Student and Teacher Experiences with Informal Learning in a School Music Classroom: An Action Research Study

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STUDENT AND TEACHER EXPERIENCES WITH INFORMAL LEARNING
IN A SCHOOL MUSIC CLASSROOM: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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A THESIS

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STUDENT AND TEACHER EXPERIENCES WITH INFORMAL LEARNING
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University of Nebraska, 2014

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Despite the ubiquitous nature of music in the lives of adolescents, school music education rarely offers experiences with the informal music making practices that are used by their favorite vernacular artists. This action research study implemented informal learning practices into the formal learning environment of my current teaching position in a rural Midwestern community, to understand more about student experiences and the educator’s role in such a classroom. The qualitative research approach used in this study borrowed from grounded theory techniques. Data collection included twenty-five total interviews with nine first-year beginning instrumentalists. Interviews were conducted in three waves, where the second and third wave question developed through constant comparative analysis, representing the evolutionary aspect of a constructivist grounded theory design. In addition, field notes, observations, and in class memos were composed while instructing the students. All data were open and axial coded. Analytic products included dimensionalized examples, properties, and categories. The findings were divided into two sections: The Student Experience and The Teacher Experience. Within The Student Experience, data analysis of the final wave of interviews allowed four categories to emerge: Uses, Value, Practice, and New Skills Gained. Both The Teacher Experience and The Student Experience data suggests that when authentically placing informal methods into a formal environment, students are very capable of self- and peer-teaching when they are given a clear set
of criteria, and the licensed educator does have a valid and meaningful role in this combined-methods classroom. Additionally, data analysis from the interviews suggests that students included new values in their definition of musicality after informal methods were implemented. The findings of this study are linked to this specific educational context, and future research in other settings (e.g., a choral ensemble) may yield dissimilar results. Additional research on this topic should include the sharing of new experiences, exercises, and ideas to benefit all teachers; especially those with a limited informal music-making background.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... vi
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................... vii

Chapter I: Introduction ................................................................................................................ 1
  Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................................... 1
  Purpose .................................................................................................................................... 2
  Research Questions .................................................................................................................. 3
  Subquestions ............................................................................................................................ 4
  Key Terms ................................................................................................................................ 4
  Background .............................................................................................................................. 6
  Philosophical Worldview .......................................................................................................... 9
  Overview of Methodology ......................................................................................................... 9
  Basic Assumptions .................................................................................................................. 10
  Delimitations ........................................................................................................................... 11
  Significance of the Study ......................................................................................................... 12

Chapter II: Literature Review .................................................................................................... 15
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 15
  Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................ 15
  Authenticity and Literature Selection ....................................................................................... 16
  Core Values .............................................................................................................................. 18
  Peer-Directed Learning ........................................................................................................... 22
  Role of the Teacher .................................................................................................................. 23
  Assessment ............................................................................................................................... 25
  Definition of Musicality ........................................................................................................... 28
  Summary .................................................................................................................................. 29

Chapter III: Methodology ........................................................................................................... 31
  Choosing Qualitative Methods ................................................................................................. 31
  Grounded Theory Design ......................................................................................................... 31
  Ethical Issues and Challenges ................................................................................................. 33
  Site Selection ............................................................................................................................ 34
Participant Selection ........................................................................................................35
Ethical Issues ..................................................................................................................36
Data Collection .............................................................................................................38
  Observations ..................................................................................................................39
Memos and Field Notes ..................................................................................................39
Interviews .......................................................................................................................40
Data Analysis ...............................................................................................................42
  Open Coding ..................................................................................................................43
Axial Coding ..................................................................................................................43
Summary ..........................................................................................................................44

Chapter IV: Results .......................................................................................................46

Introduction ...................................................................................................................46
The Student Experience .................................................................................................46
  Uses ...............................................................................................................................48
  Value ............................................................................................................................49
  Practice ........................................................................................................................53
New Skills Gained .........................................................................................................56
Self-Assessment and Peer-Teaching ..............................................................................58
Overall Experience .......................................................................................................60

The Teacher Experience .................................................................................................62
Selecting Groups ............................................................................................................62
The Teacher's Role In The Informal Learning Environment .........................................63
Student Needs ...............................................................................................................67
Overall Experience .......................................................................................................69
Summary ..........................................................................................................................70

Chapter V: Conclusions .................................................................................................72

Introduction ...................................................................................................................72
Elaboration and Broad Discussion ..................................................................................72
Conclusion and Implications for Music Education .........................................................75
Application for Future Research ....................................................................................79

References .......................................................................................................................81
Appendix A: Interview Protocol #1 ................................................................. 84
Appendix B: Interview Protocol #2 ................................................................. 85
Appendix C: Interview Protocol #3 ................................................................. 86
Appendix D: School Proposal and Consent Forms ........................................ 87
Appendix E: Sample Lesson Plan #1 ............................................................... 91
Appendix F: Sample Lesson Plan #2 ............................................................... 95
Appendix G: Categories with Properties and Dimensionalized Examples .......... 96
Appendix H: Student Descriptors ................................................................. 97
List of Tables

Table 4 Dimensionalized Examples in Categories,

First Wave vs. Third Wave .......................................................... 51
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Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Music is used by nearly every person on the planet. The role it takes or the precedence in one’s life varies from person to person, but we all use music daily. For example, music may be listened to on a car ride home, as a workout companion, accompanying a commercial on television, and for a smaller group music may be performed. Most music students today listen to a popular style of music in their daily lives, and use it in many ways such as mood or social identity (Lehmann, Sloboda, Woody, 2007; Jaffurs, 2004b). Today, music is readily available nearly everywhere youth turn with cell phones, digital music downloads, and streaming online services such as Spotify. This availability increases the role it plays in the lives of adolescents, yet they rarely experience informal music practices in their formal music education.

Informal music making is categorized when a student is responsible for their own learning, typically with no music educator present, and where they are usually not realizing any learning is taking place (Jorgensen, 1997; Green, 2002; Folkestad, 2006). This type of learning is predominant with rock bands and other vernacular musicians. Vernacular musicians and vernacular (or popular) music is performed in these informal settings, which differ from the methods of the more traditional music classroom.

Vernacular music in a classroom is more than just the addition of popular musics in our daily curriculum. To effectively teach vernacular music, we must observe their informal learning strategies and find creative (and authentic) ways to implement them into our classroom. Many music teachers may not have had many informal music experiences themselves due to a lack of
opportunity for them to do so, therefore many of their students do not get the opportunity. However, if we as music educators can give the students of today opportunities to experience vernacular music making in their everyday music classroom, we will create better listeners, performers and everyday music users.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to implement informal learning practices into the formal learning environment of my current teaching position’s first year instrumentalists, to understand more about student experiences and the educator’s role in such a classroom. Among my current teaching duties, I instruct first year instrumentalists, primarily in the seventh through twelfth grades. In this qualitative study, I kept record of my own experience, observed the students’ experience and this project’s effect on student musical values, identity, and their thoughts on musicality. It is my belief that a music program that combines informal and formal methods will help students metaphorically connect their physical sound production with aural skills, similar to the description offered by Davis (2010), ultimately benefiting their overall music making and definition of musicality. In Davis’ study, observed students began making metaphoric connections based on sight, sound, and kinesthetics, ultimately improving their own musical cognition. Keeping with the authenticity of a vernacular music making environment, a licensed music educator is traditionally not present. As I will show in this paper, I believe that a music educator has a valid role to play in this combined-methods classroom.

I believe that an early instrumental education that includes exercises focusing on aural skills will effectively aid in a student’s definition of musicality, or how they define themselves in
a musical world. These exercises will increase student attention to their own sound production quality, as they effectively use both self- and peer-assessments (Lebler, 2007) to evaluate their daily performances.

An informal learning community traditionally features an environment where students are more responsible for their own learning (Green, 2002). Therefore, if we wish to authentically implement informal practices into a formal community, it raises questions about the teacher’s role in this environment. This study will aide music educators by describing the teacher’s experiences, in addition to student opinions on the methods of teaching and the exercises in general.

**Research Questions**

One point of investigation is asking how implementing informal learning practices into a formal learning environment of first-year beginning instrumentalists affects their musical values, identity, and definition of musicality.

Also, before and after implementing the informal practices:

- How do the students, themselves, define what it means to being “musical”?

- What are their ideas on their own identity as a musical person?

The following question can also be considered: When making this experiment as authentic as possible, what is the teacher’s role in such an environment?
Subquestions

A few subquestions present themselves with this topic and classroom experience: First, what feelings arise when students are asked to participate in informal music making? Informal learning can possibly be threatening to some students, creating feelings of uneasiness. It was of high importance during the course of this study for the educator/researcher to be supportive and sensitive to all students needs while making them feel as comfortable as possible.

Does the inclusion of informal music deter from the formal music making? As mentioned before, this project was meant to be a fusing of two methods and applying them into one classroom setting. In order for there to be an even emphasis, the educator (to the best of his ability) ensured that equal time was spent on both activity sets, placing comparable encouragement and focus on both parts.

Key Terms

The definitions of key terms used in the report of this study are as follows:

Formal music learning - Often associated with a teacher centered instruction, where the teacher is responsible for what is learned, giving directions to the students as well as feedback on their performance. This system uses written curricula, syllabi and/or explicit teaching traditions (Green 2002, p.4). Here, students come with the specific purpose of learning how to make music (Folkestad, 2006).
*Informal music learning* - A more peer-focused learning community, where social interaction with self- and peer-assessment and ear-training take precedence over a licensed educator’s curriculum. Here, students are responsible for their own learning, but can have some assistance from peers and family (Green 2002, p.5).

*Vernacular* - Diverse musical social groups with a range of musical genres and practices, typically outside formal institutions (O’Flynn, 2006). This term is used not to describe a style or genre of music, but rather how music is produced and consumed (Blaukopf, 1992).

*Fiddling/Hunting* - As used by Davis (2010), this term refers to the process of where a musician attempts to match pitches (from what the teacher is playing, a song on the radio, a melody that is purely in the performer’s memory, etc) with no written notation to guide them; purely by combining aural skills with trial and error.

*Musicality* - A broad term that encompasses what skills a musician values to consider themselves “musical.” Although this term varies from person to person, views on musicality vary most drastically between formal and informal musicians (Jaffurs, 2004b; Green, 2002; Davis, 2005).

*Grounded Theory* - A qualitative procedure used to generate a theory to explain an educational process of events, activities, actions, and interactions that occur over time (Creswell, 2012). This design develops a theory over time and is “grounded” in data from participant experiences documented through interviews, observations, memos, and notes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
**Constructivist Design** - While gathering data, the researcher makes decisions about categories and further data collection through a method of constant analysis, as the events in the study progress through time (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2012).

**Background**

Looking back to the earliest years of our lives, most of us would agree that the initial forms of music making were utilizing more informal methods. Mimicking a friend’s melody on a playground, singing along with music on the radio, making nonsense songs about items or people in the room; all of these examples use no sheet music, no certified music consultants, and were free from criticism of form or technique. These early music making moments shaped a love for music that eventually led most of us to ensemble participation, instrument learning, or possibly even private lessons; activities largely of which completely ignore the informal practices that made us passionate of music in the first place.

Personally, my first formal music experience came with learning an instrument in a fifth-grade school ensemble. I recall learning staff notation for the first time alongside holding an instrument, learning fingerings, and forming proper embouchure technique. While practicing at home, I would play along with songs on the radio, attempting to mimic the melodies. By high school I was beginning to understand how to improvise over popular songs on an audio recording. By this point, I had noticed the lack of those activities in my school band program, creating a view of “school music” and “other music” firmly in my mind.
It was not until I pursued an undergraduate degree in music education that I began to understand the differences between the formal and informal learning strategies. In college, I learned different instruments through methods courses, simultaneously learning how to teach these instruments in a formal way. As I progressed through my degree and into my teaching career, I have observed many music educators in different schools across the country to see that my formal instrumental music experience was in no way out of the ordinary. When I took my first beginning band teaching position, I followed the same teaching methods as my mentors, using techniques that lined up with my current school district’s expectations and assessment model.

Concurrently with my teaching career, I have worked as a studio musician for others and making my own recordings, working primarily with vernacular musicians. In casual conversations, I began to find out how few of these musicians had formal training, and heard their reasons for not pursuing formal education in their secondary and post secondary schooling. Their experiences with formal education left them unsatisfied, and they eventually left their programs and pursued music in other ways more fitted to their needs. However, almost all now regretted not participating in formal music, understanding the need for skill sets such as notation reading and proper form to better themselves in their craft.

These conversations allowed me to have a unique perspective on my own teaching and my students’ needs and values. While reflecting, I began to realize that my students were not receiving all of the musical skills that I used on a daily basis (whether in my formal or informal careers), but rather only those used in a formal practice. As educators, we strive to help our
students become quality music makers. Are we truly fulfilling that goal if we ignore skill sets found in the informal music making world?

As I approached my teaching strategies with these thoughts, I began to ask myself new questions. I quickly realized that almost all of my students in beginning band classes were also learning music notation for the first time. As my classes progressed, it came to my attention that beginners were looking at a note on a staff (essentially a picture), and associating these with physical actions (fingerings, embouchure, breath support, etc). However, I did not see many associating sound to the note on the page. This presented itself as an interesting opportunity for a crossing of classical and vernacular music making. As classical musicians associated notation to physical properties, vernacular musicians associated physical properties to sound (with minimal notation). This seemed like a natural way to experiment with formal and informal methods in a classroom.

It is important to note that this project in no way places a hierarchy between the formal and informal practices. Instead, it is its goal to mesh the two, helping create a positive learning experience for all students involved. Allsup (2003) examined democratic teaching ideals, and determined that in this type of education setting, teachers and students are on equal ground. In this environment, new ideas are constructed and can evolve. Much can be learned from our earliest music making experiences, and using methods similar to those can serve students in their musical abilities and identities, aiding in their musical development both in and out of the music classroom.
Philosophical Worldview

It is my belief that the music education world is at a turning point. Vernacular music making is not only a valid method, but important to so many both inside and outside of the Western music culture. These essential vernacular skills (e.g. self- and peer-teaching, self- and peer-assessment, aural skills) may be ignored by music educators today, as they are focused on preparing for an upcoming performance. In addition, many educators are well aware of the fact that most of their students will only be involved in a music ensemble during their secondary school years. This formal classroom puts an emphasis on music performance, limiting the life-long music makers. It is my hope to find beneficial solutions that give more students a music education that is useful outside school walls.

The advocacy/participatory approach to this study can aide us in this long road to stopping the limiting of self-development taking place in today’s classrooms. I believe that the implementation of vernacular musician skills and informal music practices will not only help students musically, but also create better music listeners, users, and creators, regardless of participation in post-secondary education ensembles.

Overview of Methodology

In this study, a qualitative research method was conducted to best gather the data directly from the student and educator sources in their natural setting (Creswell, 2007). Within qualitative research, some methods of a grounded theory design were used for data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An action research design allowed myself, the researcher, to conduct the study in my own classroom to improve issues that I have observed in
my own school setting (Creswell, 2012).

This formal classroom was in a rural midwest community, which met at the end of every school day. Although enrollment fluctuated throughout the study, for the majority of the project there were nine total students, ranging from seventh to twelfth grade.

This classroom featured exercises that utilized the formal education source, *Standard of Excellence: Enhanced Comprehensive Band Method; Book 1* (Pearson, 2004), in addition to informal exercises that were developed by myself (based on the works of other researchers) that centered around authentic informal music making (Davis, 2005, 2010; Jaffurs, 2004b; Green, 2002). These exercises focused on aural skills, solo- and peer-directed learning, as well as self- and peer-assessment practices.

I collected data for eight weeks, beginning in late October of 2013. Daily data collection occurred through observations, field notes, and memos taken during and immediately after class sessions, as well as reviewing video recorded rehearsals. These field notes and memos focused on both the student learning experience and the educator’s experience instructing the course. As a second data source, interviews were held with the adolescents at three separate points in the eight-week session.

*Basic Assumptions*

It is to be assumed that the success of a student’s performance is also based on their work outside the classroom. Practice is an essential part to learning an instrument, and with this model, the practice time at home needed to focus on both the informal and formal exercises. If a
student does not practice outside of the classroom, they may have found it difficult to succeed inside (similar to a current formal classroom).

In a classroom that typically only uses formal methods, students may have had predetermined ideas about what the class would be like. It can be inferred that implementing the informal methods may create negative feelings toward learning either formally or informally, which could have directly impacted their attitude toward the overall class.

**Delimitations**

The findings from this study come from a small focus group, and may not be applicable to very different teaching contexts. This was meant as a step in my own teaching career to better the music education of my students. As the researcher in this study, I learned just as much from my students and their experiences in the course, as they have from the instrumental instruction.

Another limitation was time. Although the class is a full school year in duration, for the purpose of this paper there was an eight week data collection window. The class continued after the data collection, offering new insight into student and teacher experiences, as well as the student definitions of their musicality. However, this study’s conclusions are based off of the eight week data collection window.

Creswell (2007) and Charmaz (2006) recommended anywhere from twenty to thirty individuals for sampling, however this being a rural town, population does become an issue to meet that number. Students at the sampling site are allowed to take three electives in a given semester, and music is one of these options. Although there is some crossover with some students participating in both instrumental and vocal music, most only participate in one or the
other. The Beginning Band class typically has smaller participant numbers mainly due to scheduling conflicts (this course is only offered once daily and all core classes are held during specific hours for different grade numbers, meaning instrumental music simply is not an option for some). Due to this, enrollment and gender balancing was not under the researcher’s control.

Lastly, being an action research project, I was the acting researcher and educator performing this study in his own classroom setting. I ensured students knew that their reactions would not affect their grade, favorability, or participation in other groups, but rather this was to be treated as a learning experience for us both. Although ethical issues may have been present, this methodology was best for this particular situation, and results may not be applicable to all situations.

**Significance of the Study**

As researchers such as Lucy Green and Sharon Davis have indicated, there is a wealth of evidence building that suggests the inclusion of informal learning or vernacular music making is valuable and can contribute to a formal music curriculum. There are skills involved that are not necessarily used in the traditional formal music classroom. Participation in school ensembles has sociological advantages for the students involved, as Parker (2010) and Jaffurs (2004b) have pointed out. This leads one to believe that we need a program that can not only better suit all of our students needs, but make other students (such as vernacular musicians) feel welcome in our classroom.

The term “musicality” tends to vaguely describe musical ability such as technique, theory, audiation, or expression. Therefore, it can be understood that musicality can have a
different meaning to a different person (including vernacular or classically trained learners), whatever music abilities it is that they hold value to. Blacking (1973) discovered musicality had a different definition to Western musicians than that of the rest of the world. Technique was the lead Western concern, where “feeling” mattered to other parts of the world. Lucy Green’s How Popular Musicians Learn (2002) reveals that vernacular musicians’ most important value is that of “feeling,” making their music making methods worthwhile for any classroom.

In addition, Gordon (1997) suggests that while being technically proficient can be of great importance, it should also be vital to have students become “musically intelligent listeners” (p. 347). With the inclusion of informal practices (which rely heavily on aural skills) into a classroom setting, we attempt to accomplish these goals. Being a musically intelligent listener can also mean a heightened sense of self- or peer-assessment to better their performance which, as Lebler (2007) described, students in an informal learning environment have roles of both providers and recipients of peer assessment (p.216). These are worthwhile skills for any musician to have.

Vernacular musicians have the unique opportunity to be producers and users simultaneously (Lebler, 2007). In an informal education, musicians can be “co-creators of learning, taking an active role in much of what only teachers have done in the past” (p. 206). The inclusion of informal musicians into a formal learning community creates an environment where teacher and student can become co-producers of learning.

Authentically implementing these informal practices means that the role for the music educator will change. In a more traditional classroom, the teacher is more directly responsible for student learning. In more vernacular music making, students use methods such as self- and
peer-assessment, model and mimicking strategies, and other techniques that can reduce the need of a licensed music educator to be present. However, as I will more thoroughly discuss in the Literature Review chapter, music teachers still have a very valid and useful role in this informal setting. This study may be a small window into this environment, but these descriptions of teacher and student experiences can better prepare ourselves for work in a future classroom combining formal-informal methods.

Finally, in this ever changing world of music education, we find ourselves in formal classrooms where students believe that most musical learning does not occur unless someone teaches them. It is no secret that after students leave secondary education, many no longer participate in music ensembles. If we as educators helped students understand a musical world where a teacher is no longer necessarily present, we can open new doors to music making. This world exposes music in new ways where students can create, and not necessarily what someone else tells them to create (Jaffurs 2004b). Of course, this may require some educators to reevaluate their own philosophy of music education; one that does not focus on creating music performers, but rather focusing on music users. With this change in terminology, there is still a value in the performance aspect of music making, but can now also be free to include listening, audiating, and assessing musics; all useful skills to have outside of an ensemble. Basically, we are arming our students with skills to become lifetime users of music, in the many different ways that it can present itself in our everyday lives.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for understanding the research study that I am engaging in. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that thinking through extant literature helps: 1) stimulate theoretical sensitivity by demonstrating relationships that can be checked by the data; 2) approach existing philosophical and theoretical writings in order to analyze data; 3) support data gathering by acting as a secondary source; 4) stimulate questions for data gathering; 5) reflect on theoretical sampling techniques; and 6) supplement validation. Creswell (2012) adds, “The literature review is not to identify specific questions that need to be answered; instead, the literature review establishes the meaning and importance of the central phenomenon” (p. 17). In addition to this, Creswell (2007) proposed that the review of literature serves to help position one’s study in the current research available, as well as provide the rationale for the given problem.

Theoretical Framework

There is an increasing number of informal music studies being performed, and many of these are observing the learning styles of popular musicians. For example, how vernacular musicians interact and teach each other, how they choose their repertoire, and what their expectations and values are. However, this researcher has found that most studies indicate the possible use of their findings in the formal classroom, but little has been written about actual application. Even Lucy Green’s widely accepted How Popular Musicians Learn only explored
the behaviors and relationships of vernacular musicians, yet only includes suggestions on how to incorporate the findings into the formal classroom.

The focus of this literature view is the gathering of other researcher suggestions and putting many of their findings into practice. The inclusion of the informal music practices could serve as a dilemma for some. Many researchers realized that they had very little (if any) experience in vernacular music making, or quite simply a shortage of equipment and/or funding for guitars, bass, drums, etc. While some of my readings were formal-classroom related, my main focus was what vernacular musicians view as important in their informal world to better aid in the authentic implementation. What I found were core ideas and values that could easily be entered in a formal classroom environment. From there, I was able to create exercises that met both formal and informal practice.

In the end, several main topics and questions presented themselves while marrying the formal and informal worlds. Therefore, I have divided this literature review into six sections: Authenticity and Literature Selection, Core Values, Peer-Directed Learning, Role of the Educator, Assessment, and Definitions of Musicality.

**Authenticity and Literature Selection**

In past publications of this topic, few researchers considered the mere placement of popular music repertoire into the classroom as enough action, rather stating that the teaching of informal methods in our every day music classrooms would be the most beneficial and authentic. At the Tanglewood Symposium in 1967, education leaders alongside members of business and government gathered to consider how to improve music education. In the final declaration, the
phrase “the musical repertory should be expanded to include music of our time in its rich variety, including popular teenage music ...” (Choate, 1968, p. 139) was present. Today, popular music in the classroom is presented almost as a bait-and-switch tactic to gain new ensemble members, or similar to giving a child candy: “You know it’s not good for them, but once in a while won’t hurt them too much” (Jaffurs, 2004a, p. 1905). Of those educators that place popular music in their classrooms, some admit it to be a watered-down, poor imitation of the original (Campbell 1995).

Popular music already has a big presence in our students’ lives, but it is currently very limited to consumption rather than the making of it (Woody, in press). How does one keep up with a continuously changing genre of music in order to select a piece that all students enjoy? The selection of musical taste is one way that an adolescent begins to formulate “who they are” and their place in a social group (North & Hargreaves, 1999; Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves, 2002; Davis, 2005). Typically, vernacular musicians are already enculturated in their music, as apposed to classical learners (Green, 2002). If a student chose their own musical piece to perform, they are more likely to select something that they are already enculturated in.

Excitement over a popular-based song selection can quickly wear off once the teacher starts rehearsing parts in a formal method. Also, some researchers argue that the inclusion of popular songs in a sheet music format is immediately taking away from the authenticity of the piece. This could mean the music choice itself is only part of the authentic presentation. Campbell (1995) stated that being already widely accepted in an adolescent’s social life, popular music even has to go beyond a “rock appreciation” course. This genre of music requires engagement, not just passive listening. Although Campbell also said that the placing of popular
music in a formal school ensemble makes the content “blatantly out of context” (p. 19), perhaps the authenticity of vernacular music making comes from experiences had by the participants and the way that the information is transmitted, rather than from the instruments making the sound or repertoire they perform. Therefore, shedding more light on the methods of informal music making can show us new and meaningful ways to incorporate popular music in our classrooms.

The idea of something being taught authentically is what teachers should strive for in music education. The question of “what makes our music teaching authentic” is one that I ask myself every day while in the classroom. I recall being in high school chorus and being handed sheet music for “Blackbird,” as performed by the rock band, The Beatles. The caption “as performed by” is what really caught my attention. Of course, I was sure that the phrase was meant as a reference point to catch the eye of the reader, making the piece instantly recognizable and evoking a feeling of excitement that comes along with, “We are performing pop music!” However, this selection was not written as The Beatles performed it. There was no acoustic guitar part to be seen, only three lines of vocals in this SAB arrangement, with a piano accompaniment. Later, in my first year of teaching, I found myself in front of my class handing out a similar piece of popular music. I began to wonder, “Is this in any way authentic?” This is a question that I asked while creating the exercises in this study.

Core Values

Sheri Jaffurs (2004a) stated, “I asked my students what they would teach to a first-grade music class. In five minutes, I found out what music skills and achievements they valued” (p. 199). One way that we as educators can establish authenticity in our new classroom is
examining the values that vernacular musicians have. If we understand this, it will be easier to establish meaningful lessons that authentically display informal practices.

While classically-trained musicians sometimes feel “attached to the sheet music,” ear-trained musicians often regret having no formal notation training, as they cannot communicate with other musicians easily or preserve their own work (Rodriguez, 2004). As some vernacular musicians read a form of notation such as tablature or chord charts, few read the standard notation found in formal classrooms. One of the most important skill sets of informal musicians is the aural transmission of data. Lucy Green offers this insight:

“Apart from a few highly professional function bands and session musicians, popular musicians rarely use music notation, and whether they use it or not, they must always be able to play without it, on the basis of what has been learnt through listening” (Green, 2002, p. 28-29).

Although standard notation may seem threatening to some some vernacular musicians, there was a time where none of us could read sheet music. Although some vernacular musicians may be fearful of note literacy, according to a questionnaire handed to participants (both vernacular and classically trained) of Baker & Green’s 2013 study found that 79.8% of students wanted to learn both notation and ear-training. As many students are picking up their first musical instrument, they are simultaneously reading notation for the first time. This is the opposite of what you would see in an informal music making community, where the sound comes first. Davis (2010) suggested that beginning instrumentalists may only be mentally connecting a picture (notation symbol) to a physical action (kinesthetics) where sound is never evaluated by the brain. Davis concluded that her beginning instrumentalists made more
metaphoric connections (high vs. low, how notes related to each other, etc) when she included aural teaching methods, linking sound to the notation.

To a vernacular musician, listening skills are of high importance. According to Middleton (1990) and Green (2002), there are three basic types of listening:

- Purposive listening, where the listener is learning something in order to use it in some way later. This would be similar to how a vernacular musician wants to play an exact copy of a song.
- Attentive listening, where there may be the same amount of focus on detail as purposive listening, but little need to recopy it.
- Distracted listening, where the music is played in the background of another activity and the listener is being attended to on and off.

Augustyniak (2013) divided listening in two ways, similar to the above. People can listen consciously to music, also called purposeful listening, where they focus on music without any other interference. This purposeful listening would be the same as the purposive listening definition from Middleton (1990) and Green (2002). Augustyniak’s other listening category comes from non-consciously absorbing ambient music, or listening non-purposely. This method contains similar characteristics of Middleton and Green’s “distracted listening.”

Of these types, the one of greatest value to vernacular musicians is purposive (purposeful). Vernacular musicians use audio recordings in order to mimic not only the correct chords and rhythm, but also the timbre or effects the model musician uses. All of these elements
are learned purely through listening, and this unconscious learning is more common with
informal musicians than formal. This copying of recordings develop performance skills as well
as form “fundamental building-blocks in compositional skills” (Green, 2002, p. 75).

Building off of the model/mimic learning, we can look at another core value: the
objective of “feel.” As mentioned earlier, while a vernacular musician is purposive listening,
they are imitating several factors of the recording, including note value, duration, timbre, and the
interrelations among the instruments. When a vernacular musician practices, it is not uncommon
for them to prepare their part alone (much like a formal musician would) before they rehearse
with a group. During this practice time, they become sensitive to not only their part, but how
that part relates to the other instruments present (Green, 2002).

These listening skills can be transferred into the formal classroom, where students
playing band instruments also understand these relationships. The earlier reviewed Sharon G.
Davis article (2010) implemented more aural listening skills in her beginning band class to find
students making metaphoric formal and informal connections. As one example, while practicing
at home, a student named Amy began realizing the opening phrase in the song “Deck the Halls”
reminded her of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.” As she made these connections, she began fiddling
at home, hunting for the correct pitches by repeating the phrase until the correct pitches were
found. The metaphoric connection did not stop there. When she had difficulty in hitting the
higher pitches, she realized the embouchure learned in the classroom song, “Deck the Halls,”
helped her in the opening of the popular styled piece.
Peer-Directed Learning

Formal and informal learning communities differentiate by one important factor: the presence or absence of a teacher. Jorgensen (1997) stated that the formal community is teacher led, while the informal is non-teacher led, but I would disagree. Other researchers have stated informal practices still utilize a teacher form, but through another source such as a fellow musician or a recording. Alongside this characteristic of unaware sense of learning found with the informal listening practices, Folkestad’s 2006 study found that while the formal community student learns how to play music, the informal student plays music.

Frederick Seddon and Michele Biasutti (2009) attempted a formal-informal community, where a teacher prepared a class (formal) yet was not present for when the students learned (informal). Student perceptions varied, with some enjoying the experience of being responsible for their own learning and others were frustrated with a lack of teacher support and direction for when they had questions or difficulties. Some students enjoyed working at a slower pace, while others wanted to move forward but were not allowed. This could show us that a teacher does have a place in the informal implemented into the formal classroom. Another particular downfall of the model presented by Seddon and Biasutti is the lack of peer interaction, which therefore does not give us an authentic view of informal learning.

Popular music groups work best when a leader teaches the rest of the band members. Every participant practices alone, but when the group collects, a song leader (typically a lead singer, guitarist, or the one whom selected the song being rehearsed) will direct the rest of the band (Green, 2002; Campbell, 1995). This form of peer-directed learning gives vernacular musicians a unique role as composer, arranger, and performer (Boespflug, 2004; Davis, 2005).
With a supportive music ensemble, a student can have more musical growth through interaction with peers, making a supportive music classroom the ideal place for such collaboration and sharing of ideas, values, and perspectives (Allsup, 2008).

In a survey conducted in March of 2005, students enrolled in private lessons were asked what contributed most to their musical development. Although the most common answer amongst popular style musicians was their own opinions, comments and criticism from bandmates, audiences, friends and audio recordings all outranked teacher feedback (Lebler, 2007).

Although students will serve as both providers and recipients of peer assessment, it cannot be assumed that students will be properly prepared to understand the responsibility of their own learning. This is especially true if the environment typically has an educator as the primary feedback source (Lebler, 2007). Thus, it will be the responsibility of the teacher to be a guide and show the proper methods of peer-directed learning, and to display that the students can be successful in engaging with the work as the musical master while still a student themselves (Rust, O’Donovan, & Price, 2005). Teachers will need to educate and involve the students as both performers and assessors which will support the development of self-monitoring; an important skill for professional musicians of all types to possess.

Role of the Teacher

Despite many of this research project’s exercises being peer-led, the licensed music educator still has a role in this community. With the many informal and vernacular music research studies that Lucy Green has conducted, organizations and articles have become
available to both students and teachers alike, helping create informal music making experiences. As some music educators may be unsure about their informal music making, teacher education is definitely needed.

In Scott Emmons’ 2004 article, *Preparing Teachers for Popular Music Processes and Practices*, advice is given to music educators interested in including vernacular music methods in their classrooms. This article includes insights to help get teachers started, including lesson plans geared toward creating popular music through the use of technology and authentic “rock band” instruments (guitar, bass, keyboards, drums). Emmons recommends allowing students to make as many decisions as possible, where the teacher then becomes more of a facilitator or coach.

In recent years, workshops have become available to help educate teachers in their informal music making. Organizations like Musical Futures utilize a range of activities such as classroom workshopping as well as informal learning strategies. During the Musical Futures project, students collaborate and participate in playing music by ear using audio recordings. During this time, teachers “respond to students’ needs by, for instance, modeling, questioning, providing help with finding pitches, making suggestions for holding instruments and posture, technique and many other aspects” (Baker & Green, 2013, p. 2-3).

Another workshop entitled the Ear Playing Project, or EPP, was founded in the United Kingdom by Green. This project is geared towards classically-trained musicians that are particularly unsure or uncomfortable in their informal music making abilities. Here, teachers can work one-on-one or in small groups to gain new knowledge and experiment in their informal
methods. With projects such as this becoming increasingly available to educators, the role that teachers play in the combined-methods classroom is becoming clearer.

In a classroom that utilizes both informal and formal methods, as well as self-, peer-, and teacher-led activities, both the students and the educator have unique roles to play. While it was mentioned earlier that students will simultaneously participating as a composer, arranger, and performer, the teacher role will obviously include many methods that are authentic to both formal and informal music making characteristics. While extensive research and music teaching schools have been using various methods of formal music education for years, the inclusion of informal methods is still in its infant stages. One way that we can begin is applying methods used by the teachers in programs such as Musical Futures and the EPP.

Assessment

One of the biggest aspects of music education would be that of proper assessment. Granted whatever assessment strategies were used prior to the implementation of informal practices will still hold true, there will now be a need to properly assess the informal practices. It should be generally accepted that authentically taught unique skills of vernacular musicians deserve to be assessed authentically as well (Lebler, 2007).

Just as formal music practice have national standards in the United States (MENC 1994), we need to establish some sort of standard policy for the informal practices. Sheri Jaffurs (2004b) proposed a series of standards based on Lucy Green’s 2002 work. In short, Jaffurs listed the following as skills found in the practices of non-traditional musicians, keeping in mind that some will not be applicable in a classroom marriage of formal and informal:
• Being able to extract information from copying the music aurally. In other words, listening and remembering what is heard.

• Continually evaluating and the ability to judge correctness and modify their performance.

• The ability (which advances over time) to play standard chord progressions; such as 12 bar blues.

• The ability to detect timbral qualities in music they wish to copy.

• Being familiar with many styles of popular music and being sensitive to individual styles.

• Being able to play in any key and easily maneuver around the instrument or voice.

• Have a repertoire of between fifty to several hundred songs.

• Reproduce exact imitations of songs they hear.

• The ability to embellish, arrange, and contribute creative ideas to the music (improvisation/creativity).

• Although the ability to read notation is not required, those that do use it as a “memory jogger.”

• Seek new ways to widen knowledge and skills. Listening to all genres for new ideas.

• Ability to get along with and cooperate with members of the group, participating in a team effort with no one person in charge at all times. Respect of each other and their opinions and ideas.
Jaffurs and Green offered these standards as what vernacular musicians not only value in their musicianship, but also as guidelines to help educators direct student learning.

Vernacular musicians utilize skill sets that they not only view as important, but are observable and assessable in a formal classroom. Dividing skill sets into two categories, “hard” and “soft”, allows us to organize them into two assessing qualities (Blom & Encarnacao, 2012). “Hard” skill sets consist of cognitive and technical skills, while “soft” sets are more behavioral. As a subdivision of the soft set, participation can be shown as “personal” and “interpersonal” skills. The “personal” skills are shown by examples such as tardiness, bringing of their equipment, and coming to rehearsal prepared from home practice. “Interpersonal” skills included teamwork, the sharing of ideas, participating in discussions, being engaged, and putting forth effort.

In a written assignment, Blom & Encarnacao (2012) asked students to choose three criteria to peer- and self-assess their group’s rehearsals, and three criteria for members of other rock groups to assess their final performance. Among the factors to choose from were qualities such as creativity, balance, instrumentation, communication, dynamics, and enthusiasm. From the explanations provided, students most favored soft sets in peer assessment of rehearsals, while factors found in hard sets were favored in performance. Therefore, Blom & Encarnacao suggested the hard set be a criteria for performance (such as technical skills of the individual and the group) and the soft as criteria for rehearsal (such as participation within the team or group).

As providers and recipients, students must play a double role in the assessment process. Although it is important for students to understand the proper way to communicate to peers with supportive and meaningful assessments, it is even more important to be a listener of their own
performances. Vernacular musicians use a variety of techniques to help self-assessing, but most include some method of recording. As mentioned earlier, there is high value for a vernacular musician to “play like the recording” of another popular style music artist. Using recordings at home, vernacular musicians self-assess and better their skills by mimicking many aspects of the music, including pitches, note durations and rhythm, timbre and other effects, as well as a given part’s role within the ensemble (Campbell, 1995).

**Definition of Musicality**

Every musician defines musicality in a different way through what they value the most in their craft. For example, a formal musician may value playing a piece exactly as written, sight reading skills, embouchure techniques, scales, breath control, and dynamics. These values have evolved over hundreds of years and still hold true for many musicians today as they were used to create *The National Standards for Arts Education* (MENC, 1994).

Philosopher Bennett Reimer discussed musicality and the levels of musical intelligence in his book, *Philosophy of Music Education* (2003). Here, he addressed what it means to be musically intelligent, and stated while one person may be proficient in one or two aspects of music (such as theory, musicology, composition, improvisation, etc.), it is highly unlikely that they will be competent in all of them.

In the informal learning communities, definitions vary from those above. This is due to a difference in core values mentioned earlier in this literature review. John Blacking’s ethnographic study of the Transvaal Venda people of South Africa helped discover a difference between the Western notion of musicality and the the rest of the world’s view of musicality.
Blacking (1973) discovered new methods of music education through the Venda people, as their musical instruction was focused more around ideas of “feeling” and expression rather than technical aspects of performance. As children become enculturated through this musical environment, they find themselves not only technically proficient, but also expressive. This study is still being drawn from today.

Music psychologist Edwin Gordon acknowledged the importance of audiation in his Music Learning Theory. In *Learning Sequences In Music* (1997), Gordon stated that it is of equal importance to be technically proficient in an instrument as it is to be “musically intelligent listeners” (p. 347). Becoming a musically intelligent listener can be beneficial to both performers and listeners alike, which would make informal music practices extremely favorable to those not participating in post-secondary ensembles, by now having abilities to continue as well educated music users.

**Summary**

Through the given literature, we can establish that there is both a need for further research in the informal learning communities and research in the implementation of the ideas mentioned above. Informal practices have teachable aspects that can be affective in the formal music classroom. Knowing the core values of vernacular musicians, we can provide a meaningful and authentic learning community in our own classrooms. From the literature reviewed here, we can establish standards of assessment. Although peer-directed learning, peer-assessment, and self-assessment may, in some ways, diminish the role of the licensed educator in
the informal community, the literature provided in this chapter clearly states that a teacher can still have a valid place in the marriage of the formal/informal worlds.
Chapter III: Methodology

Choosing Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research methods do not determine a cause and effect, but rather observe the subjects in a natural setting (Merriam, 2009). In a qualitative approach, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated that the researcher is “attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3). The data needed for this study was highly dependent on opinions and views of the informants and provided best results because it was performed in their natural setting (Creswell, 2007). In order to best illustrate the experiences that the adolescents and educator encountered, qualitative design was be best for the descriptive data.

With my background as a choral and instrumental educator of these students for the past six years, I find that I have witnessed their growth both musically and socially. Living in a rural community in the Midwest during this time, I have a solid grasp of the demographics of the area, and I understand much about the values of students as well as the expectations of the community, school, and district. All of this knowledge served useful in data analysis and the rich descriptions that I provide in my conclusions (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2012).

Grounded Theory Design

Because I performed this research in my own classroom, this is, at its core, an action research study. However, in many aspects of my data collection and analysis, I used elements of a grounded theory report. Grounded theory is a qualitative research design that allows a researcher to generate a theory “grounded” in the data (Creswell, 2012). Although this research
project will not be generating a theory, per say, the analytical tools that grounded theory utilizes were used to strengthen this study’s data collection and analysis. Because the formal music education world has developed over centuries, implementing informal learning strategies creates a complicated situation. This design assisted in representing all complexities while still being sensitive to the adolescents in this setting (Creswell, 2012).

In grounded theory, data typically is collected by interviews, observations, conversations, and personal reflections. In this study, I performed twenty-five interviews to gather data on the student experiences as they occurred. There was an entry interview, one mid-level interview (given half-way into the data collection window), followed by the eighth-week exit interview. Although the entry and exit interviews essentially had much of the same content, the mid-level interview questions were developed as the students progressed through the first portions of the class.

A grounded theorist collects data through systematic procedures in order to form a theory (Creswell, 2012). Using these data collection techniques will be useful in the further research of informal learning in formal learning communities. Lucy Green, Sharon Davis, and Sheri Jaffurs have justified the skills, values, practices, and assessment of informal learning, acting as a “first-wave” of researchers, and now a “second-wave” of research projects like this one can bring forward new theories for future research (Allsup, 2008).

The three types of grounded research designs (systematic, emerging, and constructivist) are split into two positions by Charmaz (2006). She listed systematic (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and emerging (Glaser, 1992) as more of a quantitative stance on grounded theory. The constructivist design has more of an overall qualitative approach, according to Charmaz, and the
ever-developing coding allows a better understanding of the participants’ experiences. As data was collected in this study, observations were made and new questions developed as the students experienced the process (Creswell, 2012). Using constructivist grounded theory allowed me to be flexible with the progression of the study and focus more attention on the views, feelings, beliefs, and assumptions of the participants (Charmaz, 2006). Also, because every student’s musical value, identity, and definition of musicality varied, this constructivist approach was a definite strength, as the interviews occurred in progressive stages of this project. There was, no doubt, a difference in interview responses due to student age, prior musical experience, and future goals. The using of constructivist grounded theory served best to voice each individual student’s beliefs, which ultimately gave richer data.

The theoretical sampling used a collection of interviews, memos, observations through an emerging design. This design allowed me to analyze transcribed interviews and form preliminary categories. Through these categories, I was able to find clues to what data to collect in my next round of interviews. Continuing this process through all interviews, my categories became more refined and saturated (Creswell, 2012).

Ethical Issues and Challenges

Qualitative research is already deemed subjective and personalistic by some (Stake, 2010). However, for this study, the subjective nature of the data and conclusions are precisely why this method was chosen. During interviews, all participants were asked identical questions to protect against excess subjectivity. The use of multiple student experiences adds to the richness of the data description.
Because all of the students were under the age of eighteen, a parent consent form was required of all participants (see Appendix D). The contents of this form gave a brief summary of the study, the method of data collections, and what the data would be used for. There does not contain text that heightens the sense of importance of the study or describe how students should behave or answer questions, in an attempt to have had students behave as ordinary as possible in their natural setting (Newkirk, 1996). All students involved in this study are listed under a pseudonym to protect their anonymity (Creswell, 2007).

Finally, due to this being an action research study, the close relationship between myself and the participants can raise some ethical issues. All students involved in the study had the right to opt out at any time during data collection without being penalized (Creswell, 2012). Students understood that if they decided to opt out at any time or did not wish to participate in the interviews at all, they were still welcome to participate in the class. All participants were involved in as many research phases as possible, to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study and how the results would be used (Brydon-Miller, 2009).

Site Selection

Currently, I am the music educator at “Cooperstown Junior High and High School,” located in a rural Midwestern town in the United States, teaching seventh through twelfth grade vocal and fifth through twelfth grade instrumental music. The pseudonym “Cooperstown” is used to protect the identity of the staff and participants of the site. At the time of this study, it was the sixth year that I was the music teacher at this particular school, so there was much stability with enrollment and expectations in the program.
In the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, Cooperstown Junior High/High School consisted of 233 total students in grades seven through twelve. There were 114 male and 119 female students enrolled. The ethnicity was predominantly White with 88% of the total population, 9.4% Hispanic, 2.1% Asian, and with less than one percent of all other ethnicities. At the beginning of data collection, six female and three male students were enrolled in the Beginning Band course, ranging from twelve to seventeen years of age. After the first round of interviews, one female student left CJHHS to become homeschooled and left the course. During the data collection window, one student joined and left within a week’s time, moving in and out of town. This student was not included in any data collection.

Music is included in the normal school day (not before or after) as an elective course. For vocal music, CJHHS offers junior high choir, high school choir (two separate classes which combine for concerts), and an advanced a cappella choir. By district policy, instrumental students must take two years of beginning band courses, then may enter in the concert band. Students are free to select any and as many music classes that they wish to participate in. The 2013-14 student enrollment in music was approximately 78 students participating in vocal (37 male, 41 female), and 24 in the instrumental program (10 male, 14 female).

**Participant Selection**

As mentioned earlier, because the site is a rural town with a smaller school population, the class size was nine total students, three male and six female. One hundred percent of the students enrolled in the class participated in the study. This sample size is small according to the numbers recommended by Creswell (2007) and Charmaz (2006), however having been at
Cooperstown for six years, I can state with certainty that this is a higher enrollment than past
beginning instrumental classes. All students returned the parental consent form, agreeing to
participate and giving permission for interviews to be audio recorded (Creswell, 2012).

This class featured a variety of ages participating, as the class is open to all seventh
through twelfth grade students. Participants ranged from twelve to seventeen years of age. Four
student participants were also involved in choral music, and three participants already had some
form of instrumental education, taking this class to learn a secondary instrument. This wider
range of social identity definitions produced an interesting dynamic within the course and
provided rich data.

This project used an opportunistic sampling strategy in order to best gather data
throughout the unfolding events that took place during the data collection. Because the
participants’ view and definition of their own musicality and the role that music plays in their
lives may have changed throughout the sampling time, it was important to document these
changes as they occurred. The gathering of as many perspectives and experiences as possible
was crucial in the theoretical development, allowing for richer data for the qualitative research.

Ethical Issues

At the very heart of this study is the participant’s voice. Any given student’s experiences,
emotions, and definitions of musicality (although similar) were not the same as the other students
participating. The daily rehearsals and interactions between students and educator developed
opinions about the program and informal music practices. However, only a fraction of the
information could be observed in these rehearsal settings, and the need for data collection
through student interviews became key to fully grasping the individual’s perceptions through their own words (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

In order to secure permission of my school to perform this research, I submitted a written proposal to the Cooperstown Junior/Senior High School principal, who acted as the site gatekeeper. This proposal included shortened versions of the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and expectations for the school (see Appendix D). After the proposals were received, I met with my principal personally to discuss the study and answer any questions he may have had. Once he understood the nature of this study, the school proposal was sent with a permission form (Appendix D) to the district curriculum office, which was approved by the district’s Research Committee and the Superintendent. All documents, interview protocols, and methods were approved by the Institutional Review Board.

While conducting this research in a formal music classroom, it was impossible for me to offer complete anonymity to participants because they were in plain sight of the other student participants. However, every action was taken to keep the subjects as anonymous as possible. All members enrolled in the Beginning Band class were handed consent forms (see Appendix D) which included a self-addressed and postage-paid envelope to avoid the students handing them in at school, to help protect participant anonymity. I set up interviews via phone conversation with consented students or their parents to coincide with their schedules, and encourage a before school, after school, or lunch break meeting time to avoid the need for another teacher’s permission. To protect their identities, each student was listed with a pseudonym, both in data collection and reporting, to protect their identity and I kept all data confidential on a password protected laptop. Consent forms, copies of audio interviews, transcripts, a master list of
pseudonyms and birth names, as well as any other notes were kept in a locked file cabinet to protect identities. Video recordings from daily rehearsals were kept on a password protected laptop for future reference. Audio and video files were destroyed within three months of taping, while all other data will be destroyed within one year of the completion of the study.

Data Collection

The Beginning Band class met every school day for approximately fifty minutes. In early October, Cooperstown Junior High and High School’s principal attended a class meeting and stated the goal of the research that was to take place, discussed the student participation requirements, and handed out the parental consent form that was needed to participate in the study. The parental consent forms (Appendix D) were handed out to all students, complete with a self-addressed and postage pre-paid envelope for their submissions. Student participation was emphasized as completely voluntary, and that they may still participate in the class yet choose not to be interviewed.

Once consent forms were received, I began setting up initial interviews. All student interviews were set up well in advance and to coincide with their schedule. A reminder of the upcoming interview was provided via phone conversation to either the student or their parent.

In the early stages of the class, the students were introduced to an instrument that they had never played before, but choose on their own. To match requirements of the CJHHS school district, the use of Standard of Excellence: Enhanced Comprehensive Band Method; Book 1 (Pearson, 2004) was used for formal instruction. Typically, an estimated one page was covered out of that methods book daily. The class then moved on to present exercises that I had written,
but based on the literature mentioned in the previous chapter. These exercises featured informal learning strategies such as peer-directed learning, aural skill usage and development, and peer-and self-assessment strategies. All informal exercises focused on concepts learned in the pages of the *Standard of Excellence* text and built on those concepts. On a few occasions, the day’s lesson plan would solely focus on a larger assignment that utilized both formal and informal strategies (Appendix F).

**Observations**

Video recordings of the classroom daily activities were made, mainly focusing on a view of the students. This angle was most useful in observing student reactions and interactions throughout the exercises. During rehearsal time, I composed notes and memos, addressing personal thoughts, feelings or points of interest in the given rehearsal. Within a few hours of each rehearsal, I would watch the day’s video recording and composed notes based on the student experiences. I would use these notes to better aid my daily rehearsals. At times, I would observe information that coincided with my daily memos, supplying more descriptive data. These observations would prove useful in the overall description of both the teacher and student experiences.

**Memos and Field Notes**

During class time, I composed memos of thoughts, questions, and observations that I had during daily activities. These memos, and those that accompanied the video recordings, assisted in the description of what it was like to be the educator in this classroom. To further aid the
descriptions of these experiences, weekly journals were kept to summarize classroom activities, student behaviors, and detailing questions and comments of my own experiences. All journals were kept on a password protected laptop, and students were referred to by their pseudonyms to protect their identity.

**Interviews**

All interviews were according to standards of the Institutional Review Board. Consent was given by the students, parents, school site, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board. At the time of each interview, students were reminded that participation was completely voluntary, and their identity was being kept confidential. Students verbally gave confirmation of their consent prior to the audio recording beginning. All interviews were conducted in the director’s office in the music room at Cooperstown Junior High/High School. Interviews occurred three total times during this study.

All interviews were between 10-30 minutes in length. All interviews were audio recorded through an iPad Mini, using the internal microphone from the device and the application, “Recorder.” Interviews were then processed through the application, “AnyTune Pro,” where the audio could be slowed down and rewound easily for transcription. Transcriptions were made through the Apple word processing software “Pages,” using student pseudonyms, within three days of the interview date. These interviews allowed me to reflect and probe further as the class continued. The greatest challenge of these interviews, was the age difference of participants. While the older students were very articulate and able to discuss their
ideas in detail, the younger participants had a more difficult time finding words to describe their experiences.

At the time of this thesis’ proposal, the inclusion of four total interviews (two mid-level, one every two weeks) was ideal. However once this project began, circumstances with various students being pulled out of the classroom for standardized testing simply did not allow four interviews to take place. With this change of schedule, I found it most beneficial to meet with the students for only one mid-level interview.

*First wave (or pre-interview):* The first wave of interviews were conducted within a week that students were given instruments, based on the timing of receiving the instruments from the school district. The interview questions followed a protocol as displayed in Appendix A. These questions were based on student perceptions of musicality, the role that music plays in their lives outside of school, and asking them to describe feelings associated with starting a new instrument. The data from this interview provided as an individualized base for each participant, and allowed for comparative data in the final analysis.

*Second wave (or mid-level interview):* The second wave of interviews were held approximately mid-way into the data collection window. The questions in this round of interviews represented the evolutionary aspect of the constructivist grounded theory using an emerging design. These interview questions were developed by analyzing the first wave of interviews, creating preliminary categories, and finding clues to direct my next data collection. The questions focused on the participants’ current feelings of the class, as well as successes and hardships they have experienced during the process. The interview protocol for this wave is provided in Appendix B.
Third wave (or exit interview): The final wave of interviews contained aspects of the second wave, but also contained questions very similar to the first-wave. These questions were asked within one week that the students went on their winter break, essentially the end of their first semester. The collection of this data not only gave new information, but also allowed a comparison to the first wave, showing if the participant’s views or definitions had changed or modified in any way after the implementation of informal practices. The interview protocol for this wave is provided in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

The data collection methods provided qualitative data. As mentioned earlier, although this is an action research study, the data collection and analysis utilized characteristics of a constructivist grounded theory approach, using an emerging design and constant comparative analysis. As mentioned earlier, the use of a constructivist design displayed by Charmaz (2006) was demonstrated, in order to best describe the experiences had by the individuals. The data provided through each interview was analyzed immediately following the collection, thus an emerging design was best for this particular study (Creswell, 2012). This thorough analysis through a constant comparing of data helped create new research questions, and better saturated the categories presented (Charmaz, 2006). Constant comparative data analysis aided in this constructivist approach, and the gathering of new data was continuously compared to the raw data, incidents to other incidents, and incidents to categories (Creswell 2012).
Open Coding

Data was analyzed using the online qualitative analysis software, “Dedoose.” Participants were entered as descriptors, along with their age, gender, grade, instrument choice, and number of instruments that they have formally learned. After interviews were transcribed, they were uploaded, attached to descriptors, and analyzed. Using a constant comparison model, each transcript was analyzed in sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections, creating indicators (Creswell, 2012). Through these indicators, I began attaching open codes in order to relate and develop concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) for further interview questions.

During the second round of interviews, a similar process was applied. Using an emerging design, I was able to analyze interviews to create preliminary categories, looking for clues about what additional data to collect (Creswell, 2012). When the final exit interviews were completed, categories became more refined and saturated. This process allowed me to constantly compare new data to the same descriptor, as well as seeing a much larger picture when comparing to other students or the class as a whole.

Axial Coding

Axial coding was performed to “make connections between a category and its subcategories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). After the final round of interviews were transcribed, they were uploaded and coded in a similar way to the previous interviews. After organizing fifty-seven dimensionalized examples from the raw data of the final interviews, I narrowed to twenty-six properties. Through these, four categories emerged. For example, within a transcription’s indicators were dimensionalized examples such as “sticking with it,” “setting
goals,” “being passionate,” and “playing with emotion.” These examples were narrowed to the properties of “hard work/dedication,” and the objective of “feel.” These properties allowed the category “value” (something that the participants valued in a musician) to emerge. See Appendix G for a list of the dimensionalized examples, properties, and categories.

Summary

This methodology chapter has outlined the specific steps of the research study. Qualitative methods were chosen in order to best provide the participants’ voice as they described their experiences. Within qualitative research, an action research project was appropriate, because I acted as the teacher/researcher in my current teaching location. However, elements of a constructivist grounded theory design were chosen because the ever-developing coding technique would best help in generating effective data gathering and analysis. The participants were any that both enrolled in the course and completed and returned the parental consent form. All consent forms, interview protocols, and procedures went under review by the IRB of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The theoretical sampling included memos, field notes, interviews, and observations composed by the teacher/researcher in order to best describe his experiences. Rehearsals were video recorded and later watched for analysis. A total of twenty-five audio recorded interviews were taken in three waves (pre-, mid-level, and exit) in order to best represent the individual voices of the participants. Questions for these interviews were derived from an emerging design,
where each interview was analyzed, creating preliminary categories. These preliminary
categories aided in what data was to be collected in the next wave’s interview questions.

All transcriptions were uploaded to an online qualitative research software tool,
“Dedoose,” to aid in the analysis process. Data analysis of transcribed interviews included a
constant comparison procedure, allowing the raw data to be broken up into indicators or
excerpts. After the final interviews were transcribed, fifty-seven dimensionalized examples
were narrowed to twenty-six properties, which in turn emerged four categories which are
discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.
Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

In the latter half of Chapter III, I discussed the methodology used to collect and analyze data for this study. Using an emerging design, after each interview was completed, I open coded each transcribed interview. This allowed me to use a constant comparative analysis technique found in grounded theory research to aid in finding clues for data collection in the next round of interviews. Axial coding began once the final interviews were complete and transcribed. I used a similar open coding technique, discovering fifty-seven dimensionalized examples in the raw data. These led to twenty-six properties, which in turn allowed four categories to emerge. These categories, or themes, effectively display a window into the experience of the students.

This chapter will discuss these results in two sub-sections: The Student Experience and The Teacher Experience. The Student Experience results are based on the interviews as well as observations made by the instructor, using in-class memos and notes from video recorded rehearsals. All teacher related experiences were based on observations, field notes, memos, and video recorded rehearsals.

The Student Experience

As discussed in Chapters I and II, the term musicality can mean different things to different people, depending on what a musician values most. In a study such as this, it is important to view how students use music in their everyday lives and what they value in a
musician. When we understand this information, not only can we see student goals, but also how they currently use music, and how they see themselves in a musical world.

It is important to mention that a meaningful piece of qualitative data came from the general tone of the interviews. While asking questions about the students’ musicality in the first set of interviews, participants seemed unsure and hesitant with their responses. However, during the final wave of interviews, answers to musicality questions were overall more confident and direct. I did not sense that they were expecting the question, but rather that they were prepared to give an answer. This suggests that the student participants thought more about their values of musicians and themselves. It is possible that through learning an instrument they have begun to consider new ideas in their own musical world as they begin to identify themselves within it.

In any newly designed curriculum, the student experience should be a high priority. As an educator, it is important for us to understand as much as we can about what the students enjoyed and valued, what they looked for from the teacher, what they found worthwhile, as well as difficulties that they had. The data presented in this chapter was found by asking questions in the final interview that were similar to the first. Although there were more questions asked and topics covered, it was important for me to see growth (if any) in the students’ music use and what they thought was necessary to be a good musician. After coding the interview transcriptions, I was able to narrow their statements into four categories that were relevant to this project: Uses, Value, Practice, and New Skills Gained.
Uses

Educating students in becoming better music users allows us as educators to help students retain music in their lives after their secondary education; whether it is with listening, performing, or creating. As my philosophy of music education features making my students better music users, knowing how they use music in their daily lives helps me to not only to direct lessons to be most useful to them, but also to gauge if they have grown musically in my classroom.

The data from the final interviews suggested that some students began using or recognizing that they were using music in new ways compared to their first interview. In the first wave of interviews, students had given eight dimensionalized examples of how they “use” music, yet in the last interview that number had increased to twelve. Every student had different ideas of how they used music, and all agreed that it was a big part of their life.

The most predominant examples in the pre-interviews were music listening in a vehicle, background noise while doing homework, and accompanying a sports activity or workout. During the final interviews, I found that these students were using music in more participatory ways, including singing or playing at home, composing their own music, and performing in church groups. I organized these dimensionalized examples into six properties: Listening, Church (listening and performing), Dance, Playing or Singing Outside of School, Stress Relief, and Creating.
Value

In order to better understand what students valued in music, I formulated two questions. Students were asked to name characteristics that they admired in a “successful” musician, and what they believed it would mean to be a “success” at their instrument that they were learning. I left the term “success” open to interpretation by each participant. These questions were asked during the first wave of interviews then repeated during the final wave.

As students listed qualities of a successful musician during the first round of interviews, performance was mentioned the most often with eight total dimensionalized examples. Students respected the quality of the performance, being on a stage, and being able to play difficult music. I was surprised to see that only three students had mentioned the same traits in their successful musician as their own instrument success goals. David, a seventh-grade first-year alto saxophone player, believed that a successful musician was one that played on a stage of some sort. He believed he would be a success at his instrument if became good enough that he could perform with an “actual group,” through an audition of some sort, and then perform with them on a stage.

Taking the value of performance one step further, Brooke, a senior learning her third instrument, respected musicians who could be “put on the spot” with improvisation and sight-reading skills and wanted to be able to do this. Brooke stated, “Just, like, any sort of song, I guess. I could imagine in my head at any sort of show where someone yells out a song to play and I can just do it.” Although sight-reading is present in both the vernacular and classically-trained musicians value system, Brooke made statements that leaned more toward the vernacular value side, especially wanting to use these skills to play in other genres. “…Being able to adapt
to other types of music around you,” she explained. “Like, if you’re going to go play with someone, to be able to just go and play with them and not have to … I mean, yeah, obviously you have to learn it, but not have to take a lot of time trying to figure it all out. Just being able to go and kind of do it.”

Clara, a sophomore learning her first instrument, found another vernacular value in music with an objective of “feel.” She believed that the emotion of the performer or piece being properly portrayed was the most valuable attribute of musicians. Although Clara mentioned this value in the view of her successful self, she stated that she does not believe it achievable until she perfects other aspects of her performance first. Clara said, “Right now, I just want to switch to my notes correctly. And … I don’t know, I’m just kind of focusing on the sound, not really anywhere near emotional stuff because I’m not very good yet.” This suggests that Clara has some sort of value hierarchy already placed in her mind, where these skills are at more of an advanced level, not attainable by a novice musician.

In the final round of interviews, performance was again the highest mentioned category with eleven total dimensionalized examples. There was a far greater number of properties found in the third round, suggesting that students were identifying more ways that they defined “success,” both in a musician and themselves. Compared to the first round of interviews, the distribution of dimensionalized examples to categories was far more even. Table 4 displays the most predominant categories found in the two interviews. Not only does this chart show how many times students mentioned examples in each category, but also displays that categories had more dimensionalized examples in the final interviews. This suggests more students were recognizing additional ways that they valued music.
Four out of the nine total participants matched their successful musician value with that of their own success in the final sets of interviews. Brooke again matched her value of sight-reading, cross-genre playing, and performance values. Clara mentioned performance ability in both her successful musician and herself, however this time she swapped one vernacular value for another. In the third interview, Clara never once mentioned the objective of “feel,” but rather discussed sharing music with others (both in performance and music making) as well as the ability to compose songs using aural skills. David also kept his performance values, but this time added the vernacular aural skills to his values. When asked about his successful musician, he said, “Like, if they can play a lot of really hard stuff on sheets (music) and if they can play by
ear.” When asked which one was more important to him, music notation or playing by ear, David responded, “A little bit of both.”

This is Zach’s first semester at CJJHS as well as his first year participating in music, choosing the clarinet as his instrument. In the first round of interviews, he identified performance to consider himself successful at his instrument. “I think I would step up for a bigger crowd and try my hardest to, just like, try to be good, I guess … in front of a lot of people,” he said. Although he briefly mentioned performance again in his third round, he had a bigger focus on composition and creativity. When asked about what he valued in himself as a musician, he said, “(I am) kind of creative when I write my songs.” He also said, “I believe that I’m actually trying something … trying something really new and I think if you keep trying and trying to do new things, then you’ll be successful in life.”

Examining Table 4 again, another interesting development came from the third wave of interviews, where students began including aural related learning in their value system. It was indeed eye opening that no dimensionalized examples mentioning ear-training skills during their initial definition, found in their first-wave of interviews. Many students, such as Brooke and David had mentioned the want to learn to create and perform music using more ear-training, yet when they discussed their successful musician, aural skills were not present. However, during the final interviews, Brooke, David, Erica, Samantha, Autumn, and Clara all mentioned the need of aural skills and making music with ear-training as characteristics of themselves as a successful musician.
Practice

Any music educator would agree that practice contributes to a student’s success in playing an instrument. It is ideal to relay that information to students early, so they can improve performance, achieve goals, and be better prepared for rehearsals. During the second wave of interviews, I asked all students about their practice habits: how long, how often, and what they practiced when at home.

Once the second wave of interviews was complete and data was analyzed, I realized that very few students were using informal methods in their home practice. David, Clara, and Autumn all expressed ways in making informal music at home. Autumn and Clara would actually meet and play their instruments together, then at times Autumn would play her instrument along with Clara playing the piano, and the two would make music together. Autumn said, “Sometimes (Clara) and I would try playing together for, like, an hour or two because we would get distracted and then just keep playing. That was fun.” When asked about the source material for their practice, Autumn replied, “I now have my clarinet books and I go through that, or I play the music that we have, or I just pick random songs that we have laying around our house.”

David also had a piano in his home and began making music using aural skills. At night, he would practice his instrument for approximately ten minutes, then before quitting would switch to the piano. “I go to YouTube, or I Google, ‘how to play …’ this song,” he said. He would then watch other musicians make music and mimic their actions or figure out the song by himself, using aural skills.
Samantha, Brooke, Evan, Zach, and Erica all practiced at home, only playing exercises out of their methods book. When asked why this was, the most common answer dealt with not knowing how to practice ear-training at home. One example of our aural work in class included me playing a short melody on the piano and the students hunting for the notes, ultimately playing the melody back to me. Brooke took these activities very literally, and when asked about her aural practice at home, she replied, “I don’t know, because I don't know how to do it on my own. I play it on the piano, I don’t know what to play on the clarinet.”

With this information, I began introducing new methods of informal music making, including one exercise where students played along with the recordings provided with the *Standard of Excellence* text. In this particular lesson, students played a melody without the book, using only their instrument and listening to the example. I believed implementing these new ideas, students would find new ways of making music aurally and attempt more informal methods at home.

In the final wave of interviews, I found that the same students were still practicing formal and informal methods at home, but since the last interview, only one new student had started attempting ear-training practice at home. Brooke, whose values included informal music making, had begun to play along with songs she would hear on the radio. She added, “Not a lot though, because I’d just get really frustrated.” Once Brooke would get frustrated, she would quit and put her instrument away.

These numbers show that there were still four students that were not practicing aural music at home. Erica is a senior, and despite being in choral music for several years, had never taken an instrumental course. During her final interview, she mentioned the lack of other
musical people to make music with at home, so aural practice could not be achieved. When asked why she did not practice aural music at home, she said, “Because I don’t know who I would do it with. My family isn’t really very ... musical. They like music, but they don’t really know much about it.”

Other students, such as Samantha, again mentioned not understanding how to practice aural skills at home. Evan had mentioned not enjoying the aural skills, where his frustrations would make him want to stop practicing. “I’m not a big fan of that. I’m more, just kind of going through it until I have it down (using formal methods),” he said.

In his second interview, Zach believed his aural skills were not needing practice, stating, “I just do it perfectly.” In the third interview, he showed signs of growth in self-assessment. When playing in his methods book, he was able to break troublesome sections apart before continuing. In a similar description as Evan, Zach found that while playing with a recording, the music progressed further even though he needed to stop to figure out his part. “I think it’s kind of harder,” he said, “because that has a certain beat you have to go to. I just want to figure it out beforehand to figure out a beat.” However, when he talked about his formal practice, he mentioned creating new melodies off of mistakes he would play. “Well, sometimes I kind of put, like, if I mess up, I put it into something. Like, keep it going ... So, accidents become not accidents, I guess.”

These data indicate that the educator needs to be very supportive and diligent with student aural practice. Providing daily lessons which feature different aural methods, as I did, was not enough for students to understand new ways of using aural methods outside of school. Even after students understood that the aural classwork could be applied in many ways, some
students still did not practice these skills at home due to it being too frustrating, or the book practice just being easier and more suitable for their needs. With this in mind, it would probably be best if the teacher provided actual aural assignments for students to take home and prepare for the next day.

New Skills Gained

As in any beginning music course, these students gained new skills as they progressed with their instrument. This class had a unique spectrum of skills that students recognized, with some students being in their first music course alongside others learning an additional instrument. During the final wave of interviews, I discussed these skills with the students, asking them what they had gained so far into the course.

While discussing new skills that they have gained, students most often mentioned abilities related to the physical production of sound. Especially in this category, dimensionalized examples came from more students and were discussed more often. For the “Physical Production” property, I grouped together student examples such as playing without squeaking, moving fingers from one note to another, tonguing, breath control, and strengthening their embouchure. For example, in his final interview, Evan began talking about his embouchure technique stating, “I think that being able to control the pitch just with your mouth is kind of interesting … I can’t really stop doing that.” Clara also mentioned her embouchure, and added finger movements to her skills. “I guess on notes, like, how to form my mouth to make them sound better,” she said. “And I guess how fast you move your fingers off certain notes to get to others.” When asked about what he has learned so far in the course, clarinetist Zach said,
“Moving my fingers faster. I’m trying to use the tongue thing, but not a lot because if I do it a lot it will squeak. So, I’m trying to do better on that.”

The second highest mentioned examples came in students mentioning notation. Here, students referred to gaining or improving their ability to read notation, especially recognizing symbols on the page and correlating it to different fingerings for their instrument. Erica had previously learned notation, but had forgotten most of what she had learned due to years of lacking involvement in music. “Well, I’ve learned a lot more about notes and, like, all of the signs and what they’re called on the music,” she said. “Because, I mean, I knew what they were called from taking piano lessons, but that was, like, second grade. So, I really didn’t remember much. And then I learned what they meant also.” Evan had never learned anything related to music notation related prior to this class. In his third interview, we began discussing new knowledge he had gained in the course, and he said, “I would definitely, definitely … reading sheet music. Before I was here, I didn’t know a thing. Now I can see, you know, at least tell what’s high and what’s low.” We continued to discuss this “high and low” idea of his and found that he meant both the notated understanding and the aural hearing of notes being higher or lower than the other.

I was surprised that specific comments about aural skills were much harder to come by. Most students only mentioned the term “aural skills” while discussing their new knowledge and were not able to go into much more detail (e.g., pitch matching, tone quality), therefore placing examples into an aural skill category was quite difficult. However, examples that were found included student comments mentioning playing by ear, as well as matching pitch and tone quality of other performers. For example, Clara was discussing her aural learning and said the most
challenging thing to her was her ability to match pitch. “I guess hitting the notes right without, like, I don’t know … just messing up, I guess. And then I’m trying to work on the tone or whatever it is … and timing. I’m so bad at that!”

Autumn had mentioned her skills in pitch matching and comparing her tone with others. She stated, “Well, you obviously have to be able to match the notes better and I’m learning that. I’m not quite there. So, I guess making tone and like making sure you match with stuff.” As an oboe player, she found that her pitch was effected greatly by her embouchure and breath support, so matching the pitch of the flute players became an ongoing aural training skill that all (even classically-trained musicians) experience.

Self-Assessment and Peer-Teaching

At times, comments like Autumn’s blurred into a self-assessing and teaching category. Some students, like Autumn, discussed watching other oboe players on YouTube and attempting to match their tone quality. When discussing one of our aural activities, Clara remembered playing the melody from “Happy Birthday to You” and evaluating her pitch accuracy while hunting for notes. Both of these are prime examples of students utilizing skills rooted in self teaching and assessing their own performance.

When placing students in small group or pairs for activities (see the Teacher Experience section for further discussion on how this was approached), careful consideration was taken in the groupings. Reflecting on these exercises, most students found themselves to be participating in more of a “learner” role, while the other group members were the “teachers.” However, students like Brooke and Autumn recognized that they were taking the teacher role and embraced
it. Both Autumn and Brooke felt that their previous instrumental experiences prepared them to help their partners, discussing how most of the time they did not think they needed help from other students in either notation or aural exercises.

In one particular exercise, students notated their own compositions, taught it to a group member aurally, and in turn the group member notated the piece (see the “Teacher Experience” section in this chapter for extended discussion on the exercise). Reflecting on this, Autumn noticed how her more advanced experience in rhythm and melody led to issues with a more inexperienced player, Samantha. “It was difficult trying to teach my part,” she said. “I probably should have made an easier one, not that it was super hard … maybe I just went around the notes too much. Going from like, high to low, rather than moving up step by step because that’s how she wrote hers and I thought maybe that would have made it easier.” While I was concerned that this experience might have been frustrating to Samantha, she found it fun, exciting, and helpful. In her second interview, Samantha said, “I find it pretty helpful because, like, you can tell or not if you’re doing a note wrong or something like that. If it sounds way off, you can tell usually.”

Several times in her various interviews, Brooke mentioned that she thoroughly enjoyed having this teacher role. However, in her second interview, Brooke stated how her teachings had not always made the same impact on all students in her groups. “I don’t know, there’s been times with (Zach) where I’ve told him multiple times but he, I don’t know, he just kind of doesn’t seem accepting, I guess. But if I’m working with (Erica) or (Evan) or whatever, they do. But I feel like that’s probably because they know me better and they know that I’ve done a lot of music stuff.” When discussing group learning with Zach, he had a different point of view of his time with Brooke. “She has played a lot of the woodwind instruments and she knows the notes
to the clarinet and it’s like she knows everything, and I can learn from that because I only know a little bit.” He also stated, “I think it’s kind of helpful because I can learn from someone older than me and they get it more than the younger people do and I can learn from her.”

Through all of the peer teachings, each group seemed to create their own dynamic without any instruction from the classroom teacher. After the first group exercise was complete, we had a class discussion about methods that they had used in teaching their partner their aural example. While a few students attempted to match note-by-note first then adding rhythm, most students performed pitch matching and rhythm simultaneously in one measure chunks. Learning in this way seemed very natural to all involved as one player would mimic the other’s measure, then they would play it at the same time to double check their progress.

When discussing pitch matching techniques with the class, Zach mentioned that because his partner was playing the same instrument, he could at times look at her fingers to determine the note. I was surprised to see that the other students thought that this was “cheating,” but I explained to the class that while this was a completely valid way to problem solve in this situation, we cannot rely on this method alone. In an instance where players use two different instruments, instrumentalists must rely on mainly listening skills to learn parts.

*Overall Experience*

Throughout the interviews, I was pleased to hear most students discussing aural and notation activities interchangeably, as if both were a natural way of learning an instrument. During interviews, many students had to be asked specifically about the aural learning activities in order to gain knowledge on their experiences, possibly due to the fact that they had already
grouped the notation and aural learning exercises together in so many ways. Two instrumentalists, Autumn and Brooke, had a different view on the aural learning, mainly because this was not their first instrumental experience. They had never performed peer-teaching or aural activities of this nature before, so they knew what exercises were different than their previous instrumental experiences.

While most students found aural examples difficult, they still found them enjoyable. During the final interview, students were asked what their favorite exercise was up to that point. All but two students, Evan and Zach, mentioned an aural-based activity. In unrelated questions, Zach had mentioned that he felt he was a natural at the aural skills exercises, so it did not feel like learning to him. Evan discussed that he believed that he would never need the aural skills in any musical situation that he saw himself in. “I could see that there’s a value to it, but I don’t … I personally don’t have a use for it,” he said. “I might in the future, but I don’t (now).”

Depending on the various skills of the student, most negative comments about the class dealt with notation that was higher or lower than the lines in the staff (counting ledger lines), and various aural skill developments. Zach had mentioned having a hard time hearing the difference between two notes being a half-step apart, stating, “There’s two of the same notes that are similar; the B natural and the B flat. Those sound exactly the same. Without looking at the keys, then I … it’s very frustrating to me.” David found that not being able to physically see notation made it difficult to remember what he had previously done, “Because when you learn by ear, you forget how to play it after a certain amount of time.”

While several students discussed their frustrations with notated ledger lines, no two students had the same aural difficulties. This could prove problematic for teachers, where they
would need to be exceptionally diligent with the various student needs in this classroom utilizing this combined-methods approach.

**The Teacher Experience**

In order to better prepare other educators for a combined-methods classroom, it is important that we exchange ideas and experiences, helping each other to create the most authentic and meaningful programs. Every classroom’s students bring individual experiences, expectations, and knowledge. Therefore, large or small, no two music classrooms are the same. Teachers dedicated to providing the most meaningful music education for their students will be the ones taking the first steps in implementing these informal practices into their classrooms. These teachers must document and share their observations, ask questions and help each other find answers, and utilize our individual experiences to help strengthen our students’ education. No matter how confident any of us are in our informal music making, all educator experiences are valid and useful. This section will discuss the findings from my own experience in this formal/informal music classroom.

**Selecting Groups**

In the beginning of this project, the biggest question was how to create an authentic experience of informal music making inside of my formal classroom. The authenticity of youth meeting with friends of similar musical interests to discuss and participate in informal music making is difficult to replicate. My solution to this was to group my students based on a set of criteria that I had established. On the first day of classes, I had my students complete a set of
questions on an index card. Questions included their name, age, grade, how many instruments they had previously learned inside of school, how many instruments they had previously learned outside of school, and what instrument they were learning in this course. These questions allowed me to gauge my students’ formal and informal music background. Once I imported them into a simple spreadsheet, I was able to organize them and create different student groups in various ways for classroom activities. See Appendix H for a full list of students, complete with descriptors.

It is important to note that throughout the class, groups of students changed based on the difficulty of the activity. For example, in the beginning, I grouped more knowledgeable students with less experienced students, keeping instrument tunings together if possible. Later, I would experiment with different student groupings, such as pairing the inexperienced with inexperienced, different instrument combinations, and older students with younger. An educator could easily utilize the same lessons multiple times yet change the grouping criteria, creating a unique, challenging, and authentic classroom experience. These simple criterion from the index cards proved invaluable throughout the course.

The Teacher’s Role In The Informal Learning Environment

As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, the authentic vernacular music experience is traditionally without a licensed educator present. Self- and peer-teaching and assessment take precedence in a vernacular music setting. Therefore, if we are to create an authentic informal music experience within a formal classroom, the licensed educator must be willing to let go of some control. However, there are many ways in which the music educator can still play a role in
itself this combined-methods classroom. It is important to note that throughout this section, I will be continuously pulling information from my memos, observations, and field notes, yet will be presenting the findings in more of a narrative way.

Throughout my daily memos, observations, and field notes, I began to see themes emerge that I believe show that an educator can have a meaningful and authentic place in this learning community. Evaluating my own data, I found that I acted in more of a “supportive” role, as a mostly silent educator walking around the classroom, listening to each group. Students participating in pairs or small groups did most of their own teaching and evaluating, and they experimented with their own teaching and learning methods, which did not always generate positive results. During activities, I would wander around the room, checking on progress and answering questions if needed. These questions were both formal and informal in nature, and I would use a variety of methods to answer them, but not always answering a formal question with a formal technique, or informal question with informal technique. All exercises truly focused on marrying both informal and formal methods.

I found that once a solid set of directions were given, most students were completely capable of being at least partially responsible for their own learning. While my directions never included a specific method for the students to teach with, they did include criteria that they had to follow. To properly display this, in the next few paragraphs, I will present one particular exercise where students combined ear training, composition, and peer-teaching. See Appendix F for a sample of this lesson plan.

In this particular lesson, students composed a four measure melody using a set of the five pitches that they had learned up to that point from the *Standard of Excellence* text. I explained to
the students that while any of these learned pitches or rhythms could be used, they had to be able to notate it on a sheet of staff paper. I also mentioned that it did not matter what they composed, as long as it sounded correct to them.

While students worked, I checked on their progress. I rarely spoke unless asked a question, and used both formal and informal methods in my answers. During these compositions, students had more difficulties than just notating their melody. As noted in my memos, I found that most of my questions were related to production of sound, including embouchure, fingerings, and breathing questions. I was quite surprised how well students were handling the situation of composing on their own, when based only on playing by ear. As students began nearing the end of their compositions, I asked them to play the melody that they notated, and would help them edit any corrections. These edits came in the form of aural examples, such as, “You played this rhythm, but you notated this,” clapping both examples for the student to hear.

Once their composition was complete, students were paired based on experience and, because this particular exercise was one of our first group activities, their paired instrument tunings were the same. One main stipulation given for this portion of the exercise was that students had to face each other so they could not see their partner’s composition. The composer then had to play their melody while their partner matched the pitches on their own instrument, then transcribed it onto staff paper. Again, I found myself checking each group and answering more sound production questions and providing hints such as, “I think the pitch that you are looking for is a little higher than what you are playing.”
At the end of the first transcribing day, students were not finished notating their melodies. Before the end of class, I gathered everyone and discussed how they were teaching each other, frustrations they were experiencing, and methods they were using to solve them. In one instance, a group expressed that they “didn’t have enough time” to find the pitches while attempting to learn one measure at a time. I had taken note that the other groups began offering suggestions, saying they solved that issue by always starting from the beginning. The next day, I observed groups using methods that they had heard the other groups discuss. Because of this interaction, our future exercises included open discussions, where students began evaluating their performances and methods of teaching and learning. As the course continued, it was evident that students became more knowledgeable with informal music making and became more confident not only in their own abilities, but with other members of the class and their peer-teachings.

While the teacher may be more of a silent entity, there is much work that must happen to structure this learning environment. While the educator prepares the lessons, they must take the peer groupings into consideration. As mentioned earlier, different group dynamics can quickly change the difficulty of any lesson. It was equally important to demonstrate to the students that I was engaged in their learning, only in different ways other than simply giving instruction. While some may consider this method of teaching easier, it is quite the contrary. An educator must be diligent and attentive to all group members, yet allowing them the freedom to discover their own answers, right or wrong, as they critique themselves and the other members if their group.

In this supportive role, the educator can provide methods, problem solving, and assessment, utilizing both formal and informal strategies. It was clear to me that the exercises were meaningful to the students, and that there still was a need for an educator to be present.
Presenting clear criteria and directions allowed students to have boundaries yet still experiment with music making possibilities as they worked on each of their activities.

Just as each exercise included formal and informal music making, the authentic assessment for each method was equally important. Therefore, assessing of projects was based on both formal and informal methods as well. Formal assessment could include the correct rhythm and pitch notation, while informally assessing a student’s ability to offer teaching strategies, problem solve, and how they worked within their groups. It is important to note that my assessments never included how correct a teaching method may have been (if the method yielded positive results), but rather the ability to evaluate their methods and problem solve (alone or with others) to create a solution for their issues.

Student Needs

During the second round of interviews, I discussed different aspects of the class with the students. In order to better evaluate my own teaching and to better prepare more meaningful exercises, I asked students about their Standard of Excellence and aural exercise learnings. During these conversations, I asked what they found particularly helpful from me, the teacher, during these exercises.

When asked about what the students found helpful from the teacher in aural activities, five out of eight students mentioned being given the starting pitch as helpful. In shorter aural activities, I would play a melody that was based off of concepts that were learned in the Standard of Excellence text (see Appendix E). Before I would begin these aural examples, I would ask students to “find the first note,” and would repeatedly play the first pitch of the melody. Students
would then hunt for the note until they were able to find the pitch. I would double check their pitch matching by having individual students play the note for me, I would assess their accuracy and give hints if needed.

David found that matching the starting pitch was the most difficult portion of the aural exercises. Once he found the beginning note, he could evaluate where the next pitches went, whether higher or lower. “It gets easier,” he said. “If I start out and I find the first note and I kind of go from there. The first part is difficult, then it’s easy.” Brooke, who had previous instrumental training, found the first pitch very useful as well, but thought that was almost giving too much information. She said, “That definitely helps, but I feel like that’s cheating, I guess. I don’t know … but that helps.”

Four students had mentioned repetition as the most helpful method in the aural training. In order to help memory issues (like David had mentioned), the aural activities were given in short, two to four measure excepts, with the melody being repeated several times. During their partner exercises, I had noticed that repetition was included in most of their teaching methods. “Well, I don’t recognize the note right away. I have to kind of search for it,” Clara stated. “Like, repeating it, I guess, while we’re doing it.” Along with repetition, Erica mentioned that the tempo of the example meant a lot to her. She was most successful when the tempos of aural examples were not too fast, but she did not want them to be too slow either, thinking that the other students would get bored. “I don’t want you to go too slow because everyone else is (better) than me, you know. It’s harder for me to find it.” This would indicate that students like Erica do not want to seem unsuccessful, and are conscious of the other students playing the examples.
Overall Experience

Looking back at the experience of being the teacher in this combined approach, I believe it was a positive one. It was rewarding to see my students succeeding on their own in playing and problem solving, but I must admit at times it was difficult. There were points where just giving the answer to a problem would be the quickest way to allow the student to move on, but I knew that this would not help them grow musically. Personally, I referred back to my student teaching, where my cooperating teacher challenged me to answer questions with questions. This approach allows students to problem solve, thinking of possible resolutions. If the first action does not yield positive results, they move on to another possible solution. This advice definitely came in handy during these exercises, whether formal or informal in nature.

In this classroom, there is a definite balance between silence and being vocal, or being the teacher that is needed or not needed. Coming into this classroom prepared to fulfill a more supportive and reassuring role is best. Properly preparing exercises and examples, as well as the student grouping hierarchy, is of great importance for a smooth and positive experience for all involved. Although it was not long before I realized that students were quite capable of their own peer- and self-learning and assessment, they definitely required specific criteria to help guide them.

I benefited greatly from the use of trial and error in some of my preparation, especially in the beginning stages of the class. Even though at times, my groupings, methods, and exercises may not have been as successful as I would like, the wrong answer always led me to a new idea to attempt with the students. I believe that in this combined-methods approach, an educator must
be comfortable with being wrong, then trying alternate strategies to create a meaningful experience for the students. These trial and error techniques are obviously present in the informal student learning processes, and even makes the experience feel more authentic when practiced in the instructor’s teachings.

Summary

This chapter discussed the results found throughout this study, separated by the student experience and the teacher experience. All students involved in this project were interviewed three times and their responses were transcribed and coded. Through axial coding, dimensionalized examples from the interviews allowed four categories to emerge within the student experience. For the teacher experience, observations, field notes, memos, and video recordings of rehearsals were used to help describe what it felt like to be the teacher in this combined-methods classroom.

Throughout the interviews, students mentioned what they valued in music, which aided in the understanding of their definition of musicality and how they fit in their musical world. Throughout their discussions of their home practice, I discovered that the teacher needs to be very specific about what and how to practice aural skills at home. Students also recognized that they have gained formal and informal skills through the class, including abilities in physical production, notation, aural learning, and self-teaching strategies.

In this music classroom utilizing a combined approach, the teacher still has a role in student learning. While an educator takes the more supportive role in the informal learning activities, this allows students to pave the way for self- and peer- teaching and assessment.
Creating exercises with clear directions and criteria, yet allowing for students to be in charge of their own learning, a meaningful classroom that utilizes both formal and informal music making techniques emerges. Through trial and error (especially in the beginning) and recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the students, educators can create authentic music making exercises that benefit all students as music users. Educators must be willing to step back and allow students to take control, which may be a challenge for some. However, it is clear that the music educator not only is justified, but is also relevant and needed in this music classroom.
Chapter V: Conclusions

Introduction

In the Literature Review chapter, I examined studies related to informal learning, setting the groundwork for this project. The Methodology chapter discussed this project’s research design, data collection, and analysis. In the Results chapter, I explored the findings of this study through the Student Experience and the Teacher Experience sections. Bringing these ideas together, the goal of Chapter V, Conclusions, is to evaluate this study, compare its findings to previous research, and discuss recommendations for future research. First, I will elaborate on this study’s findings and discuss larger issues. Second, the conclusions and findings of this study will be compared to previous research. Finally, we will apply this study’s findings to discuss recommendations for future research.

Elaboration and Broad Discussion

Dealing with larger issues in music education, there is much that we can learn from studies such as this and others reviewed in Chapter II. In his 2007 article *Music Education at the Tipping Point*, John Kratus discussed that music education must adapt to our changing times. Utilizing new methods to better prepare our students for their musical world should be at the top of our list of change. This study has shown that a classroom that mixes formal and informal music making methods can be done authentically and meaningfully.

While helping our students become better music users, we want to effectively provide an environment that encourages music making where the licensed music educator does not have to
necessarily be present. Programs using a combined approach such as this one provide a unique learning environment that helps inspire students to make, listen, and evaluate music alone and with others, both inside and outside our classroom walls.

As students progressed through their interviews, the tone of their responses were more confident. They began discussing their ideas, feelings, beliefs, and values with more thought and effectiveness. Having the ability to discuss these musical concepts and ideals with others and being prepared to defend their answers is just one skill that can used by our students outside of our classroom. If a classroom utilizing self- and peer- teachings and assessment encourages these interactions, music educators wishing to prepare music users would aspire to include these methods in their regular coursework.

While in the first and final round of interviews, students discussed what they looked for in a successful musician and what would be needed to consider themselves a success at their instrument. Compared to their first round of interviews, the students’ dimensionalized examples in the final responses were more evenly dispersed with more examples being presented more frequently. This indicates that students were more knowledgeable and confident in their responses, taking aspects of their own learning and applying them to their definitions of musicality. Some students, such as Erica, had changed her responses, and directly related these changes on being involved in this music course. She said, “Well, I think playing an instruments a lot harder than it seems. I mean, I didn’t think it was going to be easy, obviously, but it was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be. There’s so many different parts to it.”

Overall, from this study’s data, we can determine that students enjoy and find value in a classroom that utilizes both formal and informal music making methods. I found no evidence to
suggest that implementing informal methods negatively impacted the formal music making in any way. In fact it seems that in most cases, the methods crossed each other and were helpful tools while making music using the inverse method; formal solutions with informal difficulties, informal solutions with formal difficulties. In addition to this, peer-directed teaching and learning seemed natural in many cases, even when students did not realize that they were performing any teaching activities.

As in any study, this project has its limitations. As any educational environment has unique students and dynamics, the results of this study may be related to the specific context of this classroom. This study was carried out in a small Midwestern community, and the same findings may vary from those found in a larger school context. A different demographic (and a longer data collection window) would most likely warrant different results due to student needs, previous knowledge, social dynamic, and their unique definitions of their own musicality. However, this does not warrant a dismissal of this study. As mentioned in Chapter IV, Results, as music educators begin implementing informal practices into their formal classrooms, we need to share our experiences to help others problem solve and create the most meaningful classrooms for their own students. Not all suggestions will work in all situations (much like other aspects of education), but we can take other teacher experiences and build off of them.

Many music educators lack informal music making experiences, therefore this may stop them from attempting a formal/informal classroom. Granted, all educators teach in methods that are familiar to them and focus on what they value. Personally, I am very comfortable in my own informal music making, and as a result find these classroom scenarios to be nontthreatening. However, this combined-methods classroom is not out of reach of any music educator. As our
musical world continuously evolves, the education for our students must evolve with it. As
music educators, we should be continuously challenging ourselves to better benefit our students’
needs. If an educator lacks confidence in their informal music making, they can gain comfort by
reading research studies, attending workshops, and experimenting with their own informal music
making either with other educators or alone in the homes.

I suggest that all teachers, regardless of how confident they are in their informal learning
and teaching, begin their combined-methods classroom by asking their students what they
themselves value, what they expect from the teacher, what the teacher does that is helpful to
them, and what they need more of. This will only strengthen lessons that are geared toward the
individual student needs, as well as increase a teacher’s own informal teaching, knowledge, and
experience.

An alternative approach to this study would have been to observe a different classroom
utilizing similar techniques, to give a new approach to these concepts. Working with an action
research study allowed me prior knowledge of students involved, which can benefit much of the
early decision making of this classroom dynamic. Were I to observe an unfamiliar classroom
implementing informal practices into their formal classroom, I would have a fresh perspective
with no previous knowledge of students that could possibly cloud my observations and interview
questions.

Conclusion and Implications for Music Education

While definitions of a formal/informal classroom differ, many researchers like Seddon
and Biasutti (2009) and Jorgensen (1997) defined an informal learning community as one that is
non-teacher led. In this project’s music classroom, the educator was still present (not dismissed altogether), playing a different role in certain exercises, yet always a very important part in student learning. My findings do indicate that a definition provided by Folkestad (2006) may be closer to this classroom. Folkestad suggested that when a teacher is present students learn how to play music, yet with no teacher present a student actually plays music. This definition implies that students are less aware that any learning is taking place, which seems to fit this study’s scenario. In addition to these reasons, my student groupings were designed from simple questions and criteria describing each student. These were imported into a spreadsheet, so the descriptors could be organized by different criteria (see Appendix H). According to Augustyniak (2013), it is the teacher’s responsibility to organize a hierarchy of students. Drawing conclusions from this study’s findings, it would confirm that the educator does have a place in a classroom utilizing informal methods, much like Deddon and Biasutti (2009) indicated.

In How Popular Musicians Learn, Lucy Green (2002) stated, “Whilst formal music education has welcomed popular music into its ranks, this is by no means the same thing as welcoming informal learning practices related to the acquisition of the relevant musical skills and knowledge” (p. 184). Throughout this study, very little popular music was used, but rather the techniques of its informal learning musicians. Vernacular musicians have a set value system that they individually decide upon. Green (2002) and Middleton (1994) are just two researchers displaying how aural content and listening is of high importance to vernacular musicians. Any music students, including those that participated in this study, are no different; as displayed in their discussions on how they use music and what they value in “successful” musicians.
Throughout their aural learning, this study’s participants made metaphoric connections between pitches, and how different pitches related to one another. As Davis (2010) discussed, this effectively displays that the students involved in this course were making connections to the taught information in more ways than just a symbol on a page to an instrument fingering.

During the final round of interviews, student dimensionalized examples were grouped into properties which allowed four categories to emerge. In the “Value” category, twelve different properties were found (see Appendix G). Reexamining Table 4, the participants top properties could be grouped into the “hard” and “soft” skill sets found in Blom & Encarnacao (2012). As mentioned in the Literature Review chapter, “hard” skill sets include more cognitive and technical skills, while “soft” sets are more behavioral. The top properties mentioned were Performance, Aural Skills, and a tie between Creativity and Notation. All four of these fall under the “hard” skill set. There was another tie for the next mentioned property, which included Hard Work/Dedication, the objective of “Feel”, and music being a Service to Others. While “Feel” could be considered a hard skill set, “Hard Work” and “Service to Others” could be considered to be a soft skill. Blom & Encarnacao discussed how a soft skill can be subdivided into “personal” (for example tardiness or bringing equipment) or “interpersonal” (sharing ideas or participating). Both the Hard Work and Service to Others properties could be considered interpersonal soft skill sets.

Some students made comments about their need for a specific tempo. For example, Erica had mentioned that she was more successful with the ear-training exercises if they were at a slower pace, but never said anything in front of the class for fear that she would seem unsuccessful or less competent than the other students. As Seddon and Biasutti (2009) discussed,
different participants wanted to be participating at different speeds. Whether that is performance tempo or moving from lesson to lesson, when having a variety of students with different abilities, finding a pace that all students would find satisfactory may be a difficult task.

Students such as David and Autumn showed signs that they were practicing their ear-training skills at home. Utilizing technologies such as audio recordings and YouTube, these two immersed themselves in conscious listening, perfecting skills, while completely unaware of their learning (Augustyniak, 2013; Jorgensen, 1997; Seddon & Biasutti, 2009; Folkestad, 2006). As Augustyniak found, regardless of a student’s skill, the use of technology helped developed their auditory memory, which in turn can aid in their improvisation skills, sight reading abilities, and music memorization (McPerson, Bailey & Sinclair, 1997; Woody, in press; Woody & Lehmann, 2010).

This music classroom allowed for a very unique music experience for the students involved. As students became teachers and assessors, I noticed in my observations that students were supporting each other and sharing ideas. Much like Allsup (2008) mentioned, I began observing students taking each other’s opinions and suggestions and applying them to their own practice, and more musical growth occurred. Through this sharing of ideas, peer-assessment became accepted, creating a positive and authentic learning environment (Lebler, 2007).

As I mentioned in Chapter IV, although the students found the aural exercises difficult, they still found enjoyment in them. As educators, we sometimes tend to think that students will not be willing to practice something if it is too demanding. However, as Lehmann, Sloboda, and Woody (2007) discuss, if someone is intrinsically motivated to learn, or the material has a personal meaning, the difficulty of the musical task does not typically affect their willingness to
perform it. Instead, the process of the music making is rewarding in itself. This could especially be seen in the informal practice that Autumn and Clara were participating in.

Application for Future Research

As mentioned in Chapter II, research about vernacular musicians and informal music making has been increasing in recent years, but the studies following the actual implementation of informal music making into a formal classroom are scarce. Researchers such as Lucy Green (2002, 2004) and Sharon Davis (2010) have paved the way in what Allsup (2008) describes as the “first-wave” of researchers. Now, “second-wave” studies and researchers are needed, applying and documenting experiences of implementing these methods into other classrooms.

These methods could also be applied to a choral classroom, creating a new and interesting dynamic. The exercises provided in this study would obviously not cross over into the vocal music classroom, so new exercises and ideas would be necessary. In addition to this, vocal music does not include a physical pressing of an instrument’s key. Therefore, some teachers may argue that choral music already uses aural learning, making some of this study’s findings not applicable to the choral classroom. Do students involved in vocal music value similar musician characteristics as the instrumentalists in this study? Implementing vernacular music making skills into a choral classroom also raises new and interesting questions about students feelings on singing alone, improvisation, and social dynamics within this environment.

For any teacher interested in beginning a classroom utilizing a combined-methods approach, I would recommend beginning by reading some of the available research. Lucy Green’s How Popular Musicians Learn (2002) is the obvious beginning step, with much of
informal music making research basing ideas from her text. Due to time constraints or location, many educators may not be able to attend any of the workshops suggested earlier. Should this be the case, I recommend reading Scott Emmons’ *Preparing Teachers for Popular Music Processes and Practices* (2004) for additional insight, further investigation into the purpose of including vernacular methods, and suggestions for lessons based in the informal music making methods.

In any studies that implement informal practices into formal classrooms, the documentation of teacher and student experiences is necessary. Recording student progress, successes, and difficulties allows us to better formulate exercises that are both meaningful and authentic. Documented teacher experiences allow other educators to prepare themselves and their classrooms for a new type of learning to take place.

Studies such as this one can benefit other teachers, even those without informal music making experience, to take the first steps in creating their own combined-methods classroom. As mentioned in Chapter IV, some educators may be hesitant toward using combined-methods due to being uncomfortable in their own informal music making abilities. Their feelings are justifiable and shared with many other music educators, which makes the sharing of their experiences all the more valid. No matter the amount of knowledge an educator may have, size of school that they teach in, the ages of teachers or students, or the results that they find, all experiences will be viable. As the number of documented student and teacher experiences grows, a more meaningful music classroom will be created, ultimately better preparing our music users for outside our classroom walls.
References


Rodriguez (Ed.), *Bridging the gap: Popular music and music education*, (pp. 159-174). Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference.


Appendix A: Interview Protocol #1

Interviewee: __________________________
Interviewer: __________________________
Date: ____________________________    Time: __________________________
Place: __________________________

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, I am conducting a research project. I am interested in understanding what students at this school value in music and how you see yourself in the musical world. I want to talk about your experiences learning a new instrument. This interview should not take more than 30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have right to discontinue your involvement at any time. Throughout this study, I will keep your identity as well as this school’s identity confidential at all times. You have consented to a tape recording of the interview. Do you still consent to this interview being audio recorded?

Are there any questions that you wish to ask? Then let’s get started.

Examples of Interview Questions:

1.) Please tell me about yourself.
2.) How did you become interested in playing an instrument?
3.) What types of music do you listen to in your spare time?
4.) In what ways is music playing a role in your life outside of school?
5.) How did you choose the instrument that you are currently playing?
6.) What do you think it would mean to be successful at your instrument?
7.) What do you believe it means to be a successful musician?
8.) Tell me about interactions you have with the other musicians in this class.
9.) How does it feel to be learning a new instrument?

WRAP-UP: Thank you for your time today. I appreciate you sharing your experiences and insights on this topic.
Appendix B: Interview Protocol #2

Interviewee: ____________________________
Interviewer: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________ Time: ____________________________
Place: ____________________________

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, I am conducting a research project. I am interested in understanding what students at this school value in music and how you see yourself in the musical world. I want to talk about your experiences learning a new instrument. This interview should not take more than 30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have right to discontinue your involvement at any time. Throughout this study, I will keep your identity as well as this school’s identity confidential at all times. You have consented to a tape recording of the interview. Do you still consent to this interview being audio recorded?

Are there any questions that you wish to ask? Then let’s get started.

Examples of Interview Questions:
____ 1.) Tell me how you feel you are doing so far in learning your instrument.
____ 2.) Tell me about when you work in partners. Is it helpful, hurtful, difficult? Why?
____ 3.) Tell me about what you feel your role is when you work with your partner.
____ 4.) Talk to me about your note reading skills ... How are they coming along? Do you find it difficult or easy? To you, what is the most easy/difficult thing about reading notation? What would you like to see more from me, your teacher, during these exercises?
____ 5.) Tell me about playing by ear ... Do you find it difficult or easy? To you, what is the most easy/difficult thing about ear training? What would you like to see more from me, your teacher, during these exercises?
____ 6.) What is your favorite exercise so far?
____ 7.) Tell me about your practicing at home. How long do you practice? What do you work on?

WRAP-UP: Thank you for your time today. I appreciate you sharing your experiences and insights on this topic.
Appendix C: Interview Protocol #3

Interviewee: ________________________________
Interviewer: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________ Time: ________________________________
Place: ________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, I am conducting a research project. I am interested in understanding what students at this school value in music and how you see yourself in the musical world. I want to talk about your experiences learning a new instrument. This interview should not take more than 30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have right to discontinue your involvement at any time. Throughout this study, I will keep your identity as well as this school’s identity confidential at all times. You have consented to a tape recording of the interview. Do you still consent to this interview being audio recorded?

Are there any questions that you wish to ask? Then let’s get started.

Examples of Interview Questions:

___ 1.) Now one semester in, how do you feel about your progress on your instrument so far?
___ 2.) Do you feel that you are on the road to being a successful musician?
___ 3.) When practicing, do you do any aural skill work? How or why not?
___ 4.) Do you work with anyone outside of school (like partners) in music related activities (practicing, listening, discussing, etc)? How or why not?
___ 5.) How do you currently use music outside of school?
___ 6.) Name some characteristics of a musician that you respect.
___ 7.) What new skills have you learned so far with this instrument?
___ 8.) What do you believe it means to be a successful musician?
___ 9.) What do you currently think it means to be successful at your instrument?

WRAP-UP: Thank you for your time today. I appreciate you sharing your experiences and insights on this topic.
Appendix D: School Proposal and Consent Forms

6300 – R Request to Conduct Research

Requests must include an outline of what is to be done, who is to be involved and how the results will be used and distributed. Below is the minimum information needed for consideration of the request.

Name Mark C. Adams Date 8-14-2013

Institution ___________________________

Represented University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Advisor Dr. Robert H. Woody

1. Statement of purpose of the study. (A copy of the research proposal may be submitted.) – See attached documents
2. How many students and staff members will be involved in the study? Approximately 15-20 students, 1 staff member
3. What is the time line for participant involvement? Six weeks
   a. Starting date? September 9th, 2013
   b. Ending date? October 18th, 2013
   c. How much time will each participant need to devote to the study? Approximately 120 minutes
4. Who will receive the results of the study? How will the results be used? The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, used for completion of a master’s degree.
5. Will the results of the project be beneficial to the School District? In what ways? (If a questionnaire is to be used, please attach a copy of the questionnaire.) Yes, by meeting more student needs in music education and by helping students learn music making skills outside of the classroom (including post-secondary education).

Person making request Mark Adams

Research Committee Recommendation: 

Date 9-3-13

Dr. Brown
Terry Quinn
Steve Anderson

Stephen L. Fenton Committee Chairman
Superintendent Approval:

X  Request Recommended

Request Denied

Date 4-5-13

Richard M. Stephen  Superintendent
Parent Informed Consent/Youth Assent Form

**Project Title:** Implementing informal practices into a formal classroom and the effects on student perception of musicality

**Purpose of research:** This is a research study that will be taking informal music making methods and placing them in the traditional formal music classroom. The purpose is to use both formal and informal methods of learning music, and see the effects it has on your child's definitions of what it means to be musical. Your child is invited to participate because he/she is currently enrolled in the Beginning Band 1 class.

**Procedures:** Participation will take place during the 8th hour Beginning Band 1 course. For formal instruction, participants will be using *Standard of Excellence: Book 1*, by Bruce Pearson, to coincide with the district's current instruction and assessment. In addition to this, the teacher/researcher will be implementing informal strategies that will focus on ear-training, cooperative learning, and self-assessment strategies. The teacher/researcher will be video recording himself while instructing this class. It should be noted that there is a possibility that your child may be seen in some of the video recordings. These video recordings will only be seen by the teacher/researcher and kept confidential at all times.

All students enrolled in the Beginning Band 1 course will be participating in the above activities, which all meet's, as well as the state of's assessment standards.

Participating in this study will take approximately 120 minutes of your child's time outside of the Beginning Band 1 course. The teacher/researcher will interview your child individually for 25-30 minutes, asking questions about their experiences in learning their new instrument. These audio recorded interviews will be held in the music room office and will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for your child, which may be during a free lunch period, before school, or after school. A total of four interviews will occur in a six week period, beginning in October of 2013. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research project will in no way affect the grade your child receives in the course.

**Risks and/or Discomforts:** There are no known risks associated with this research.

**Benefits:** Your child may find him/herself exploring and understanding music making in new ways. The data from this study will help the researcher to better understand the role of music in adolescent lives, both in and outside of school.
Confidentiality: Any information that could identify your child will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and all audio recordings will be destroyed within three months of collection. The information collected through this study may be published in journals or presented at meetings, but the data reported will use a pseudonym for both your child and the school.

Opportunity to ask questions: Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before your child participates or during. We would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed.

Mark C. Adams

Robert H. Woody
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
(402) 472-6231
rwoody2@unl.edu

At any time, should you have questions or concerns about your or your child's rights in this study, please contact UNL’s Research Compliance Services Office at (402) 472-6965 or at irb@unl.edu.

Freedom to withdraw: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You and your child are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting relationships with the researcher, the University of Nebraska, School, or .

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep. Please return this form by mailing USPS, using the enclosed pre-paid envelope, no later than Friday, October 18, 2013.

☐ I consent to my child participating in this study and having interviews with the teacher/researcher audio recorded (please check the box).

Signature of Parent/Guardian _______________ Date _______________

Signature of Participant _______________ Date _______________
Appendix E: Sample Lesson Plan #1

LESSON PLAN
GRADE: ____________
DATE: ____________

### NATIONAL STANDARDS
- Singing alone and with others
- Performing on instruments alone and with others
- Improvising
- Composing and arranging
- Reading and notating music
- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Evaluating music and performances
- Understanding relationships between music and other arts
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture

### INFORMAL STANDARDS
- Copying music aurally
- Continually evaluating and judging performance
- Detect timbral qualities in music
- Playing in any key
- Embellish, arrange, and contribute creative ideas
- Seek new ways to widen knowledge
- Cooperation with members of the group

### EQUIPMENT:
* Standard of Excellence (SOE), p. 6
* Informal Assessment (IA) #1
* Piano, Trumpet, synthesizer

### NOTES AND OBJECTIVES:
1.) Review treble clef, time signature, whole note, whole rest, measures, and flat.
2.) Instruct fingering chart use.
3.) Introduce concert D, C, Bb both formally and informally.

### PROCEDURE:
1.) Students open to page 6.
2.) Review concepts in orange boxes at top of page.
3.) How to understand the written fingering chart.
4.) Rehearse and problem solve SOE #1-7.
5.) Introduce informal assessment practice.
   - Describe method, expectations
   - Play concert Bb on synthesizer, instruct students to play concert D - discuss.
   - Play concert Bb on synthesizer, instruct students to play concert C - discuss.
   - Play concert Bb on synthesizer, instruct students to play concert Bb - discuss.
6.) Rehearse and problem solve IA #1.
FOR THE FULL BAND

1 TIME FOR BAND

2 THE FUN CONTINUES

3 WHOLE LOTTA COUNTING

4 FOUR SCORE Page 39

5 MIX 'EM UP

6 MELTING POT

7 BAND ON PARADE

A flat (♭) lowers the pitch of a note one half step. It remains in effect for the entire measure.

Write in the counting and clap the rhythm before you play.
Informal Assessment #1:

Match these pitches:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)

6.)

Match these two pitches:

7.)

8.)

9.)

10.)

11.)

12.)

Listen to the whole excerpt before attempting:

13.)

14.)
Informal Assessment #1 (continued):

15.)

16.)

17.)

18.)

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:
## Appendix F: Sample Lesson Plan #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LESSON PLAN</th>
<th>GRADE:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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### EQUIPMENT:
- Blank staff paper
- Pencils

### NOTES AND OBJECTIVES:
- Review first five notes learned
- Being the first informal group exercise, extra support may be needed.

### PROCEDURE:
1.) Hand out blank staff paper. Students will individually compose a melody, four measures in length. Allow as much time as needed.
   - Criteria: * They can only use the first five notes and rhythms that they have learned.
   - * The melody needs to be “whatever sounds good to them.”
2.) Once the composition is complete, divide students into pairs and hand out new blank staff paper.
   - Grouping Hierarchy (most important listed at top):
     - * Instrument tuning the same (same instrument if possible).
     - * More experienced with less experienced (Instrument Number).
3.) Students face each other so they cannot see the other’s composition. “Composer” must teach their melody by only playing it, “transcriber” must notate what they hear the other student play. Switch roles once the composition/transcription is complete.
## Appendix G: Categories with Properties and Dimensionalized Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Dimensionalized Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Skill Gained</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notation</td>
<td>Reading notes</td>
<td>Knowing all the note names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical playing</td>
<td>Tonguing</td>
<td>Moving fingers faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breath control</td>
<td>Embouchure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aural</td>
<td>Playing by ear</td>
<td>Tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matching pitch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self teaching/learning/assessment</td>
<td>Evaluating own performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Accompanying in vehicle</td>
<td>Sports activity/workout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background noise</td>
<td>Homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church group (listening)</td>
<td>Attending concerts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing or Singing Outside of School</td>
<td>Church group (performing)</td>
<td>Singing in their room</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playing their instrument at home</td>
<td>Composing own music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Relief</td>
<td>Adjusting mood</td>
<td>“Getting my mind off of everything”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Composing dance routines</td>
<td>Composing own music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work/Dedication</td>
<td>Sticking with it</td>
<td>Setting goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persevere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Doing something unique</td>
<td>“Not being boring”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Look like they’re enjoying it”</td>
<td>“Put yourself out there”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance to Others</td>
<td>Being passionate</td>
<td>Having fun</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playing with emotion</td>
<td>“Making others feel what I’m feeling”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audition or Play With a Group</td>
<td>Performing in different ensembles</td>
<td>“Being good enough to audition for a group”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Feel!”</td>
<td>Being passionate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playing with emotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition/Improvisation</td>
<td>“Make something up on the spot”</td>
<td>Write my own songs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sight-reading</td>
<td>“Ability to pick something up and do it”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aural Skills</td>
<td>Playing by ear</td>
<td>Recognizing my instrument in songs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mimicking other players</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical production</td>
<td>Play longer (not getting tired)</td>
<td>Not squeaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notation</td>
<td>Knowing all of the notes</td>
<td>Read notation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Playing fast</td>
<td>Performing difficult sheet music</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not “messing up”</td>
<td>Adapting to play other genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to Others</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing with others</td>
<td>Reaching out to people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notation/Book Practice</td>
<td>Playing songs from the book</td>
<td>Playing from other books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aural Practice</td>
<td>Playing melodies from memory</td>
<td>Playing along with media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Aural skills make me frustrated”</td>
<td>“I don’t know how”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing with others</td>
<td>Playing with family members</td>
<td>Matching class exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing alone</td>
<td>No one to help practice aurally</td>
<td>“Not knowing” anyone to make music with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix H: Student Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Instrument No.</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Instrument Tuning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Oboe</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brooke</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flute</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alto Saxophone</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tenor Saxophone</td>
<td>Bb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tenor Saxophone</td>
<td>Bb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mallet Percussion</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
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<td>7th</td>
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<td>Flute</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>