow teachers and their students.

In summary, a synthesis of these writings suggests that power within the classroom is multi-faceted. Power can describe the procedures and methods that students and teachers within a specific classroom choose to use as they engage in social learning. Power also can describe the overt demands made upon the classroom by principals,

---

145 Not only did the students continue in the competition, they also were invited to conferences in which they gave lecture-demonstrations about classroom interactions. The students’ success eventually led to the development of a limited partnership through which the piece of theatre entitled, Colours: A musical allegory, is now licensed to and performed by other theatrical companies.

146 Giroux, Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope, 28.
administrators, school boards, and educational bureaucrats. It also can define the covert forms of ideological influence of the larger society that is manifested in the personal ideologies and assumptions of the classroom members and the struggles that such ideologies bring to classroom interactions.

Toward A Definition of Power

For the purposes of this study, I delineate among the different ways in which power can be manifested within the classroom. The phrase *political system of the classroom* describes the manner in which students and teachers define their ways of interacting within the localized reference system. *Direct power* describes those demands made upon the students and teachers in the classroom from authorities whose job it is to administer educational policy (principals, assistant principals, educational administrators, school board members, and educational bureaucrats). Finally, the phrase *ideological social power* describes the type of covert influence that social ideology plays in the classroom as students and teachers interact with one another based upon the assumptions and prejudices that the students and teachers bring to the classroom from the larger society and their lived experience.
CHAPTER V

BENNET REIMER AND THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

In Chapters II through IV, through the analysis of philosophical literature outside of music education and my own teaching described in the four scenarios, I developed a context for the three constructs that comprise the core of this research: 1) the construction of self through self-knowledge, 2) the localized reference system of the choral music classroom, and 3) the issue of power in the choral music classroom. In the next four chapters, I examine these three constructs as they have been articulated in the music education philosophical literature. Such an analysis allows me to understand how four music education philosophers have viewed these ideas, how they are similar or dissimilar to the literature outside of music education, and how they are similar or dissimilar to the meaning that I make from my personal teaching. In conducting such analysis, I can relate my ideas to the body of knowledge that has been articulated in music education philosophy and extend the conversation in subsequent chapters into new areas where my own practice and study lead me.

Although the body of literature in music education philosophical writing is rather small in comparison to other types of research in music education, enough has been written that it becomes necessary for me to limit this analysis if I am to examine the writings of different authors and their theories in any depth. For this analysis, I have chosen the writings of four music education philosophers whose writings have had a major impact upon my practice and theoretical understanding of dialogic interactionism. Included will be the work of Wayne Bowman, David Elliott, Estelle Jorgensen, and
Bennett Reimer. Each of these writers has an extensive body of work in which he or she has dealt with many of the topics outlined in this study. In addition, represented in these writings are the philosophical traditions of aesthetics, critical theory, feminism, praxialism, and relativism. All of these philosophical traditions are quite similar to those examined in Chapters II through IV.

In these four chapters, I begin by reviewing each writer’s philosophical theory as carefully and objectively as possible. Then, in the second part of each chapter, I use the definitions constructed in Chapters II through IV to engage in a critical analysis of each philosopher’s theory. Such a critical examination, within the context of my own work, allows me to distinguish those aspects of these theories that lend support to mine and to distinguish those aspects where my work extends these extant theories.

In those instances when my work differs from the writing being examined, it is not my intention to set my work in opposition to what already exists in the philosophical literature. Rather, by understanding the manner in which I define such constructs differently from other writers, I am able to more clearly define my own thinking. Each of these philosopher’s work has added much to the practice of music education. Whether or not my work agrees with or differs from their philosophical theories is inconsequential. I engage here in critical examination as a way of understanding my own practice—I engage in such examination in a principle of charity.

I have limited the examination of each philosopher’s writings to the three constructs delimited by my research questions. As the reader will see, however, in the case of Jorgensen, it is necessary, within the confines of my research questions, to make a
reasoned interpretation, supported by evidence from her work, since she does not posit a succinct theory of self, reference group or power (as do writers such as Elliott and Reimer). Likewise, Bowman does not articulate specific theories about power or reference group but, as I show, his ideas about context and the relative nature of music to specific social situations are congruous with the questions being asked in this research. His writings about the construction of self through music as praxis also help to further define the construct of self-construction as outlined in Chapter II.

In this chapter, I begin my analysis with the work of Reimer. As many scholars have claimed that Reimer’s aesthetic theory has inspired their own work, analyzing his writings seems a fitting place to begin. In Chapter VI, I continue with my analysis by looking at the work of Elliott who states, “I suggest there are several good reasons to believe that music education’s traditional doctrine of music education as aesthetic education fails to provide a logical and comprehensive philosophical foundation for teaching and learning.” It is his belief, that aesthetic education has failed music education, which inspired him to articulate his New Philosophy of Music Education. Therefore, I have chosen to examine Reimer and Elliott’s work in succession to provide the reader a chance to look at both consecutively. In Chapters VII and VIII, I examine the work of Bowman and Jorgensen, respectively.

---

Reviewing Reimer’s Aesthetic Theory of Music Education

Reimer states that “the major function of art is to make objective and therefore accessible the subjective realm of human responsiveness.” As such, he defines the role of music education as “the education of human feeling through the development of responsiveness to the intrinsically expressive qualities of sound.” He defines feelings as subjective experience or “the element in human reality of affective responsiveness” and asserts that such subjective experience is both alike and unique in every individual person. Therefore, it is possible to relate the concept of self-construction to Reimer’s concept of subjective feeling experiences. This connection is made explicit when he states, “Because experiences of art yield insights into human subjectivity, the arts may be conceived as a means of self-understanding, a way by which our sense of our human nature can be explored and clarified and grasped.”

In order to comprehend exactly how the subjective world of feelings is manifested in musical learning according to Reimer, it is necessary to examine his basic philosophy as he presents it in the second edition of *A Philosophy of Music Education*. Such an explanation is the focus of the first part of his book (Chapters 1 through 7). In the last part of his book (Chapters 8 through 10), Reimer describes in practical terms how the philosophy of absolute expressionism can be manifested in the classroom setting.

---

149 Ibid.
150 Ibid., 46.
151 Ibid., 108.
It is this part of Reimer’s writing that explains his ideas that are relevant to the constructs of localized reference system and the issues of power in the classroom.

In recent months, Reimer has published a third edition of his work entitled *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision*. In it, Reimer re-envisions his philosophy within the context of more contemporary thought and practice in music education. In doing so, he presents many of his original ideas in ways that attempt to find the middle ground between aesthetic education and the many other topical philosophical positions of music education within the past decade such as postmodernism, feminism, praxialism, and so on. The extension of his ideas, especially the connection between the aesthetic and sociological aspects of music learning, articulates a more holistic vision for music education than either of the previous two editions. As such, this new edition suggests that Reimer has continued to develop his philosophical ideas in ways that embrace new ways of thinking in the discipline. He states:

[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 continue to change. It must be an essential characteristic of aesthetic education as a professional philosophy, then, that it not consist of one particular set of problems or issues, resolved in one particular fashion, relevant to one particular institutional Zeitgeist as it exists at any one particular period in history.\(^{153}\)

\(^{152}\) Ibid., 53.

I have chosen to review separately his writings as he presents them in the third edition from his explanations in the second edition. Having read both, I find that the third edition makes more sense in light of the articulation of his theory in the second edition. Without grounding in this earlier version of the philosophy, it is difficult to understand the manner in which this third version extends the philosophy into new terrains. Therefore, I will examine Reimer’s work to see what he has to say about each construct, first, as it relates to the second edition, and finally, as he has extended his ideas in the third edition.

**The Concept of Self**

*Second edition*

Reimer bases his theory of the education of subjective feelings on the philosophical tenets of *absolute expressionism*. The use of the word absolute refers to the idea that meaning and value in art are contained within the internal qualities of the artwork itself. This idea of “where you go to get what art gives” is explained by comparing absolute expressionism with two other philosophical perspectives: absolute formalism and referentialism.

The absolute formalist position, like the absolute expressionist position, holds that meaning and value are found within the qualities of the artwork itself. Formalism differs from expressionism in that such meaning has no reference to anything outside of the music. In fact, Reimer explains that for the formalist, “artistic events, such as sounds in

---

155 Ibid. For example, in music the internal qualities would refer to elements of tone color, rhythm, melody
music, mean only themselves: the meaning is completely and essentially different from anything in the world which is nonmusical."  In referentialism, the meaning and value of a work of art lie beyond the work of art itself in concepts such as the socio-cultural aspects surrounding the music, biographical information about the composer, or the story in a programmatic work of music. "To find that art work’s [sic] meaning, you must go to the ideas, emotions, attitudes, events, to which the work refers you in the world outside of the art work."  

Absolute expressionism includes elements of both the formalist and referentialist stances, but it differs from both with regard to expressionism. While absolute expressionism places musical value and meaning in the artwork itself, it acknowledges that external references often are a part of the musical work. It differs from referentialism, however, in that such outside influences are not referenced back to things outside of the music, but become a vital and coherent experience within the context of the work. Just as salt looses its basic character when added to soup, it changes the flavor and character of the soup as it is integrated within it. So, for Reimer, such external forces become part of the internal structure of the music. If they do not, they are considered extra-musical and do not fall within the purview of absolute expressionism.

---

156 Ibid., 27.
157 Ibid., 22.
158 Ibid., 17.
159 Ibid., 26.
160 Ibid., 42.
161 Ibid., 43.
The concept of expressionism refers to the idea that the artwork is intimately connected with feelings or with subjectivity. Reimer defines feelings in terms of perception: “much of what we know about our world—of what our world seems to us to be like—we know about feeling it.”\textsuperscript{162} He describes feelings as the deep waters that flow at the perceptual level of being, below the level of language. To each category of feelings humans assign conceptual words such as \textit{love} or \textit{hate} which float in the water of feelings as buoys, but these concepts are merely markers for a much deeper and experiential phenomenon engaged in the act of living and feeling. To these discursive buoys, he assigns the term emotions. Emotions are important for they are signifiers, the best that language can offer, of an expansive lived experience that is at the core of our humanness, but they do not take the place of the act of feeling in all of its rich layers.

This subjective experience or perception of feelings is lived through the aesthetic engagement with art.\textsuperscript{163} As art is expressive of these feelings in human nature, then to engage in art is to experience, first hand, the range of feelings that comprise our subjective being in the world. This is paramount to the concept of absolute expressionism—which states that what is valid and good in art is contained within the artwork itself since it is expressive of the human experience of feeling.

Art, and specifically music in this context, allows each individual to experience the subjectivity of feeling much in the way that language allows each person to

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 50.
experience conceptual reasoning. As humans make art, they are able to embed feelings into the materials of the medium. Such acts allow for the objectification of feelings so that individuals are able to reflect upon, hone, explore, and transform them through engagements with the music. At the same time, this process of artistic creation allows a person to examine, order, explore, and deepen the individualistic experience of being in the world—the world of feelings.

This objectification of feelings is accomplished in two ways: learning in music and learning about music. The subjective experience of feeling is a perceptive event, not a reflective or discursive event, that Reimer defines as learning in music. Learning about music through language is important because it allows us to increase the perceptive awareness of learning in music. Reimer describes this connection by saying,

“... while the conceptual language we use serves to point out more of what can be noticed (to “disclose”), when engaged in musical experience we “notice without naming.” Musical experiencing, phenomenologically, is nonconceptual in essence, I have maintained, concepts being always and only a means toward the end of refined noticing and therefore refined sharing of the ineffable meanings music provides.”

The process of perceiving is embedded in an aesthetic experience. In an aesthetic experience, the person engaged in aesthetic perception (the act of perceiving through doing) also has an aesthetic reaction—an “undergoing” or change in

---

164 Ibid., 29-37.
165 For example, in music this would include melody, tonal color, rhythm, and so on.
166 Ibid., 109.
understanding as a result of the act of doing in perceiving.\textsuperscript{169} According to Reimer, for a person to have an aesthetic experience, both aesthetic perception and aesthetic response must be present. Likewise, both perception and reaction are integrated one into the other—the act of perceiving and the change of understanding happen simultaneously.\textsuperscript{170}

An aesthetic perception is capable of being enhanced through education.\textsuperscript{171} An aesthetic response, however, is highly individual. Reimer writes, “certainly there will be a sharing of feeling because all people share in the common human condition. At the same time the individuality of every person will insure that his or her experience has a personal dimension.”\textsuperscript{172} While an aesthetic perception is teachable, an aesthetic response is only affected through more thoughtful and aware perceptions gained through aesthetic engagements with art.

How, then, is aesthetic perception teachable? Reimer suggests seven different behaviors or ways of interacting with music that can be enhanced through music education.\textsuperscript{173} They include \textit{Valuing}, \textit{Perceiving}, \textit{Reacting}, \textit{Creating}, \textit{Conceptualizing}, \textit{Analyzing}, and \textit{Evaluating}.\textsuperscript{174} He categorizes these behaviors in three groups, \textit{Means Behaviors}, \textit{Ends Behaviors}, and \textit{Outcome Behavior}. According to Reimer, the ultimate goal, or \textit{Outcome Behavior}, of music education is that through the study of music, students learn to \textit{Value} music. They learn to value music through the \textit{Ends Behaviors} of \textit{Perceiving} and \textit{Reacting}. As students’ ability to perceive music increases through

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 108.  \\
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 107.  \\
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 107.  \\
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 110.  \\
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 108.  \\
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 167.
\end{flushright}
directed study, their ability to have an aesthetic reaction to the music increases. As their aesthetic reactions increase, they, in turn, come to value music in deepening ways. In order to increase students’ ability to perceive and react to music, we must engage them in Means Behaviors or the actual moments of teaching which lead toward deeper levels of perceiving and reacting. So, Means Behaviors lead to Ends Behaviors that ultimately lead to the Outcome Behavior of valuing music.

Since it is through the Means Behaviors that we ultimately affect a student’s ability to perceive and react to music, it is important to understand how Reimer defines each of these behaviors. The first of Reimer’s Means Behaviors is Creating. The act of Creating (performing, listening, composing) allows for the objectification of feelings in the medium of music so that other Means Behaviors of Conceptualizing, Analyzing, and Evaluating can transpire. Creating is also crucial to aesthetic sensitivity since it is in Creating that aesthetic perception is central.

The next Means Behavior toward aesthetic experience is that of Conceptualizing. As stated above, Reimer suggests that emotions are verbal signifiers used to anchor or objectify the phenomenal experience of feelings into concepts. Likewise, as we perceive musical feelings, it is possible to label such feelings using linguistic labels that refer back to the perceptual feelings we have experienced. With the help of these linguistic signifiers, we are able to engage in talking about musical feeling at least to the limits that language will allow. For instance, as we perceive variations in the qualities of sound, we

174 Ibid.
can give such an experience a name—timbre. Timbre, in turn becomes a concept that refers back to our phenomenal experience of the perceived qualities of sound.

Developing concepts about musical perception allows us to examine such feelings and reflect upon them—or as Reimer says, learn about the music. While such learning about is crucial to helping students develop their perceptual skills, these conceptual anchors are merely a means toward aesthetic perception or knowledge in music; they cannot take the place of perception by the students.175

Analyzing, the third Means Behavior, is a type of conceptualization in which we break down different parts of the perceiving of a piece of music in order to understand how the parts relate to the whole. Without analysis, a piece of music could only be experienced within its wholeness. Analysis allows us to seek out musical concepts within the music in order to understand at a deeper level how the music has been constructed and thus how feelings can be ordered and understood. According to Reimer, Analyzing is a Means Behavior and not an Ends Behavior.176

The final Means Behavior, Evaluating, allows students to make “judgments about the quality of music.”177 Through evaluation, students learn how to assess the success with which a given piece of music is expressive or not expressive. It is not the point of evaluation to like or dislike a piece of music but to learn to recognize pieces of music that are honest and authentic as aesthetic expressions of human feelings. The ability to make such judgments leads to heightened aesthetic sensitivity.

---

175 Ibid., 109.
176 Ibid., 170.
So, through the four *Means Behaviors* described, we can help students to hone and refine their perceptual skills. Such increased awareness of perception consequently enhances aesthetic reaction and leads us toward the ultimate goal of aesthetic experience or aesthetic value.

While this explanation is a simplification of Reimer’s entire philosophy, it does get to the heart of his argument of establishing aesthetic education as the basis for music education. For him, our ultimate goal is to help students achieve aesthetic experiences that, in turn, enable them to enhance their ability to feel. In this way, Reimer suggests musical learners are engaged at the very heart of what it is to be human; a feelingful experience that Reimer argues is most efficiently achieved through the study of music.178

Reimer believes that every person is capable of having aesthetic experiences.179 Likewise, since to have aesthetic sensitivity is at the core of what it means to be human, it is important that all students be given the opportunity to enhance their aesthetic understanding through musically creative activities and conceptualizations.180

What may often distract students from achieving the goal of aesthetic experience is the discipline’s over-emphasis on performing.181 Reimer’s criticism in this regard is not that performance is inherently counter-productive to aesthetic education; what he suggests is that performance requires of the student the added necessity of achieving

177 Ibid.
178 Ibid., 119.
179 Ibid., 111.
180 Ibid., 169.
181 Ibid., 168-169.
technique, music-reading skills, and the like in order to be able to perform the music.\textsuperscript{182}

For many students, there is not much interest in learning these skills or they are taught to the exclusion of aesthetic understanding. In the context of general music classes, he proposes that listening can be a much more efficient and yet musically involving activity that helps students achieve aesthetic understanding without the added pressure of perfecting performance skills. While he still suggests that general music should contain performance opportunities, he offers a curriculum that is geared more toward listening as a means toward aesthetic experience. Likewise, in the performance classroom, aesthetic experience cannot be denied to the exclusion of skill development.

\textit{Third edition}

In Reimer’s third edition, he articulates his aesthetic philosophy in the context of more contemporary thought in music education such as aestheticism and culture, society, multiculturalism, pluralism, and so on. But even as the theory is articulated in a new context, Reimer makes it clear from the start that his philosophy of music education is grounded in and based upon the nature and value of music. Though he has abandoned the use of the term absolute expressionism, Reimer clearly upholds the idea that musical value and meaning (or feelings) reside in the artwork itself. Therefore, although he acknowledges that extra-musical ideas can be a part of music, such references and meanings are still embedded in the qualities of sound and the aesthetic organization of sound as music.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 172-177.
He supports this idea in the following statements:

. . . music educators, I suggest, can and should help make what Lucy Green calls “inherent meanings—those inhering in the interrelated sounds themselves—as available for experiencing as possible.\(^{183}\)

A philosophy of music education should clarify the major dimensions of musical experience so music educators can effectively offer them to, and nurture them within, their students.\(^{184}\)

Reimer is able to articulate his theory in this new context through the use of what he calls synergism, a philosophical method in which the philosopher works in a spirit of compassion, not a spirit of contention, to find the common threads with which seemingly dichotomous theories can be synthesized into a theory that is “better than the sum of its parts.”\(^{185}\) He describes philosophical synergism as:

\[
[a] \text{position [which] assumes that many or most beliefs or “isms” (doctrines, theories, systems, or practices), rather than being conceived as fixed, dogmatic, self-sufficient, axiomatic, and unable to be adjusted to take account of alternatives, are likely to be more valid and useful if understood as being open to variations, modifications, and adaptations to a variety of positions ranging from those similar to those seemingly oppositional. What is to be avoided whenever possible is an “either-or” mentality that forecloses helpful accommodations, as if beliefs, to be valued, must be absolute and unassailable or else not worth having. There may indeed be issues seemingly incapable of any resolution between the “either” and the “or” (one thinks of the abortion issue as an example), but these are likely to be exceptions.}\(^{186}\)
\]

He suggests that synergism resists the tendency to over-simplify philosophy by posing theories in extreme positions in which little or no common ground can be


\(^{184}\) Ibid., 69.

\(^{185}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{186}\) Ibid.
mediated.\textsuperscript{187} He maintains that synergism transcends pluralism not by merely accepting diversity as a way of life, but, more importantly, by probing beneath the surface to articulate those areas in competing theories in which commonalities may be found.\textsuperscript{188} He suggests that a synergistic stance does not necessarily suggest that those who adopt it will adopt an “average philosophy” in which there is no room for further debate or growth.\textsuperscript{189}

This synergistic approach toward philosophy forms the basis of Reimer’s entire revision. Throughout the book, he calls into question his philosophy in light of competing theories and, through philosophical examination, attempts to come to a synergistic position. The first theories that he takes on are those of modernism and postmodernism. Suggesting that postmodernists have articulated a theoretical position that puts modernism and postmodernism as extreme competitors, he uses the writings of Susan Haack, Michael Parsons and Gene Blocker, and Paul Woodford, to suggest that “one can understand the two positions as overlapping both historically and intellectually, with a great many points of compatibility.”\textsuperscript{190} Likewise, he applies his synergistic methodology to the issues of process/product, praxialism/aestheticism, musical values/non-musical values, musical expression/musical communication, and music viewed in its social context/music viewed as absolute, all philosophical positions that, according to Reimer, have been articulated by music education in the past as false dichotomies presented through extreme-case scenarios.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 33.  
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.

138
Like in the second edition, Reimer acknowledges both the self and self-growth in connection with musical interaction. In the third edition, he extends his understanding of self to include not only the emotional or feeling side of self, but the cultural/social influence with which self is constructed. He states:

As Carl Seashore reminded us, “When you listen, you hear what you are.” And “what we are” when having musical experience is the sum total of all we have experienced in our lives.

Most directly, the musical role we are playing (composer, performer, listener, teacher, critic, historian, theorist) affects our experience profoundly. Also, the lifetime of feeling that has made us who we are does not simply disappear when we are musically involved, any more than it does when we are involved with anything else. And if our life has caused us to adopt a particular perspective that permeates our being, one focused on race, or gender, or religion, or whatever, we are likely to apply that perspective to music as we might to much else in our life. Musical experience is not exempt from being influenced by who we are, in all our complexities, when we are having it. Certainly there are times when “we are the music while the music lasts,” and those are very precious times indeed. But just as surely we often cause music to reflect who we happen to be, and, in the deepest sense, we must do so to some degree as we must with everything else.¹⁹¹

Like in the second edition, Reimer suggests that when humans create music, listen to music, or respond in any way to music, they are able to experience feelings first hand. Referring to the work of Antonio Damasio, he extends this idea to suggest that feelings are ways of thinking in the body and, as the body and mind are unified, then feelings, like thoughts, are a part of consciousness.¹⁹² He states:

Direct experiences of feeling are embodied in music and made available to the bodied experience of those engaged with it. Such experience is as extensively and powerfully gained from musical involvements as from anything else humans can possibly do. Music, I suggest, is perhaps our most effective mode for cultivating,
extending, and refining the felt undergoings that are the basis for human consciousness and cognition.193

Having made these observations about self and self-growth through the direct experience of feelings in music, Reimer offers that our job as music educators is two-fold. First, we must make clear to students the inherent qualities of music in order to help them be able to experience music at deepening levels. We do this through teaching students to know-in and know-about music by helping them to understand how sound is organized to create musical meaning.194 Second, we must try as much as possible to allow students to have the space needed to form their own musical feelings/knowledge in their own individualized ways. In other words, we must try not to stifle or inhibit their ability to feel and experience music.195 In short, Reimer suggests that teaching is a synergism between helping students understand musical principles and allowing for the power of music to enhance their lives.

*The Localized Reference System*

*Second edition*

The idea of a local or global reference system is not specifically articulated in Reimer’s writing. In order to seek understanding of the ways in which aesthetic education in music is viewed with regard to local/global systems will require critical interpretation.

193 Ibid., 80.
194 Ibid., 89.
195 Ibid., 89.
Reimer suggests that engaging in art aesthetically is “the most powerful tool we have for refining and deepening our experiences of feeling.” Therefore, when we engage with art, we come to know, first hand, the ways in which humans experience the world through feelings. In this way, all art of every culture contains a universally understood expression of the nature of human feeling. At the same time, each cultural expression of art also expresses the individual ways in which these universal qualities are experienced within the context of the specific culture. What emerges is the idea that aesthetic experience is both global and local, simultaneously.

Conceptual, analytical, and evaluative thinking are the means by which we enable learners to become more aesthetically aware as they understand, at deepening levels, the inner-workings of music. These musical concepts become one of the major ways in which aesthetic education is realized in practice. In a series of textbooks that Reimer co-authored, this becomes clear. The books are based upon the musical concepts of rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, form, and tone color. As students progress through the curriculum, they examine the ways in which these concepts are manifested in the music they sing, play, listen to, move to, conduct, and compose. Additionally, the series also includes works of visual art, architecture, and poetry to further enhance the concept of aesthetic expression in other arts media. In this way, the curriculum is expressly global in that all music and art are conceptualized, analyzed, and evaluated in order to discover their expressive qualities.

---

197 Ibid., 145.
This is not to say, however, that aesthetic education is solely global. The basic premise that the aesthetic experience is, by nature subjective, implies that such learning is also individualistic. Reimer explains, “human beings are both universally alike and culturally different; that is the human paradox embodied most strikingly in art.”

So, while humans share a universal understanding of the perceptual experience of being alive, they also experience and must be allowed to experience this in unique and individual ways. Reimer states,

Teachers who in their zeal try to get their students to feel what the teacher thinks they should feel, by the use of emotion words which influence feeling, can only undermine the unique value of musical creation and musical sharing, which must be allowed to be as truly personal as anything in human life can be.

Reimer acknowledges this global/local dilemma when talking about curriculum design. Recognizing that there can be no foolproof curriculum in which all teachers can implement and all students will understand equally, he surmises that we must “probably learn to live with it.” He suggests that teachers’ personal interpretations of curricula should be based on an understanding of the nature of the philosophy of music as well as current information from other disciplines relative to musical curricula. Interpretations by teachers not versed in such understanding should not be tolerated.

Likewise, Reimer’s work describes a system that is both open and closed simultaneously. The conceptualization of music through the use of aesthetic concepts is
basically a closed system; all art is understood conceptually through a similar set of criteria. At the subjective level, however, the artist is constantly in a dialogue with the medium of the art being created which suggests possibility and discovery. Reimer writes:

So as the artist works on the material, the material immediately works on the artist, and the artist, with her sensitivity and imagination and craftsmanship, responds and decides and carries the act forward. An intimate, reciprocal relationship is established between artist and material. The artwork grows and develops through guidance of the artist’s sensitivity to the feelings she recognizes, and imagination of their further potentials, and craftsmanly shaping of the material in which the expressive encounter is being embodied.\(^{204}\)

At this subjective level of creativity, the manner in which art and aesthetic perception develop in the artist, is inherently open-ended and capable of imaginative possibility.

*Third edition*

Reimer does include a chapter in the third edition dealing exclusively with context. He makes a clear distinction among music as universal, as contextual, and as individual. At the universal level, Reimer states that music is in one way universal in that it is practiced globally and has been practiced by people throughout history in ways that bring meaning to peoples’ lives.\(^{205}\) Likewise, he suggests that in almost all cultures, music is related in some way to the emotional.\(^{206}\)

Just as it is universal, it is also contextual which suggests that the individual practices of music throughout the world are a result of the cultural and social lives of the people in which the music is created.\(^{207}\) Certainly, sounds are organized within each culture in differing ways or styles. But, Reimer suggests music and culture go deeper. As

\(^{204}\) Ibid., 61-62.
music is grounded in feelings, the way a culture lives, the experiences shared by its members, and the way each culture views reality, these core feelings are directly embedded within the inherent meaning of the sounds they choose and the ways they choose to organize them. He states:

... the cultural basis for music is far more profound than matters of stylistic idiosyncrasies. We must understand that when a culture is effective it stamps its members so deeply in their psychic being as to form their “primal stuff”—their foundational sense of reality and selfhood. The music of a culture expresses, or captures, or formulates, or gives voice to this reality as only sounds organized to be meaningful can do (and as each other art does in its own particular way). And each instance of music contributes, in its way, to the sum total of the culture’s psychic identity, because each individual’s expression of artistic/aesthetic meaning affects that individual’s inner world as related to his or her culture’s world, whether as a mirror of it or as an alternation, an extension, or a denunciation. Music and culture exist in symbiosis, each dependent on, receiving reinforcement from, influencing change within, the other.208

Finally, each individual experiences music at a personal level in relation to her or his lived experience. It is at this level that Reimer suggests music becomes real to each of us in our own unique way. He warns that we cannot and must not forget this aspect of music. He says, “Honoring it [individualized musical experience], cultivating it, cherishing it, is the basis for a mutually respectful attitude toward all humans and toward the differences among cultures’ musics and ways to educate musically.”209

Reimer argues that as music educators, we must keep these three aspects of music (universal, contextual, and individual), in balance by not over-emphasizing one for the

206 Ibid., 173
207 Ibid., 173-178.
208 Ibid., 176.
209 Ibid., 171.
other. So, as in his second edition, Reimer’s conception of the classroom is one that is both global and local simultaneously.

*The Issue of Power*

*Second edition*

In speaking about what Reimer calls the *operational stage* of curriculum, the stage in which the teacher and student are interacting within the classroom, it is clear that the teacher is making many of the decisions. Reimer writes:

> the teacher’s sensitivity, both to people and to music, guides each operational decision in order to optimize the experience of the former with the latter. Imagination, as brought to bear by a teacher, is the exhilaration with which he or she suffuses the interactions of music and students, so that learning opportunities are fresh and vivid. And the teacher’s authenticity ensures that both student and music are being treated with the genuineness and respect each deserves.\(^{210}\)

Earlier in the book, however, he suggests that:

> when performance group directors or classroom teachers are directing the music making of students but make all the decisions for them . . . those directors are creating, but their students are surely not. The students have been forced to be artisans, used for making art but permitted no involvement in artistic creation. The non-creative nature of much that passes for arts education stems directly from the denial of the artistic decision making function to those who need to experience it the most—young people who need to feel what it is to be artistically creative.\(^{211}\)

What emerges from this apparent contradiction, then, is the idea that a balance of power in the political system between student and teacher must be maintained. Inherent in allowing students to subjectively experience aesthetic perception through creativity means allowing them the opportunity to share in the decisions, both musical and non-musical, in the classroom. In creating the lessons, however, the teacher establishes the

events that will transpire within each classroom as a means to enhance the aesthetic experience. Therefore, while the political power of the classroom may be shared, the manner in which it is facilitated remains relatively teacher-centered.

Reimer does not engage in critical analysis in any way that suggests the presence or absence of direct power in the classroom. Certainly, his slant toward acknowledging the universal aesthetic qualities of both music and art suggest that social influences may be at play in the classroom. However, such a critical discussion is beyond the scope of his writing. In her article, “Aesthetic Music Education Revisited: Discourses of Exclusion and Oppression,” Julia Koza criticizes Reimer of committing the sin of omission. She states:

Through silences and omissions as well as actual statements, Reimer indicates that the socio-political dimensions of music should not be of primary concern to aestheticians and educators. He never discusses gender or power and apparently does not consider these issues to be germane to what he represents as a politically neutral discussion of aesthetics. Although he claims that aesthetic education is not about art for art’s sake, he appears to contradict himself, for example, by suggesting that art as art, not art as socio-political commentary, should be of greatest importance to aestheticians and educators.\textsuperscript{212}

Reimer counters this critique in a subsequent article in which he suggests that he has been held accountable for issues beyond the purview of his writing.\textsuperscript{213} Interestingly, in the third edition of his book, Reimer considers the issue of gender quite extensively. He surmises that such issues are relevant to music and can be considered by individuals if

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 69.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Julia Koza, “Aesthetic Music Education Revisited: Discourses of Exclusion and Oppression,” \textit{Philosophy of Music Education Review} 2, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 75-91, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Bennett Reimer, “Gender, Feminism, and Aesthetic Education: Discourses of Inclusion and Empowerment.” \textit{Philosophy of Music Education Review} 3, no. 2 (Fall, 1995): 107-124, 110.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
they so desire but, he also suggests that choosing to engage in such critique can lead to a loss of understanding of music’s innate qualities that, for him, are not engendered.  

Third edition

Reimer again makes relatively few remarks about power in his third edition. Certainly, the fact that he consistently speaks about allowing students the freedom to experience music at the individual level suggests that power in the classroom is a somewhat shared political system. However, it is the teacher who makes most of the curricular decisions for what is to be studied and in what manner it is to be experienced. Again, we must come to a similar conclusion; power in the classroom is balanced between the teacher and the student, but the ways in which the classroom is facilitated remains relatively teacher-centered.

Toward direct power, Reimer again makes little critical examination of his philosophy to uncover covert social influences. As explained above, however, he does finally articulate the idea that such examinations have taken place within the discipline of music education, and, though he may not agree with them, such examinations must be considered within a synergistic understanding of music.

A Critical Analysis of Reimer’s Work Writing

The Concept of Self

With regard to subjectivity and the self, the boundaries that seem more clearly drawn in Reimer’s earlier editions are softened in the third edition. For instance, Reimer more fully articulates the ways in which culture influences both musical creation and

---

musical response, and he seems willing to embrace more fully a sociological stance toward music. That Reimer is willing to continue to develop his theory is laudable; it reaffirms his commitment toward scholarship. Still, at the core of Reimer’s theorizing is music education as aesthetic education. According to Reimer:

Aesthetic education in music attempts to enhance learning related to the distinctive capacity of musical sounds (as various cultures construe what these consist of) to create and share meanings only sounds structured to do so can yield. Creating such meanings, and partaking of them, requires an amalgam of mind, body, and feeling. Musical meanings incorporate within them a variety of individual/cultural meanings transformed by musical sounds. Gaining its special meanings requires direct experience with music in any of the ways cultures provide, supported by skills, knowledge, understandings, and sensitivities education can cultivate.²¹⁵

A close examination of this definition reveals that, though Reimer believes musical interaction is intimately interconnected with both individual and cultural experience, the resulting meaning of both are embedded within the sounds and the ways that those sounds are structured in music. To be sure, the learner must experience music first hand as a listener, composer, or performer but the aesthetic in music is “where you go to get what art gives” and “what you get when you go there.”²¹⁶ In essence, for Reimer, meaning or feeling lies within the music itself. Reimer confirms this view by saying:

Art works are expressive forms in which the vital conditions of livingness have been captured so that people can regard them and experience them. The conditions of life—the rhythms of organic existence—are embodied in the artistic qualities of art works. In music, for example, the qualities presented by melody, harmony, rhythm, tone color, texture, and form are expressible of or analogous to

²¹⁶ Reimer, Philosophy of Music Education, 2nd ed., 27.
or isomorphic with the patterns of felt life or subjectivity or the conditions of livingness. . . . When we perceive these conditions embodied in the qualities of a thing, and react to the expressiveness—the feelingfulness—of these qualities, we can share the sense of “aliveness” they present. To the extent that the expressiveness of a work is deep and vital, and to the extent that we can share that expressiveness by perceiving and reacting to the conditions which embody it, our sharing of a sense of organic life will be deep and vital.²¹⁷

According to Reimer, when a student has a musical experience, he or she has a direct experience with human feelings captured within the work of art itself. As a result, the student learns more about self and/or what it means to be human by feeling what is inherent in the music. Reimer’s theory has several implications.

First, it implies that in some way music is reified, or that thought or feeling can be dehumanized in some way. While I understand Reimer’s claim, I suggest that feeling and thought are human traits, not musical ones. Certainly music, like language, allows us to engage in our thoughts and feelings, but the thoughts and feelings do not reside or cannot be captured within the music. Music is neither alive nor divined, rather, it is socially constructed by the composers and performers and socially mediated by the listeners. Without the humans involved to do the thinking and feeling, music does not nor cannot exist.

Second, to imply that feeling and meaning reside within the music suggests that feeling is somehow universal or capable of transcending cultural or individual knowing. Yet, when I experience music of another culture, I have no way of knowing whether or not what I think and feel is what was intended by the composers or performers or representative of what it is like to be a member of such a culture. I will extract from the

²¹⁷ Ibid., 102.
musical experience what I will based upon the filter of my own experiences. While some of what I feel may be similar, it can be, at best, a taken-as-shared experience. Knowing and feeling are intimately known or felt by each individual.

Reimer anticipates this argument by examining the contextual/universal dilemma. He explains that the contextualist suggests that people cannot know another culture through music because they cannot transcend the cultural understanding embedded within them as a result of living in their own culture. On the other hand, the universalist suggests that feeling transcends culture, and people will take from the experience any of the common feelings that all people share in the fact that they are human. Having established both positions, he argues that each is extreme; his synergistic solution offers that the truth probably lies somewhere in between. I will be able to understand some feelings because of what I share, universally, with all humans. Likewise, some of what is expressed within the music will not speak to me because I cannot transcend my own cultural, corporeal, and emotional context.

I question that the universal is possible. How can we be sure that what we call universal is universally felt or understood in the same way by each individual? It is possible that both individual and similar meaning can exist simultaneously. Similar, however, is different from universal. Important to notice here is that Reimer’s synergistic method is quick to find compromise and, in doing so, the distinctness of both the contextualist and universalist positions may be lost. In an attempt to find cohesion for the discipline of music education, I find that Reimer often simplifies the distinctness of each
position. In doing so, he loses some of the intricacies and complexities of the dynamic interaction that transpire within experience.

Thirdly, though humans may arouse feelings within themselves as they interact with music, the feeling itself usually does not have meaning for the person without the process of reflection. This process of reflection most usually involves some type of linguistic processes, as well as non-linguistic processes, as the person constructs their ongoing theory of self through experience. If I do not reflect, then how do I know that I know what I know? Reimer warns us, however, to be careful of using language that might hinder the connection between student and musical feeling. Yet, it is through the very act of articulating the meaning we have made from experience, most often through language, that we come to a new understanding of self.

A common thread that runs through almost every writing examined in Chapters II through IV, from Dewey to the constructivists, suggests that reflection is a key component of understanding and constructing self. As humans, we almost always reflect through language. Communally, it is through the use of language that we make sense of our shared worlds. Certainly I do not deny that the corporeality of feelings is a valid way of knowing and that everything I know cannot be captured in language, but it is usually through language that we come to make sense of feeling through the process of reflection. That such knowledge also is known at the corporeal level only enriches and deepens the experience of what is known. While Reimer does not forbid the use of

---

language in the classroom (part of knowing music is knowing about it through language),
the major thrust of his philosophy suggests that most interactions with music in the
classroom should be sonic events that do not involve the use of language necessarily. For
him, it is the transference of feeling from the music to the student through the sound itself
that provides subjective knowing—an almost mystical occurrence. He states:

> In the matter of social/cultural contexts, the risks are heightened because
of the need to use language to do what it uniquely does—to disclose and explain.
Language-knowing is so dominant in education, so highly respected and supported,
that we can be seduced into relying on it too much, overbalancing the
experiential foundation our subject matter requires. So we need to be careful
here, using disclosure and explanation sufficiently for them to enrich, but
sparingly enough that they do not interfere with what matters most in music—the
experience of its meaningfully organized sounds in their embodiment of the
culture from which they spring.²²⁰

While I understand his reasoning for placing emphasis on sonic events, for me
there is much about music that brings meaning to self that transcends the sonic event. The
musical experience happening in the classroom in Narratives Three and Four involved
much more than sound. It was political in that we had to find ways of sharing power
among student/student, student/teacher, and idea/idea. It was corporeal in that we
interacted physically in the space and with each other. It was linguistic in that we
engaged constantly with reflection through discussion. It was ontological in that the
amalgamation of these interactions helped us each to develop self-knowledge in our
unique ways as we each entered the shared space of the classroom. The meaning that
was constructed in the classroom was not inherent within the music. It was alive and
dynamic within our physical bodies and the ways in which we interacted. It was through
language and our articulations of such realizations through reflection that we became aware of the knowledge about self that we were constructing. Language plays a bigger part in the construction of self, I suggest, than Reimer’s philosophy considers.

Finally, the implication that feeling resides within the music and that learners come to know these feelings through musical interactions suggests that self-knowing and the construction of self-knowledge flows from outside inward. Like the constructivists, my experience suggests that opposite may be true. Our experience of living and our construction of knowledge start from within us and move outward into the world. Our interactions with the world may arouse our inward feelings and thoughts, but meaning and knowledge are made within us as we come to know ourselves as selves. Yet with aesthetic theory, it is our connection with the meaning or feeling captured within the art that somehow creates in us understanding and feeling. It is as though feeling exists beyond us and is somehow given to us as we interact with the art.

It is possible to experience intersubjectivity but intersubjectivity implies that, first, there must be subjectivity, distinct and concrete individuals that interact in the world from their own position. Intersubjectivity, then, implies a dialogue among distinct individuals with other distinct individuals.

Reimer states that, “A philosophy of music education should clarify the major dimensions of musical experience, so music educators can effectively offer them to, and nurture them within, their students.”221 This statement suggests that Reimer sees the

---

221 Ibid., 69.
development of knowledge and of self as an outward/inward experience. He does not deny the uniqueness of self nor the on-going growth of self through musical interaction. Inherent in his philosophy, though, is the idea that all music education can do is clarify the “major dimensions of music” and offer them to students. Self-growth and self-construction are somehow a by-product of this outward/inward interaction. Yet, as the constructivists suggest, knowledge is consciously constructed from the inside out in interactions with distinct others that reside in the environment, whether the others are other human beings or music.

Basing music education only upon the aesthetic qualities of music may limit the types of experiences and self-growth that can transpire within the music classroom. When I have seen such teaching based upon aesthetic principles in practice, it tends to be content-centered, teacher-oriented, and the interaction of the classroom remains controlled. Does self grow, and can learners construct self within such a classroom environment? Yes, but in my experience, it is almost in spite of what is intended by the teaching event. I suggest that a strictly aesthetic approach to music education tends to favor a closed system of musical traits that, in many instances alienates learners rather than invites them into the intersubjective space within the classroom. Is Reimer wrong? Absolutely not. The impact that he has had on music education is profound and has helped to define, for several generations, what music in music education has to offer. I suggest, though, that the conversation cannot simply end with aesthetic education. Can we create an intersubjective space that includes music and all of the other ways of interacting in a classroom? I have no answer. I do think that we must continue to
question and to envision what such a space might be and how it might transpire in practical terms.

The Localized Reference System

In the third edition, Reimer quite clearly delineates three levels of musical interaction: the universal, contextual (or for him, cultural), and the individual level. He suggests, in his synergistic way, that the three interrelate and must be balanced within the classroom. Should we over-emphasize the universal, we neglect both the cultural and individual, and vice versa. This leads him to complete the chapter by examining the contextual which, quite similarly to Elliott, he suggests should be taught in as authentic a way as it is produced within each culture.

I have argued that the individual is embedded within the local, the local within the larger community, and so forth. I also have argued that it is from the individual perspective outward that humans (selves) enter the world. Greene states:

Consciousness thrusts toward the world, not away from it; it thrusts towards the situations in which the individual lives her or his life. It is through acts of consciousness that aspects of the world present themselves to living beings. These acts include imagining, intuiting, remembering, believing, judging, conceiving, and (focally) perceiving. Alone or in collaboration, they bring individuals in touch with objects, events, and other human beings; they make it possible for individuals to orient themselves to, to interpret, to constitute a world.

And Fosnot states:

How does individual representation interface with one’s social setting? As ideas are shared within a community, new possibilities are suggested to the individual for consideration. These multiple perspectives may offer a new set of

---

222 Ibid., 168-198.
correspondences, and at times even contradictions, to individual constructions. Of course, these perspectives shared by others are not “transmitted;” even the shared perspectives are interpreted and transformed by the cognizing individual. But as we seek to organize experience for generalization and communication, we strive to coordinate perspectives, to “get into the head” of others, thereby constructing further reflective abstractions and developing “taken-as-shared” meanings.

From this perspective, learning is a constructive building process of meaning-making that results in reflective abstractions, producing symbols within a medium. These symbols then become part of the individual’s repertoire of assimilatory schemes, which in turn are used when perceiving and further conceiving.²²⁴

In both of these quotes, the interaction with the world is situational and contextually based upon the context of self as mediator. It is for this reason that I suggest both the individual level and localized social level of the classroom become the context (a culture in and of itself) from which interactions with increasingly more global reference groups take place.

When we work from the assumption that feeling and meaning are embedded within the music, we inherently create a situation in which learners are somehow molded and nurtured by music rather than allowed to construct knowledge from their own perspective within the world. It is here that my view differs from Reimer for, like the contextualist that he describes, I think that it is the lens of self and the interaction of self within the immediate environment (the classroom) that filter what knowledge can and will be constructed. In this way, I once again suggest that knowledge is relational and contextual and that, if there is any universal quality to music, it is, at best, taken-as-shared.
The Issue of Power

In my review of Reimer’s theory above, I concluded that power in his theoretical classroom is balanced in some way between teacher and students. I do this because he does acknowledge the individual level of each student within each classroom and warns that the teacher should not, if at all possible, interfere with the ability of the individual to make personal meaning that results from having an aesthetic experience. I must state, however, that in this model the teacher maintains control of the environment through “clarifying the major dimensions of musical experience” and by “effectively offer[ing] them to, and nurtur[ing] them within, their students.” It is clear that at each level, the teacher controls what will be studied and how it will be studied. Likewise, as in the example of Reimer’s Silver Burdett textbooks, the profession-at-large, or representative members of the profession, decide what aesthetic qualities are most important for study and, in some way, prescribe what will be studied through offering musical experiences in the form of textbooks. For me, the power and control of the classroom must be shared with student in ways that allow the student the ability to influence classroom interaction. This is an important distinction.

With regard to ideological social power, I suggested in Chapter III that Reimer acknowledges such power issues in the third edition of his book. He even includes power issues, such as gender, as part of his synergistic solutions in which he suggests that these viewpoints must be honored. It is clear that Reimer considers ideological social issues to

---

224 Fosnot, Constructivism, 27.
be embedded within the sounds themselves with little or no need to consider them separately, unless a person is so inclined. While he does not deny that these power issues exist, considering them separately from musical study detracts from the inherent value of music. He explains:

When feminists choose to emphasize that dimension of music, even in the face of possible loss of the values of inherence, they are exercising their right of freedom to do so (as are others who emphasize different delineated values).

My philosophy will emphasize the synergistic capacity of music to encompass delineated meanings and also to take them into the realm of inherence as only music can do. This capacity, I believe, accounts for the uniqueness of music in human life and therefore its powerful, indispensable value. Implications for music education will be drawn from this position. But this does not negate or repudiate the fact that other values, such as from a variety of delineated aspects of music, can be and often should be honored and attended to as important dimensions of musical meaning and experiencing.  

---

226 Ibid., 59.
CHAPTER VI

MUSIC MATTERS: THE PHILOSOPHICAL WORK OF DAVID ELLIOTT

In his work, *Music Matters*, Elliott describes the purpose of music education in the following way: “Self-growth, self-knowledge, and musical enjoyment are the aims of music education overall and the primary goals of every music teaching-learning episode.” As the concepts of self-growth and self-knowledge are crucial to the idea of dialogic process, understanding the ways in which Elliott has articulated them within the teaching/learning process is important to this study.

Most of Elliott’s writing about the construction of self and the acquisition of self-knowledge are discussed in the second section of the book, *Music and Music Education* (Chapters 3-9). The concepts of reference system and the sharing of power in the classroom are referenced in the third section of the book, *Music Teaching and Learning* (Chapters 10-12). However, as Elliott’s ideas are complex, such references to each of these topics do not neatly fall into the listed chapters of the book. It is necessary, therefore, to look at the whole of the book in order to understand exactly how Elliott articulates each of the three constructs: the construction of self through self-knowledge; the localized reference system; and the issue of power.

Reviewing Elliott’s Praxial Theory

*The Construction of Self*

Elliott’s conception of self is based on a cognitive model that comes from the philosophical tradition of materialism, which he defines using the words of Dennet,
“[T]he mind is the brain.” As such, consciousness, in the manner that Elliott suggests, is first based upon biological neural processes and can be explained through the understanding of how these neural processes function.

Consciousness is, in Elliott’s terms, what we refer to as the self. To explain how consciousness works, Elliott uses a theoretical model designed by Csikzentmihalyi in which consciousness is comprised of three components: attention, awareness, and memory. The component of awareness includes the sub-concepts of cognition, emotion, and volition. As we pay attention to an experience in the world, we “select, sort, retrieve, and evaluate” these experiences in our awareness and store them in our memory. Elliott goes on to explain that these three concepts are not mutually exclusive but highly interactive in everyday experience. He suggests that awareness begins first with attention; a person must attend to consciousness before awareness or memory can transpire. Finally, he suggests that cognition is multi-dimensional (verbal knowledge is not exclusive—there are several different ways of cognating, including musical thought).

228 Ibid., 51.
229 Ibid., 52.
230 Ibid.
231 Cognition includes the mental processes “involved in the verbal and non-verbal organization, retrieval, use and application of our apprehensions. Cognition refers to the various processes by which we recognize, relate, and deploy information from inside and outside ourselves. Information includes all the differentiated sights and sounds, all the recognized thoughts and emotions, all the situations and events, that we encounter.” Ibid., 52.
232 Ibid.
Consciousness, according to Elliott, emerges as a biological process related to genes. It also emerges as a cultural process related to memes. With genes, the structure of the brain is passed on and developed from one generation to the next through an evolutionary process that follows the principles of natural selection. Likewise, through memes, ideas and concepts (cultural) are passed from generation to generation through “instruction, example, imitation, variation and/or various forms of presentation and encoding.” Through the development of consciousness, both genetically and memetically, the result is the construction of an independent identity called the self. This self, in turn, becomes the storehouse for each individual’s experience in the world and the meaning that is made of such action in experience.

The goal of the self is to find order in selfness and to strengthen its being. As the self experiences outside events through consciousness, it, in turn, shapes internal intention and goals which determine what the person can and will considered in consciousness. This circular process allows the self to realize its own potential as a free agent in the world and allows individuals the opportunity to rise above the limitedness of outside events.

Referencing Csikzentmihalyi, Elliott suggests that the optimum experience of this type of self-growth comes in the form of flow. When challenges from the environment meet the level of the skills of consciousness in the self, the result is enjoyment and a

---

233 Ibid.
234 Ibid., 111.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid., 113.
237 Ibid., 117.
sense of seamless experience, or flow. In musical terms, when a musical challenge presented to students is aligned with the musicianship level of the students, self-growth, enjoyment, and flow result which, in turn, strengthens the concept of self. If the musical challenge is greater than the musicianship level, anxiety or frustration will ensue. If the musicianship level is greater than the musical challenge, boredom ensues. Consequently, for self-growth to continue, the ratio of challenge and musical growth must be kept congruous and constantly increasing in difficulty. 238

In order to understand this more fully, one must examine how Elliott describes the concept of musicianship. Elliott defines musicianship as a procedural way of knowing. 239 By using the term procedural, Elliott suggests that knowledge is embedded in the process of acting in the world—or, “actions are nonverbal forms of thinking and knowing in and of themselves.” 240 Using Elliott’s term, the act of musical thinking and learning-in-action is musicing. 241 The concept of procedural knowing that Elliott articulates rejects the tenets of music education as aesthetic education.

Elliott specifically rejects Reimer’s notions of aesthetic education that state that the essence of music is found in musical works with which learners engage in order to have an aesthetic experience. 242 To replace the concept of musical work and aesthetic experience (which Elliott finds inherently passive), he proposes that music is not

---

238 Ibid., 131-132.
239 Ibid., 51-68. For a full description of Elliott’s theory of procedural knowing in music (musicianship) see 53-71.
240 Ibid., 55.
241 Ibid., 49.
242 Music Matters, 23. For a full understanding of Elliott’s arguments against Music Education as Aesthetic Education, see Elliott, 23-38.
ontologically manifested in works but in human actions—music is found in human acts
where cultural, musical, and human qualities interact to produce musical experiences. He
states, “. . . the sounds of music are essentially a matter of artistic-cultural actions and
performances, a discerning level of understanding and appreciation demands knowledge
in kind.”243

In addition, these musical-cultural acts are the result of the specific contexts of
which they are made and follow the rules and traditions of that context. This marks a
change for Elliott away from aesthetic education which he suggests analyzes all examples
of music making through the use of the aesthetic principles developed in Western art
music. Therefore, his practice-specific concept of music education is embedded in
studying music within the context of its socio-cultural rules and traditions. As such,
music education is the process of enculturation, inducting students into the practices of
musicing within the context of a specific kind of music-making cultures (i.e. Western art
music, African drum ensembles, Japanese folk music, and so on).244

The procedural knowledge that a student gains through musicing, emerges out of
the context of the musical experience being studied. For instance, if students are studying
African drumming, the knowledge that they need to make the music (techniques, reading
systems relative to the musical/social event, facts concerning the nature of the event, and
so on) and to solve the musical problems that emerge in the act of musicing come from
the traditions and rules of African drumming. The musical problems that students solve

243 Ibid., 57.
244 Ibid., 67.
constantly spiral upward in difficulty as students move from novice levels of musicianship toward expert levels of musicianship.245

In summary, the self is strengthened through the acquisition of self-knowledge that results when musicianship levels (the procedural understanding of thinking-in and reflecting-on action while involved in active music making of a context-specific musical-cultural experience) match the musical problems (and the ability to solve these problems) that exist in the musical-cultural event (i.e. interpreting, composing, arranging, performing within the context of the musical-cultural event). As such, the act of developing musicianship in this procedural and context-specific way insures the development of self-knowledge and the continued realization of the self through flow experiences.

For Elliott, then, music education is at heart the induction of students into musical contexts where, through active participation, they develop self-knowledge and the strengthening of the self. In practice, the role of the teacher is to establish environments that approximate, as much as possible, the authentic musical context of the music being studied. Within what Elliott calls reflective musical practicums, the teacher helps students begin to recognize musical problems and, through critical reflection-in and –on action, find musical solutions within the context of the musicing event.246 The teacher also must ensure that the musical challenge or problem is aligned with the musicianship level of the learners and that both continually increase to maintain optimum growth, or

245 Ibid., 70-71.
246 Ibid., 269-272.
flow. As teachers induct the student-apprentices into the music practices, gradually the teacher begins to fade as students become more and more adept at creating their own musical problem-finding and solving skills.247

Localized Reference System

Elliott’s view of the localized reference system can be found in his conception of context. The concept of context in Elliott’s philosophy plays itself out in two important inter-related ways. First, when Elliott uses the term context, he almost always means the context (social/political/cultural) in which the piece of music being studied was formed. The context of the piece is comprised of the social/cultural human relationships from which the piece of music being studied emerged. Such a context provides, Elliott writes, “the total of ideas, associations, and circumstances that surround, shape, frame, and influence something [the music being studied] and our understanding of that something.”248 To this end, such context provides the boundaries within which we come to know and make music. He continues, “Teaching and learning musicianship includes teaching and learning different kinds of musical obligations and ethics as they apply in different musical communities.”249 In this way, musical ideas are relative to the context of the localized culture within which the piece of music originates.250 To this end, the system of possibilities is both open and closed. Elliott suggests that within musical

247 Ibid., 280.
248 Ibid., 40.
249 Ibid., 168.
250 Elliott does argue that universal musical ideas exist that cross over musical contexts. In fact, Elliott suggests that concepts of musicianship (procedural knowledge in the formal, informal, impressionistic, and supervisory domains) exist within each musical context. In this way, they are, at once, universal and relative.
interpretation there is room for personal decision by the musicians, but only within the limits of the existing context of the score and the cultural/musical limits of the social/musical context of the piece. 251

With regard to the individual classroom and curriculum making, Elliott takes a localized view of the context of the classroom. He writes, “Teachers have been instructed (or obliged) [in traditional curriculum design] to follow a universal set of inflexible, step-by-step procedures. In contrast, advocates of practical curriculum inquiry urge teachers to look to themselves and their own teaching circumstances.” 252 He describes curriculum-making as the teacher thinking-in-action within the context of her or his own classroom and with regard to the needs of her or his students’ levels of musicianship. Elliott states:

Put another way, it is because individual teachers and students put their personal stamps on the educational aims, subject matter knowledge, teaching processes, learning processes, and assessment procedures (and so on) that teaching, learning, and curricula are highly fluid and unpredictable. The decisions that teachers make in the first two stages of curriculum making can and do determine the nature and values of the teaching-learning stage in fundamental ways. In the end, however, an excellent curriculum is an excellent teacher interacting with students in educationally sound ways. 253

He further describes the practicum as a socially constructed place in which students and teachers engage in formal and informal coaching and mentoring sessions both between teacher and students and between students and students. 254

251 Ibid., 167-168.
252 Ibid., 253.
These two concepts, the context of the piece of music being studied and the context of the classroom in which the piece is being studied, seem to be inter-related. While the context of the learning environment, the classroom, is locally conceived, its parameters and experiences are based upon the limits of the context from which the music being studied is derived. It is this context of the musical practice that the teacher is trying to replicate, in its authentic form, within the context of the classroom. In this way, the methods and procedures for study are localized and remain open, but only within the limits of the context of the music being studied. So, in fact, the music classroom is, at once, local and global.

The Issue of Power

Elliott’s philosophy, as well as the practical application of it in his practicum, is inherently teacher-controlled. The notion that teachers are inducting apprentice students into the norms and values of context-specific and authentic musical cultures implies that the teacher brings to the classroom expert knowledge of these musical cultures that he or she uses to shape the learning environment. Examples of this can be found throughout his writing:

What this means is that musicianship develops only through active music making in curricular situations that teachers deliberately design to approximate the salient conditions of genuine musical practices.255

With the guidance of music teachers who have achieved competent, proficient or expert levels of musicianship themselves, music students learn how

---

253 Ibid., 258.
254 Ibid., 287.
255 Ibid., 72.
to meet successive musical challenges by drawing upon and developing various dimensions of their own musicianship.\textsuperscript{256}

We analyze what and how our apprentice practitioners are thinking-in-action. Music educators are diagnosticians of musical thinking.\textsuperscript{257}

. . . knowing how to diagnose, coach, critique, and correct a student’s musical thinking-in-action; knowing when (and when not) to interrupt musicing and listening for verbal reflections; knowing how to reduce temporary problems that impede musical problem solving; and knowing how to encourage students’ ongoing efforts when they experience temporary boredom or frustration.\textsuperscript{258}

Put another way, because teaching occurs not in isolation but in relation to students, a teacher’s knowledge-in-action is what gives meaning to the teaching-learning situation.\textsuperscript{259}

Educatorship is the flexible, situated knowledge that allows one to think-in-action in relation to the students’ needs, subject matter criteria, community needs, and the professional standards that apply to each of these.\textsuperscript{260}

An excellent music curriculum, I have said, is largely an excellent music teacher in action.\textsuperscript{261}

In Elliott’s philosophy, while the teacher is directly responsible for shaping, managing, and making curricular decisions, this is done in a spirit of support in helping musical apprentices become increasingly able to make such decisions for themselves. Borrowing the concept of scaffolding from Vgotsky, Elliott suggests that the teacher (expert) begins to fade as students (apprentices) are capable of working on their own.\textsuperscript{262}

In addition, Elliott describes the practicum as a social structure in which students “take
on formal and informal coaching functions for and with their peers.” So, while the teacher is most definitely in control of the classroom, students are urged to be active participants in the learning activities.

A Critical Examination of Elliott’s Theory

*The Self and Praxial Music Education*

Elliott has done much to shift the philosophy of music education away from the aesthetic and toward an understanding of the social construction of music manifested in various global contexts or musical communities. He states, “In short, *what music is, at root, is a human activity.*” This is an important shift in leaving behind the objectified and dehumanized notion of music-as-work suggested by the aesthetic movement. What this shift in perspective does for music and music education is to acknowledge the human context of music and bring to light the ability of such musical action on the construction of the self. It is to this end that Elliott suggests music education should exist. He states, “*Self-growth, self-knowledge, and musical enjoyment are the aims of music education overall and the primary goals of every music teaching-learning episode.*”

Likewise, the way in which Elliott conceives of the classroom, as a musical practicum in which students engage authentically with the musical practices of other socio/cultural musical communities, allows learners to experience different ways of making music and musical meaning through action. Within these practicum experiences, he suggests that students are creating musical knowledge that is not only formal but is

---

263 Ibid., 287.
simultaneously procedural. In this way, students engage in cultural and musical understanding in communities outside of their own.

So, at the outset, it appears that Elliott has articulated a philosophy that supports on many levels much of the meaning that I am seeking from my own teaching scenarios. His work validates mine by suggesting that music is socially constructed and by suggesting that musical study enhances the construction of self. However, as I will demonstrate, Elliott has not gone far enough in explaining the construction of self in ways that give credence to the uniqueness of each self within the context of lived history. As such, the manner in which I have defined self in this study transcends Elliott’s articulation of self in ways that more clearly delineate the individuality of self and the manner in which self is constructed within a personal context.

As I have said, Elliott suggests that all music education exists to strengthen the self. Most of Elliott’s defining of self comes from explanations that he borrows from Dennett and Czikszentmihalyi.\textsuperscript{266} Elliott suggests that the self is both a genetic and memetic construction that is manifested in a person’s increasing ability to become conscious. He acknowledges that each self is individual. He states: “Each human self is a unique pattern of intentions and goals. The self determines when and where the energy of attention will be deployed and, therefore, what events and experiences will enter consciousness.”\textsuperscript{267} Outside of this acknowledgement, however, he does little to develop this idea or to consider the ramifications of a self that does, indeed, make its own

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 112-121.
decisions in the classroom. To do so suggests a shift in power within the classroom and Elliott’s curricular ideas clearly do not support such a shift. The teacher controls what is to be studied as he or she inducts learners into different musical communities.

Likewise, he uses Czikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow to suggest that the phenomenal experience of becoming conscious is often that of pleasure and enjoyment experienced quite differently by different people. He never directly addresses the role that individual life experience plays in both forming self and shaping future learning; nor does he address how consciousness of self through reflection brings about a critical awareness of the self within its own lived context.

In the opening of the book, Elliott introduces three music students to his readers, Tim Pani, Clara Nette, and Sara Band, and talks briefly about the musical communities in which they study. How exciting it would be to see how each of these three students constructs self, both musically and otherwise, within the context of their unique life situations. As it soon becomes obvious, though, his description of these three selves is prototypical.

The way in which he uses Dennet and Czikszentmihalyi’s theories provides the reader with a general model for how the self might develop, but since it never considers the individual and social context of the learner, the reader is left with the feeling that the construction of self somehow happens in uniform ways for most musical people throughout the world. Although he acknowledges that musical practices play out in unique ways within different cultural musical communities, most of his writing is focused

---

267 Ibid., 112-113.
on the universal. He states, “What I am proposing, then, is that while musicianship is essentially local (or context-dependent), it is global to the extent that most (if not all) forms of musicianship involve the same five kinds of musical knowing.”268 Since his premise is that through local and global ways of musical knowing we come to construct the self, we also can assume that this construction of self is somehow local and global. Yet, we rarely, if ever, have the opportunity to see in his writing the more local construction of self—a self born out of unique experiences, struggles, and triumphs—as we did in the writings of the constructivists, feminist epistemologists, or critical pedagogues. In comparison to these writers, Elliott’s concept of self seems abstract and decontextualized.

What Elliott has proposed is a theory of the development of a musical self that is constructed as students are inducted into many differing ways of making music. His musical self is one that is formed out of guided experiences involving novice students with expert musicians in ways that help these apprentices master musical procedures as a way of forming musical knowledge. He states that “the music educator’s role is principally one of mentoring, coaching, and modeling for music students conceived as apprentice musical practitioners.”269

This musical self is not necessarily synonymous with the self of which I write—a self born out of a unique history in ways that bring critical awareness to one’s place in the world. What Elliott has not addressed are the unique qualities of self that learners bring to

268 Ibid., 54.
269 Ibid., 74.
such musical practicums and the ways in which these individual modes of self-understanding influence the types of musical and other knowledge that will eventually be taken away from the experience or mediated within the experience among others.

For example, as Belenky et al. suggest, part of a sense of self for a woman is created out of the interaction between both her own concept of being a woman within the world and the way in which she is socialized into the world as a woman. At the same time, critical awareness of the way in which she defines womanness helps to shape the lens with which she will continue to look at the world. As such, her personal understanding of being a woman drawn from her own experience may be one of the crucial factors in determining what she chooses to bring to consciousness and, thus, the manner in which she chooses to grow as both a woman and a person within her own context or world. In addition, she is not only “woman.” This ever changing lens of self is influenced by the many other unique factors that come directly from her lived experience within the world. So while the personal lens is formed out of experience, it also shapes future experience in ways that create a unique and individual person.

Likewise, these musical novices of whom Elliott speaks bring other modes of knowing into the world in ways that create for them a lens through which they construct knowledge. Issues such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, to name a few, are all factors that influence musical knowledge as well as critical awareness of the self within its context. Elliott has focused little attention on the unique perspectives, such as these, that are paramount within the learner’s lived world.
Where my work differs most with Elliott’s work is with regard to context. Elliott nearly always appropriates context in relation to the piece of music or musical practice from which a piece emerges. It is to this idea that he assigns the term Music, the musical habits of a certain group of musicers within their localized context. These cultural contexts, or Musics, become the curricula for music study as teachers socialize or induct their students into such practices by establishing learning situations that are as authentic to the studied musical cultures as possible. He states:

Developing musicianship is essentially a matter of induction: students must enter and become part of the musical practices (or music cultures) they intend to learn. This is so because musicianship is context-dependent. The musicianship underlying any practice of music making and listening has it roots in specific communities of practitioners who share and advance a specific tradition of musical thinking. Musical practices swirl around the efforts of practitioners who originate, maintain, and refine established ways and means of musicing, as well as cherished musical histories, legends, and lore.

As such, these musical contexts become the standards or expert models that, as Elliott, should guide musical study.

Herein lies Elliott’s paradox. He considers the context of the practitioners within musical communities to be the driving force behind the way music is created in each cultural environment, yet he pays little attention to the context of the individuals within each classroom. While context matters for the expert musician in a musical community, context in Elliott’s writing has little bearing on how student musicians in their own musical community (the classroom) interact with, make sense of, and transform Musics.

---

270 Ibid., 44. He contrasts the term Music with MUSIC, “a diverse human practice consisting in many different musical practices or Musics,” and music, “the audible sound events, works, or listenables that eventuate from the efforts of musical practitioners in the context of particular practices.”

271 Ibid., 67.
I suggest that Elliott’s lack of focus on the socio-musical community of the classroom stems from his intense focus upon the processes of induction and enculturation of novice musicians into various expert models of music-making.

Elliott is not wrong to assume that music learning is, in many ways, a process of socialization to the norms of varying musical cultures. Much about musical study or any study for that matter is about the socialization or induction of students into existing musical styles and cultures. If students want to study Ghanan music, they must understand something of the context that shapes the specific ways that Ghanans create music. However, socialization and induction are not the only processes that are involved in music learning or the only processes that matter.

While a Ghanan context can be experienced by students, it can never be appropriated. Students studying such music in middle America may understand to some extent what musical life in Ghana may be like. They will never be Ghanan, however. At best they can be empathetic to such musical and social conceptions in ways that are created and shaped by their own life situations and cultural-communal understandings. As I have suggested, the social community of each classroom is embedded in many larger contexts, hence the ability of students to connect and empathize with a Ghanan community. While such embeddedness of the classroom into the larger worlds of musical communities makes possible global connections, it is the context of the individual classroom and the even smaller context of each individual learner within the classroom that provides the perspective from which meaning-making will transpire.
Similarly, even with period instruments, students cannot appropriate style as it was performed by Beethoven’s contemporaries, for example. Not only are the political, social, and moral contexts of the students’ worlds quite different than that of late nineteenth century Vienna, the only guide we have toward creating such period performance practice is that which has been interpreted by scholars from writings of the period. When such interpreted information guides performance practice in a musical classroom, it is still shaped by the manner in which the students make sense of it through the individual lenses of their own situations in the world, their technical musical abilities, and so on. Try as we might, we can only create the music of our own cultural community or, at the very least, the interpretation of how our cultural community understands another culture to be. While it may be desirable to engage in such cultural-musical study, we cannot do so in ways that deny our own context or the way things are in our own localized musical classrooms. Local context matters and should not be denied in the desire to produce a musically accurate or authentic performance.

To further illustrate the importance of acknowledging the individual and group context within the music classroom, I will turn to the compositions that students created in Narrative Three. Elliott suggests that composing also is a process of being inducted into the context of various Musics. He states:

One learns to compose by being inducted into culture-based and practice-centered ways of musical thinking that particular groups of musical practitioners maintain, refine, and embody in landmark compositions. Second, composing is highly contextual in that composers do not generate and select musical ideas in abstraction. Composers do not simply “compose.” They compose particular forms of music: songs, film scores, fanfares, preludes, laments, dance suites, string quartets, symphonies, marches, overtures, operas, requiems, sonatas, concertos, cantatas. In doing so, composers depend on
established models and criteria of compositional practice that they decide to follow, adjust, redevelop, or transcend. \(^272\)

While I understand his explanation and agree that it is, at least, partly true, this is not the manner in which our own composing took place within the classroom.

Those of us in Narrative Three began to compose from our own experience. For each song that we created, we first established a metaphor that was born out of our conversations and improvisations. From the metaphor, text was likely to be the next area that we addressed. Text informed melody and, finally, melody informed style. Even in choosing style or form, we were not merely appropriating or changing existing landmark musical examples, we were trying, as best as we could, to work organically from our own perspectives, from our conversations, and from our interpreted meanings. What resulted were several songs that transcended in so many ways any one style or form of musical composition.

This way of working applied to all but two songs. After developing several songs, we decided to put them together in an evening of performance and felt as though we needed something to "hold them all together." Following the guide of *A Chorus Line*, we created a beginning and ending song in this traditional musical theatre style. Interestingly, for us and for the several critics that we met in the various competitions we entered, the first and last song somehow did not work. One critic suggested that in the body of our work, we had created something new and fresh. For him, the problem with the whole piece was that the opening and closing were so predictable.

\(^{272}\) Ibid., 162.
Were we merely appropriating existing forms and styles of music in our composition? Elliott might say yes. I would not disagree to a point—we were and are embedded within the larger social context of our culture that helped to shape many of the ideas we were pursuing. The organic way in which we worked created in many of us the sense that somehow we were being transformed. We began to see how our localized interactions and conversations led to a transformation of what we called self. We were able to acknowledge the perspective that existed among us because of each of our places in the world. Such acknowledgement brought about musical growth, but more importantly, it brought about a sense of growing in our understanding of who we were in the context of our own lived histories. In many ways, we became one of Elliott’s expert groups. We were our own authentic, musical community.

Elliott comes the closest to acknowledging the importance of each learner’s perspective when he discusses musical interpretation. It is during this section that he suggests that the performer’s viewpoint has a bearing on the manner in which a piece of music is performed. He states:

Our enjoyment of performing and listening for musical performances derives, in major part, from the richness of the performance-interpretation process. When the criteria of a practice encourage performers to develop and project competing interpretations of compositions, the possibilities for achieving self-growth and enjoyment increase because there is an inherent dynamism in the practice. Interpretive options give performers and listeners more and more musical challenges to find, solve, and express. Accordingly, interpretive options invite, encourage, and demand the dynamic growth of musicianship.  

---

273 Ibid., 166.
Elliott qualifies this perspective of interpretation by suggesting that it should fall within the purview of the composer’s original intentions, past performer’s original intentions, and what the audience expects of such a performance. We are somehow thrust back into a world in which music exists in standards of expert performances, external to the context of the learners, which they must acquire if they want to be called musicians. Is it not possible for both Music and the musicers to be transformed in their localized and personal musical community?

Elliott’s work has helped to move music education beyond the ideas of aestheticism. He has embraced music as a human endeavor and brought to the classroom not only musical education but also humanistic education. As with all philosophical work, the conversation stops when the point is made. Yet, written in the margins and embedded within the layers of this book lies the potential for new conversations.

What seems clear to me is that Elliott has embraced the relativistic ideas of self, musical communities, and MUSIC without being willing to accept the possibility of a relativistic world structure. Time and again, we see Elliott work to find the common in the situation: the five ways of making music; the standards for musical assessment; the musical induction of novice learners into expert music making communities; and so on. In doing so, the intimate relationship between the individual self and its context is never explicitly considered. The conversation has stopped short and in doing so has limited the possibilities for learners within their learning communities.

---

274 Ibid., 165.
Localized Reference System

I have addressed quite directly Elliott’s conception of context in the above discussion of self because, by considering the concepts of context and self together, it is easier to understand how Elliott defines self. Therefore, I will not continue the discussion here, except to reiterate that I find Elliott’s conception of context to fall short of acknowledging the relativistic and individualistic nature of each musical environment that is crucial to the organic construction of self.

Having said that, I must say that the manner in which Elliott describes interaction within a musical practicum is quite similar to the types of interactive experiences that I described in Narratives Three and Four. He states:

Most practicums involve groups of students who often take on formal and informal coaching functions for and with their peers. By means of the mutually reinforcing effort of the practicum as a social unit, students witness and test the specific ways of thinking that define a musical practice.\textsuperscript{275}

The idea that music-learning and understanding is socially negotiated in a highly dynamic environment is directly related to my experience. The ways in which knowledge was constructed in my classroom were equally interactive. The individual perspective of each student informed the types of conversation that emerged, which, in turn, created a context for our next interaction. This often messy and highly dynamic process is crucial to creating an environment in which learners have the opportunities to construct personal knowledge through group interaction.
The Issue of Power

In my review of Elliott’s work above, I suggest that Elliott’s classroom is mainly teacher-controlled. This is to be expected in a system that is based on the induction of novice learners by expert mentors. In most ways, the teacher maintains control over the curricula. It is the teacher’s role to establish methods that balance students’ musicianship with musical challenge. Clearly all of the curricular decisions to be made in the classroom fall to the teacher.

To Elliott’s credit, he does acknowledge the role of peer mentorship and student interaction with the day-to-day implementation of the music practicum. Likewise, he suggests that through the course of study, the role of the teacher/mentor should diminish as students grow in their ability to make music within the context of differing musical communities. Again, this represents another unfinished conversation. Elliott has opened the door to the sharing of power among the members of the classroom, but, as this idea is only mentioned and not fully developed, he has not shifted significantly from traditional curriculum design. The teacher maintains the power and control over what is to be taught and how it is implemented.

Such a system, based upon social induction with little critical awareness, creates an environment that is ripe for social hegemony. Certainly, Elliott speaks clearly to the need for the study of many types and styles of music. In doing so, he makes a strong case for multicultural music. Without critical reflection-on-action, though, by both the teacher and students, how can a teacher be assured that he or she is not unconsciously replacing

\[^{275}\text{Ibid., 287.}\]
one set of biases with another? As we have seen over the past two decades, the multicultural movement is not, in and of itself, any less hegemonic and any more liberating than traditional education. Multiculturalism in many settings has become an excuse to study the music of a small number of cultures in ways that bring about little but surface explorations.

Without the acknowledgement of the perspective of the localized reference system as a starting point for interaction with other musical cultures, students have little to guide their explorations or make sense of these experiences. However, when students are critically aware of their perspectives and biases and their local perspectives are acknowledged, they can enter into such experiences in ways that create the space for critical conversations. In knowing who they are and understanding the ways that they are unique, students have much more of an opportunity to build community in connection with worlds outside of their own. As Freire suggests, such conversations come from mutual respect for all of those involved and from an equality among those interacting. Without a critical consciousness of how learners are positioned in their own world, conversations and explorations into other worlds often become shallow and empty.
CHAPTER VII

WAYNE BOWMAN: ESSENTIALISM, RELATIVISM, AND MUSIC EDUCATION

Music education philosophers, such as Elliott and Reimer, not only have examined their praxial and aesthetic perspectives conceptually but they also each have taken great pains to prescribe ways of bringing their philosophical ideas into practice within the classroom. As such, their writings have been viewed as *philosophies of* music education. To this end, Reimer, in particular, spends a great deal of time discussing the need for a philosophy of music education as a means for guiding the practice of music teaching, understanding the value of music and musical teaching, and justifying the importance of music teaching and learning.\(^{276}\)

Bowman, in his writings, takes a different approach to philosophical inquiry. In his article “Philosophy, Criticism, and Music Education: Some Tentative Steps Down a Less-Traveled Road,” Bowman suggests that “music education does not need a philosophy nearly as much as it needs to become more philosophical: to approach music and teaching and research (indeed, everything we do) more philosophically.”\(^{277}\) He calls for the development of “philosophical habits of mind” in music education or for the process of critically examining the assumptions on which belief and practice are based.\(^{278}\) He is not interested in finding distinct and irrefutable answers. His quest is to unearth the assumptions on which music education is founded and to examine critically such

---


\(^{277}\) Wayne Bowman, “Philosophy, Criticism, and Music Education: Some Tentative Steps Down a Less-
assumptions in order to expose inconsistencies in logic, challenge unexamined beliefs, and consider alternative possibilities in light of time-honored traditions and canons.²⁷⁹

As such, Bowman’s work is not practical in the sense that he makes application of philosophical principles to the classroom. Such is not his purpose. His concern is to engage in the examination of assumptions in hopes of achieving perspective and understanding. That such understanding eventually informs practice is beyond the scope of his pursuit.

Much of the philosophical writing examined in Chapters V and VI is grounded, to some extent, in the instructional practice of music teaching/learning. Likewise, this dissertation is grounded in the development of hermeneutic understanding that stems directly from my own practice. As a result, the choice to include Bowman’s work could be questioned. However, to exclude his work would limit the scope of this inquiry. While Bowman does not place his discussion within the context of the instructional practice in the classroom, the critical examinations that he makes of assumptions on which the profession has based practice are crucial to the discussion forwarded here.

There are two concepts about which Bowman writes that are central to this examination. They are his writing about the ethical nature of the construction of self as a result of musical interaction and the relative nature of music and music education. In his article, “Educating Musically,” he speaks directly to the concept of self-construction

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 3.
through music education. In his article, “Universals, Relativism, and Music Education,” Bowman constructs a relativistic foundation for music education. I will explain later in the chapter how a relative foundation for music education directly supports my construct of the localized reference system. Likewise, as the local reference system is intimately woven within the constructs of self and power, Bowman’s relativistic ideas indirectly speak to these two constructs as well.

I will adopt a somewhat different format for analyzing the work of Bowman since the constructs which I am seeking to examine are not couched within a philosophy of music education, but rather in philosophizing about music education. This different format also is needed because he does not directly address the three constructs of this study, with the exception of self. Therefore, I will examine his theoretical concepts in the context of his own arguments: first, his conception of self and; and second, his relativistic world-view. I will relate these concepts of self and relativism to the three constructs of this study (the construction of self through self-knowledge, the localized reference system, and the issue of power), in my critical analysis that follows.

Reviewing the Theoretical Writings of Bowman

*The Concept of Self*

Bowman, in his article, “Educating Musically,” begins by suggesting that music itself may not be the best starting point for music education curriculum for three reasons. The nature of music may not be enough in and of itself to justify that everyone should be taught or asked to learn music. He states that curricular choices and priorities most often

---

279 Ibid., 4.
are based on foundations that are beyond the purview of the nature of music.\textsuperscript{280} Second, he suggests that because the value of music is pluralistic in nature and leads to many varied ways of instruction, musical value does not lend itself well to justifying music education.\textsuperscript{281} Finally, he states that no matter how much we value music, it is not essential to life; consequently, its inclusion in curricula is not highly valued by the larger society.\textsuperscript{282}

It has been argued, he explains, that music is valued as a part of most human societies and offers unique opportunities to understand both human nature and human purpose.\textsuperscript{283} Likewise, it has been argued that music is crucial to a life well lived. While he does not deny these claims, he argues that such benefits of music do not necessarily follow when music is studied or learned. Such values and claims are contingent upon the situation in which music teaching and learning transpire. He concludes that while the value of music is crucial and necessary to music education, it simply is not sufficient in and of itself to justify music education in the curricula of public schools.\textsuperscript{284}

This conclusion leads Bowman to question how music education would change if the profession focused less on the musical aspect and more on the educational aspect of music education. In other words, how can students be educated through music rather than only taught about music. This leads him to question the nature of education.

\textsuperscript{281} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.,
He states:

I begin by exploring what the educational commitment implicit in the phrase music education entails: what, beyond the effective delivery of instruction or the transmission of sophisticated skills and knowledge, the word “educate” implies. Among my conclusions is that education is distinctively ethical in character, concerned ultimately with the development of character and identity.285

In examining his question, Bowman first suggests that music education’s clear bias has been toward music and not toward the educative part of the term music education. In leaning toward music, we have opted to teach about music and how to make music (technique) while often overlooking the key role that interaction with music can bring to the ethical and moral personhood of the learner. He suggests that education cannot be measured in skill or the amount of knowledge a person has acquired as much as it is “about what a person knows or can do as the kind of person one has become as a result of those knowings and doings, the attitudes and dispositions that orient and motivate an individual.”286 As such, education, unlike musical instruction, has no clear-cut or measurable goals. It is about helping learners to create ways of approaching life and approaching other learners who are also in the same process much more than it is about the musical content taught in a lesson. In short, education is concerned with how learner’s can construct self as a result of interacting with music and interacting with others in musical communities.287

To help explain how the self is constructed through education, he uses terms appropriated from Aristotle. For Aristotle, there were two kinds of knowing: episteme,
which was a theoretical kind of knowing concerned with timeless universal themes, and a
more practical kind of knowledge for which Aristotle coined two terms, techne and
praxis. Bowman defines techne as “the technical know-how exemplified by the making-
actions of the skilled craftsman” which he relates to the kind of knowledge acquired in
training.\textsuperscript{288} He defines praxis as “the experiential resourcefulness (or wisdom, perhaps) by
which people navigate the social/political world,” which he relates to knowledge as it is
constructed through education.\textsuperscript{289} As for techne, Bowman suggests that such knowledge
comes in the form of method, a kind of knowing that can be detached from the learner
and taught to others (i.e. the skill or technique used in playing a musical instrument
which can be taught by one person to another). Praxis, on the other hand, “is grounded in
and takes its guidance from \textit{phronesis}, an \textit{ethic} concerned with \textit{right action} in the
variable and unpredictable realm of human interactions.”\textsuperscript{290} As such, the kind of
knowledge constructed by the learner through praxis is contingent upon the context of the
interactions and the environment in which the learner finds herself or himself. This kind
of knowing is characterized by the construction of identity or self by the learner as he or
she learns to live in and make sense of the world, in this case, through interacting with
music and other musical learners. As such, this kind of knowing or of becoming is not
measurable, and it is highly contingent upon context.\textsuperscript{291}

\textsuperscript{286} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid., 66-67.
\textsuperscript{288} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 69.
The concept of phronesis is central to Bowman’s definition of praxis. In order to understand phronesis as an ethical idea, it is important that we understand how Bowman describes ethical knowing. Calling on the work of Geraldine Finn, Bowman makes clear that what is often construed as ethical is not truly ethical at all.\textsuperscript{292} Bowman suggests that often when a learner confronts something new in experience, be it a person, idea, or situation, he or she often tries to accommodate the novel experience into the meaning schemes he or she already has in place. As such, the experience is relegated in technical terms to already existing schema. The learner does not ponder what is novel about the experience as much as how similar this new experience is to what he or she already knows. Likewise, the learner may attempt to make the new idea meet the status quo by attempting to fit the idea within existing standards and rules without considering how the idea might revolutionize such rules. This is not what Bowman considers ethical.

Bowman suggests that an ethical experience is one that is transformational. When the learner meets a novel experience in the world, instead of understanding that experience in terms of what he or she already knows, the learner sees “the other”\textsuperscript{293} as a concrete and distinct entity, a new idea or person with very specific traits which may or may not share commonalities with the learner. In viewing the other in such a concrete way with an intersubjective space between them, the learner must then decide whether or not he or she wishes to develop a relationship with the other. In choosing to develop a relationship with the new idea, the learner commits to put at risk all that he or she is; the

\textsuperscript{291} Ibid., 69-70.  
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 68.
learner is vulnerable to changes in self as a result of interacting with the other in their in-between space. In short, the interaction of the learner with the other may bring about a transformation or a revolution in the way life is presently understood by both.\textsuperscript{294} He describes the ethical encounter in the following quote:

\begin{quote}
My concern is to emphasize the liberative and transformational potentials of the ethical mode of being. Ethical presence-to-the-other makes profound demands on its agents. It requires that they accept and embrace personal responsibility for constructing their relationship to the other, and, concomitantly, that they be willing to yield something of themselves as formerly constituted.\textsuperscript{295}
\end{quote}

Praxis, as an act of phronesis, demands that the learner is completely involved, very aware of the situation, and willing to make changes in self as the interaction between self and other unfolds.\textsuperscript{296} For the learner, praxis is the ability to become comfortable with ambiguity and change. It is characteristic of a learner who is able and willing to look at the other as an opposing idea and, in doing so, meet the other on an intersubjective level in the in-between space in an attempt to understand how two differing ideas can interact. Praxis as phronesis is concerned with a person who is not willing to allow the status quo or the politics of the situation regulate the possibilities that may emerge in interaction. Praxis as phronesis is concerned with how the self guides the learner through a very complex and ever-changing world. Praxis, like techne, is not something that can be learned from another. It is constructed out of and intertwined with the very core of who a

\textsuperscript{293} Bowman appropriates the term “the other” to signify the novel experience or person met by the learner. Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{294} Ibid., 68-69.
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{296} Ibid., 70.
person is—with identity. Praxis as phronesis is always experienced in action within the world; it is embodied. He explains:

One does not so much deploy phronesis as enact it. Nor is the identity or character to which it is so inextricably linked abstract and disembodied. This ethical mode of being present to otherness does not take its guidance from some detached intellectual regulator mechanism but from one’s entire being. One’s corporeality or embodiment is thus a profoundly important dimension of phronesis. One’s sense of how best to make one’s way in unfamiliar situations is mediated by the body, and not casually. As one feels one’s way forward, the sense that finds one lead or possibility compelling, and another barren, is deeply rooted in the body.  

In short, praxis as phronesis is the kind of personal and committed knowing that describes self as an on-going and reflective construction of meaning-making out of experience. It is not, as techne is, a factual body-of-knowledge about something or a method for developing a skill.

As Bowman equates education with praxis, his defining of the term brings him back to his question about education. He asks essentially, what is an educated person? He begins his answer by suggesting that an educated person is one who is able to be flexible, rational, thoughtful, and willing to go beyond the obvious or stereotypical. He or she is able to look beyond the clarity of logic in order to understand that knowledge may not always conform. He suggests that an educated person has the ability to create or improvise in the midst of what seems like the chaos of the moment. An educated person is quite cognizant of the intimate connection between the knower and what is known and understands that all knowledge is fluid, on-going, and intersubjective. An educated
person is aware that knowledge is created in action over time; no one can know at the outset what will transpire in interaction.

It is through each of these traits that Bowman defines the goals of education in comparison with training, and he suggests that praxis as phronesis has many new implications for both curricula and practice. In other words, he is suggesting that to educate is to help the learner intimately know the self, the positionality of self in the world, and the fluid and on-goingness of constructing knowledge of self through action/interaction. However, it is important to note that he does not try to relegate all music learning to the concept of education only. He suggests that we need not abandon training or technical rationality as these both have their place in music learning as well as education.

Bowman concludes by examining how well music is suited to such educative aims. First, he states that engaging in music is an ethical encounter in which the self is in the process of becoming with no definite or predictable outcome. Music engages, creates the need for great commitment and does not become something we have done as much as it becomes a part of who we are. Second, music is both action-oriented and experiential, helping the learner to become comfortable with ambiguity and change. It is expressly social which makes cooperative, intersubjective meaning crucial to its experience. Finally, the ritualistic and repetitive nature of music helps to form character, both of the individual and the group involved.

297 Ibid., 71.
298 Ibid.
He states:

Music plays a fundamental role in the social production and regulation of identity. If music is an important part of the machinery by which people’s individual and collective identities are constructed, reconstructed, maintained, and regulated, music education becomes something dramatically more momentous and problematic than an act of overseeing the development of musical skills, musicianship, or “aesthetic sensibilities.” The view on which this claim is based is performative, one that sees identities not as natural facts, but cultural performance. However, “performances” must be understood here not as pretences, but as actions that actually generate what they enact: “doings” that constitute states of “being.”

So, for Bowman, self is constructed and enhanced through the interaction of the learner with music and others in the musical environment. While musical skill is part of music education, what he suggests is that, as a profession, we have chosen not to involve ourselves with the riskier and messier process of education. Instead, we have chosen to concern ourselves with the objective and orderly process of teaching skill. In doing so, he suggests that we have missed one of the main reasons music learning is important; it is about the process of becoming human. In learning music, students have the opportunity to construct self and self-knowledge through their interactions in the world and with others pursuing the same goals.

Relativism and Music Education

Bowman suggests that music intrinsically consists of sound-making events that emerge from specific human practices and interactions. Such musical/social constructions are as varied and pluralistic as the social contexts from which they emerge.

---

299 Ibid., 75-76.  
He states, “I would like to advance that musical value is always value for some end or purpose, that it can only be gauged relative to that end or purpose, and further, that such ends or purposes are both multiple and ever changing. What is intrinsic or extrinsic to a given music is always relative to the field of human action in which it is embedded. Musical meaning cannot be culturally transcendent because music is culture.”

This social/cultural constructive view of music is in direct opposition to the ideas of essentialism or absolutism which holds that music has an inherent essence and value and thus, music education exists to help students understand and experience these musical constructs in one universal manner. For Bowman, there exists no internal essence or value of music; such value exists only in the meanings that are made within the context of the people engaged in making the music. He suggests that the universal ideas that music philosophies, such as aesthetic education, have taught are, in reality, culture-specific.

This view of music follows the philosophical perspective of relativism. The value of music, for Bowman, lies in the meanings given to music by specific musicians relative to their specific situations and within the context of their values, beliefs, and goals. Such relative meanings are not, however, whatever the group arbitrarily wants them to be. These musical meanings are, Bowman explains, “deeply embedded in

---

in Music Education No. 135 (Winter, 1998) 1-20, 3.
301 Ibid.
302 Ibid., 2-3.
303 Ibid., 3-4.
304 Ibid., 4-7.
learned patterns of human action and response, where they are always being contested, resisted, and reconstructed."305

The type of relativism that Bowman suggests is not, as he states, “an inversion of essentialism.306 In other words, Bowman is not trying to make a case for the absolute acceptance of relativism as much as he is interested in resisting the notion that all musical meaning is absolute—or can be viewed as universal and indefensible. It is the rejection of the ideas of absolutism that is at the heart of Bowman’s writing. He suggests that an absolutist viewpoint tends:

to portray difference as inferiority [which] blinds us to crucially important realms of musical meaning and value—the social, historical, political, spiritual, and corporeal among them. By insisting that all worthwhile music and instructional practice be one way, essentialism stigmatizes differences and marginalizes whole ranges of valid musical (and music education) practice.307

Bowman suggests that the philosophical literature in music education has been and continues to be based upon the concepts of absolutism, universality, and conformity.308 That such a perspective remains in our philosophical literature represents, for Bowman, a major hurdle for music education philosophy. This leads him to his stated purpose of exploring what it could mean for music education “were we to acknowledge the multiplicity of musical natures and values, and to attempt to make that multiplicity a constitutive feature of its professional identity.”309

305 Ibid., 6.
306 Ibid., 5.
307 Ibid., 4.
308 Ibid., 4.
309 Ibid., 2.
The relativistic perspective that Bowman describes as “serious” is neither “anything goes” nor nihilistic in nature, two criticisms that are often made of relativism.\(^\text{310}\) What he is ultimately arguing for is a perspective that will allow music education to embrace the validity of the many ways in which music is made, taught, and learned within the many different educational and musical contexts that exist. He states:

Musics and instructional practices are human behaviors embedded in social contexts and instructional practices. Their natures and values are plural, malleable, unstable, and ever changing. So to “Why music education?” I am inclined to respond that there are many potential answers, each with its own claim to some degree of local validity, and none that can claim to obtain for all times and places and circumstances. We may well have been right to insist that music education philosophy follow from the nature and value of music. But, to reiterate the central point of this essay, we have been wrong to think that either of these is singular.\(^\text{311}\)

Bowman also explains that the many pluralities that exist in music education stem from the diverse experiences that we as teachers bring to the classroom and the differing ways in which these experiences help to shape our understanding of how we will proceed to teach and what we will choose to call music education. He states:

what my students and I get from what we do together may be very different from what you get from yours. In other words, our reasons for doing what we do and the ways we try to justify it are as different as the instructional activities in which we engage and the musics we teach. That is very different. Both ‘education’ and ‘music’ are open concepts with multiple valid meanings that are relative to circumstance and subject to change. Music education names a set of diverse and divergent practices that cannot really be accommodated by a single unified theory or supported by one grand foundational premise.\(^\text{312}\)

\(^{310}\) Ibid., 5.
\(^{311}\) Ibid., 15.
\(^{312}\) Ibid., 13-14.
Throughout his paper, Bowman quite eloquently defends relativism in light of critics who argue that such a relative perspective does not allow for a standard by which we can base musical learning, relegates music learning to indoctrination of subjective whims of the teacher, and by its very nature of separateness, creates an incommensurate playing field of music teaching for which there can be no common goal. He takes great care to show how each of these misconceptions about relativism can be dispelled and how music education can achieve a plurality of co-existing worlds without losing a sense of solidarity. \(^{313}\)

A Critical Examination of Bowman’s Theoretical Writing

*Relativism, Praxis, and Self*

Bowman’s articulation of the construction of self through praxis as phronesis quite clearly articulates the differences between the deep kind of ethical and moral knowing that becomes the construction of self and the more surface knowing that comes with the ability to know “how” or know “what.” His praxis is the kind of knowing that hooks speaks of when she talks about the transformative knowledge she constructed in her all-black school verses the content-knowledge she was asked to acquire in her white school. It is the type of life-changing knowing for Freire that emerges as a result of the interaction of dialogue between two equal and respectful people in comparison with the banking concept of learning. It is grounded in the deep awareness of self, other, and the spaces in between that Greene calls wide awareness.

\(^{313}\) Ibid., 6-14. For a full description of Bowman’s defense of relativism, see 6-14.
For Bowman, music learning is techne and much more. Music learning is about personal transformation as a result of interaction that happens in an environment in which learners are free to enter from their own life situations, interact and relate intersubjectively, and continue the process of becoming aware of self as it constructs and is constructed. In short, Bowman suggests that musical interaction is musical but at the same time social, political, ethical, moral, metaphysical, existential, and ontological. Its power rests in the humans who daily become more human in the musical process. It is not a natural phenomenon that is there to be discovered as much as it is a human relationship that is forged through interaction. Growth is a goal unto itself. For Bowman, the purpose of music education, conceived of in terms of the nature and value of education, is self-growth, or to use his term, self-creation. These ideas, all part of praxis as phronesis, are messy, unsure, unsettling, and unpredictable. As such, music educators often have chosen not to embrace them except in those rare moments when they erupt unannounced in the classroom and become crystal clear to all involved.

Bowman’s clear articulation of praxis as phronesis and the distinction he makes between praxis and techne provide a skeleton to which my narratives add flesh. The conception of the construction of self through the ethical process of musical and human interaction supports the conversation begun in Chapter II and offers a clearer and more succinct direction with which to continue my conversation in the remainder of this study.

Finally, such a process, such knowing, is highly contextual, both socially and individually. The concept of context and of the localized reference system is crucial to
the construction of self. It is now to Bowman’s conception of relativity and my construct
of the localized reference system that I turn.

*The Localized Reference System*

Bowman argues that music consists of sound events that emerge from specific
human practices and interactions. As such, the value of any one of these music events is
relative only to the extent that the music event is valued by the people involved within the
community from and for which the music is made. Such a perspective suggests that
value is not and cannot be a universal or an absolute idea and, more importantly, that
value cannot reside within the music, as the aesthetic movement claims. The value of
music is a humanly constructed and humanly mediated concept and can have no universal
or divined truth claim that transcends all cultures. Any resulting truth or value comes
from the people within the community in which the music is made and is, at best, an
intersubjective agreement among them to accept such value as truth.314 He states, “The
idea of immutability can be replaced with historicity; timeless truths with flexible webs
of negotiated belief; objectivity with intersubjective agreement—and not just with
adverse consequences but with distinctly positive outcomes.”315

The same can be extended to each learning environment. Each classroom also can
be seen as a socially constructed set of human interactions relative to the goals and aims
of the social group in which the music is made. Acknowledging such, opens the
possibility for viewing each classroom as a distinct musical reference system. This local

315 Ibid.
and relative perspective toward music teaching and learning allows freedom for both teacher and student to place their musical interactions within their personal domains of experience and to make meaning of these musical experiences relative to their individual and group perspectives.

The idea that music learning events are relative to their own context is a major departure from the way that music education has evolved over time in this country. Certainly, such an idea is different than the aesthetic education movement that is based upon the premise that musical value is inherent within the aesthetic principles from which the music is made, principles that transcend all styles and types of music. Musical study thus becomes the process of students gaining an understanding of life’s truths by interacting with music in order to understand what the piece has to teach. The assumption upon which aesthetic theory is based suggests that there is one absolute truth that transcends all people everywhere. In order to come to an understanding of such truth, or feeling as the aesthetic movement calls it, a student must engage in music with the goal of having an aesthetic experience. If any other musical value exists, it falls well beyond the boundaries of music study in the classroom.

Elliott’s praxial theory embraces a much more relativistic foundation. For him, music is a social/cultural event that evolves from and is understood by the community of musicians making the music. In this way, he also suggests that musical value is a human social construction and that value or truth claims are relative to each musical community. However, even he cannot make the full shift to relativity. He goes on to suggest that there are five ways that musicians make and understand music which are universal and
transcend each musical culture. Likewise, he fails to fully acknowledge the classroom as a valid musical culture by his suggestion that students are apprentices to be socialized to the many differing musical cultures within the world. He walks down the road of relativism, but simply cannot break away from the modern idea of essentialism.

In embracing relativism, Bowman does not accept a nihilistic interpretation that suggests if everything exists, then nothing exists. Nor does he suggest that music instruction be devoid of standards for practice. At first glance this appears to be impossible; if there is no absolute musical value, then anything can count as music instruction. There is no standard by which we can gauge if musical learning is happening. How can music education accept relativism and still maintain a standard for learning? He explains:

The demise of absolutes does not make anyone’s musical value claims as good as anyone else’s. We can continue to admire and honor “our” musics and mount compelling arguments in defense of our musical values without claiming at the same time that they are ultimate—that they embody standards by which the worth of every music everywhere must be gauged. It is one thing to concede that there may be no truly neutral ground for adjudicating competing claims, but obviously quite another to say there is no ground at all. That something does not obtain for everyone everywhere does not mean it obtains for no one, nowhere. And “many” does not mean “any.” Meanings such as “reality” or “musicality” are intersubjectively validated social constructions and are therefore always inescapably “relative.” But not in the silly, irresponsible sense that they are just arbitrary choices, there for the choosing and whatever anyone wants them to be. For they remain deeply embedded in learned patterns of human action and response, where they are always being contested, resisted, and reconstructed.

I suggest that while music classrooms are autonomous and valid musical communities in and of themselves, each classroom is equally embedded in a web of

\[\text{(316) Ibid., 6.}\]
relationships to other musical communities. An agreed upon set of musical standards can be a musical value held by the community known as American music education, and, as all music education classrooms in America are part of this larger community, the values of the larger community can and may be assumed at varying levels and with varying value within each sub-community. Moreover, as Bowman suggests above, many of these values will probably be included in the local classroom because they exist in the lived experience of both the teacher and students as “learned patterns of human action and response” relative to the many musical worlds that the teacher and students have been a part of outside the classroom. The idea of relativism, however, would suggest that these standards are not absolutes and that they can be negotiated and redefined within each local reference group as it is relative to their needs and values. They also can be negotiated and refined at the national level, as well. He states:

Professional solidarity requires neither uniformity nor unanimity. Crucial through it is, solidarity can be forged amidst diversity and difference. The case for music education is not compromised but strengthened by its capacity to be many things and serve many ends. Diversity and differences are not signs of professional weakness but sources of vitality and resilience. Music and music education are intricate webs of dynamic beliefs and practices. Unlike monoliths, webs are causal, temporary affairs whose power comes of their portability and flexibility. They require routine maintenance, of course, but there is good in that, too.

Bowman’s explanation of relativity in the context of music and music education supports the construct of the localized reference system defined in this study. Such a shift in world-view opens many possibilities for the ways in which music is mediated and

---

318 Ibid., 15-16.
understood within each classroom. While an outsider visiting several music classrooms might suggest that the types of experiences happening within each classroom seem quite similar, the meaning that is made by students and teacher is relative to the context of each classroom and very personal to the individuals within it. At the same time, the values of the larger communities in which the classroom is embedded also interact with the localized reference system of students and teacher. The highly dynamic interaction of the individual worlds of the students, the individual world of the teacher, the music being studied, the social groups that make up the classroom, and the many interconnections of the local groups within larger and larger social groups make for a never ending foray of problems to be discovered, problems to be solved, and meanings to be made by each and all, simultaneously. This same dynamic interaction also suggests that each musical context or classroom as well as the larger community of American music education is an ever-changing and on-going open system.

Relativism and Power

If every musical community is relative to its context, and the music classroom is considered a musical community, then it logically follows that every music classroom could be considered an autonomous community in and of itself and that every member within the community a musician. This changes the role of teacher/students from master/apprentices to experienced learner/less experienced learners (or, in Bowman’s terms, more/less educated) and acknowledges that, while the young musicians may be less experienced learners, they are as valid as any learner in any other musical setting.
making music and understanding it in the context of their community and lived experience.

Such a premise supports the idea that a change in the power structure of the classroom shifts from one that is teacher-controlled to one in which both teacher and students share power as they interact in the context of their musical community. Certainly, the acceptance of such a premise does not guarantee a shift in power. It is quite possible that this premise could be accepted with the teacher taking control and continuing to make most, if not all, of the musical decisions. A shift from seeing students less as apprentices and more as learner/musicians working in an autonomous musical community shifts the idea that students must somehow be molded into musicians, as if the classroom were a factory and students its commodity. The idea of community suggests a sense of sharing among the members as ideas are negotiated, debated, and embraced.

Likewise, such a shift in world-view not only changes the political structure of the classroom, it also puts both student and teacher in an active role of constructing self through the ethical interaction of each with other. Such a role is predicated on rethinking the absolutist and essentialist’s assumptions on which music learning has been based in the past—assumptions that tend to squelch such ethical interactions rather than foster them. This calls for the kind of critical awareness that Freire, Giroux, and other critical pedagogues suggest. Bowman writes of something quite similar in discussing the need for change in the ethnocentric qualities that have developed over time in musical communities.
He states:

The challenge, then, is to build awareness and tolerance for differences into acculturation—to build openness to difference and otherness into the values and points of view that we privilege. An important step in this effort is to learn to cherish and celebrate musical bests without recourse to a persistent “human nature” or “musical nature.” This means learning to maintain our sense of solidarity politically, without resort to metaphysical musings, essentialist enterprises, [or] knock-them-dead musical absolutes. But the idea is not just to get rid of our infatuation with objectivity, it is to replace it with intersubjectivity; not just to renounce the idea of getting things absolutely right, but to replace it with the idea of getting things right relationally, relative to the norms that are anchored in nothing more or less substantial than flexible webs of belief, value, and practices.319

In this sense, a shift toward a relativistic understanding of the classroom increases the need for critical awareness in order to recognize indoctrination over interaction. It is this same type of critical awareness that helps each person construct meaning within the context of her or his place in the world. Such a rethinking of the embedded social control, hegemonic relationships, and hidden agendas of teachers within the practice of music teaching, could be emancipating for both students and teacher alike.

319 Ibid, 11.
CHAPTER VIII

ESTELLE JORGENSEN: SEARCHING FOR AND TRANSFORMING MUSIC EDUCATION

Reviewing the Work of Jorgensen

In her book, *In Search of Music Education*, Jorgensen examines many of the philosophical questions inherent in music education theory and practice but does not offer explicit answers to such questions or create a *philosophy of* music education. Rather, Jorgensen articulates the questions of music education as a set of dialectic situations that are embedded in the tensions among what seem to be the irreconcilable concepts of music, education, and music education. She proposes that by articulating these various tensions that arise within music education, and by engaging in dialogue in and among them, we continue the open-ended process of defining that which we call music education. Within this process, she suggests that music educators must come to love these questions as much as they seek their answers. She states:

Such a broad view [of music education] requires reshaping the music education profession. It necessitates preparing music teachers to make decisions as professionals rather than technicians, equipping them to cultivate a wide understanding of the meaning of education and the role of music as a cultural phenomenon and handle the dialectics they face in their classrooms, studios, and all the other places they teach. It means enabling music education researchers to undertake a wide range of philosophical and scientific studies and validating descriptive as well as analytical investigations. It requires rethinking the role of music education in conserving and reshaping aspects of music and education and providing a clear vision for the future. It suggests seeing the possibilities for music education inherent in the context of several institutions—the family,

321 Ibid., xiii.
322 Ibid., x.
church, school, business, and music profession, among others—as a life-long rather than school-age pursuit. It requires courage to act in variance with institutional pressures to preserve the status quo if need be. And it demands moving beyond the uncritical acceptance of the ideas and methods of others and becoming critically and personally engaged in asking questions and finding the right instructional approaches for the particular situations educators face.  

Her most recent book, *Transforming Music Education*, begins by philosophically examining the need for a transformation of both education and music education. Having established such a need, she then examines what is meant by the term transformation. This leads her to a critical and reasoned examination of what transformation can mean in both the contexts of education and music education, respectively. Finally, she envisions how such a transformation in music education might occur and what it might look like in practical terms. Her vision, based upon a dialectical, dialogical, and critical process, sees music education as inclusive of all people (be they men or women), as empowering the individual while nourishing community, as forging change and cherishing tradition, and as creating better people as well as better musicians. Her vision seeks to liberate both students and teachers from the limitations of standardization, the status quo, and institutional demand by allowing both to engage in critical dialogue and passionate music-making within their specific places of work. Her vision is open-ended and based upon emergent change. Most importantly, she envisions

---

Ibid., 92.
music education in ways that bring dignity and honor to the human beings who practice it. She explains:

Within the context of commitment to such ideals as justice, equality, mutuality, and fidelity, transforming music education addresses each of the systemic and dehumanizing flaws in music and education. All of its facets are infused by a broad and dialectical vision that calls for reshaping the institution of music education as well as the individual experience of its members. A paradigmatic shift toward transforming music education can be realized, practically, in many different ways. Its dialectical nature is not mandated for all. Rather, as I have pointed out, each of these dialectics may be difficult to reconcile, and a variety of possibilities emerge.325

Jorgensen does not define self, localized reference system, or power as constructs as I have in this study. Yet, in the context of her writings, she speaks to each in direct and meaningful ways. In order to understand these concepts as she articulates them, I will have to ferret out of her writing the ways in which she speaks indirectly about each.

Before beginning such an examination, there are three philosophical methods of thinking that she does define directly and use consistently throughout her work. Although these philosophical methods are not directly related to the constructs under consideration in this chapter, they are essential ways of engaging in philosophical thought that support the development of such constructs. These methods include dialectic thought, dialogic thought, and critical examination. After examining how she defines each of these philosophical ways of thinking, an exploration of how she indirectly treats the notions of self, localized reference system, and power will follow.

325 Ibid., 143.
Jorgensen’s Philosophical Ways of Thinking

First, Jorgensen defines dialectic thought as a way of holding into consideration all of the competing theoretical positions about a subject at once. In such thinking, Jorgensen seeks to articulate the polar opposite positions and tensions among positions that exist in relation to the subject being studied in order to define the positions and, more importantly, the resulting space that exists between and among them. By establishing this space, the philosopher is able to examine, dialogue with, and envision a multitude of possibilities for how such tensions can commingle.

Jorgensen makes it clear that dialectic thought is not a synthesis, nor is it an attempt to develop false dichotomies; it is not a this-becomes-that or this-against-that situation. She describes dialectical thought as a “this-with-that” relationship that she explains through the metaphor of the way actors or dancers interact on stage. At one moment, one actor takes focus and then another. At one moment, the dancers may begin to physically interact while at another moment they may completely ignore one another. In this way, dialectic thought is open-ended, in that there exist infinite numbers of ways competing theories can commingle and present possible solutions. It is also contextual, in that the ways competing tensions inter-relate depend upon the context in which they are being examined. She suggests that competing tensions are often irreconcilable. Dialectic thought also can be practically employed within the world of the classroom.

She explains:

It is important to recognize that this dialectical approach constitutes a process whereby teachers and their students explore their alternatives and the possibility of the ground between them before prematurely foreclosing either option. It provides a systematic way of analyzing alternatives and focuses as much on the process of philosophical reflection as on its practical outcomes. Given the freedom to act in this manner, teachers and their students likely will arrive at differing solutions that fit their particular perceptions of their times and places.\textsuperscript{328}

Second, Jorgensen defines dialogic thought as a way of thinking about how these competing tensions might commingle; she likens this process to a dialogue.\textsuperscript{329} Here she describes dialogic thought as it might be manifested within the phenomenal world:

Each participant approaches the exchange as a learner seeking to understand the other’s perspective and to better know one’s own. The points of view each embrace may be similar or different, yet each converses in humility, as a fellow learner respectful of the other’s views. . . . Partners in the dialogue recognize the inherent flaws in their own and the other’s perspective and practices, but see the other beyond these flaws with empathy, open-mindedness, open-heartedness, and generosity of spirit. Each values the other because she or he also seeks to know wisdom. One need not necessarily agree with or accept the other’s position, but may seek to persuade the other of the value of one’s own views and practices. . . . the partners in dialogue need to accept the fallibility of their views, possess the humility, integrity, and willingness to change their perspective and practices if necessary, respect differences where they cannot be resolved, and grant the other the freedom to disagree if agreement cannot be reached.\textsuperscript{330}

To this end, she suggests that the process of dialogue offers the philosopher and the music education professional a way in which to engage practically in dialectical thought while working through the seemingly disparate concepts of theory and practice.

\textsuperscript{327} Jorgensen, “A Dialectical View of Theory and Practice,” 343.
\textsuperscript{328} Jorgensen, \textit{Transforming Music Education}, 17-18.
\textsuperscript{329} Jorgensen, “A Dialectical View of Theory and Practice,” 343-344.
Finally, Jorgensen engages in the process of critical reflection, in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, in order to elucidate “systemic problems that militate against the ends of freedom, civility, justice, humanity, and inclusivity.” Among the many issues about which she writes critically are issues of gender, power, world-view, tradition, and mind-set. She suggests that it is through critical reflection that such issues become clear and can lead toward the dialogic process that results in transformation.

Inherent in the dialectical, dialogical, and critical methods that Jorgensen employs is the notion that answers are as emergent and on-going as their attached questions. As such, she can offer few answers short of encouraging the on-going dialogue that she suggests. Her writing requires that readers assume the professional stance she describes and, through critical reflection and dialogue, work toward understanding of these music education situations within the context of their own work in the classroom.

*The Concept of Self*

In her book, *In Search of Music Education*, one of the assumptions that Jorgensen poses is that music education must be viewed in all of its contexts and not just in the context of primary and secondary schools, which she contends is how we have come to view it in the West. As such, her view of music education is a life-long process of interacting in many different musical environments with many different musical goals and pursuits. She states, “it is imperative that the movement from a child’s home through

---

330 Ibid., 349.
the various levels of schooling—elementary, secondary, and tertiary, and on to adult life—be thought of as one continuous process.”

Based upon this view, it is logical to conclude that individuals are in pursuit of musical knowing throughout their lives and, subsequently, self-knowing through performance and/or listening as they move in and about the many musical environments of their worlds (family, church, country, the music profession, and the music industry). How such musical knowledge develops she does not address directly, but, in reading her work, it is possible to conclude that such individual ways of knowing are the result of the many permutations of lived experience with music that comprise each person’s life. If this is so, then knowledge develops in as many ways as there are individuals.

In *Transforming Music Education*, Jorgensen speaks much more directly about the concept of constructed knowledge. She compares constructed knowledge with Freire’s concept of banking education and suggests that the construction of knowledge comes through actively forming and integrating new meaning in light of conceptions that have been developed throughout a person’s lived history. It is not the depositing of facts or information by a teacher into the student. Likewise, she suggests that the personal context with which a learner constructs new knowledge may not coincide with the manner in which subject matter has been designed by the teacher or by an existing teaching method or system. She states, “Viewing knowledge as personally and corporately constructed suggests that rather than converging on some underlying rational,

---

332 Ibid., 19-47.
333 Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*, ix-x.
universally shared structure, the opposite may be the case—namely, a tendency toward divergent perspectives, each of them partial understandings of a particular subject.”

This brings her to propose that curriculum and the teaching of it must enable students and teachers, as in Freire’s conception of conscientization, to be critically aware of the ways that education can thwart each individual’s dreams and aspirations and to fight against such oppressions. In order to wage such a fight, students and teachers must engage in dialogue with each other and with the subject matter to find ways that learning can emancipate and not restrict the individual construction of knowledge and ultimately, of self. She suggests that “education, in this view, is fundamentally about emancipating self and others and achieving a more humane society.” So, it is logical to conclude that she supports the idea that self is constructed from self-knowledge within the specific context of the individual’s lived history and the immediate social world in which he or she resides.

Next, also in the spirit of Freire, Jorgensen clearly suggests that individual freedom and the construction of self cannot happen without the help of others. This call for help, however, does not suggest that one person can liberate or mold another. Personal freedom and construction of self happen individually through reflection as each person works to understand the limitations of the environment. By working in connection with others, all are able to battle that which might oppress. It is first through

334 Ibid., 83.
335 Jorgensen, Transforming Music Education, 35-40.
336 Ibid., 36.
337 Ibid., 37.
338 Ibid.
dialogue with others that individuals become critically aware of the covert issues inherent within their environment. It is also through dialogue that groups of individuals work together to change that which constricts. So the construction of knowledge and of self is at once both individual and social.

Finally, she suggests that the construction of self through the construction of self-knowledge is intimately related to issues such as gender, sexual identity, sexism, and so on. She contends that the institution of school in which learners find themselves has traditionally been biased toward the ideas and conceptions of white, heterosexual men. As such, the resulting system tends to alienate and deny different ways of knowing and different ways of constructing self. Such alienation leads toward oppression. Again, she suggests that learners, critically aware of such biased assumptions, work together to change such oppression, and to construct a system through dialogue in which multiple voices are present and can be heard. She explains that:

finding or recovering women’s ways of knowing and doing can broaden the realms of knowing and being. The feminine voice is different, and the female perspective brings a richness to human experience that is ignored or silenced to the detriment of the entire human race. Recovering and articulating that perspective is a necessary first step in the process of accepting it into the mainstream of human thought and practice.

The interpretation of self that I believe is present in Jorgensen’s work is evident in five ways. (1) Music learning is an individual, life-long process of living in and between many different spheres of musical validity with many different methods of learning. As

---

339 Ibid., 20-25.
340 Ibid., 21.
such, a musical self is developed throughout a person’s musical experiences in the many and various musical groups in which he or she belongs. (2) The construction of self-knowledge, and ultimately self, happens individually in the context of a learner’s past experience and conceptualization. (3) The construction of self is constructed socially as individual learners act in union, through dialogue, to develop learning communities which are inclusive, humane, and emancipating. (4) There is no one universal theory or practice that can encompass all musical learning styles or individual ways of constructing knowledge. As such, students and teachers must constantly be aware of and willing to change those elements in the environment that hinder knowledge-construction. (5) Issues such as gender and sexual identity are intimately intertwined in both self-construction and knowledge-construction. Learners and teachers must develop learning environments that are inclusive, critically aware of bias, and empowering.

In these ways, I suggest that Jorgensen offers a view of self that is constructive, individualized, social, and contextual. Through experience, action, and reflection, learners are in the process of constructing self through the construction of knowledge, be it musical or otherwise. Likewise, learners must be vigilant to insure that the covert powers of oppression, when present within the learning environment, are confronted. Jorgensen’s view of self is one that is humane and empowering. It is also one that is transformative, ethical, and spiritual. She states:

I am in the company of those who believe that education should be humane. It ought to be directed toward such ideals as civility, justice, freedom, and inclusion of diverse people and perspectives. It ought to take a broad view of the world’s cultures and human knowledge and prepare the young to be informed and compassionate citizens of the world. It ought to address not only the material things but the aspirations and longings of the human spirit. And it ought to
provide learners with the skills and dispositions to participate in their governance actively and intelligently, and prompt and empower them to act toward the betterment of their world.\textsuperscript{341}

\textit{The Localized Reference System}

Jorgensen’s writing places music in both a local and a global context. By acknowledging the fact that music-making and learning exist on all levels, both at the professional level by the music industry and at the amateur level in the home, school, and church, she has given voice to the validity of every musical world, whether it be local, national, or international in scope. Also, by taking a more global view of music education rather than just those learning environments that exist in the public schools, she has given validity to the many ways that music-making and learning happen in a multitude of venues in all parts of society at varying age levels.

At the same time, she acknowledges that in each of these more global examples of music education, it is the manner in which each is constructed locally by the particular people involved within each cultural group that is at the heart of music education. In speaking specifically about the classroom, she explains that education is carried on ultimately by individuals or in groups by a particular teacher and student(s) in the context of the wider community.\textsuperscript{342} As such, teachers and students must be empowered to look critically at their own situation in order to develop meaningful and effective interactions that relate to their specific classroom situation. Likewise, she suggests that “Even where the community may agree on certain values, beliefs, and practices, their precise

\textsuperscript{341} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid., 63.
realization will and should differ from one individual or situation to another.” So, much of the local/global issue for Jorgensen becomes a dialectic; both are held in consideration at once. It is, however, at the local level that the inter-relationship of both are played out through the dialogue of teacher, students, and others within the cultural group. As such, no two musical settings construct themselves in quite the same way nor can one unilateral system of instruction be effective for all.

I suggest that Jorgensen’s view of each particular classroom, constructed out of the dialogue that exists among teacher and students, is inherently that of an open system constantly in the process of becoming. She explains that:

Dialogue can only be thought of as liberating where teacher and student focus on the questions at issue and where the answers are genuinely open-ended. In this sort of dialogue it is not so much the answers as the process of addressing the questions that is of crucial importance in instruction. Even where precise answers are necessarily agreed upon in specific circumstances, the teacher may frame them within the context of larger questions that challenge the received wisdom or the status quo.

Likewise, in speaking of curriculum, she states:

while it [curriculum] has often been interpreted as a closed system, curriculum design, as I see it, is in a constant state of ‘becoming.’ It is an open system or a dynamic process.

More importantly, I suggest that Jorgensen views the entire discipline of music education as an open system. Throughout her writing, she challenges the profession to employ a dialectical approach within our relationships that works to bring into

\[343\] Ibid., 24.
\[344\] Ibid., 36.
\[345\] Ibid., 39.
consideration all of the seemingly contradictory and disparate tensions that exist. She then asks us to construct our work together by engaging in the process of on-going dialogue that is respectful of diversity, inclusive in nature, and willing to accept that easy solutions are not probable. These dialectic and dialogic ways of interacting are inherently open-ended. She explains:

> Among the advantages of this dialectical approach are its open-endedness, interconnectedness, and situatedness, allowing for multiple solutions to educational problems. It is analogous to a hypertext, or an interconnecting system of branching networks from various nodes that make it possible for a person to choose where to enter the system, which texts to select, and in what order. 347

So, it is logical to conclude from Jorgensen’s writing that she views the classroom in both global and local terms, but she gives much attention to the actual construction of learning contexted within the specific and localized members of each classroom. This localized view is intimately interwoven into all of her discussions about and questions regarding the manner in which music education could and might proceed. At the same time, she views both the profession at large and the learning that transpires within each classroom as open-ended or open systems.

The Issue of Power

Jorgensen’s writing suggests that she sees the political system of the classroom as an equal and joint relationship between students and teacher (and, in the context of the school, between teacher and administrator). Her emphasis upon both constructed and feminine ways of knowing are predicated on the assumption that learning is an individual

pursuit in which the learner becomes intimately connected to that which is learned.\textsuperscript{348} As such, the teacher cannot dictate a body of factual knowledge to subservient students who are expected to consume and retain it. Students must construct their own knowledge within the personal and social context of the classroom. In order for this to transpire, students must have the freedom to interact with other students and the teacher in ways that are personally and communally valid for everyone present in the situation. To this end, the pedagogy that she recommends is liberating.\textsuperscript{349}

She speaks most directly to this concept of shared power in the context of administrators sharing power with teachers. She does, however, suggest that such leadership should be modeled for teachers by administrators in hopes that they will, in turn, model it for students. She explains in the following quotes:

Among the leadership qualities that promote imaginative, diverse, cooperative action are faith, courage, consensus building, listening, empowering those closest to where the decisions must be made, and ensuring accountability for personal and corporate action. . . leaders and [the] led [must be] willing to share the burden of forging collective policy and administering the organization and able to work out honestly and civilly agreed-upon processes for sharing power.\textsuperscript{350}

Seeing that educational transformation operates best through persuading rather than dictating to others, a humane approach to leadership suggests that leaders exemplify in their own work with teachers the same attitudes and values that they wish teachers, in turn, to model with their students, and that they act with, rather than on behalf of, other teachers to improve music instruction.\textsuperscript{351}

Likewise, the types of learning that happen within a feminist epistemology are based upon the same dialogic process for which Jorgensen argues throughout her writing.

\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{350} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., 133.
Much of learning stems from the dialogues that teacher and students have as they interact with each other and with music in the classroom. She describes this process by saying that:

A teacher opens dialogues or conversations with a student; cares for the student and the subject matter; reflects before, in the midst of, and after instruction; and forges an instructional process that delights in questions, resists foreclosing options, engages the many, sometime conflicting tensions that abound in education and music, and relates knowledge to the lived experience of teacher and student. Such approaches resist the prosaic ways and pat answers of the past and demand the best of teacher and student in transcending the status quo and forging better theory and practice in the future. A profound optimism tempered with realism, search for wisdom tempered with practicality, and respect for tradition tempered with ambition for change demands more, not less, of teachers and students in imaginative and critical thinking, music teaching and learning skills.  

Within Jorgensen’s conception of education, teaching and learning become a partnership between students and teacher that is based upon mutual respect, dialogue, and a shared vision for what can be experienced and what meaning can be extracted from experience.

The critical aspect of Jorgensen’s writing speaks directly to ideological social power as it is manifested in the classroom. Jorgensen develops a pedagogy in which both learners and teacher engage in critical reflection in order to expose covert ideological power structures that threaten their ability to construct knowledge or work within the classroom setting. She models such a critical process for the reader in her critiques of education with regard to gender, world-view, music, education, tradition, and mind-set. This process of critical reflection, challenging those aspects of tradition that limit rather empower, and the process of creating a transformation in music education are at the core

---

352 Ibid., 130.
of her work. She describes her transformation theory as she articulates it in her latest book as “a radical and critical pedagogy—one that is not satisfied with the status quo and seeks to realize ideals, even if imperfectly, in the phenomenal world.”

A Critical Examination of Jorgensen’s Work

Of the many considerations that Jorgensen offers the profession of music education in her writing, it is her articulation of the processes of dialectic, dialogic, and critical thought that I find to be most important. Not only are these ways of thinking helpful to her in considering the philosophical questions inherent within music education, they may prove to be equally helpful in practical terms to the profession at large as ways of engaging in teaching and learning among students and teachers, constructing the structure of schools among teachers and administrators, and developing the profession of music education at large among colleagues. Therefore, in examining Jorgensen’s work in the context of this study, these ways of thinking and acting become important considerations.

I will examine the process of dialogue in connection with self since this is where I find it to be most helpful, although it relates in many ways to each of the constructs of this study. Likewise, I will examine the process of critical reflection in relationship to power. Before I begin the examination of each construct, I will first consider Jorgensen’s dialectic process separately from the discussions of my constructs. The way in which Jorgensen articulates the dialectic process provides a core way of thinking that makes

354 See Transforming Music Education, 29-47.
355 Ibid., 20.
dialogue and critical reflection meaningful. It also provides a foundational way of thinking about each of my constructs, individually and in connection one to another, more than it is relevant to any one of the constructs in particular.

Jorgensen’s dialogic process is in many ways similar to Reimer’s description of synergism. Reimer, too, is trying to find new ways that competing issues can be resolved. I suggest that Jorgensen’s and Reimer’s theories have many differences. One way of understanding what Jorgensen means by dialectical process, then, is to compare it to Reimer’s synergism to see how the two might be similar but, more importantly, to see how they are different. In understanding this distinction, Jorgensen’s dialectic process becomes clearer.

_Dialectic Process and Synergism_

As stated earlier, Jorgensen’s dialectic process is a way of thinking that seeks to hold into consideration all of the issues inherent within the subject being studied. This includes issues on which there can be agreement, those that are in direct opposition one to another, and those that exist in between. In considering all possibilities, the philosopher is able to define each issue in its uniqueness and explore the space that exists in and between. What emerges from such thinking are possible ways in which competing tensions can commingle. While the synthesis of competing issues may be possible, it is not the driving force in understanding how such issues relate in dialectical ways. What Jorgensen is attempting to do is to find ways in which competing tensions can commingle and yet still maintain their own uniqueness. This is an important distinction. She states:

[The] dialectical approach offers a synthesis of a particular sort. Rather than attempting to bring conflicting ideas or tendencies into reconciliation, unity, or
harmony, educators may sometimes need to be content with disturbance, disunity, and dissonance. Things in dialectic do not always mesh tidily, simply, or easily. Nor necessarily ought they. They resultant complexity, murkiness, and fuzziness of the dialectical relationships, however, greatly complicate the task of music educators.\textsuperscript{356}

In her latest book, Jorgensen addresses directly the concept of synthesis, a way of thinking to which she admits she was attracted earlier in her career. She argues that looking only for the ways that competing ideas can be synthesized results in thinking that is “problematic, simplistic, and reductionistic.”\textsuperscript{357} She explains:

\begin{quote}
It [synthesis] was problematic in that it did not address the question of how to meld things that were logically contradictory and mutually exclusive. It was simplistic in that it failed to address the variety of combinations inherent in the polarities identified, the various ends to which they may be put, and the possibility that only certain aspects of these polar opposites could be melded to varying degrees, and even then, the outcomes might be very fragile. It was reductionistic in assuming that the analysis should be construed at a high level of generality concerned mainly with social issues. Nor were things as neat and tidy as my theoretical world seemed to be.\textsuperscript{358}
\end{quote}

Reimer’s articulation of synergism is similar to that of Jorgensen’s dialectic process. He looks to find all of the competing issues that exist within a given subject and to come to a deeper understanding of the ways that these can be brought together by finding the ways in which the two overlap, are similar, and support one another. He describes this process as “probing beneath the surface of differing positions for what makes them tick and how they might, in ways not always obvious, be less antagonistic

\textsuperscript{356} Jorgensen, \textit{In Search of Music Education}, 68-69.
\textsuperscript{357} Jorgensen, \textit{Transforming Music Education}, 11.
\textsuperscript{358} Ibid.
toward each other than a surface view of them would reveal."³⁵⁹ He contends that what often appears at first glance as complete opposition is the result of the extreme way each part of the opposition is defined by the philosopher.

Although he does not use the word synthesize, the manner in which he looks for both overlaps and commonalities among competing positions suggests such. More importantly, the manner in which he offers synergistic solutions to seemingly differing ideas suggests that synthesis is what he is seeking. For example, Reimer argues that the concepts of postmodernism and modernism as they have been defined by postmodernist philosophers pitting two ideas against one another is a false dichotomy.³⁶⁰ He argues that what some refer to as postmodern are really special cases of modernism; the two are really, at their core, much more similar than philosophers have articulated in their attempt to define them. He concludes that much of postmodern critique can be seen as a version of modernism. To insist that it is postmodern only complicates the issue and splinters professions into antagonistic arguments and relationships that are unnecessary.

As Reimer suggests, if we dig a bit deeper, it is possible to contend that both the postmodern and modern connotation which Reimer describe are based, foundationally, on different world-views. One world-view suggests that there exists a universal truth to which all humans aspire in the individual and social ways that they live their lives. The other world-view suggests that a universal truth cannot be possible and that the world exists in smaller, situated, and negotiated truths, truths that are true only for the

³⁶⁰ See Ibid., 23-29, and 30-32.
individual context or situation from which they emerge. Another view, as synergism might suggest, could be that both world-views exist simultaneously; there is a universal truth that is mediated by localized truths that are subsumed by the universal.

To accept only the latter position, the synthesis of what appears to be direct oppositional world-views, simplifies the importance of the first two positions and forces each to change in fundamental ways to make synthesis possible. In Jorgensen’s dialecticism, all three positions must be considered as well as the ways in which they interrelate and disagree. The notion that agreement may not be possible is an important understanding that probes the complexity of competing world-views. Difference is not necessarily bad, just as unity is not always good. Considering agreement and difference within the specific ways that they emerge in each of the three world-views suggests growth, emergence, and the hope that new ways of interacting and community might be, and can be forged, ways that presently do not exist within current thinking. I suggest that this is what Jorgensen means when she contends that synthesis is “problematic, simplistic, and reductionistic.” I also suggest that this is one of the major tenets of postmodernism. Are there not new ways of thinking about the complexity of the world that have yet to be considered? Must complexity only be considered as it has traditionally been in the past? Most importantly, what benefits are there, practical benefits, to real humans when new ways of understanding are forged?

For example, if one takes a human approach to gender, and not an approach that is radically feminine or masculine, how does that alter the way in which action is carried out in the world? As feminist critique has pointed out, such a synthesis is more often
than not a way of covertly maintaining a male-dominated and hegemonic world. When people refuse to see the distinctiveness of each issue by only considering the ways in which they are similar, everyone loses. Dialogue that might have ensued and might have led to new understanding, is often stifled by the very synthesis that was meant to enlighten. As Jorgensen suggests, continued attempts in education to ignore the particularities of learners and contexts in efforts to develop a stronger, standardized, and universal way of educating, often result in the opposite. Instead of creating stronger learners, learners are often alienated and disenfranchised and kept from wanting to or being able to reach their own potential.\footnote{Jorgensen, \textit{Transforming Music Education}, 35-40.}

In my mind, the dialectic approach that Jorgensen has argued offers much to music education both philosophically, as a way of reasoning through the complex issues inherent in music education, and practically, as a way of interacting with each other within the world. As she suggests by critically reflecting on her own writing, this method is not fool-proof and it calls for understanding complexity in ways that recognize the particularity and distinctness of each position. This dialectic approach is open-ended and constantly in the process of becoming. What may seem insurmountable today may be less so in the future.

There is a liberating and inclusive quality inherent in the dialectic way of thinking that, as she suggests, could lead toward a transformation in the music education profession. Likewise, synergism may be helpful, as well. In the manner that Reimer uses it in his book, however, I suggest that he is too hasty to find that which is common at the
expense of that which is not. I find many of his arguments to be focused mostly upon maintaining the aesthetic approach to music teaching as a universal way by which music education could and should proceed.

The Concept of Self

I suggested above that Jorgensen’s view of self is based upon a constructivist model in which learners construct self through the construction of self-knowledge stemming from their experience, problem-finding, problem-solving, and critical reflection. The context of each learner plays an important part in the ways the learners interact within the world, as well.

Her writings about self support the manner in which I defined self in this study. However, as she is not specifically writing about the self, her work is not nearly as conclusive in this regard as the writings about self I examined in Chapter II. I suggest that what she has offered that is important to the construction of self is her notion of the dialogic process.

Construed as both a philosophical method of thinking and a practical action engaged in by students and teachers, dialogue gives definition to one of the many ways that interaction can happen within the classroom. In the music classroom, dialogue can transpire between the learner and self, between the learner and music, between learner and learner, and between learner and teacher. Such ways of interacting, as Jorgensen suggests, allow the learner to problem-find, to consider alternate ways of finding possible solutions, and to seek answers that bring about change through the affirmation of others.
in the classroom. Dialogue allows learners to expand upon self by asking questions, by sharing differing perspectives, and by acting together as agents of transformation.

The type of dialogue that Jorgensen describes, based upon Freire’s conception of dialogue, is an exchange among people who share equally in the political system of the classroom and who genuinely care about one another. Dialogue, in this sense, does not force agreement but welcomes diversity and divergence of thinking. It is politically charged in that it seeks to change that which comes from differing opinions and problematic exchanges. It is rooted in action. It takes from and gives back to the lived world. As to the idea that dialogue has transformative power, Jorgensen explains:

In transforming music education, instead of having leaders decide what is best for music educators, dictate to or persuade others of their plans under the guise of building consensus, and achieve compliance by dint of influence, authority, pressure, or force, dialogue occurs widely throughout the profession, and ideas and plans seep up through the system, later to be facilitated and implemented by leaders. Nor is dialogue constrained by external dicta that define the parameters in which it takes place or spell out the conclusions it must reach. Instead, participants delight in the questions. Their conversations invite active engagement, prompt individual commitment, and inspire to transformative action.

She is speaking here about the power of dialogue to transform the profession of music education at large, but consider how such a process might play out in the classroom:

In transforming the music classroom, instead of having [teachers] decide what is best for [students], dictate to or persuade them of their plans under the guise of building consensus, and achieve compliance by dint of influence, authority, pressure, or force, dialogue occurs widely throughout the [classroom], and ideas and plans seep up through the system, later to be facilitated and implemented by

---

362 Ibid., 37.
363 Ibid., 144.
364 Ibid., 37.
365 Ibid., 144.
Nor is dialogue constrained by external dicta that define the parameters in which it takes place or spell out the conclusions it must reach. Instead, [students and teachers] delight in the questions. Their conversations invite active engagement, prompt individual commitment, and inspire to transformative action. 366

Jorgensen’s conception of dialogue helps to explain the action that is involved in constructing self through constructing self-knowledge. Dialogue’s humane and ethical qualities support a learning environment in which all learners have the opportunity to be engaged and to construct knowledge and meaning within their own context. The process of dialogue is an important consideration with regard to how learners construct knowledge and ultimately self as they interact within the music classroom.

The Localized Reference System

Jorgensen supports the idea in her writing that the issues of the localized reference system play a key component in education that leads toward self-construction and personal liberation. Throughout her writings, she argues that each classroom must be allowed to construct itself within its own context. She states that “each place and situation has its own particular set of challenges, and these cannot be met in standardized ways.” 367 For her, music education is about specific teachers and students in specific situations working in ways that bring meaning to their positions within the world. Ignoring the context of this localized reference system, as is done when a standardized curriculum is imposed upon the classroom, creates education that is repressive to both

366 Ibid.
367 Ibid., 127.
students and teachers.\textsuperscript{368} It ignores the very issues and needs of the learners within each environment and keeps students from ever understanding how their musical study might aid them in finding solutions to their needs.\textsuperscript{369}

Her willingness to acknowledge and celebrate each localized classroom does not mean that she suggests we deny the embeddedness of each classroom within larger social systems. But, she makes a clear distinction between standardized instruction and the ability of learners to see commonalities between their own situations and those of other musical cultures that they study. She argues that finding commonalities between the localized culture of the classroom and cultures beyond it is part of diversity. This is a way of examining music that is helpful to learners within their own context. But finding only one way of negotiating curriculum across the boundaries of localized classrooms is a practice that represses more than it empowers. She explains:

finding and cultivating common threads, shared musical understandings and practices, is entirely consistent with celebrating diversity. This is so because of the crucial distinction between standardizing instructional methods or ends and identifying common or shared purposes. Each musical practice has specific rules that undergird it and a corresponding sense of “rightness” on the part of its exponents and public. Construed globally, however, the commonalities that emerge across musics tend to be general rather than specific, construed phenomenally as well as theoretically. Although there may be consensus within a particular practice, or similarities from one musical practice to another, such themes and common expectations, even though widely shared, are general and partial and cannot be relied upon as the sole or principal driver for instructional decision-making. Specific personal and musical factors are of equal if not greater importance, and these defy standardization.\textsuperscript{370}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{368} Ibid., 36-37. \\
\textsuperscript{369} Ibid., 37. \\
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 127-128.
\end{flushleft}
The Issue of Power

Similarly, Jorgensen suggests that both students and teacher constantly must be critically aware of the way in which covert ideological power structures imposed upon the classroom from the society at large repress learners from realizing or reaching their potential. This critical reflection upon such power structures, as illustrated in her reflections upon gender, not only suggests inequities and injustices in teaching and learning that repress students’ freedoms, this reflection comprises Jorgensen’s justification of the need for transformation in both education and music education.

Equally, she finds elements of the ways and traditions of making and taking music, the scientific foundation upon which education has been based, the bias toward content-only teaching, and the mind-set that educators have assumed in the past, as ways of oppressing students and teachers and keeping them from reaching their potential.\(^{371}\)

Jorgensen’s critical reflection is a call to action, a call for both students and teachers to be aware of and seek to change those things in society that repress. She states:

Greene points to the need to become “demystified” or “wide-awake” to the situation and recover things that have been buried by human ignorance, neglect, opposition, or destruction. In another vein, Scholes invokes a different metaphor in describing the music teacher’s task as one of removing obstacles to understanding, much as one might repair an impassible road cluttered with debris.\(^{372}\)

Within this charge, she suggests that music education has the potential not only to transform itself, but to act as an agent of change within the society at large. She suggests:

\(^{371}\) Ibid., 19-47.
Oppressive structures are endemic to music education as to society, and these oppose civility and humanity. By privileging some and marginalizing others, the establishment ensures that some voices are heard while others are silenced in the public spaces, some cultural expressions and visions of civility are advocated while others are repudiated. This exclusivity, under whatever guise, no matter how well meaning, is to the detriment of all. However, where these oppressive structures are undermined, society is enriched in terms of the discourse, conduct, and cultural expressions of its members. By tackling the dehumanizing forces in music education, music educators and those interested in their work can create a miniature society that presages a more civil society; in this way, music education can model not only general education but also society yet to come.\footnote{373}

Summarizing the Critical Examination of the Music Education Philosophical Literature

By examining my three constructs within the context of the writings of these four music education philosophers, it becomes clear that there exists support for much of what I have articulated about my own teaching. With regard to self, both Bowman and Jorgensen suggest that self is constructed out of the interaction of each learner within the musical environment, be that interaction with other learners, the teacher, or the music. Bowman’s consideration of the ethical nature of such interaction among and between distinct others is an important consideration in understanding how each self is unique and how each learner must take personal responsibility to engage in dialogue with others within the classroom in ways that bring about self-growth for each. Similarly, Jorgensen’s dialectic approach to the classroom, the notion of understanding this with that, also speaks directly to the autonomy of each self and the care that must be taken within the classroom to insure that such autonomy be recognized, maintained, and celebrated. For both Bowman and Jorgensen, the classroom becomes the intersubjective

\footnote{372 Ibid., 21.} \footnote{373 Ibid., 120-121.}
space in which learners, teachers, and music enter into dialogue as each person negotiates meaning, constructs knowledge, and engages within her or his ongoing development of self.

While it could be argued that both Elliott and Reimer also articulate a theory of a constructed self, neither author considers the autonomous context of each individual self in the way that Bowman and Jorgensen have. Elliott never seems to reach beyond the psychological explanation of self to illustrate the phenomenal ways in which personal experience and lived history help to shape such an ongoing construction. Likewise, Reimer’s articulation of self lacks the reflective process of making meaning through language. His insistence upon self as a manifestation of the act of feeling gives the impression that self is constructed as some type of by-product of action in which the learner has little control or understanding.

Certainly, with regard to the localized reference system of the classroom, Bowman’s consideration of the relative nature of each learning context is helpful. The ability to understand both the context of individual learners, the corporate learning environment, and the contextual nature of music allows for individual meaning-making to transpire. For Jorgensen, the localized reference system is paramount; she suggests that it is in the process of working through the specific problems and situations that arise among specific students and teachers that learning is mediated and music education is transacted. Certainly, Elliott’s consideration of the context from which varying musical traditions emerge also supports the notion of a relative approach to music-making and understanding, although as I have suggested, he does not fully recognize the unique
context of each classroom as a unique reference system in and of itself. His insistence upon the induction of learners into authentic cultural practices of music tends to deny the context of the classroom and the ways in which localized interactions with music can transcend the context from which the music originally emerged. Although Reimer has done much to situate his aesthetic approach to music education within a more contextual framework in his latest edition, he basically argues for a more global approach to music in that the aesthetic qualities of music transcend any or all localized contexts in which music can be understood.

With regard to power, both Bowman and Jorgensen diligently seek to expose basic assumptions upon which practice has been based within the discipline of music education in order to reconsider how such assumptions control the types of interactions that can and do transpire within the context of the classroom. Jorgensen especially takes great care to show how issues of gender, sexuality, tradition, mind-set, music, worldview, and education have all set social parameters upon the types of dialogues that happen between and among students and teachers. Such a critical examination is lacking in both the work of Elliott and Reimer. In some way, each of the writers suggests that the political system of the classroom be based upon a more equal distribution of power between students and teachers than is traditionally considered in the institution of school. Certainly, with Elliott and Reimer, such shared power is slanted more toward the control of the teacher than it is in the writings of Bowman and Jorgensen.

Considering these writings together, what becomes obvious is that there exists among them what Jorgensen would describe as a dialectic relationship. Each writer has
described a different type of interaction that can and does take place within various classrooms each day. For Reimer, the interaction is grounded in students engaging with the aesthetic qualities of sound. For Elliott, interaction is characterized by the induction of students into various musical traditions. For Bowman and Jorgensen, interaction transpires within the specific issues and situations that emerge among the participants within each specific classroom each day.

Jorgensen’s dialectic approach suggests that each of these interactions be kept in consideration. As tensions and struggles emerge between and among them, dialogue becomes important in negotiating what seem like non-negotiable situations. I agree with her. I suggest, however, that it is possible to engage students in interaction with the aesthetic qualities of sound without accepting the aesthetic assumptions which Reimer asks us to accept. So while one may engage with an idea in a dialectic, such engagement can be on different terms than originally intended by the composer and with different goals and purposes.

This dialogue of which Jorgensen speaks must happen daily in each classroom as students and teacher forge an environment in which all members have a place to learn and to grow. The ways that such dialogue transpires could and should be different for every learning environment within which students and teacher engage. Both students and teacher must be critically aware of those situations that emerge that seek to stifle interaction or control it. This is the type of ethical responsibility that Bowman suggests along with the type of learning environment in which all learners have the potential and freedom to construct their personal and corporate meanings about music, life, and self.
There is no prototypical classroom. Nor is the process of dialogue ever complete. It is an on-going, daily process of wide awakeness, critical reflection, and ethical interaction.

Having further defined the constructs of this study through the critical examination of each within the context of the philosophical writings of Bowman, Elliott, Jorgensen, and Reimer, I am now ready to describe, more fully, what I mean by dialogic interactionism. The theoretical description of dialogic interactionism which I offer in Chapter IX is grounded in my definitions of the constructs of the study presented in Chapters II through IV and my examinations of the philosophical discourse in music education presented in Chapters V through VIII. In addition, I also will draw upon my many observations and personal reflections made upon the interactions that transpired in Narrative Three and Four and the many classrooms in which I have taught in recent years. Such a description helps me to better understand the transformation that I experienced in my own teaching and enhance the meaning that I take from such an experience into new teaching situations.
CHAPTER IX

UNDERSTANDING DIALOGIC INTERACTIONISM

Having completed the thematic analysis of the constructs of this study in Chapters II through VIII, I now examine how these themes work together to help explain the phenomenon I call dialogic interactionism. Interaction through dialogue means that what transpires in the classroom is contextual to the specific situations of the environment as it is created by those present in that environment.

I begin the chapter by looking at the world-view of dialogic interaction. Next, I must understand something about each agent present in the dialogic interactive classroom. I examine these agents, both human and musical, in order to develop a description of each that establishes them as distinct others within the intersubjective space of the classroom. Following such description, I examine how a localized perspective of the classroom accounts for the types of interaction that might transpire therein. I consider the issue of power and of the trust that exists among and between the agents of the classroom in order to understand how the process of negotiation helps to define classroom interaction. Finally, I provide the reader with a theoretical description of the dialogic interactive classroom and the role of teacher and student within this dynamic learning environment. This description leads me in Chapter X to consider how such a classroom as described here might function in practice.

The World-View of the Dialogic Classroom

Before I describe the dialogic classroom, I begin by articulating several assumptions upon which this classroom is based. In other words, I am summarizing my
philosophical world-view of the dialogic interactive classroom. It is based upon the themes analyzed in this study and, as such, speaks to the construction of self, the localized reference system, and the issue of power.

The view of learning assumed in the dialogic interactive classroom suggests that learning and the development of self are intrinsically related. It is through learning that humans are actively involved in constructing knowledge that, in turn, provides them with a sense of, or phenomenal experience of, what I have described in this study as self. Greene states that “learning is, in one dimension, a conscious search for some kind of coherence, some kind of sense. Learning also is a process of effecting new connections in experience, of thematizing, problematizing, and imposing diverse patterns on the inchoateness of things.”

Likewise, Popper suggests, “that we are not born as selves, but that we have to learn that we are selves; in fact we have to learn to be selves.” So, the purpose of music education, or any educational pursuit, is intrinsically the process of meaning-making both of the self and the self in the world through the active process of learning. In the case of the choral classroom, this meaning-making happens through the process of making music.

Each student should have the opportunity in musical study, or any study for that matter, to have a sense of agency of the self in which her or his unique experiences are given credence and authority. For such agency to develop, it is important that the lived experience with which a student enters a music classroom is recognized and that such

---

experience in the emerging self of the student is allowed to foster and grow through interactions with music and the music classroom setting.

Critiques of such a world-view might argue that schools exist not specifically to develop individualized and empowered learners but to extend the aims and goals of the state that seek to train, enculterate, and socialize the younger generation toward professional thinking and becoming contributing members of society. I would argue that this world-view does not negate necessarily the quest for skill development, socialization to institutional norms/values, or enculturation.

Music education has, on occasion, viewed the development of skills, socialization of students to institutional norms, and the enculturation of students toward culture-specific musical traditions as end-states. In short, each of these has been viewed as the purpose of and rationale for music instruction. What I suggest is that the process of learning and constructing self through active engagement, in this context through music, are larger than any of these special cases. The on-going development of self through the construction of musical knowledge and the making of meaning is our greatest purpose for existing in the public schools in this country. To deny this type of learning is to deny the basic humaness of students. As Greene states,

If learning focuses upon lived life, it should enable persons to recognize lacks in the situations through which they move. Recognizing lack or deficiency (infringements on personality, exclusion, or neglect), they may learn how to repair and transcend. . . Emergence like that, transcendence like that, are necessary if persons are to achieve a sense of effectuality again. If they can remain in touch with their perceptual landscapes, if they can be critical and aware, they may be able to overcome passivity and the temptation to withdraw. We must all choose ourselves as learners open to the profiles of a world we can never fully know, willing to live (as Virigina Woolf once wrote) ‘in the presence of reality.’ We
may be, objectively, nothing more than a ‘quintessence of dust.’ But we can choose, and we can sometimes transform.”

So, the dialogic, interactive classroom is based upon learning and not simply schooling. Though schooling may be consumed by learning, it is not the end goal of the types of interactions that transpire in the dialogic interactive music classroom. Though music learning involves the acquisition of subject matter and the development of musical skill, it is so much more. Music learning is also ethical, political, ontological, epistemological, social, historical, and moral, to name a few.

The Human Agents of the Classroom: The Students and Teacher

At the opening of *The Self and It’s Brain*, Popper begins with a quote of Josef Popper-Lynkeus saying, “every time a man [sic] dies, a whole universe is destroyed.” What a fitting way to describe the students and teacher who enter a classroom every day—each a universe in and of herself or himself. In what ways might we consider each as an autonomous universe?

Every student and teacher is a self, both constructed out of experience and in the process of constructing through experience. Each is unique. No students or teacher have had exactly the same experiences nor have they interpreted shared experiences in the same ways. Each is a part of the shared world of the classroom in which he or she enters, yet each is also part of many other worlds in which he or she coexists. As Popper would

---

suggest, each student and teacher is a World 2 that thrusts outward into Worlds 1 and 3 or, as Bowman would suggest, each is a distinct other.

Each student and teacher has a unique perspective or lens through which he or she views the world. From the vast number of possible experiences within the world, this lens focuses on a few—those experiences that the self brings to consciousness. At the same time, whatever is brought to consciousness changes and shapes the lens in new ways, therefore altering what will be filtered from experience into consciousness in the future. The self is both constructing and constructed simultaneously as it lives in and interacts within the world. This circular process provides the basis for the construction of self as the individual lives in the world.

While the students and teacher are alike in many ways, they are different with regard to experience. Within the institution of school, the teacher almost always has more professional experience in the reference group of those who share in the values of the subject matter. Outside of schooling, however, it is possible that many of the students have more skill and/or aptitude for music-making than the teacher in ways that are not considered by school music curricula. These differences are often clearly defined by both the students and teacher and give superiority to teacher or student within the context being considered.

With regard to learning, however, as I have defined it within the world-view of the dialogic interactive classroom, superiority becomes less of an issue. What students lack that the teacher has is the experience of finding problems, solving problems, and constructing musical knowledge that leads toward self-knowing. This is an important
consideration, because it implies that the teacher’s construction of knowledge is neither complete nor fixed. While the teacher may be a more experienced learner, he or she, like the students, is in the process of constructing self in an on-going and evolutionary way. As learners, the teacher and students are in different places in their lives while in pursuit of similar yet unique goals. As learners, each can affect the other. Students learn from the teacher and the teacher learns from students. Borrowing from Freire, the student becomes student-teacher and the teacher becomes teacher-student.\(^{378}\)

Within the institution of school, the professional experience that distinguishes the teacher from the students brings with it both power and responsibility. The teacher is charged with and empowered to control the classroom with regard to the curricula that will be followed, the activities that will transpire within the classroom space, and the manner in which the classroom is constructed and maintained. How that teacher chooses to negotiate such power is both an act of personal choice and institutional control.

Not only is power granted to the teacher by the institution of school, it also is appropriated by the students who, having been socialized into the institution, grant power to the teacher to maintain control and to guide learning. As Freire suggests, this symbiotic relationship is often one of an oppressor and an oppressed.\(^{379}\) The teacher making most, if not all, of the decisions creates a dependent relationship between herself or himself and students in ways that force the students to look to the teacher for guidance.

\(^{378}\) For ease of reading, I will refer to the concept of teacher-student as teacher.  
and direction. In establishing such roles, the two become codependent in ways that one cannot exist without the other.

The teacher, however, may chose to break this traditional and institutionalized bond established by the institution of school and meet the students in more equal terms as a fellow learner. Such a shift changes the power structures established by school and transforms the ways in which students and teacher will interact. I return to this idea later in the chapter.

While all of this may seem rather obvious, this view of students and teacher marks a change from the traditional way both have been considered in the past as part of the institution of school. Traditional education has not denied the idea that each student or teacher is an individual, rather it has tried to forgo the individuality of both in order to maintain institutional control forcing both students and teacher into established ways of acting and being.

The shift I describe from students/teacher to fellow learners changes the traditional classroom structure toward a structure that is flexible enough to allow for the individual constructions of knowledge, constructions of self, and dialogues between student-learner and teacher-learner. In the dialogic interactive classroom, community becomes important—but community conceived of in ways that bring individual people together in both common and individual pursuits of knowledge-construction. As Jorgensen suggests, this type of classroom creates a messy environment in which there is a constant redefining of goals and procedures based upon specific individuals within the
classroom and their specific needs for making meaning of their lives through the study of music.

The Music

Music can be described, as Popper might describe it, as a distinct agent or a World 3 product. A World 3 product is decentralized from the experience of individual people in World 2 in that it often is composed by others and in time periods that predate the individuals interacting with it. Unlike personal thoughts and feelings which live within the immediate world of the individual, with exception of original composition and improvisation, music is usually experienced as coming from somewhere else, be it another time period, another culture, a performer, and so on. This quality of music being outside of personal experience gives the illusion that it is objective in some way.

Popper qualifies each World 3 product as being socially constructed by humans living in World 2. The ideas that exist within World 3, while decentralized, can only be retrieved by humans from the individual perspectives of their World 2. In other words, much of what is considered music was written in centuries past and was constructed socially from the mores of the society in which it was composed. Over time and through the process of institutionalization, music begins to take on law-like qualities that give the impression that music is somehow part of the natural order of the world or has been given by the divine. The way that music has always been defines what it may become. Music, like language or any other World 3 product, becomes reified and given life-like qualities—it has power over people to make them feel or think in certain ways.
A good example of this is Reimer’s absolute expressionist concept. For him, music contains feelings captured within the aesthetic qualities of sound and feelings that are put there by composers from different periods and styles of music history. When the music is studied, listened to, or performed, this power of feeling is experienced by the listener/performer who, in turn, understands the feeling as it is expressed in musical terms. In this way, music contains a world of feelings that transcends the particularities of human’s social and individual contexts; there exists in music a set of feelings that all humans can understand regardless of their place in history, the context of their social world, and their unique qualities of self. This set of feelings has existed throughout history and is experienced by future generations through musical interaction. In essence, this set of feelings becomes almost law-like, just as gravity is law-like, in that these feelings have always existed and will continue to exist forever. The manner in which one learns and understands such feelings is through the medium of music.

While I do not negate the fact that music evokes feeling, I suggest that the music itself is not where feeling is contained nor is there a set of feelings that exists objectively from the human agents who might feel them. Certainly there is feeling within the composer when he or she creates the piece of music, and there is feeling in the listener/performer when he or she interacts with the music at a later time. The feeling, however, resides within the people who are interacting with the music in ways that are unique to each. As we can say that an intimate relationship exists between the knower and the known, we also can say that an intimate relationship exists between the feeler and what is felt. What we feel in music, the manner in which we feel it, and the resulting
meaning we give to it happen within the context of our lived lives and experiences. Just like thoughts, feelings also are constructed within the context of what we have felt previously and these feelings, more often than not, are given meaning through reflection. While people may each feel things they describe in similar ways, each person can only know her or his own feelings and thoughts.

Music, then, is an idea, a World 3 product. It only has meaning in the context of the World 2 through the humans who make it, perform it, study it, and listen to it. As such, all World 3 products are humanly constructed and only have meaning in the context of the World 2 of human beings. However, in the phenomenal experience of music in the classroom, there is often a feeling that music is a distinct other—another player in the classroom interaction. Like the other agents present, music provides for dynamic interaction from which the construction of self-knowledge and self can emerge. It can be shaped, transformed, and interpreted in ways that transform its structure. Likewise, such changes help to transform the human agents in the classroom as they go about the process of interacting with it.

The Localized Reference System

I suggest that there are at least two perspectives that students and their teacher can take with regard to the context of the classroom; that the classroom is but a small part of a much larger system (what I have described as a global view of classroom context) or that the classroom is a complete system in and of itself which is embedded in larger systems (what I have described as the localized reference system view of classroom context).
The perspective that students and teacher choose to take, helps to shape the types of interaction that can and will transpire within its boundaries. If the students and teacher take a global view of the classroom, accepting that the classroom is but a small part of a much larger system, they often feel as though they have little control over the issues and agenda that seem to guide interaction. Greene states the following regarding teachers; I suggest that her ideas extend to the students as well:

Often submerged in the bureaucracies for which they work, they [teachers] simply accede to what is taken for granted. Identifying themselves as spokespersons for—or representatives of—the system in its local manifestation, they avoid interrogation and critique. They transmit, often tacitly, benign or neutral versions of the social reality. They may, deliberately or not, adapt these to accommodate to what they perceive to be the class origins or the capacities of their students, but, whether they are moving those young people towards the assembly lines or administrative offices, they are likely to present the world around as given, probably unchangeable and predefined.

A localized reference system view, on the other hand, acknowledges the autonomy of the classroom embedded within larger systems that tend to shift the locus of control to the students and teacher in the particular classroom. Certainly the classroom is still influenced by the larger systems in which it is embedded, but students and teachers are able to claim more control over their interactions with one another thereby giving them more of a sense of agency.

The dialogic interactive classroom takes the second view of context; each classroom is a reference system unto itself in which the specific agents, their specific life situations, and the specific interactions among and between them become central concerns of both students and teacher. While the classroom is not divorced from its larger contexts, when the door is shut and for the time that the students and teacher are
together, each classroom becomes an intact reference system complete with a political system, standards for interacting, goals and objectives, ethical and moral codes of conduct, and norms and values. Such a localized view of the classroom allows for interaction that emerges from the specific needs of students and teacher, the way power is negotiated by the agents of the classroom, and the freedom for both students and teacher to construct musical knowledge and self in ways that are meaningful to their life situations.

This localized view of the classroom is not something that students and teacher can simply accept, nor can it be mandated. It is a dialectic that must be negotiated daily by the agents involved in the classroom. As such, this perspective is not static nor fixed—it is constantly in the process of becoming.

The dialectic is comprised of the needs and situations of the agents present in the classroom in connection with the needs and situations of the larger systems in which the classroom is embedded. The dialectic situation between the local and global provides clashes of ideology from which possibility emerges. In what ways do the agents in the classroom find themselves in this dialectic relationship? I suggest that there are two considerations.

First, just as the students and teacher are constructing knowledge about self in the context of the music classroom, so they also are constructing knowledge about self in the many other reference systems to which they belong, be these systems other classes, the family, religious groups, sports groups, music organizations, school faculties, and so on. When students and teacher enter the world of the music classroom, they bring with them
their constructed knowledge, perspectives, and ideologies from these other systems. Through interaction, these competing ideologies collide creating problems that must be solved. The manner in which these competing issues are resolved, in turn, can create opportunities for growth or can create situations in which growth can be repressed. Just like the construction of knowledge and of self emerges from problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection, so does the negotiation of the dialectics between the local issues of the classroom and the competing issues brought to the classroom by students and teacher from other reference systems. In this way, the music classroom becomes more than about the construction of musical knowledge or skill, it is embedded in issues of ethics, moral behavior, meaning-making, and self construction all inter-related with the musical interactions that transpire among the agents present.

Second, the music, like the human agents in the music classroom, is tied to other reference systems from which it originates. With the exception of original composition and improvisation, music that is studied in a choral classroom has a distinct history and style. It was composed beyond the boundaries of the classroom in a particular time and social context. When it enters the classroom to be studied, it brings with it the particularities of its origin. These particularities, if known, can be studied. If the piece is Korean, we can, as Elliott suggests, study about Korean music in the hope of understanding how the piece might have been developed and what meaning it might have had within its own context. Such a tie to the original conception of the piece of music provides opportunities for growth by the students and teacher who interact with it.
When the music enters the classroom, however, it also is a part of the local context of the classroom and the dynamic interaction therein. As such, it has a new context and is appropriated by the individual agents in the classroom in ways that are organic to the classroom context. Although we may study about Korean music, or that of nineteenth century Vienna, or aristocratic Germany during the time of Haydn, our understanding and the resulting knowledge can only be mediated within the boundaries of the individuals within the classroom. We cannot, try as we may, recreate the world of aristocratic Germany in 1785. We might choose to try and in doing so construct new knowledge, but this knowledge will be limited to our vision of what such life in Germany may have been like.

Likewise, there is nothing to prevent us from appropriating the music in ways that divorce the music from its original context in order to meet our immediate needs and constructions of knowledge within our localized context. We might, for instance, take a Renaissance composition and change its style to be more jazz-like by emphasizing its syncopated rhythms, adding a drum set, and a new text designed to resemble instrumental sounds in the style of scatting. Such a transformation of the music may provide a way of problem-finding, problem-solving, and reflection that, within our own context, leads toward a logical, new way of constructing both musical and self-knowledge.

As music is humanly constructed, so can it be reconstructed within differing contexts with different goals in mind. Such was the practice of the Renaissance and Baroque composers who often found ways of quoting each others’ music presenting borrowed melodies in new and varying contexts. Such is the process of jazz
improvisation in which musicians borrow melodies from one another and change the context of these melodies in ways that bring about entirely new musical products. This ability to change the original context is also a practice often carried out in the theatre. There are many Shakespearean productions that treat the text in ways that bring about new understanding in light of a contemporary context.

This view, that music as its own agent can be considered in many different contexts, is different from the more traditional view of music taken by music education in America. The history of music education in this country has been based primarily upon a Western European interpretation of music and musical tradition, especially as it was mediated in the nineteenth century. In this tradition, the score is sacred. Every attempt is made by performers to recreate the intent of the composer in order to develop a product that is as authentic as possible. This authentic approach to music-making is one way of working and one in which students have the opportunity to learn and grow. By trying to recreate the original context of the piece of music, the original context of the music controls the manner in which interaction transpires.

However, more contemporary practice in music education, such as that which Elliott proposes, emphasizes an equal importance on improvising, arranging, and composing. With the advent of technology, such compositional skills are easier than ever for student to acquire. This shift in educational focus allows for more organic interactions with music. Suddenly, music can be transformed into new products that stem directly from the context of the students and teacher within the classroom environment.
This does not suggest that the only way to contextualize musical study is to engage in improvising, arranging, or composing. Likewise, interpreting music can be equally as creative and personally meaningful to students and teacher. Such goals must be considered by both the students and teacher, however, and the interpretation of existing scores must be allowed to transpire in context to the issues of the classroom, not only with regard to the standards and traditions of European musical practice.

While more contextual ways of interacting with music creation and interpretation are present in music education practice today, these novel ways of interacting with music are not standard in most choral classrooms. Most music that is studied and performed by choirs in middle schools and high schools is still studied and performed in the more traditional ways, ways in which students are asked to serve the music, the time period in which it was made, the aims or goals of the composer, and the meaning that was given the piece by those original musicians and listeners who interacted with it. As I have suggested above, the ability to achieve this authenticity is but an illusion; authenticity can only exist within the boundaries of the individuals recreating the music. More often than not, these attempts at authenticity negate the context of the classroom and force students and teacher into ways of that are acontextual and often repressive.

Like Greene suggests, students must be allowed to see their landscapes within the things that they study. In acknowledging the local context and transforming the music in ways that are appropriate to the classroom context, we may loose some of the preciseness and authenticity of product that western musical tradition has sought to control. If
students are freed to construct their own knowledge by transforming the music they study at the expense of such a standardized way of viewing music, then so it must be.

This is not to say that style and history are unimportant considerations in the study of music and that students and teacher are free to do whatever they want to a piece of music any more than Bowman’s consideration of relativism is superficial or nihilistic in nature. The related worlds of a piece of music provide many perspectives that bring about learning in the classroom. When these related worlds are valued at the expense of the localized context of the learners studying the music, an imbalance has occurred. As music is humanly constructed, so is it humanly interpreted. Celebrating the many individual things that students and teacher bring to the interpretation of music is necessary if students are to be allowed to construct knowledge within the landscapes of their lives even at the expense of an illusion of authenticity.

The contextual perspective of the classroom that is negotiated by students and teacher creates opportunities for both musical and self-growth. Likewise, such a perspective also can limit growth and repress freedom. The dialectic interactive classroom attempts to maintain a localized perspective of context between the specific issues and needs of the students and teacher mediated through the music being studied. This contextual dialectic that exists in the dialogic interactive classroom creates a messy environment that must be mediated and negotiated constantly by students and teacher alike.
The Issue of Power

Core to the dialogic interactive classroom, defined by its own context as a localized reference system, is the negotiation of power. Competing ideologies brought into the classroom by students and teacher through lived history and other reference groups to which they belong, the power of music which is appropriated by the students and teacher, and the choices that students and teacher make in the context of their daily interactions together create a dynamic environment which is politically charged. Power, both covert and overt, rears its head in every aspect of the learning environment. In order to understand how such power is present and mediated in the dialogic classroom, I begin by looking at power in terms of the human agents in the classroom, the power of music, and finally the power of interaction, respectively.

**Power and the Human Agents In the Dialogic Interactive Classroom**

Ideological social power is brought into the dialogic interactive classroom by students and teacher in the form of their lived histories and the knowledge constructed from other reference systems to which they belong. These perspectives, biases, and prejudices collide with one another as interaction with music transpires. From each collision, there emerges a problem that must be solved, problems that provide new opportunities for students and teacher to construct knowledge and self.

Many of these problems are musical in that they relate directly to the making and performing of music in the classroom. Still others are ethical in that relationships among the various human agents of the classroom must be negotiated. Many are ideological in that competing world-views and ways of world-making come into conflict. Some are
political in that they seek to control the interactions of the classroom in ways that hold power over other agents present.

Whatever the power issues that arise, and they are infinite, the ways in which the agents problematize and negotiate them as well as the manner in which they have the freedom to negotiate them determines how knowledge-construction and ultimately self-construction for each agent will transpire. The freedom to act in these power situations of the classroom is directly related to the type of political system that students and teacher are willing to construct for their environment.

Traditional schooling dictates the types of power relationships that are allowed to transpire within the classroom. The institution of school gives final authority over the classroom to the teacher as he or she is ultimately responsible for the types of experiences that transpire within the borders of the learning environment.

As stated earlier, the dialogic interactive classroom seeks to limit the amount of institutional control of the classroom, or teacher control, and seeks to share power with the students in ways that allow students to assume active roles as equal and autonomous members of the group. In this way, students and teacher are free to interact in the classroom in ways that are meaningful to their own context. The questions that they pose and the problems they choose to consider can emerge directly from the issues of their lives. These choices and decisions can be directly related to musical learning or stem from many of the other considerations present in the classroom—ethical, moral, epistemological, ontological, and so on.
As with any democratic system, such freedom cannot be mandated. Power issues that arise must be constantly negotiated by the agents of the classroom in an on-going, evolutionary way. Students and teacher must develop ways of negotiating power that can range from formal systems of voting and debate to more informal ways of turn-taking and sharing.

Not all power issues that emerge within classroom interaction are necessarily positive. In fact, with any decision that is made some agents are empowered while others are repressed. Often covert power structures exist in the classroom that seek to limit growth rather than encourage it. One of these issues, as writers such as Belenky et al., hooks, and Jorgensen remind us, is the issue of gender. Gender identity and the roles that are established in the larger society in reference to women, for instance, often controls the manner in which power is negotiated and behavior proceeds in the classroom. The definition of gender roles creates expectations and conformity to norms and values that result in specific behavior by both men and women. Whether such ideology takes the form of prejudice by male members of the class or assumed behavior by the women of the class, gender identity and ideology inform interaction.

As Greene reminds us, all agents in the classroom must be wide-awake to such covert issues of power as they are manifested in the behaviors and situations of interaction. Such awareness, which happens through constant reflection, challenges social ideology by articulating clearly assumptions present in action. In turn, such articulation allows agents consciously to choose behaviors and to plan for ways of negotiating power rather than to act blindly. These covert expressions of power are so
vast and so dynamic that to be aware or conscious of them all would be impossible. However, as Jorgensen suggests, part of that which we call music is coming to terms with these power relationships that exist among and between the agents involved in the event in ways that seek to liberate rather than imprison.

Likewise, as any teacher or student knows, the classroom environment also is controlled by direct power, usually that of administrators, legislators, and policy makers. Often, ways of working and interacting that students and teacher prefer are expressly denied by the rules of the institution of school. Mandates, directives, and orders directly influence behavior, serve as evaluation standards for teacher performance, and, in the final analysis, determine job security for the teacher and satisfactory progress for students. As with the global perspective of the classroom, such direct power over the classroom often leaves students and teacher feeling helpless, frustrated, and demoralized.

The dialogic interactive classroom, however, takes a different perspective of direct power. Certainly, mandates and directives must be followed and behavior compromised. Rather than seeing such mandates as deterrents to self-growth, they can be viewed as boundaries in which new ways of acting can transpire. In short, the boundaries set by well meaning administrators can become possibilities for new ways of problematizing competing power issues which lead toward new ways of negotiating, new ways of constructing knowledge, and new ways of interacting.

The Power of Music

Music has power. Music educators have tended to define such power as an emotional force that can move people to feeling, a trait of music that is often seen as
positive. While I agree with this definition of musical power and I agree that it is one of music’s greatest assets to students in the choral classroom, my research also suggests that part of the power of music is political as well. Once music is seen as a political force, it is not necessarily always an asset. The choice of which music should be studied tends to favor some students and alienate others. Likewise, issues of musical taste and preference can be empowering and at the same time alienating.

I examine such political issues in as far as they are relevant to the discussion of the dialogic interactive classroom. However, I will not attempt here to develop a theory of the political nature of music in the classroom. Such a discussion goes beyond the purview of this study.

While the power of music is real, it is important to note, as Elliott suggests, that this power attributed to music is not inherent within the music at all; music’s power rests in the human agents of the classroom who give it power. Music is a social construction and, as such, can only be mediated by the humans who allow it to have power. In actuality, then, the power that music exerts within classroom interaction, is really another illustration of the power issues that arise among and between the human agents of the music learning environment. As such, this musical power, like all of the other issues of power I have examined, is inherently musical but also ethical, epistemological, ontological, moral, social, and historical as well.

For purposes here, I talk about music as a distinct other since this is how it often presents itself to students and teacher within the context of classroom interaction. However, the reader is reminded that what I am really talking about is a human
construction and, at its core, such power exists only among the relationships and
interactions of human beings who are acting in, negotiating between, and constructing
knowledge within the choral classroom.

The idea that music has power over humans to move them to feeling is a universal
maxim of our society. One would be hard pressed to find a person who would disagree
with such a statement in general. However, as with any maxim, it takes little analysis in
order for universality to fall away; such universality is really relativistic to the individual
perspectives of each learner who comes under its power. Music does move people to
feeling but in highly individual ways.

From a physical aspect, the power of sound waves that stimulate the bodies of
listeners can be physically exhilarating for some while at the same time be quite painful
for others. The soaring quality of a melody that inspires one person creates no emotional
response in another. The destruction of diatonic harmony in twentieth century music that
leads some to a spiritual experience is for others nothing but noise and cacophony. The
power of music to move a person to feel is a highly personal and individualistic event.

The relativistic notion of the emotional power of music has two implications for
classroom musical study. First, the music being studied may or may not be given power
by the students and teacher who interact with it daily. The individualistic perspective of
each human agent within the classroom determines the extent to which musical
interaction becomes emotionally or physically charged. Even in those moments in which
everyone in the classroom seems moved by the music, such commonality of feeling is, at
best, what Fosnot suggests as taken-as-shared. The individual perspective of each person
determines the manner in which he or she will respond to music. Distinctions among and
between individuals in the classroom become, yet again, issues of power that must be
negotiated. Such interactions provide opportunities from which emerges both
empowerment and repression.

In those rare moments when most human agents in the classroom do find the
music to be powerful such agreement toward the power of music is taken-as-shared.
However, these rare moments can be quite exceptional and can create new possibilities
for interaction within the music classroom. As taken-as-shared moments, these events
illustrate the best of intersubjective communication among humans. Such power can
control interaction, create new ways of behaving, and can be, as most choral singers
know, quite transformative. These instances of music’s power are illusive and cannot be
replicated at will. They are special moments that occur within interaction from which the
agents involved leave feeling changed. They are to be treasured and reflected upon to
maximize their special effects. Though they are not divined, they do represent the best of
what music education has to offer and can lead directly to self-awareness and self-
construction.

While music is powerful, it is at the same time political. For every piece of music
that is chosen for study in the classroom, other pieces of music are not chosen. As
personal taste and value are prevalent among the members of the classroom, the choices
made for study directly influence the manner in which interaction will occur and in which
learning will be constructed. Every choice of repertoire has the potential to empower
some students and alienate others. Choices of music for study are critical and every
attempt must be made to select a wide variety of choices to meet the many needs of students present. Finding a balance is crucial.

Likewise, choices for study should emerge from the specifics of the students involved if they are, as Greene suggests, able to see their own landscapes in the music being studied. Simply choosing music for study off of a standard “great choral literature” list, choosing music that is pleasing only to the students or the teacher, or choosing music that is deemed quality by professional standards does not guarantee that students will respond to it. The choice of music becomes a dialectic that exists between and among the student’s needs, the teacher’s preferences, and the standards established by the profession intended to teach quality literature. The negotiation of such a dialectic can lead toward both empowerment and disenfranchisement.

Finally, the history of music is ripe with examples of how music has been used as a political force: religious music, military music, commercial jingles, political campaign music, rock-n-roll, and even the subversive nature of gangster hip-hop come to mind. Music represents the norms and values of the reference group from which it is created. The clashes that come from such ideology in the larger society can often be quite emotionally charged.

Likewise, as each human agent in the classroom is also a member of different reference groups, the musical norms and values that each bring into the classroom creates conflict, superiority, and hierarchy. No where is this more apparent than in the musical tastes of teacher and students. What the teacher values musically may not be what is valued by students at all. In fact, most often such values do not align. Once again,
ideological clashes occur within the learning environment that must be negotiated by the human agents present. Some clashes lead toward possibility, others lead toward alienation. Likes and dislikes must be tolerated and power structures negotiated for individualistic learning to take place.

The dialogic classroom takes into account all of these instances of musical power. Choices of repertoire must be mediated by both students and teacher and appropriated in ways that bring dignity to those involved in musical learning. Through critical examination, choices must be varied and pluralistic in the hopes of providing meaningful experiences to different learners within the group. The issues that arise with regard to music’s power must be constantly negotiated through reflection and action. There is never a perfect classroom in which the needs and desires of all learners can be met. However, through reflection, dialogue, and action more students can be drawn into musical study in ways that are personally meaningful, transformative, and relevant. Once again, local perspective matters. The localized issues of the specific agents of the classroom must be considered. And while there will always exist a dialectic among the agents of the classroom, and between the classroom and other reference system in which the classroom is embedded, these tensions can become, through critical reflection and conscious action, possibilities as much as deterrents.

*The Power of Interaction*

As I have alluded to above, the way in which power is negotiated in the classroom by students and teacher directly influences the manner in which interaction will continue. When any decision within the classroom is made, others are denied. The very essence of
this dialectic implies that some power structures are privileged and others are not. Privilege implies power, hierarchy, and hegemony. These issues are unavoidable in the classroom and must be handled with care by both the students and teacher involved. Dialogic interaction requires making choices, but in ways that are reasoned and conscious. The process of critical reflection upon action must be constantly engaged. Choices must be considered in light of the resulting interaction that follows. More importantly, when new interaction proves to be undesirable, both students and teacher must be flexible enough to create changes in interaction—to reconsider, revise, and, if needed, resist. All power negotiations within the classroom result in changes in interaction. Likewise, they are intimately connected to the localized situation of the reference group of the classroom. Critical reflection becomes a crucial part of influencing interaction and must be a central concern of all agents. There will never be a perfect classroom, but through the sharing of power and the critical awareness of action, the dialogic interactive classroom can become an effective environment for the construction of knowledge and of self.

The Issue of Trust

Though trust was not one of the original themes developed in my thematic analysis, through the process of this research, it has become a salient issue. Certainly, I do not deal with it here in the depth that it deserves; such a task must be considered in future writing. However, as it is apparent in every interaction within the dialogic classroom, it is important enough to be mentioned here.
Within the relationships and actions of students in the dialogic interactive classroom lies the issue of trust. Each of the members of the classroom must learn to trust in ways that, at first, may be foreign to their experience. Trust, like power or knowledge-construction, is an elusive phenomenon that emerges from interaction, risk-taking, and experience. Trust takes time, patience, and negotiation. It is often frustrating. It is not shared equally among the participants within the classroom.

All human agents within the classroom have issues with trust. Some students have trusted teachers only to have that trust violated. Many students do not trust that the teacher is willing to share power. Some students have issues of trust that run deeper than classroom interaction. They have learned not to trust—a result of having their trust destroyed by parents, siblings, friends, and significant others. As such, trust is contextual to the specific life situation of each student. The manner in which trust is acknowledged and allowed to prosper depends upon past experience—a situation that is unique to each individual.

Trust is dynamic and constantly in the process of becoming. As Bowman states, it is an ethical concern that guides how one interrelates with the distinct other. Trust involves great risk. It involves both trial and error. Yet, it is an important part of the dialogues that exist within the choral music classroom and can lead directly to the manner in which musical knowledge, self-knowledge, and self are constructed through musical interaction.
Describing the Dialogic Interactive Classroom

Having examined the world-view of dialogic interactionism; the agents within such a classroom; and the issues of localized perspective, power, and trust; it is now possible to synthesize these ideas into a theoretical description of the dialogic interactive classroom. Such a theoretical description helps to illustrate the type of classroom I have come to know as teacher. It also provides a theoretical framework for which I can, in the next chapter, make specific connections to practice.

At the core of the dialogic interactive classroom is interaction mediated through dialogues among and between students, teacher, and music. Little attempt is made by the teacher to control the interaction in an a priori manner. Rather, interaction emerges in an organic way related specifically to the problems that emerge in action: negotiations of power structures, clashes of ideology among agents in the classroom, musical problems to be solved, musical hypotheses to be tested, musical experiments to be conducted, and so on. The result is a dynamic classroom environment that is constantly in the process of becoming. Though the boundaries of the classroom imply a closed system, within these boundaries there exists an open system. Students and teacher are never quite sure where interaction will lead or what specific products will emerge from such interaction.

Were it possible to stop the interaction of the classroom and to observe the resulting classroom structures created in action, there would be several different structures that might emerge. At one moment, the teacher might control interaction as he or she shares factual information about music. At another moment, a student might control interaction as he or she offers a solution to a musical problem. At another
moment, the music might control interaction as students and teacher work diligently to identify a musical problem for study. Still another moment might reveal two students who control interaction as they debate the value of choosing one musical interpretation over another. The different permutations of structures that emerge in action are endless, each structure revealing yet another way to make sense of dynamic interaction. These different structures of the classroom that develop within action move logically one to the next within the context of the issues created by the individual agents of the classroom. Through debate, negotiation, experimentation, repetition, and reflection, action follows action in a seamless and often chaotic flow of events.

In the dialogic interactive classroom, there exists a standard by which learning can be assessed. Rather than establishing such a standard before action transpires, however, the dialogic interactive standard is constantly in the process of being developed through reflection-on-action by both teacher and students. The borders of the classroom become permeable, student expectations follow the context of action, and behavior is allowed to shift as needs arise. What is right at one moment becomes less right at another. Assessment of learning happens but only after action has transpired and in relation to the course that such action has taken. As such, reflection becomes inexorably linked to action, much in the manner that Freire describes praxis or Schön describes reflective practice.

What is important to note is that within this rich and dynamic action of the dialogic interactive classroom, students are given the opportunity to frame their musical learning in ways that resonate with their lived histories. Curiosity emerges from past
practice and the construction of knowledge becomes relevant to such past practice. This relevancy of knowledge construction to lived history makes learning vital to the needs and issues of students and teacher. As such, through the interactions of the classroom, self is constructed from knowledge-construction that is both musical and personal.

However, such an open system of the classroom does not guarantee that students are free to engage in their own learning experiments within the classroom. Power issues that emerge among students must be negotiated in ways that seek to give as many students as possible the access to engage in their own knowledge-construction, whether they choose to use it or not. There does not exist a perfect system in which all students will construct knowledge or self in equal ways. Issues of trust, willingness on the part of students to participate, and issues such as time restraints make for an uneven playing field. However, in the dialogic interactive classroom, every attempt is made to involve all students within classroom interaction in ways that are relevant to their own life situations. Such attempts are ethical, celebrate diversity, and seek to maintain the dignity of both students and teacher.

The dialogic interactive classroom is process oriented. It is based upon interaction relative to the context of students and teacher in specific classroom settings. It is, at times, ambiguous, complex, fluid, and chaotic. At other times, it is controlled, logical, and sequential as the needs and contexts of students dictate such action. Most importantly, the dialogic interactive choral classroom is about helping students define self; it is about helping students to know self in the world, to make meaning of self in the
context of music, and to shape self for future action in the world through the study of music.

*The Role of the Teacher in the Dialogic Interactive Classroom*

Besides being an active agent within the classroom, the teacher has at least two special responsibilities to perform within the dialogic interactive classroom. The first responsibility is to mediate interaction. As the classroom is based upon organic interaction, the teacher must work to keep interaction alive and to see that it evolves in a manner that allows for the inclusion of all students. Mediating interaction involves suggesting possible avenues for exploration, working to keep students involved in the interaction as it transpires, and making sure that students have access to the dialogues of the classroom.

Such mediation entails acting as a participant observer in the classroom and commenting upon such observations in order to help students problem-find and problem-solve. These descriptive statements guide interaction without necessarily prescribing action. Likewise, the teacher mediates learning by encouraging both reflection in action and on action. This involves engaging students in reflective conversations about action, helping students to articulate meaning developed through action, and helping students document progress as they develop the next course of action.

Learning to mediate means letting go of institutional control and finding ways of sharing power with students. This does not mean that the teacher looses control of her or his classroom. Rather, it means that the teacher must reconsider what control means within this dynamic classroom and to envision new ways of engaging students in
practice. Such skills are often as experimental as the process of constructing knowledge. Trial and error combined with reflection inform teacher action in ways that facilitate student learning through meaning-making of action. In this manner, the teacher as mediator is constantly being defined within the context of the localized reference system of the classroom.

Secondly, the teacher acts in the role of model, not in the master-apprentice mode of modeling where teacher assumes the role of expert, but in demonstrating through action ways of engaging in action, of reflecting on action, and constructing meaning through action. The experience of the teacher in working within the dynamics of musical learning and classroom process is vital in allowing students to envision how they might proceed with their own learning. Certainly, such modeling is not offered to prescribe action for students but as a way of illustrating possible method and procedures for negotiating musical learning.

Modeling includes the articulation of content knowledge acquired by the teacher about music. The dissemination of factual knowledge, however, is done within the context of student action. Rather than giving a lecture that, most often, is divorced from context, the teacher offers content knowledge as it is relevant to the course of action of students. Much as Elliott suggests, content knowledge that arises out of the needs created by action leads toward more relevant learning and assimilation of understanding about music. Again, as with mediation, the teacher must develop the requisite skills needed to weave conversations about music into the dynamic flow of action in the classroom.
The Role of Students in the Dialogic Interactive Classroom

As with teacher, the role of student within the dialogic interactive classroom changes, as well. The traditional role of student as receiver of knowledge shifts to a more active role of student as constructor of knowledge. Like for the teacher, this involves taking risks, trusting instinct, and visioning new ways of becoming involved in the action of the classroom. As such, this makes learning more personally relevant for the student and requires commitment on the part of student to take responsibility for her or his actions. Like the teacher, the student must become comfortable with ambiguity, must learn to reflect upon action in order to make meaning which is relevant to her or his life situation, and must learn to allow meaning to guide future interaction with music, the teacher, and fellow students. Learning, for the student, becomes an active process whereby he or she is able to hone observation skills, further develop analytical skills, and increase evaluation skills within the context of action.

This active learning style is usually not readily accessible to the learner as, more often than not, he or she has been socialized to a more passive role as learner. It is not uncommon for a student to resist such a process out of fear or lack of confidence that he or she can exist in such a world. It is important that the teacher provide a safety net, most often through modeling and encouraging, which allows the learner to begin such a process. Likewise, a student who easily adapts to the active process of constructing knowledge can serve as a model for other students helping them to understand process and to be willing to take the necessary risks that lead toward growth. As I mentioned earlier, trust becomes a major factor in the ability of a learner to engage in the dialectic
interactive classroom. Trust takes time and patience. Through experience and success with the process, each student gradually begins to develop her or his individual ways of constructing knowledge. In turn, however, the learner may find that this active approach toward individualized learning may lead toward empowerment and transformation.
CHAPTER X

DIALOGIC INTERACTIONISM AND THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING

In reflecting upon Chapter IX, six salient issues emerge which characterize the dialogic interactive classroom. They are Transcending Musical Skill in Music Teaching, The Dialogic Interactive Choral Rehearsal, The Needs of Students and Curricula, Dialogic Interactionism and Assessment, Dialogic Interactionism and Planning for Instruction, and Trust and the Dialogic Interactive Classroom.

First, dialogic interactionism suggests that music study is more than just the development of musical skill, content knowledge, and performance. While it entails each of these aspects of choral music education, it is, at the same time, about much more. It is about the construction of self through the process of musical interaction. Such a definition of music suggests that issues such as gender, sexuality, ontology, philosophy, sociology, history, and so forth are as important as the acquisition of musical skill. More importantly, it is crucial that such a wide view of choral music education be considered within the context of the development of musical skill. As Bowman suggests, it is important to understand how we might educate students through music.

Second, the dialogic interactive classroom calls into question the professional model of choral rehearsal that has been and is practiced in many choral classrooms in this country. By professional model, I mean a classroom in which the teacher, acting as director, guides the choir to her or his vision in order to give outstanding performances. While performance is vitally important to the choral artform, and dialogic interactionism does not negate this, performance is not necessarily the end goal of the choral classroom
in secondary education. More salient is the knowledge of music and self that students acquire through the study of music in school than the expertness of the performance skills they achieve. Most students in choirs in public schools will not pursue a career as a professional performer. Yet, in many cases, we train them as though they will. What is more long-lasting and may have greater import for a student in the long run is the knowledge that he or she acquires about self as a result of having interacted musically.

Third, the specific needs of students in the context of the classroom become a crucial concern in the dialogic interactive classroom. While standards of performance and curricula exist which help to guide the teacher with regard to developing specific curriculum, these standards must not become the curriculum of the choral classroom. The specific issues and needs of real students in real classrooms must be allowed to guide curriculum. Standards are not necessarily bad but they must be appropriated within the context of the localized reference system of each choral classroom in which the teacher teaches each day.

Fourth, assessment is a necessary part of the learning process, but assessment must be contextual to the individual situation of the learner. More often than not, students are measured against standards that divorce skill from context. The use of rubrics, portfolios, and personal reflection by students, however, allows for more meaningful and contextual assessments of students and can lead toward the ultimate goal of enabling learners to engage in their own self-reflection long after they have left the secondary choral classroom.
Fifth, the dialogic interactive classroom implies a change in the nature of planning for instruction. A priori planning becomes less important than the mediation of interaction and reflection upon interaction. This shift in how lessons are planned and implemented means that teachers envision new ways of mediating interaction and helping students to make sense of it.

Finally, as the dialogic interactive classroom is based on trust, the practice of choral music education should be humane, caring, and gentle. No longer can the teacher act like a tyrant in the choral classroom demanding action of students in ways that are dehumanizing. The study of choral music should be enjoyable and joyful. Choral music celebrates community in very particular ways. Great care must be taken to insure that this community brings dignity to the art of choral music for all those that involved.

All six principles come to live only through the actions the teacher takes in the classroom. Therefore, I provide descriptions of how these six principles might look in practice. The examples are derived from actions described in Narratives Three and Four as well as my teaching as it has developed over the past few years. By describing the dialogic interactive classroom in the specifics of teacher behavior, I close the hermeneutic circle of this research for myself by extending my theoretical understanding into practice. I also hope that such an articulation of practice may help other teachers interested in similar issues within the context of their own teaching to better understand how dialogic interactionism might be realized in their own practice. The examples that I provide, then, are snapshots of my own instructional practice, not necessarily the elements of a new methodology for teaching.
Many of the situations in which I find myself as teacher and the ways I resolve these situations through teacher action are similar to situations and actions taken by other teachers. More importantly, many of the actions that I choose as teacher and the solutions that I find to resolve tensions in my teaching may be seen as examples of standard choral practice by other choral directors that read these scenarios. Certainly, my actions are influenced by the profession of which I am a member. In this way, much of what I describe here is not unique. What makes me believe that my teaching is distinctively different from the way I was taught, however, is that my actions are a result of a cohesive philosophical position—the philosophical position of dialogic interactionism. I try to illustrate in each snapshot how dialogic interactionism guides my practice and informs my actions. Defining and understanding my philosophical position becomes a critical part, then, of helping me to act as teacher in the classroom. Dialogic interactionism becomes the critical thread that ties together my actions and helps me to bring cohesion and meaning to my practice as music educator. This hermeneutic process of defining my philosophical grounding is neither complete nor fixed; it is always in the process of becoming. The more I understand and can articulate my world-view, the better prepared I am to make choices in the classroom, to facilitate student learning, and to encourage students in constructing their own knowledge and sense of self.

Principles of Dialogic Interactionism Applied to Teaching: Snapshots of Practice

Transcending Musical Skill in Music Teaching

In order to create a musical classroom in which learning subsumes and transcends the development of musical skill, the individual perspective of each student must be
acknowledged and honored within the classroom at all times. To create an environment that is free enough to allow for individual and personally meaningful constructions of learning, I need to get to know (1) all students as fully as possible, (2) how students construct knowledge, (3) what issues guide their interactions, and (4) how they perceive themselves as learners and as human beings.

As with most aspects of teaching, time becomes the biggest problem in the classroom when trying to construct such an environment. Taking the time really to get to know each student and to develop a personal relationship with each becomes a formidable task. Time is needed for the classroom to become a safe, interactive place and for learners to have the freedom they need to construct knowledge in their own ways. Learning to find time to interact with students or to make time when it feels as though there are too many other pressing issues becomes a process of negotiation and prioritization that consumes my life. However, I am convinced that this time spent getting to know my students is a key part of creating a meaningful and effective classroom.

How am I able to get to know students? First, I begin by having students journal. As students walk into the choir room, each picks up a card with her or his name on it from the piano. During the rehearsal, students are instructed to write down one thing that they have learned during the hour, one thing that is meaningful to them that happened during the hour, or one thing that they might take from rehearsal to use again.

In the beginning of each semester, the responses I read are clinical. “I learned my part to the Mulholland today.” “I finally understood what hemiola means.” Each day I
respond to the students on their cards with comments and questions. “Why do you think you felt that way?” “What does making that sound feel like in your voice or body?” “Can you describe that feeling?” Little by little the clinical reflections give way to more meaningful responses. “I was terrified at first, but I remembered that choir was a place in where I felt safe. As we moved, I began to hear my sound open up and fill the space around me like I have never heard before.” “I am constantly thinking about questions related to teaching. How might I help my students learn to blend as a choir?” “I love choir because it reminds me of my church choir which is why I chose to be a musician in the first place.” With each comment that students share, and with the little conversations that we have together on the cards back and forth after class, I begin to get to know the students—what they think about, how they frame questions, what is important to them, and how they go about constructing meaning.

The cards and journaling open up conversations that continue outside of class. Sometimes students email me with questions or to ask for advice. Again, with each of these interactions I ask more questions—questions that I hope make them reflect and learn to articulate their ideas and feelings. As I see students in the hall, I continue conversations with them about music, about learning, and about life. More importantly, I begin to see my students in other roles that they play outside my class. I might stop by other classrooms and watch how they interact in English or math classes. I go to ballgames to watch students play and cheer. I go to their plays and church pageants when
my schedule allows. I observe them in their homes when I am invited to dinner with their families.

Each of these interactions helps me to understand more fully the learners that are in my class and how they go about constructing their worlds. This information, in turn, helps me to shape my classes in ways that allow learners to get involved on their own terms. This knowledge might lead me to ask one learner a question about music in the context of movement where, for another student, I might pose a musical question in the context of physics or acoustics. It allows me to have a conversation in the hallway with a student about vocal production and the feeling of throwing a ball in gym class or how a chord progression mirrors a phrase of text in a poem. It helps me to open up the classroom environment to many different topics and to create a rich, constantly evolving set of conversations between myself and students, between student and students, and between students and themselves. These conversations arise out of our musical interactions and lead to many different but pertinent topics of conversations.

Not every student feels comfortable talking in class or sharing their ideas before their peers. Through journaling, though, students are able to share their ideas in private so that I might bring the ideas before the class. In this way, shy students’ voices and ideas become part of the classroom dialogue even though they are not the ones initiating the conversation. Some students seem not to be comfortable sharing at all. Their journals remain clinical throughout our time together. I have had to become comfortable with the fact that not every student is going to interact in equal ways. I have to let some have more time while others take less. However, I try to keep the environment open
enough that all have opportunities to engage in the conversations of the classroom as they feel comfortable doing so. This means having to take time away from those who are always eager to talk and give opportunities to quieter students by asking them questions or sharing some of their ideas with the group.

In my observations, I have come to understand that part of this process of making meaning seems to happen as learners “tell their stories.” In the middle of class, a student might raise her or his hand and begin sharing a theory of why we should interpret a phrase in a certain way or what the words of the song might mean. As I watch and listen, sometimes I am not able to follow what the student is saying but I can always observe the expression on her or his face change as he or she begins to make personal connections through talking. Sometimes, these “stories,” as I call them, spark another student to join in and begin a conversation about the experience. It is interesting to watch as the students make connections, meet each other in shared understandings, and make sense of their experiences together.

I cherish the “storytelling” because I realize that it is through such events that students make sense of their musical and human interactions. Students’ journaling becomes a type of storytelling, as well. However, to tell stories take time. Time within a rehearsal is limited but I try always to save some time for the stories that emerge from interaction. These become important acts of meaning-making.

The restraints of curricula, the pressures of performance, and the need for students to be involved in dialogue in rehearsal, all take time and create problems for me as teacher. I simply have to find ways to balance these pressures so that students have the
time they need to interact in personal and meaningful ways. This is always somewhat of an experiment on my part. I save some time for stories while I prioritize rehearsal time. I allow more time one day to guide students through a difficult section of music while I take more time another day to have them develop their own ways for figuring out a difficult section. Some days I model more; other days I only ask questions.

It is always a challenge to know when to move forward or when to take longer to allow interaction to transpire. I have had to learn to become sensitive to the needs of the learners and allow the interaction with them to guide me as to when to move on or when to slow down. The pressures of performance, the pressures of curricula, and the needs of learners become a dialectic that I must constantly negotiate as teacher. I am not always sure how I am able to find such balance or if I really ever am able to find the perfect balance. But, in the daily process of giving and taking, of trying to know the students, and in allowing interaction to guide classroom time in light of some of the more looming issues of teaching, I have become reasonably adept at thinking on my feet and negotiating competing tensions. Likewise, I am able to create an environment in which I feel like learners have the freedom to construct knowledge in ways that are meaningful to them.

*The Dialogic Interactive Choral Rehearsal*

Should an outside observer come to one of my rehearsals, it might not be clear initially that anything is different than any other choral rehearsal. Upon entering the room, the outsider would see students sitting in chairs on risers with their folders and pencils, me at the piano or behind the podium, and a student taking roll. Rehearsal might begin with a warm-up, students might be engaged for a few minutes in developing
reading or aural skills, and then rehearsal of repertoire for concert would commence. On the surface, the observer might find the rehearsal prototypical of rehearsals held in choir rooms in schools everyday. However, as the rehearsal continues, he or she might begin to notice that the ways in which students and teacher interact, the manner in which students are engaged in singing, and the types of relationships that exist among the agents in the classroom are somehow different. Let me explain.

I view the warm-up part of class as the time in which students focus attention on building singing technique. As each physical body in the choir is unique and as each learner is constructing knowledge in individual ways, warm-ups become a time in which I encourage self-evaluation and exploration. I try to find ways of engaging learners in their own discovery of their vocal instrument. With each exercise, I often have students describe how making a sound or perfecting a technique feels in their body. From the words that they use, I develop a vocabulary of very specific terms for talking about singing rather than giving students my own terms to describe their singing. One student might say that the sound feels “free” while another student suggests that the sound feels “hollow.” In my coaching then, I appropriate the words free and hollow to describe the types of feelings students want to recreate in the given exercise.

In this way, the vocabulary used in the classroom to describe singing comes directly from the students’ own words to which they have attached specific meanings. Each class I teach has a different vocabulary that emerges from vocal explorations performed together. Likewise, for each technique practiced, I use several terms in order to try and bring as many students as possible back to their own unique physical feeling. I
might say, for instance, “As we move into this exercise, remember to keep the buzz, or vibration, or tingling, or funny feeling in the lips.” “Work for a deep, rich, purple, or chocolaty sound as you sing.”

Such a way of connecting terms appropriated by the students is a different way of teaching than I was taught. In my own learning, teachers used standard terms derived from the profession to describe sound—terms such as masque resonance, forward placement, ringing quality, dental resonance, and so on. While such terms now have meaning to me as I have engaged in years of vocal study and study of the literature on vocal pedagogy, I find that these standard terms often have little meaning to my students. I can say “support your sound” but what does support mean? However, by saying “try not to let your ribs sink” (a description that comes from the students’ own verbal articulations of action), students may find more immediate success with executing the technique. More importantly, having students develop their own vocabulary involves them in reflecting upon their own actions in order to develop theoretical terms providing specific and personal meanings for them. This helps to engage them in their own process of learning.

Having made such articulations of action into terminology that has meaning to the students, I can then, after the fact, give students the standard term used by the profession of vocal teachers. This factual knowledge helps to socialize them to the standards of the profession. It is important to me that they know the terms used by the profession but only after they have made meaning of their own action in their own individual ways. I always try to work out of action toward theory, never the other way around.
Warm-ups are also a sharing time. It is not unusual for me to ask the students to change their position off of the risers into a circle or into clusters for warm-up. Finding new ways of changing the physical space creates new ways of interacting. Suddenly, in a circle, for instance, students can more easily respond to one another’s sound than they can on the risers simply because their physical location allows them to see one another and hear one another more clearly. Standing next to each other on the risers facing only the teacher makes interaction among students difficult. So, I urge students to find new ways of filling the space thus encouraging new ways of interacting.

Within these new groupings, it is not unusual for me to pair students for the warm-up with one student singing and the other listening and giving feedback. These informal peer teaching moments are important in that through sharing with one another, students begin to make connections and learn how to articulate what they are experiencing in action. I might do the exercise once, stop and let the groups discuss for a minute or two, then switch roles between singer/listener in their pairings and run the exercise again.

There are many times in warm-ups when I invite different students to model for the class, different students to lead the class in a warm-up that they have designed, or several students to serve as respondents who, in turn, give the group feedback on what they hear, see, and experience as they listen to and watch others sing.

Throughout the warm-up, and throughout the class as well, I take many breaks to stop and facilitate short conversations that serve as ways of reflecting. These little one or two minute dialogues are times in which students can make sense of action and
personalize their understanding in ways individual to their own perspective. These little reflective moments may take several forms. I might take the minute to give my own feedback to the students. I might ask a question that inspires dialogue to begin. I might ask individual students to give feedback to the group. I might ask the paired groupings to give feedback to each other all at the same time. Or, I might ask students to think about what they just did and write one sentence in their journals describing what they have just learned.

Reflection is a constant part of every class. I try, as best as possible, to find many different and creative ways to engage students in reflection. Often, ideas for reflection come to me in the moment as I engage in the interaction of the classroom. As I watch students working together, an idea emerges and I use it to inspire interaction. In this way, interactions lead the students and me to reflections through a logical flow of action. These reflections are short, succinct, and plentiful. There is a moment of reflection and then I move directly to the next activity.

In the music reading section of class, I engage students in finding musical problems and solutions thus helping them develop their skills for reading, hearing, and understanding music in both printed and aural forms. Rather than lecturing about or defining the musical problem for students, I give them a musical example and ask them to find the “new interval” or the “problem spot.” Then, I ask them to create ways that we might conquer the problem. They might think of a song that uses the interval we are trying to learn or figure out a way of comparing the new interval to an interval we already know. Through the development of ways for problem-solving, students then try their
solution to see if it works—can the solution help students master the musical problem being examined? Of course, reflection follows action as I ask students how well the theory has worked for them. I might suggest that students modify their solution slightly to make it more dependable. They might need to come up with a whole new way of approaching the problem—a whole new solution.

Likewise, the rehearsal of repertoire follows the same kind of theorizing and experimenting. Rather than telling students how I want them to interpret the music, students work with me to find the musical problems and possible solutions. For example, we might examine a section of a piece that is being sung “out of tune” by the choir. I would encourage the students to figure out why the section was not tuning and what we might do to fix the problem. Then, we would try our solution and see if it works. During these experiments, I often help students problem-find and problem-solve by offering my own knowledge, knowledge that I have gleaned from my years of directing choirs. However, I do not offer such knowledge as the “expert” but as one possible way of working. Sometimes my solutions work best; sometimes a student’s solution works best. Through dialogue, trial and error, as well as reflection the students and I work together to develop interpretations of pieces and to construct musical knowledge in ways that are meaningful to the specific students present in the classroom.

Certainly, I often need to give students factual information about style, a musical device, how-to information about blend, balance, or vocal technique. I try always to bring this factual information to the students after they have made their own discoveries and in the context of the dialogues that transpire within classroom interaction. This
means that often, such factual knowledge comes after the students have appropriated
musical solutions or as suggestions that can be used as a possible musical solution. The
atmosphere in the classroom is usually one of collegiality and sharing as we work
together to solve problems that arise. It is not simply about learning musical facts or
appropriating content, although this comprises much of what we do together.

As with warm-ups, rehearsal time often means that the students and I re-invent the
ways in which we use classroom space. We might again rehearse in a circle, or in small
groups, or in small groups around the room rehearsing all at once, or in another acoustical
space in the building. The atmosphere of the classroom is alive and often chaotic.
Students are involved in many conversations at once. Or, we have one large group
dialogue. Or we split up all over the building in small groups for rehearsal. Classroom
interaction follows the logic of our conversations and moves seamlessly from one
dialogue to the next.

And, as with warm-up, our rehearsals are full of reflective moments. We sing for
a moment, then discuss. Our discussions lead to more singing and then more discussion.
We work this way until near the end of class. Then, as we finish class, we usually sing
through what we have been working on to bring closure to our time together and to get a
sense of our accomplishments.

The teaching techniques that I describe here are not new to the profession of
music education, choral music education, or education, in general. Some readers may
recognize my teacher actions as discovery learning, Socratic teaching, student-centered
learning, or stochastic process teaching. Some of my actions may seem to come directly
out of theories such as Schön’s reflective practice or Dewey’s scientific method. What is important is not that I utilize several different teaching techniques, but that all of my teaching is grounded in the philosophical position of dialogic interactionism.

I do not go into the classroom to be Socratic, or to conduct an experiment, or to engage students in reflection-on-action. I act as an agent in the classroom and respond to the interaction as it develops. In the process of teaching, I am not able to name the type of teaching technique I am using. Such terms as student-centered teaching or reflective practice come to me after the fact and in my own reflection. The specific needs and issues of the students involved drive my teacher action and help classroom experiences to remain true to the localized context.

In general, my teaching is about reacting to the moment, engaging in interaction with the students and the music, asking questions, describing to students what I observe in their work, using their words in my descriptions, using what I know about the students to contextualize interactions, and engaging students in dialogues. I have become adept at thinking on my feet since much of what transpires cannot be planned ahead of time. I never know when I begin a class where it might end up. Each class is a journey and I am the leader of the group through that journey. As such, each class is exciting, scary, surprising, and complex all at the same time.

The Needs of Students and Curricula

Throughout its history, choral music education practice in America has developed standards of practice that guide the kinds of experiences choirs typically have, the type of repertoire they sing, and the curricula that is chosen for study in the classroom. The
traditions of choral contests and festivals, holiday concerts, tours, repertoire lists of chestnut pieces for choirs, and curriculum standards that define minimum achievement levels for students in choral organizations are plentiful. Organizations such as the American Choral Directors Association set unspoken standards for performance, literature choices, and curricula as exemplary choirs are chosen to illustrate the best that choral music has to offer. Such practices are not necessarily bad as they have raised the level of choral singing in the country. They provide benchmarks that students and teachers can use to evaluate their own programs and to progress as a choral group.

However, often these traditions and standards of practice become the curriculum of the classroom and, as such, guide the types of interactions that transpire within it. Literature is often chosen off lists the profession deems as quality whether or not these choices meet the needs of students or community. Competition and the desire to win drive curriculum and artistic vision whether or not such actions consider the needs of learners. Students’ needs often take a back seat to the needs of directors who want to advance their careers. Well-meaning administrators make demands on students and teachers to perform in public forums that bring glory to the school whether or not such performances advance musical learning in the classroom.

In my classroom, I try to allow the needs of the students to guide the curriculum, the repertoire chosen, and the types of experiences that the choir has as a musical organization. When I have a choir of very strong readers with larger voices, I might challenge the students with a major work. On years when I have smaller voices, I might look to find smaller chamber pieces with which students can be successful. If students
seem to have trouble with a certain vocal technique, such as singing legato with a sense of musical line, I choose repertoire that highlights this technique so that students can master these difficult techniques. If I have a group that seems to thrive on competition, we might enter a choral competition or festival and participate as competitor. Likewise, if I have a group that seems to be less motivated by competition, we might develop a concert theme and center our work on presenting a creative choral concert.

I try to develop ways of letting students get involved in helping to choose repertoire. Often, we form committees that look at several pieces and make joint decisions on what might be best for a certain concert or event. Sometimes, we engage in improvisation and either compose or arrange a piece that specifically fits the needs of our group. When money is available, I commission works from composers that highlight the strengths of the singers in the choir. Some semesters, we plan large concert events where students help in building scenery, sewing costumes, planning for receptions, and so forth. Some years, we choose to travel and tour to other cities in order to share our music.

The more I work with students in the type of dialogic interactive classroom that I have described, the more I realize that the needs of the students have to be first priority and that these needs drive the decisions that I make regarding curriculum and classroom activity. But allowing students’ needs to guide curricula often can put me at odds with administrators, with colleagues, and even with students. In my past teaching, choosing to do a concert of all music by women composers did not meet my administrator’s expectations for a traditional approach to repertoire even though such an event allowed the women in the choir to engage in very meaningful constructions of musical and self-
knowledge. In another situation, my choice not to participate in a festival was seen by colleagues as a way of boycotting the event. Students frequently are not in agreement as to what might be best for the choir.

The dialectic of these competing tensions often leaves me feeling alone, confused, and not quite sure of myself. I try to put the needs of the students first, but such actions always come with a price. I have had to learn to trust that my role as teacher is about helping learners grow as musicians and people and not about creating powerhouse groups that win every competition. Likewise, I have had to learn that my own professional reputation, while important, must not grow at the expense of my students or their learning. Daily, I struggle with prioritizing what is best for the context of the learners I teach with the many other expectations put upon me both by myself and others. There is no easy solution. I have had to learn how to evaluate myself as teacher within the context of my own classroom and not necessarily by the standards put forth by the profession or school of which I am a part.

All that I describe here is not new to music education or to other choral directors. Every teacher finds herself or himself in similar dialectic situations in which he or she must negotiate student need, community expectation, and personal goals. What is important to note, here, is that my actions as teacher are guided by the philosophical position of dialogic interactionism as a guideline by which to decide all of my actions. Being rigorous about allowing such a world-view to guide decision-making brings about cohesion to my classroom and helps to determine the manner in which I negotiate tension and dialectic situations. It is also a critical part of helping to define who I am as educator.
in the context of my localized classroom and the specific students that I teach. In this way, I have some grounding out of which I can make choices.

**Dialogic Interactionism and Assessment**

Assessment is a key component of any educational environment; students must receive accurate feedback in order to progress in their learning. The same is true of the dialogic interactive classroom. Assessment in my classroom takes many forms, both informal and formal, both in terms of the group as a whole and each individual learner.

The reflective moments and dialogues that I describe above provide opportunities for both group and individual informal assessment. Providing students with teacher feedback, having students provide each other with feedback in pair groups or to the class as a whole, as well as having students reflect on their own work in the form of journaling are all ways in which these reflective moments happen.

In the course of conducting these moments, I take notes and use these notes to develop more formal checklists and rubrics that then provide formal instruments for assessment. For instance, several students may be asked to come before the choir in rehearsal and offer specific suggestions about choral blend. One student might talk about the unity of vowels (both in the mouth shape of singers they observe as well as the unity of the sound they hear), one might talk about hearing voices stick out, one might talk about qualities of different voices as being harsh, breathy, ringing, or brassy, and one might talk about the ways in which the soprano ones blend with soprano twos and altos. As I listen to their critiques, I categorize the students’ comments into a checklist: Choral Blend—vowel shape, vocal quality, volume of singers, consistency of sections within the
choir. This checklist represents the beginnings of a rubric, emerging directly from our informal observations, which we continue to develop each time the concept of choral blend comes up in dialogue.

I print these rubrics on large sheets of poster board and put them on the front wall of the choir room. In this way, we develop standards for choral singing that we use for our own evaluations of the choir. These standards emerge directly out of our own problem-finding and solving, not as a set of a priori or standardized benchmarks given to us or developed by me outside of the context of classroom interaction. As a choir, the students and I make several different rubrics throughout the year—dynamics, phrasing, text interpretation, vocal production, and so on. These rubrics become works in progress that we continue to work with all year long as our understanding of each concept deepens through experience.

Likewise, the rubrics provide the students with a set of ideas that guide their listening to recordings of other choirs. From such guided listening, students can compare how their own understanding of blend, phrasing, dynamics, or vocal/choral tone are similar to or different than other choirs. The same rubrics become formalized instruments that I use to evaluate students in individual part-checks and small ensemble settings in order to provide students with individual feedback.

I spend much of my time recording rehearsals (both audio and video) and playing back sections for the choir to evaluate. Learning to reflect on action through the use of technology allows both the students and I to see, and hear, the performance as the audience might experience our work. This type of feedback is very revealing; it allows
students to take a different look at their own practice. Again, using the classroom rubrics provides the means of organizing recorded evaluations of performance as student assessments.

Individually, I try each term to hear students sing either individually or in small ensembles and to provide individual assessment to each. Sometimes, I ask students to schedule a time to meet me outside of class for a part-check. Sometimes, I ask students to tape their part-check that I listen to and respond to in writing. In each of these instances, I always ask for students to include a self-assessment with their tape or to do a self-assessment of their singing as they perform for me. I use these self-assessments as a way of understanding the students’ perceptions of themselves and as a way of organizing my own assessment. I agree with them on some points and extend those points that I feel students need to reconsider. Many times, my extensions come in the form of questions and not definitive statements. Rather than saying, “Your performance lacks clarity of pitch,” I might respond like this, “I do not hear all of the pitches written on the page being accurately performed here. Where do you hear discrepancies? What might be causing you to have trouble with these notes? What strategies might you employ that could help you gain control over these notes?” In this way, I try to make my feedback both fair and specific as I point out what I observed. Rather than telling the student how to fix the problem, however, I try to engage the student in creating their own specific strategies for rethinking and relearning.

During the term, I ask students to keep all of their reflections, my formal observations, and their journal cards to create a small portfolio of their work. Then, at
the end of the term, I ask the students to analyze their portfolio by writing a short reflection paper on their work throughout the term. I urge them to find common themes that appear in their written materials, to find examples that provide evidence of growth, and to identify areas they find need further development. I ask them to complete the assignment by developing two or three goals that serve to guide their studies in the following term.

Two issues concerning assessment are always troublesome. First, as with other issues I have raised in this chapter, formal assessment takes time. Certainly, insuring that reflective moments are interspersed throughout action becomes a routine part of classroom interaction. Finding the time to hear individual singers, to listen to individual tapes, and to have individual meetings with students regarding assessment is time consuming. These formal assessments are crucial, however, in giving learners constructive feedback and in helping them to create strategies for continued growth. As with so many elements of teaching, individual assessment in the dialogic interactive choral classroom must become a priority and time must be saved to insure that it happens.

Second, in most schools, formal assessment must result at some point in a grade. This presents a major philosophical dilemma. Grades are most often thought of as normative in that they represent where one student’s progress falls within the progress of all students in the class. However, dialogic interactionism is based philosophically on the idea that a student’s growth should be considered within his or her own context. Certainly, students need specific and constructive feedback from which they grow. However, if such constructive feedback is followed with a normative grade of C or C-
because that is where a student’s progress falls in relation to the other students in the class, that student may give up or lose her or his motivation to try. On the other hand, if all students receive an A in their choral class, a practice that happens in many choral classrooms, students do not receive the specific feedback that they need.

Grading is a complex issue to which there is no simple answer nor have I found a way to resolve this dilemma in my own teaching. It again becomes a dialectic that must be negotiated by the teacher in light of the specifics of each student’s situation. One possible solution is to give students two grades, one normative and one ideographic. The ideographic grade, the assessment of the student within the context of her or his own progress, becomes the official grade that shows on the report card. The normative grade, which is seen by no one but the student, provides comparative feedback to the student without penalizing her or him. This possible solution, while not perfect, may provide the student with necessary feedback while not discouraging her or him from continuing to interact.

**Dialogic Interactionism and Planning for Instruction**

As dialogic interactionism is based on the facilitation of dialogues between and among students and teacher that emerge within the context of classroom interaction, the manner in which I plan for classes must be appropriate for what happens in the classroom at any given moment. Writing lesson plans with behavioral objectives and pre-arranged activities in which learners are to respond in a certain manner, does not address the flexibility that is needed to respond in the moment as needs and issues arise. This does not mean that I cease planning for instruction. It means that I adapt my planning in ways
that prepare me for the types of experiences that I may encounter with students. I do this by means of three specific actions which every teacher faces but which—as described here—are essential to dialogic interactionism. They are (1) studying the score ahead of rehearsal, (2) planning points of entry for my interaction with the students at the beginning of rehearsal, and (3) allowing previous classroom interactions to guide future interactions.

Score study

To respond to musical situations as they emerge in the moment from interaction, I must know the scores that I am teaching as well as possible. In my initial planning for the instruction of new repertoire, I spend whatever time it takes to learn each of the vocal parts to the song, to understand how the parts work together harmonically, to understand the form of the piece, to understand and interpret the text including any translation or pronunciation that must be done, and to have an understanding of the context of the piece—its history, social significance, and style characteristics. This score preparation may involve listening to recordings of the piece, reading historical or biographical information about the composer or the piece itself, doing a harmonic analysis of the score, translating text, reading about the poet whose text is used, and so on.

While such study inevitably involves the development of interpretative ideas about how the piece might be performed, the object of my score study is not to develop a set interpretation that I then try to impart to my students. The point of dialogic interactionism is that such an interpretation develops among students and teacher with the music in rehearsal and that students be allowed to be part of the decision-making that
leads ultimately toward interpretation. Certainly, as teacher, there will be many interpretive ideas that I bring to classroom dialogues about the piece especially with regard to style and historical performance practice. However, I allow students to engage in their own interpretations and experimentation with ideas during rehearsal. I also encourage students to do their own research on composers, poets, and the piece as well as the time period and reference group from which the piece originates.

While rehearsing the piece, interpretive ideas are developed, tested, and evaluated by both students and myself. Some interpretations are kept while others are abandoned. Little by little, from these interactive dialogues, the final interpretation of the score begins to emerge. As we make interpretive decisions, both the students and I mark our scores so that plans can be remembered. Then, once we have a developed plan, we rehearse the piece until we can execute the plan with ease. However, it is not uncommon to revisit the interpretation and make changes even up to the last rehearsal before performance. A thorough understanding of the score on my part before rehearsals for the piece begin is necessary in order for me to facilitate such interaction.

*Planning points of entry for interaction to transpire*

Between rehearsals, I plan for the points-of-entry that students and I use to get us into the rehearsal process. Such points-of-entry may suggest that I decide upon which sections or measures of pieces will be considered during the next rehearsal. It may involve the composition of short melodies that will be used as material for sightreading. It also may involve the composition of a new vocal warm-up a specific musical sequence with which to present a new concept. These plans represent beginnings—topics or
assignments designed to begin dialogues or interactions among the agents of the classroom. They do not represent scripted behavioral plans that attempt to predict or prescribe student or teacher behavior. They are meant simply to provide a structure for the time the students and I share and to inspire interaction and dialogue. As interaction and dialogue drives classroom action, points-of-entry may have to be revised, restructured, or abandoned all together.

Allowing previous classroom interaction to guide future interaction

Much of my planning between rehearsals involves reflection upon the dialogues and actions of the past class in order prepare for the future interaction of the next class. For instance, if our interaction has led toward the development of a rubric to be used for evaluating choral tone, in between classes I must flesh out the rubric based upon what has transpired in the dialogue of the last class in order to provide a formalized draft of the rubric for consideration in the next class. Likewise, if classroom dialogue about the text of the piece has led toward visual images remembered from famous paintings, between classes I might find copies of those paintings to share with students in the next class in hopes of continuing the conversations begun. Or, I might reflect upon interaction in order to provide students with a recounting of what has transpired during the last class, much like a secretary provides minutes of past meetings to members of the committee present. In this manner, I become a facilitator of interaction in that I make meaning of past interaction in order to provide materials or other necessary resources needed to continue conversations. I do not try necessarily to influence future interaction based upon my own interpretation nor make specific plans that prescribe what course students
and teacher must take. As leader, it is my responsibility to facilitate dialogue and to maintain the necessary resources needed for classroom interaction.

**Trust and the Dialogic Interactive Classroom**

The issue of trust permeates every aspect of the dialogic interactive classroom. Without the ability of students and teacher to trust themselves, each other, and the idea that through dialogue both knowledge and self can be constructed, the dialogic interactive classroom could not exist. Trust involves risk. It means being willing to put personal ideas into the “common marketplace” of the classroom for others to dissect, analyze, and criticize. It involves risking self and self-image in the public negotiation of thought and action—a reality that is true for both the teacher and the student. It is predicated on care for the self and the selves of others with whom dialogue transpires. Trust is at once both real and enigmatic. At times it is manifested in concrete relationships between humans. At other times, it is fleeting, hard to recognize, and difficult to control.

Certainly, the issue of trust in the dialogic interactive classroom involves both teacher and students. For purposes here, however, I can only speak to issues of trust from the perspective that I know, the perspective of the teacher in the dialogic interactive classroom. Understanding how students perceive and create trust in the classroom is a topic for further study. With regard to trust and the teacher, two issues are important: trusting myself, and trusting students.

**Trusting myself as teacher**

For me, trusting the philosophical position of dialogic interactionism as a viable way of acting as teacher in the choral classroom has been and is a crucial issue. This
philosophical position is based upon shifting the teacher role from that of expert to that of partner in learning, sharing the power of the classroom with students, changing the nature of curricula, re-establishing ways of planning for teaching, and re-envisioning the manner in which music is mediated in rehearsal. These shifts of positions and actions taken by me as teacher are at odds with the manner in which I was trained, with much of common practice in the schools where I have taught, and with the philosophical positions taken by many of my colleagues in the profession. As I have already discussed, my actions in the classroom have been met with opposition from administrators for whom I worked, with some students, and some parents. More importantly, I have often struggled with myself in that these new ways of interacting seem foreign to my upbringing and to the ways that I first knew choral music to exist while a student myself.

Not only taking such a philosophical stance but trying to create specific changes in my actions in the classroom based upon this philosophy has been a risk for me both personally and professionally. Allowing students access to the power of the classroom as well as the power of learning, involving them in the musical decision-making of rehearsal, engaging in dialogues with them that are open-ended, and allowing curricula to follow classroom interaction is not always the most efficient way of working, nor does it always produce a musical product that the profession deems as outstanding. It would often be much easier for me to acquiesce to ways of acting that are in line with the standards of my profession. Such action is often more efficient and safe.

Likewise, relinquishing the role of expert means abolishishing a mask that often is worn to protect me, personally. Admitting shortcomings, admitting that I do not know an
answer, and placing myself in the situation of learning from students involves risking personal security and ego. It is much safer to hide behind the mask of expert and to avoid facing my own limitations in front of students, administrators, and other colleagues. Dialogue with students involves revealing vulnerable parts of myself—parts of self that are then left exposed to criticism. For example, it is much easier to make up a reasonable answer to give students to avoid looking unprepared than to admit that I do not know and must search for an answer myself. In taking such risks, the rewards of dialogue can be greater as I am put in the position of constructing my own knowledge alongside my students. More importantly, I become a role model for students demonstrating for them the willingness to take the risks necessary toward personal growth and fulfillment.

I have come to trust that these ways of working are beneficial both musically and personally. While my actions may not always be the most efficient or personally comfortable, they have produced musical results of which I am proud and teaching situations that I have found to be meaningful and effective. However, just like the dialogic interactive classroom, my understanding of and articulation of my philosophical stance toward teaching is also in the process of becoming. I encounter new ideas everyday in the classroom that challenge my thoughts and actions. Again, trusting my convictions and the ways in which I come to understand the practice of teaching is central to my process and to my continued growth.

Along with trusting my philosophical position, working in the classroom in the manner consistent with dialogic interactionism means that I must trust that I am able to make teachable moments out of interaction and that such teachable moments lead toward
the development of musical skill and content mastery on the part of my students.

Conceiving of curriculum as a manifestation of interaction that is constantly evolving means that learning is constantly negotiated in action. As such, my actions as teacher transcend a priori planning of instruction that leads logically toward technical or content mastery. Simply teaching to technical or content mastery is safe. Rights and wrongs exist that make my role as teacher easier to define. However, dialogic interactionism is constantly evolving—learning happens within the context of action which requires that I as teacher can take the moments of action and help students to find meaning within them and that such meaning is, as often as not, both extra-musical as well as musical. This is an issue of trust on my part; I must trust that I can find structure in ambiguity, that I can take students’ ideas and help them to shape these ideas in ways that produce musical results with which they are pleased and in which they find meaning, and that I can demonstrate that learning has transpired within a fluid and dynamic teaching environment. This in-the-moment way of working requires that I am alert to the situations in which I find myself, that I am intuitive and can create specific actions out of interaction, and that I am creative. The ability to trust my own instincts and ways of working becomes critical.

**Trusting students**

Not only must I learn to trust myself, I also must learn to trust students. First, I must trust that students are capable of taking the initiative needed to construct their own knowledge and that they have the ability and skills needed to construct knowledge that is meaningful and personally relevant. Sometimes, hiding behind the role of expert is more
than just an act of self-preservation. Sometimes such an act is predicated on a lack of trust that students are capable of constructing knowledge for themselves. For example, often teachers make most, if not all, of the musical decisions in the classroom not so much because they want to control the power of the classroom, but because they do not believe that students have the requisite skills needed to make informed interpretations of musical scores. Certainly, there are factual issues about style, historical performance practice, and the like that students will not know. As teacher, socializing them to such ways of thinking is part of my role. However, once they have an understanding of such factual information about musical interpretation, they should be able to construct their own musical ideas in relation to their level of expertise. When the teacher does the work for students, it often appears that students are incapable of doing such work. However, as I have found in my own teaching, doing the work for students places them in a position of complacency—if I do not trust them enough to allow them a voice in musical decision-making, why should they try? I give them the answers. All they have to do is sit there and respond to my prompts.

Trusting my students in this manner means allowing them to share ideas, to experiment with musical interpretations, and to honor their choices in the musical decision-making of the classroom. Doing the work for them shows a lack of trust on my part as teacher for the students and their work. I must learn to trust that students are motivated to learn and are capable of acting in responsible ways that bring about personal constructions of knowledge. In this way, I learn to trust that students have their
educational interests at heart and that my role in such knowledge-construction is based on supporting and encouraging them in their epistemological pursuits.

Second, part of trusting students is honoring their perspectives and ideas when they share them. This involves my learning to listen to what students are saying and to help them learn to clearly articulate their ideas so that others understand what they mean. For example, it is easy for me as teacher to ask a question to which I have an intended answer. When I do not get the answer that I am looking for, the student is then wrong and must be corrected. Dialogic interactionism suggests that in dialogues with students, I must accept the answer that I receive and challenge that answer through questioning in order to understand the perspective of the student giving the answer. When the answer I receive is different from the one I expect, I must try to understand what the student is saying and begin to negotiate my own expectations with the perspective of the student. In doing so, I often find that the answer given by the student, which at first may seem wrong, is, in fact, quite perceptive. Such an answer may reflect a perspective that I have never considered; such a perspective may, in turn, change the manner in which both the student and I come to understand the issue at hand. Certainly, students’ answers are not always appropriate to the question being asked. Rather than simply dismissing the answer as wrong, however, I must trust that the student has something of importance to say and, through dialogue and questioning, help the student more clearly articulate her or his idea. Dialogue is predicated on mutual respect of those involved. Learning to trust
that students’ ideas are valid, even if different than mine, becomes important for all involved.

Finally, I must trust that students will entrust me with their ideas, their involvement, and with their learning. Trust is a mutual endeavor. The levels to which students are able to trust me as teacher as well as the ways in which students show this trust varies with each student present. As Bowman suggests, learning and trust are ethical encounters. As distinct others, both students and I learn to trust each other through the interactions and dialogues that transpire between us in the actions of the classroom. As such, part of my trust of students means celebrating these shared experiences and treating them with respect and care. Far too many times in my own experience as student have teachers violated my trust as they became rigid, disrespectful, and demanding. Certainly, I want my students to achieve at the highest level possible, and I want them to reach toward their ultimate limits, but such aspirations must happen in ways that maintain the respect and care of students and their ideas. Actions on my part must be gentle and nurturing, not demanding and forceful. The behavior of choral-director-as-tyrant who screams, yells, and belittles students in rehearsals is not congruous with a director who trusts students and their individual perspectives. Part of trusting students means allowing them the opportunity for a place at the table of the classroom, a place where a valid and viable voice can be heard. Trusting students in this manner can be emancipating for both student and teacher.
CHAPTER XI

ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several themes have emerged in this writing that raise questions for future practice and research. In this chapter, I address them under the headings of The Examination of Other Writings in Music Education, Empirical Studies of Students Engaged in Dialogic Interactionism, Future Teacher Preparation, the Politics of the Choral Classroom, the Issue of Curriculum, Comparative Studies of Classroom Practice, Assessment, and Context and Research.

The Examination of Other Writings in Music Education

Having completed this study, I am now much more aware of and able to articulate my philosophical perspective that I call dialogic interactionism. Such awareness brings clarity to my world-view and allows me to engage in more specific dialogue with other ideas in the discourse of music education. As I suggested in Chapter I, before I began this study I read the work of writers such as Regelski and Small. At that time, their work did not resonate with my experience. However, having completed my own analysis and articulation of my work, I recognize similar issues in the manner that Regelski defines praxis or that Small defines Musicking. Likewise, I also see parallels with many of the music education feminist writings that speak to a more inclusive practice of music education in ways that are empowering for both women and men. Doubtless, there are many other writings in the music education literature that intersect my ideas.

I need to engage in systematic examination of the philosophical, sociological, critical, and feminist literature in music education in light of my articulations of dialogic
interactionism in this study. Such an examination will provide a way of challenging my thinking, revising my understanding of teacher practice, and extending conversations where my work brings new insight.

For example, I need to determine: 1) How does dialogic interactionism compare with other theoretical models of teacher practice in music education? 2) In what ways do these other models influence my understanding of practice? 3) In what ways do the principles of dialogic interactionism extend current thinking in music education?

Empirical Studies of Students Engaged in Dialogic Interactionism

Throughout this study, I have described my students’ reactions to and interactions within the dialogic interactive classroom. I have based these descriptions of student behaviors and attitudes on my observations as participant observer in the classroom and on written and verbal feedback shared with me by students. I have tried not to speak for the students but to speak only of their behaviors from my perspective.

As students are a crucial part of this philosophical conception of the choral music classroom, students’ perceptions of such practice are critical. Several questions come to mind. Do students perceive the same transformation that I suggest is present in my classroom? Do students find such a classroom as empowering as I have suggested it is in this research? In what ways do students perceive their interaction in my classes—in ways that are similar to or different than how I articulated their roles? How do students perceive of my role as teacher in their musical studies?

Understanding how students perceive their experiences in my classroom is a critical component of developing my own practice of teaching as I have described it here.
Several empirical-qualitative studies that attempt to reveal students’ perceptions are needed. These descriptive studies based on observations of and interviews with students engaged in the dialogic interactive classroom will allow me to extend my thematic analysis from the students’ points of view as I continue the process of clarifying and articulating my teacher actions.

One specific issue has emerged from this study that is of particular interest, the issue of trust. While trust in the classroom is mediated between and among students and teacher, I have only been able to articulate my thoughts concerning trust from my own point of view. Systematically examining students’ ideas about trust in the form of written comments, interviews, and observations, will help me to recognize reoccurring themes that emerge from such data. This information may better help me to build relationships of trust with the specific students that I teach daily.

Future Teacher Preparation

The philosophical perspective of dialogic interactionism takes on a new meaning for me in my role as university professor. Much of my teaching has now shifted from serving as choral director to the teaching of future teachers. As such, the philosophical perspectives that I have developed here will impact the manner in which I engage in instructing these adult students as they prepare to take their own roles as teacher in the choral music classrooms. In addition, such a perspective raises critical questions for me about teacher training, education, and mentoring.

Certainly, many of the actions that I have taken in my choral classrooms might be equally important in this new context. I want to ensure that my students are prepared to
assume their roles, but I also want them to do so in ways that are contextual to their individual lived histories, that are empowering to them, and that help them to create a sense of personal voice. Such teaching changes the traditional role of teacher trainer and leaves me with the task of figuring out my teacher action in a new and different context.

This task is not easy. The preparation of future teachers is an issue in which both direct power and social ideology play a part. The demands made upon teacher training institutions, by both the profession at large and the certification standards set by each state, provide a set curriculum geared toward maintaining the status quo within the schools as they now exist. Often among the demands made upon students by certification boards, schools of education, the curriculum of the university at large, and the schools of music in which most music education programs exist, undergraduate music education students are left with one or two, if any, elective credits to pursue interests other than music. Students are over worked, emotionally drained, and often do not see the relevance in what they are being asked to study. Likewise, such demands limit the amount of authority that I have in making changes to curricula if my students are to be successful on exit and licensure examinations.

In light of such “givens,” future research should address how the philosophical perspectives of dialogic interactionism might be realized in the education of future teachers amidst the demands made upon both students and teachers by the institutions in which teacher-training programs exist? In what ways might such a philosophical view change the manner in which I construct such classes and curricula? How might I continue to develop specific strategies for instructing future teachers that help them to
develop skills in connection with their life situations? How might I encourage the development of each student’s individual teacher voice in the ways that I construct the methods classroom? How can factual knowledge about teaching be used in the development of teacher persona in ways that maintain the dignity of each student’s individual perspective? How can I help students to become critically aware and reflective of their practice?

The Politics of the Choral Classroom

The power structures of educational institutions, the power structure of the classroom, and the sharing of, or limitation of, power with the agents of both the school at large and the classroom specifically are political in nature. The way that power is maintained, structured, and shared in schools and classrooms involves different ways of conceiving of political structures and organizations. Likewise, these structures provide contexts for the negotiation of power, the covert influence of power, and the overt manipulation of power by the agents involved.

A systematic examination of political theory as related to the structure and organization of both the school and classroom is needed. A caveat . . . these kinds of studies exist—they need to be applied to the music classroom—that has not been done. Such studies might reveal different ways that the politics of schooling, educating, and learning transpires in different educational settings. In addition, such a theoretical understanding, informed by extant writings in politics, might reveal new ways of understanding how power is negotiated, controlled, and manipulated by the agents involved.
Also inherent within dialogic interactionism is the delegation of professional power from administrators to teacher and from teacher to students as power is shared, and both students and teacher are given the autonomy needed to assume such power. This delegation of power is not necessarily possible in the hierarchies of differing educational institutions. In may, in fact, be easier to achieve in an institution of higher education than in a public school setting as I have seen in my own career that has taken me from the public schools to the university. Yet even at the university level, the mandates made on teachers and students by state education agencies and licensure boards seek to limit the amount of freedom both teacher and students can exercise in the development of curricula and courses of study.

Research is needed that looks at the sociological dimensions of differing educational workplaces in order to understand how power structures are established, how teachers and students go about assuming autonomy, and how such shared power might be established within existing structural hierarchies. Certainly, the sociological dimensions of each educational institution or school are as individual in nature as is each classroom. However, a thorough investigation of many different institutions, both at the secondary and tertiary levels, may reveal some generalizations about how educational institutions tend to work and how agents of these institutions negotiate power within existing structures. Such understanding is central to establishing learning as it has been articulated here.

How is power delegated to the various members of different educational institutions? How do teachers negotiate power within such structures so that they can
claim the authority needed to share power with students? Are there structures in either secondary or tertiary educational institutions that tend to make the sharing of power among agents easier to achieve?

The Issue of Curriculum

My research suggests that the manner in which a priori planning for learning has been conceived of in the past may not best serve learning if learning is to be seen as emerging from specific interactions within the classroom environment. The problem with a priori planning for learning, as I have pointed out, is that it is impossible to know beforehand how learners will act, what they will focus upon, and what knowledge they will construct as they interact within the intersubjective spaces of the classroom. To predict these ways of acting either leads to failure on the part of the teacher as predictor or creates a situation in which the a priori plans of the teacher force students into ways of acting that stifle or constrict the organic interaction of the classroom situation. This latter manifestation of both planning and curriculum can disenfranchise students and divorce that which is learned from the learner’s innate inquisitiveness.

Changing the way we conduct planning for learning does not suggest that we abandon plans for the classroom. It is important, however, that we shift the focus from prescribing what must be studied to planning for a logical journey through what is studied, a journey that will bring about meaning and coherence for the learner through reflection. This is no easy pursuit and requires such questions as: 1.) How can I continue to envision ways of planning for learning and developing curricula that allow for the greatest degree of teacher and student autonomy in the classroom? 2.) How can I help the
future teachers that I mentor capably plan for instruction in ways that not only help them
to be successful in the classroom but also enable them to allow instruction to follow the
logic of interaction?

Comparative Studies of Classroom Practice

My phenomenologically-based examination of my teaching practice may serve as a model for other teachers interested in analyzing their own practices of teaching. From such analyses, it would be possible, then, to conduct comparative studies of different teaching situations with regard to the construction of self, the localized reference system of the classroom, and power in order to discover similarities or differences that emerge from the data. Such insight might allow for the development of generalizations about choral practice in the context of these three constructs that could lead to renewed efforts for finding ways of understanding choral practice, at least within the practices of those teachers involved. Certainly, such comparisons are difficult to make due to the inherent contextual assumption of dialogic interactionism and cannot be conceived of as universals. However, the ability to conduct comparative studies with different populations of students, different teachers, and different classroom settings might strengthen the case for acknowledging the individualized context of each classroom while, at the same time, reveal issues from different contexts that are similar.

Along the same lines, it also would be insightful to conduct comparative studies of my classrooms over an extended period of time—a longitudinal study of dialogic interactionism in the context of my own practice. Such examination again might support the relativistic nature of each individual classroom context while, at the same time, reveal
issues that tend to transcend classroom boundaries and student individualities. Such information would be useful to me in the continued development of practice in the specific classrooms that I teach.

Assessment

Assessment is a crucial part of the teaching and learning process. As teachers we have a responsibility to learners to ensure that learning is transpiring in ways that provide for the richest learning environments possible, yet, if we assume the relative nature of knowledge-construction and assume that a priori planning does not readily support such ways of knowing, then traditional tests of outcomes or standardized achievement tests become obsolete. What becomes important is that we find ways of assessing students’ musical learning that maintain the relationship of knower to what is known and that celebrate the diversity of ways that students come to such knowledge. Most importantly, we should help each learner construct personal ways of assessing, through reflection, so that he or she can continue the learning process after leaving formal schooling.

Learning to assess students in ways that maintain the context of both the classroom and each individual learner’s lived history becomes a major part of what future teachers must become adept at doing. Helping future teachers learn about portfolio assessment, rubric development, observation techniques, and record keeping such as the journaling cards I describe in Chapter X, becomes a central part of their preparation for teaching. As such, it is necessary that I utilize these same techniques in the assessment of their growth as students, both as a way of providing feedback to them as well as modeling for them how such assessment tools might be developed and used in the
Therefore, my own understanding of and development of effective assessment tools continues to be a major part of my development as a teacher of teachers.

The Issue of Context and Research

Of all the issues that have emerged within this study, the issue of context is most critical. Over and over I have seen how the specific situations that emerge from the interaction among specific students and teacher in specific learning environments create the context from which learning naturally transpires. In this way, learners are invested in the learning process since it is constructed out of the issues of their individual lives. Learning becomes relevant, topical, and self-directed. Learners reclaim agency in choosing what will be considered within the classroom and they take ownership in directing learning in ways that are meaningful and transformational.

At the same time, I acknowledge that the localized reference system is embedded in many larger systems including school, community, the music education profession, the general education profession, and so on. The influence of the larger, more global reference systems in which each classroom is embedded plays a significant role in the action within each classroom in both direct and indirect ways. I have argued that this dialectic between the local and global context can provide for possibilities within the classroom as well as hinder interactions. I have suggested that both students and teacher must be vigilant and remain aware of these influences upon the classroom from without, embracing those aspects that bring about possibility and rejecting those that seek to control classroom interaction.
Likewise, the issue of context in music education is complex and creates conflict in the area of research. In the past, much of music education research has been based upon positivistic inquiry which has sought to address issues of learning in a normative manner separating the teaching and learning process from its context in order to establish more global or universal trends that students follow in their processes of learning. Certainly, music education research has, over the past few years, sought new ways of asking and investigating questions that consider issues within the boundaries of context. However, combined with a push in educational policy toward standardization and standardized testing, it often seems that in practice, localized context matters very little—the crux of my job as music teacher is to ensure that the learners I teach live up to the arbitrary standards and learning styles that are set forth by research and the institution of school as established by school boards, state educational agencies, and, as of late, the federal government.

Just as an imbalance occurs when the global is emphasized at the expense of the local, the same is true when the local is accepted as the only important aspect of the classroom. In this case, the classroom becomes parochial and possibilities for learning and constructing both musical knowledge and self-knowledge are missed.

What has emerged in music education is a clear dialectic between the local and global contexts of the classroom, of musical learning, and of research in music education. It can be seen in debates about qualitative versus quantitative research, one methodology versus another, and an over emphasis on standardized testing in general education. As Jorgensen suggests, such tensions, having developed both in music education and in
education in general, are not ones that are easily reconciled; in truth, they will probably never be solvable totally. It is through the process of negotiating such tensions that possibilities emerge.

Understanding the issue of context in research therefore becomes an important issue. How might I as music researcher commit to asking questions that take into consideration both the local and global context of music teaching simultaneously? Are there new research paradigms that have yet to be envisioned that seek to reconcile, or at least consider, such a local/global dialectic? How might existing normative studies be applied to the specific classrooms in which I teach? How can I in my role as professor assist my students in interpreting normative research within the context of their own classroom settings?
WORKS CITED


