

**Beyond the Workshop: An Interpretive Case Study of the Professional Learning of Three
Elementary Music Teachers**

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this collective case study was to develop a more nuanced understanding of the experiences and professional learning of three elementary music teachers who taught for the same large school board in Alberta, Canada. The interpretive inquiry sought to respond to the following two research questions: 1. What does teaching music mean to elementary music teachers? 2. How do music teachers experience professional learning?

Three participants were purposefully selected based on their differing career stages, background, and teaching situations, and each participant was interviewed five or six times over the course of the five-month study. Additional data sources included transcripts from classroom observations, a variety of artifacts provided by the participants, and responses to Pre-Interview Activity prompts, a hermeneutic data collection activity that allowed the researcher to access participants' preoccupations and experience in a holistic manner. Through analysis of data related to each participant's teaching, musical, and professional learning experiences and processes, three significant themes emerged in relation to music teacher professional learning: The instrumental nature of the teachers' learning, settling issues of practice over time, and the sociality of professional learning.

This study potentially provides valuable insights for music teacher educators and for those designing structures and events for music teacher professional learning. Rather than focusing on the effects of specific professional development programs and practices, this inquiry provides three portraits of teacher professional learning as a process. It is part of a small but growing area of scholarship in teacher education that attends to the individualized learning of teachers as agentic professionals, and, as such, it offers a more complex understanding of how teachers grow and change their practice throughout their careers.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Jody L. Stark. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Beyond the Workshop: An Interpretive Case Study of the Professional Learning of Three Elementary Music Teachers", No. 00051146, January 13, 2015.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to elementary music teachers everywhere
who daily invite children into the circle of music.
Your impact is immeasurable.

Acknowledgements

Designing and enacting this study of music teachers' experiences of teaching and professional learning has been a tremendous learning journey for me as a teacher educator and novice researcher. I am grateful, first of all, to Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah who generously allowed me into their lives and classrooms and helped me to learn about their experience while also learning how to be a researcher. I am deeply indebted to each of them for agreeing to participate in my study.

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Chapter One: Moving Beyond the Workshop

Learning is the engine of practice and practice is the history of that learning (Wenger, 1998, p. 97).

Introduction and Context of the Study

This inquiry into the lifeworld and professional learning of elementary music teachers has been shaped by my own experience as a teacher educator, mentor, and a planner and provider of professional learning. It is fueled by a profound desire to better understand the process of learning to teach which begins as pupils in elementary and secondary classrooms, is formalized in teacher education programs, and continues from the first day as a new teacher through to retirement. Teachers learn informally from their students, colleagues, administration, and school community, as well as through participation in formal professional learning events such as workshops, conferences, teachers' conventions, and taking part in music ensembles and individual music lessons. They refine their practice through engaging in inquiry projects and action research, working with student teachers, taking masters-level classes, and so on. Their growth as professional learners is complex and multifaceted and is informed by their beliefs about teaching and learning. The result of teachers' professional learning is what constitutes professional growth.

How do music teachers take what they learn in these diverse ways and contexts and fashion it into their ever-evolving teaching practice? In this introductory chapter, I will discuss my interest in the inquiry, articulate the statement of the problem, and discuss the context of the study including an outline of the variety of sites for professional learning available to elementary music teachers in Alberta. I will then discuss the purpose, research questions, and significance of this inquiry, and define several key terms for clarity.

Coming to the Research

Just as the process of learning to teach begins well before entering a teacher education program, my interest in this inquiry reaches back to before I began my life as a school music teacher. As an undergraduate student, I won a scholarship to study music education in Hungary. Upon completion of my Bachelor of Education degree, I travelled to the Zoltán Kodály Pedagogical Institute of Music where I attended classes and spent time with students from all over the world. Studying at the Institute also provided the opportunity to observe and teach students in Hungarian schools. It was a transformational experience that left me with a lasting passion to work towards quality public music education for every child in Canada. It didn't take me long to realize upon my return that meaningful music teacher education was central to the project of quality music education in Canadian schools.

In addition to teaching elementary music, shortly after I returned from Europe I became a board member for a provincial music education organization of which I am still a member twenty years later. I developed and facilitated workshops for music teachers through my work with the association, presented at teachers' conventions, developed a summer teacher education program, and more recently taught undergraduate and graduate courses in music education. I have mentored music teachers around my kitchen table, and one of my current projects, which has developed out of my own learning as a doctoral student, is to encourage and facilitate other music educators presenting at teachers' conventions and conferences.

Over the course of my graduate studies, I have come to see that my interest in music teacher learning runs much deeper than ensuring that children have access to quality music programs in elementary schools. I also care deeply about music specialists and their experiences as teachers and as people. Having worked as an elementary music specialist for 12 years, I know intimately how difficult and rewarding teaching music in elementary schools can be. I also know

from my work as a designer and facilitator of professional learning, and a mentor and teacher educator that many teachers in Alberta have come to teaching music with limited opportunities to study music and/or music education in their pre-service experiences and that many elementary music teachers seek out professional learning, community, and mentoring at workshops, in graduate courses, and through participation in music ensembles. The professional development opportunities mandated by their school boards often have little to do with their realities and needs as music educators.

A New Horizon

At several places in my journey as a teacher educator and neophyte researcher, I have had experiences that have made me question what I held to be true about teaching, learning, and the professional growth of elementary music teachers. Perhaps the most significant of these experiences comes from working with a young woman whom I shall call Violet. Violet took a university course I taught for in-service elementary music teachers. She was a committed and dynamic third year teacher who was highly organized and open to trying new things. In short, she was an outstanding example of a professional teacher committed to ‘life-long learning.’ We developed a relationship over the course of the term, and when the course ended, she asked me if I would help her with year plans for the following year. As we met together to plan, I realized that Violet’s practice had not changed in the direction I had hoped it would as her instructor. Several of the key ideas around which I had designed the class were not apparent in her thinking. This stark (and humbling) realization caused me to begin to inquire into what it takes to change one’s thinking and teaching practice. I reflected on my own decade-long journey to embody a constructivist approach to teaching only to occasionally find myself standing at the front of the

class lecturing even now. Violet helped me to see that clearly, changing one's teaching practice is a slow and complex process (Guskey, 1986).

A second key experience came in the form of an assignment during my PhD coursework. During an interview of a fellow music educator I shall call Ivy, I realized that the most significant factor informing Ivy's practice was not her 'training' as I had assumed, but her beliefs about teaching, about music, and about herself. Through this experience, I began to see that teacher education and professional learning, in order to be meaningful, must address not only the nuts and bolts of practice, but that which undergirds practice: Epistemology, beliefs, identity, voice, and context. In short, like teachers' realities, teacher learning is complex and multifaceted because *they* are complex and multifaceted (Hookey, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

A final experience significant to my journey was that of reading Cochran-Smith's (2004) book on teacher education for social justice entitled *Walking the Road: Race, Diversity, and Social Justice in Teacher Education*. Cochran-Smith convinced me after many years of trying to teach music educators 'how' to teach, that teaching is not a "technical problem" but a "learning problem" (p. ix). Teachers do not need better teaching technique, but an orientation towards learning as a way of being for their entire careers. Cochran-Smith (2004) writes of the consequences of focusing on technique:

One sobering finding in teacher education that keeps surfacing in the literature is that our programs and courses may have some short term effect on changing our students' beliefs and attitudes...but our long-term influence is minimal. (p. xiii)

I began to see that the technical framing of teacher education that I so clearly espoused and perpetuated undermined the overarching goal of my project to support teachers. Echoing Cochran-Smith's call for empowering teachers as agents of their own learning, Schmidt and

Robbins (2011) suggest that music teachers must be given opportunities to “grapple with the complexities of teaching” (p. 97) and be “architects of their own professional development” (p. 96). Teachers must be empowered to enact their own professional learning. Clearly, teaching involves much more than the execution of a series of techniques, and yet, technique remains a major focus of much teacher education and teacher professional learning.

Together, these three experiences have contributed to a growing realization that a more nuanced understanding of teacher learning requires a change in thinking from a causal view of teaching and learning, whereby information and values are assumed to be transmitted to teachers, to an inquiry stance where it is possible to follow the threads of the complex process of professional learning for in-service elementary music teachers. In short, these experiences have helped to move my thinking ‘beyond the workshop’ to how teachers learn.

Statement of the Problem

Elementary music teachers have unique needs as professional learners. First, teaching music requires specialized knowledge and musical skills. In addition to understanding and skills related to teaching, subject matter, learners, the curriculum, educational goals, the specific context, and music pedagogy (Schulman, 1987), elementary music teachers must develop the ability to sing, play, perform, and read music, and must learn how to teach these complex skills to others (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004).¹ Secondly, there is often only one music teacher in an elementary school. As a result, elementary music teachers have limited access to the informal peer learning opportunities that the literature suggests is valued and helpful for teacher professional learning (Conway, 2008; Haack, 2003; Sindberg & Lipscomb, 2005). These teachers therefore need

¹ Schulman (1987) refers to the marriage of content with know-how of teaching that content as ‘pedagogical content knowledge.’

subject-specific professional learning opportunities with other music educators outside of their school (Conway, Hibbard, Albert, and Hourigan, 2005a). Finally, learning to teach is a process of socialization that begins as pupils in childhood (Lortie, 1975; Woodford, 2002). Long before they enter classrooms as educators, teachers' practice and beliefs about teaching are influenced by thousands of hours of participation in what Lortie (1975) called an "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 61). In contrast to those teaching core subjects, many elementary music teachers have learned music in a different context than they now teach. The methods and approaches of their music teachers in one-on-one private lessons or in choral and instrumental performance ensembles may or may not be relevant to an elementary classroom music context. The context, methods, and goals of teaching elementary music are often different than those modeled in elementary music teachers' own music education.

Because of the specialized skills required to teach music, professional isolation, and the potential disparity between music teachers' experiences learning music and their teaching context, elementary music specialists frequently look to formal professional learning activities such as university courses, community music ensembles, and workshops for input and ideas as they continually work out how to teach in an elementary school setting. They also seek out informal opportunities to exchange ideas with other music teachers in person, online, or at formal events, or participate in individual learning. While much of the research on teacher professional learning has focused on the efficacy of specific professional learning activities or programs, little is known about the relationship between teachers' professional learning and their teaching practice or about how teachers actually learn from formal and informal professional learning experiences (Borko, 2004). In addition, there is relatively little literature specific to the professional learning of in-service elementary music specialists (Bauer, 2012). This study

attempts to shed light on how teachers experience teaching music, the variety of ways that elementary music teachers learn and grow throughout their careers, and how they integrate new learning into their teaching practice.

Context of the Study

The Alberta context presents unique challenges for elementary music education. On the one hand, music is provincially mandated from grades one to six in the Alberta Program of Studies (Alberta Education, 2016) and therefore principals in every elementary school must ensure children receive instruction in music. On the other hand, there is no special credential required in order to teach music other than a Bachelor of Education degree and a general teaching certificate. Because music teachers have the same qualifications as teachers of other subjects, principals may not know what background and characteristics would make a music teacher effective or successful. Principals also may have difficulties finding a music teacher appropriate for their specific context. Alberta has 253,000 elementary students who attend 1567 publicly-funded elementary schools in both urban and rural settings (Alberta Education, 2017a). These schools are administered by Catholic, public, francophone, and charter school boards as well as First Nations band councils, and these various kinds of school authorities sometimes have specific requirements for hiring teachers. For example, to teach music for a francophone board, one must be francophone or at least speak French, and Catholic boards usually require teachers to be practicing Catholics.² There are also generally more teachers interested in teaching in cities than

² Both Catholic and francophone schools are public schools in Alberta. Under section 93 of the Canadian constitution, citizens of territories that had confessional schools within them at the time of Confederation in 1867, have the right to religious-based education. Thus, there are publicly funded Catholic school boards in several provinces and territories across the country. However, the provincial government in New Brunswick has recently revoked this right, and since 1997, section 93 no longer applies to Quebec. Similarly, under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), anyone in Canada who received their primary school education in either of Canada's two official languages in Canada or

in small town and rural communities. These constraints sometimes make it difficult for principals to find a suitable music teacher.

While it is the principal who hires a music teacher from the pool of available teachers and new applicants to their school board, it is the registrar appointed by Alberta's Minister of Education who determines who may teach. To teach in a school in Alberta, one must possess a valid teachers' certificate, which is awarded by the provincial Registrar's Office. For the first two years of their careers, teachers are granted an interim teaching certificate and then can be recommended for a permanent certificate by the superintendent of the school division for which they are teaching. Practically speaking, interim teacher certification depends on a written statement from an approved institution indicating that the applicant has completed the requirements for a Bachelor of Education degree (Certification of Teachers Regulation, 1999). Thus, teacher education programs are integral in the process of certification and in determining who teaches in Alberta schools.³

Although teacher education programs are integral to enabling new teachers to enter the field equipped for teaching in the 21st century, a decade or more of government cutbacks to universities has meant that opportunities for specialized coursework are few and far between for those who wish to be elementary music specialists. Offerings for future music specialists have been eroded in the places where they existed. For example, the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta, which has the largest Faculty of Education in the province, used to offer minors in music education and in other subject areas but has recently

speaks French or English as a mother tongue is entitled to have their children attend school in that language (providing there are sufficient numbers of students to justify a school). See: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/CONST/INDEX.HTML>

³ Of course, not all teachers in Alberta completed their teacher education in Alberta. Teachers who have a B. Ed. from an institution in another province or country may also be certified at the Minister's discretion.

changed its curriculum due to funding cuts. These cuts mean that many of the specialist courses for future elementary music educators are no longer being offered. Furthermore, students who plan to be elementary generalists are no longer required to take curriculum and instruction courses in music, which means that those that do not see themselves as music educators may not have any background to teach these subjects in elementary schools even though they may be required to do so once they are teaching in the school system.

In 2012, the Alberta government embarked on a massive redesign of the school curriculum. The ambitious project sought to launch a new program of studies for every subject from Kindergarten to grade 12 while piloting a new curriculum design process. Five years and a change in government later, the curriculum redesign project is still ongoing. The current provincial government has extended the timeline for implementation. New programs of study for all subjects are set to be approved and implemented between December 2018 and 2022 (Alberta Education, 2017b). While eroded funding to Alberta's universities has drastically impacted music teacher education and made it difficult for potential music educators to participate in subject specific coursework in their teacher education program, the new music curriculum is being designed to be taught by music specialists. The fact that pre-service teachers will likely not have the opportunity for specialized studies in music education means that music teachers will need to rely heavily on professional learning opportunities to develop their music teaching skills and knowledge once they begin their careers.

Becoming an elementary music teacher in Alberta.

Of the 26 publicly funded post-secondary institutions in Alberta, 16 offer some kind of provincially accredited Bachelor of Education program. Education degree options in Alberta include: 2-year after-degree programs, 4-year programs with specializations in a variety of subjects including music, 5- and 6-year combined Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Education

degrees, and collaborative education degrees and transfer agreements between the universities and smaller institutions.⁴ Teachers who complete a secondary education degree are eligible to teach elementary music but may not have experienced course work specific to working with younger children. In addition, several after-degree programs have no required music or music education courses, while combined 5- and 6-year Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Education degrees may have substantial music requirements. Secondary education programs generally offer majors and minors in music, while a limited number of elementary programs offer specializations in music education. Thus, in addition to a diversity of experiences learning music as children, music teachers in elementary schools can have vastly different music and music education backgrounds depending on where they went to university and the degree they completed, and may not be equipped to enact the music curriculum. Because teachers may not graduate from their Bachelor of Education with specific coursework to teach elementary music as a music specialist, professional learning has become all the more important. So, too, are professional learning structures and events that respond to the diversity of background and needs of music teachers in the province. It is clear that, particularly at this moment in history, what Guskey (1986) called “one size fits all” professional learning does not adequately respond to the professional needs of those teaching elementary music.

Elementary music in Alberta.

Much of the literature pertaining to the professional development of music teachers is specific to a U.S. context where music teachers generally study in a school or faculty of music along with performance majors, and music teachers are certified only for teaching music. In

⁴ In addition to the B. Ed. degree offered by the Faculty of Education, the University of Alberta offers a 4-year elementary and secondary degree, and a 2-year after degree in French. See Campus St-Jean’s website for information: <http://www.csj.ualberta.ca>

addition, pre-service music teachers must complete written competency exams in music and education, and, once employed, often must provide proof of their ongoing professional learning for retention of their teaching certificate (G. L. H. Moore, 2009).⁵ In contrast, elementary music teachers in Alberta have graduated from a faculty of education and are certified to teach any subject at any grade. There is no competency exam in music or pedagogy and no requirement for proof of on-going learning. However, teachers are expected to demonstrate specific knowledge, skills, and attributes throughout their careers, including being life-long learners (Government of Alberta, 1997).⁶

In Alberta, elementary music teachers usually teach general music to students in grades one to six. Instrumental music is generally available in grades seven to twelve, although a few elementary schools offer strings programs. In schools where music is taught by specialist teachers, elementary students often have music for 60 or 90 minutes each week which is divided into two or three classes.⁷ Some music teachers also teach kindergarten music even though there is not a curricular scope and sequence for music education for Kindergarten in Alberta. Music instruction often takes place in a designated music room, but some teachers move from classroom to classroom or teach in halls or foyers. The equipment available to elementary music teachers ranges from a piano located somewhere in the school, to a class set of iPads and/or a

⁵ This may take the form of conferences, workshops, or other professional learning activities, or graduate work. Many states require music teachers to obtain a Masters degree in order to retain their license.

⁶ See article 2(o) of Ministerial Order (#016/97) *Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Basic Provision of Education in Alberta* for professional learning expectations related to teachers with interim certificates, and article 3(k) for those related to teachers with permanent certification.

⁷ Music is a mandatory subject in elementary schools in Alberta. Elementary students must have a minimum of 950 hours of instruction in all subjects per school year, 10% of which is recommended for art and music (Government of Alberta, 2016). Dust and Montgomery (2007) indicate that there is no way of knowing if students actually receive the recommended time in music class.

variety of classroom instruments including barred and non-pitch percussion instruments, handbells, and ukuleles.

Challenges of the Alberta context.

The Alberta context creates unique challenges for the on-going professional learning of elementary music teachers. As discussed above, there has never been a greater diversity of individuals teaching music. Music teachers in 2017 come to their classrooms with a wide variety of backgrounds in music and music education, and thus have widely differing professional learning needs. Many elementary music teachers studied music extensively before becoming school music educators, but some have very little background in music and/or music education. Elementary music teachers' positions can also vary widely, ranging from teaching part-time or full-time music in one school, teaching music between two or more schools, or teaching music part-time and a homeroom class or other subjects to create a full-time position.⁸ Clearly, the reality of elementary music teachers in Alberta is complex and multifaceted. The admonishment that 'one size fits all' professional development may not be appropriate is especially true in this context.

Organizing peer-based and collaborative professional learning for music teachers within the school system as part of a formal mentoring program or as PD is also challenging. Due to the cumulative effects of government cutbacks over the last decade or two, few school boards have music curriculum consultants to facilitate collaboration and professional learning of music teachers. Partly in response to the literature regarding effective professional development, professional learning is also becoming increasingly school-based in some school districts. While school-focused learning activities facilitate professional learning for many teachers, often topics

⁸ By homeroom I mean a class of elementary children assigned to a specific teacher who teaches the class most of their subjects for a school year.

and projects are not particularly relevant to the music teacher.⁹ Such approaches tend to limit music teachers' ability to choose their own path of professional learning in order to hone their skills and understandings based on their individual needs and interests. Given this context, how do elementary music teachers engage in meaningful professional learning leading to professional growth, and how do facilitators of professional learning respond to an incredible diversity of needs and backgrounds?

Sites for professional learning.

Many music teachers in Alberta choose to participate in events organized by community arts organizations, professional associations, and colleges and universities for professional learning opportunities including: Music conferences, workshops, summer music education courses and programs, graduate studies, on-line courses and master's programs, participation in music festivals, playing or singing in music ensembles, and private study of music (Pellegrino, 2011). Music teachers choose from a variety of formal short- and long-term PD offerings based on their personal needs and interests, their location, and financial considerations. They also engage in more informal professional learning such as sharing with colleagues and mentoring student teachers (Conway, 2008). Table 1 presents a summary of many of the formal professional learning opportunities for elementary music teachers in Alberta.

⁹ This is also true of teachers' conventions. These are annual conferences for teachers organized by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), which is the professional association for all teachers in the province including school music teachers. School boards are grouped into 10 regional organizations by the ATA that are each responsible for organizing a large 2-day conference for the teachers of their respective school boards. Attendance is mandatory for all teachers and school is cancelled for students for the two days. Given the enormous scope of the event, offerings for music teachers are usually extremely limited.

Table 1. Professional Learning Opportunities for Elementary Music Teachers Offered by Community Arts Organizations and Universities in Alberta

Conferences and Workshops				
Event	Organization/Institution	Location	Frequency	Duration
Fine Arts Council Annual Conference	Alberta Teachers' Association	Various locations	1 per year	2 days
Music Conference Alberta	Alberta Choral Federation, Alberta Band Association, Alberta Kodály Association, Alberta Music Education Foundation, Alberta String Association, and Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers	Various locations	1 per year	2 days
Singposium Annual Conference	Alberta Kodály Association	Calgary or Edmonton	1 per year	1–2 days
Orff workshops	Alberta (Edmonton), Calgary, or Lethbridge Orff Chapters	Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge	2–3 events per city per year	1 day
Spring and Summer Courses and Programs				
Orff pedagogy courses	Calgary Orff chapter, University of Alberta*	Calgary or Edmonton	each summer	2 weeks
Kodály pedagogy courses	University of Alberta*	Edmonton	each summer	2 weeks
Early childhood and movement courses	University of Alberta*	Edmonton	spring and summer (some years)	weekend courses
Inspiration for Teachers choral music education program	Concordia University College of Alberta	Edmonton	each summer	1 week
Kodály pedagogy courses	University of Calgary	Calgary	no longer offered	3 weeks

* These courses can be taken for graduate credit and thus can be used towards a Master's in Education.

Short- and long-term professional development. Burkett (2011) notes that many arts organizations may provide excellent PD for music teachers. Several local, provincial, national, and American arts organizations offer short-term professional learning opportunities such as conferences and workshops, which many elementary music teachers in Alberta choose to attend. Music teachers also attend longer-term courses and programs at several post-secondary institutions in Alberta such as a week-long choral conducting program at Concordia University College of Alberta, spring and summer music pedagogy courses at the University of Alberta

(some of which could count towards a certificate in a particular approach to teaching music), or enrol in a master's program at one of the three universities. Although it is no longer being offered, many music teachers in Alberta participated in the Kodály music education program led by Lois Choksy at the University of Calgary that ran from the 1980s to the early 2000s and consisted of three-week courses over three summers leading to a certificate in Kodály pedagogy. On-line course offerings from Alberta and U.S. universities are becoming increasingly more common, and many teachers are choosing to participate in such courses or on-line master's programs.

Music festivals. Some music teachers consider feedback on their students' performance from adjudicators at community festivals to be valuable professional learning (Conway, Hibbard, Albert & Hourigan, 2005b; Cutietta & Thompson, 2000). Most if not all communities in Alberta host a locally-organized music festival sponsored by a community service organization such as the Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs where groups of all levels can perform.

Participation in music ensembles. Pellegrino (2011) suggests that music-making is a "powerful pedagogical tool" for music teachers and should therefore be considered as professional development (p. 79). Many elementary music teachers sing or play in school, university, community, or church ensembles. There are many choirs and bands in Alberta, however, most are concentrated in Calgary and Edmonton. Teachers also sometimes play in smaller jazz ensembles or groups such as recorder societies, drumming groups, ukulele circles, ethnic music societies, and church vocal and handbell choirs, all of which are potential sites of professional learning.

Informal professional learning. The literature suggests that music teachers value informal opportunities to interact with colleagues and consider informal conversations with other

music teachers to be important professional learning (Bush, 2007; Conway, 2008). While often this interaction happens in between sessions at conferences, teachers' conventions, or workshops, elementary music teachers also use electronic share sites including social media, forums, e-mail, and other informal means of interacting with colleagues as professional learning. Conway (2008) suggests that as music teachers become more experienced, they often see professional learning "in a broader context" (p. 15) and take opportunities to learn from everyone around them in a variety of ways including students, student teachers, and other teachers.

In sum, elementary music teachers have unique professional learning needs due to a potential lack of background in teaching elementary music, the specialized skills required of music teachers, their professional isolation, and the way they were taught music themselves. Because it may be challenging to access relevant professional learning opportunities in their schools and school divisions, many music teachers rely on community arts associations, post-secondary institutions, and community ensembles as well as informal interaction with peers for professional learning including musical learning and skill development. In the following section, I will clarify the purpose of my study and articulate the two research questions that have guided this inquiry.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The first purpose of this study was to better understand how three elementary music teachers experienced their work as music teachers and what teaching music meant to them. In other words, my intention was to better understand what being an elementary music teacher was like for the participants. My interest was the concerns, preoccupations, beliefs, and experiences that shaped the participants' practice, and how the environment around the teachers impacted their thinking and work and how it impacted them as people. Britzman (2003) asks the question,

“What does teaching do to teachers?” and suggests that the question allows for an examination of the ways that teachers are shaped by their work “as well as [how they are] shaping their work” (p. 25). As an extension to Britzman’s inquiry, I ask the question, “What does professional learning do to (and for) music teachers?” This question relates to the second purpose of my study.

In addition to my intention to better understand how the participants experienced their work, I also wanted a more nuanced understanding of the participants’ experience of professional learning. How did the participants continue to learn about teaching music as they went about their work, attended formal professional learning events, and interacted with colleagues and peers? I began with the assumption that teaching and learning are inseparable elements of teachers’ practice, and that “learning is the engine of practice and practice is the history of that learning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 97). Together, learning and teaching constitute and embody teachers’ history, knowledge, beliefs, and actions.

Given my interest in the experiences of elementary music teachers as educators and learners, this study sought to respond to the following questions:

1. What does teaching music mean to elementary music teachers?
2. How do music teachers experience professional learning?

Significance of the Study

Elementary music educators typically teach music to every student in a school over multiple years and therefore have tremendous impact on the musical learning and educational experiences of students. For some students, the only opportunity they will have to learn music is in elementary school, making their elementary music experience all the more significant. Music teachers in Alberta come to their elementary music classrooms with widely differing

backgrounds in music and music education and may not have adequate background from their undergraduate education to feel confident teaching music. Even in the U.S. model of music teacher preparation, many elementary music teachers report feeling that they lack adequate preparation for their role as elementary music educators (Blair, 2008). Because elementary music teachers are most often the only music teacher in an elementary school (Barrett, 2006), these teachers also report feeling isolated and unable to tap into peer learning in their on-going process of learning how to teach. Thus, even more than for other elementary teachers, professional learning events are key to on-going improvement of teaching practice for music specialists (Smith & Haack, 2000).

There is growing recognition in the literature that teacher professional learning is a complex, situated, and career-long phenomenon (Hookey, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011) and that in order to make lasting changes in teaching practice, music teachers require meaningful professional learning opportunities that develop a sense of agency and identity (Pellegrino, 2011). What remains unexplored in the literature is how teachers grow from their professional learning choices and experiences (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Scribner, 1999). Borko (2004) suggests that little is known about the relationship between teachers' professional learning and their teaching practice or about how teachers actually learn from professional learning experiences. Echoing these concerns, Barrett (2006) argues for a broadening of the sites for study of professional learning for music teachers. She calls for research on music teacher professional learning that includes study of how music teachers choose to "forge a sustainable path for growth" (p. 26). Finally, Bauer (2007, 2012) suggests that there is very little research to date on the professional learning experiences of elementary music teachers, and this is particularly true in a Canadian context. My study responds to the call to attend to the processes implicit in music

teachers' professional growth, and also provides a window into the lifeworld of Canadian elementary music teachers. At this moment in time when elementary music teachers in Alberta potentially have limited opportunities to learn to teach music prior to entering the teaching professional, a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the professional learning of music educators is of prime importance in order to help these teachers grow in their practice throughout their careers.

My hope is that this work will provide a deeper understanding of the complexity and personal nature of the process of professional growth, and an awareness of the structures that can maximize or limit teacher professional growth for elementary music teachers. Although the results of this study are specific to three elementary music teachers located in one Canadian city, I also hope this inquiry will contribute to a philosophical and theoretical understanding related to teacher professional learning and practice in general.

Definition of Key Terms

The literature on teacher professional learning uses several terms, sometimes interchangeably, to discuss the learning of in-service teachers. For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be used in the following ways:

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): the on-going professional learning of a teacher throughout their careers consisting of formal and informal learning activities. This term is often used in literature from the U.K. It is a synonym for professional learning (see below).

Early Career Teacher: A teacher in the first five years of their teaching career.

In-Service Teacher: A teacher who has a Bachelor of Education degree and is teaching in a school.

In-Servicing: An outdated term that refers to formal professional development events organized by school boards and community organizations. It implies that school boards and others are responsible for teacher learning, and that teachers are technicians who implement curricula and programs.

Late-Career Teacher: A teacher who has taught for longer than 15 years.

Mid-Career Teacher: A teacher that has taught from five to fifteen years.

Pre-Service Teacher: A teacher candidate who is enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program.

Professional Development (PD): Formal learning activities organized by someone other than the teacher such as workshops, courses, teachers' conventions, and conferences, which teachers attend. Professional development activities in Alberta are commonly organized by school division personnel, schools, the Alberta Teachers' Association, universities, and community associations including local, provincial, and national music education organizations.

Professional Growth: The outcome of professional learning; the resulting change in teachers and their practices from participating in professional learning activities.

Professional Learning: The in-service teachers' on-going learning related to teaching, which may consist of professional development activities and/or informal, collaborative, and personal ones as well. Examples of this latter group of activities include peer-mentoring, conversations with other teachers, action research, inquiry groups, working with student teachers, providing professional development for other teachers, engaging in reflective practices, journaling, and observation and coaching. The salient difference between professional learning and professional development is that for professional learning, the teacher shares in responsibility for choosing and designing learning activities and

therefore is agentic in their professional growth.

Teacher Education: The formal process of learning to teach experienced within a Bachelor of Education program at a university.

Teacher Learning: The result of engaging in professional development and professional learning.

Teachers' Conventions: two-day conferences organized by the Alberta Teachers' Association for every teacher in a group of school boards. School is cancelled on the convention days, and attendance for teachers is mandatory. There are 10 conventions organized throughout the province.

Chapter Two: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter I will discuss the theoretical and conceptual assumptions that have shaped my study. Schwandt (2000) suggests that qualitative researchers must settle epistemological, social, and moral issues implicit in the “sociotemporal occasion” (p. 200) that is research. For Schwandt, this means determining what it means to understand and how one’s understanding can be justified, as well as settling issues of how to relate to and enter the world of participants. Although these issues are inextricably intertwined and must be addressed throughout the research process, in this chapter I will speak primarily to the first of Schwandt’s concerns as I articulate the theoretical and conceptual understandings related to teacher professional learning that shape my study. Social and moral issues will continue to be addressed in Chapter Four where I will outline the methodology and methods employed to arrive at a new understanding related to my research questions. In discussing the theoretical and conceptual framework for my investigation, I will first speak to the underlying assumptions of research in the constructivist/interpretive paradigm where this study is situated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and secondly, discuss the main theoretical and conceptual understandings shaping my work from Dewey’s (1910/1997; 1916/2008; 1938/1997) pragmatic theory of experience.

Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions of the Constructivist/Interpretive Paradigm

Heidegger (1927/2010) asserts that understanding is never neutral. We project what we already believe and know into each new situation of understanding, and this ‘fore-structure’ shapes our current understanding. This projection is unavoidable, and, in spite of positivist concerns for researcher ‘neutrality,’ Gadamer (1975) argues that our projections or ‘prejudices’ in fact provide the starting point for our understanding. The act of inquiry, therefore, is always historical in nature, and this historicity is both temporal and paradigmatic (Hruby, 2001).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that a research paradigm is a set of “*basic beliefs...* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts...” (p. 107). A research paradigm embodies the researcher’s assumptions about the nature of people and what there is to know (ontology), and how it is possible to come to understand what there is to know (epistemology). Research in the constructivist/interpretive paradigm is grounded by the epistemological assumption that individuals, including researchers, construct their understandings of the world through interaction in their environment. Understanding in interpretive research entails “the kind of transaction that goes on between people...as they attempt to comprehend each other’s meaning [and] see the sense and significance of what they say and do” (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997, p. 20). Meaning is constructed through transactional engagement with the world and with others.

Hruby (2001) points out that construction is not a passive process, that someone is always doing the constructing. At the heart of the metaphor of construction is an agentic individual engaged in making sense of their world. Ontologically, people are not separate from the world, but are very much a part of it, shaping and impacting the situations around them, and also being shaped themselves in turn. While research in the constructivist/interpretive paradigm is most often associated with its epistemological claims, Packer and Goicoechea (2000) assert that sociocultural perspectives of constructivism encompass an often tacit non-dualist ontology whereby people are considered part of the world, not separate from the world, and whereby coming to know results not only in deeper understanding (epistemological claim), but in personal and social transformation (ontological claim).

This study is undergirded by Dewey’s pragmatic constructivism (Leglar & Collay, 2002). While the key epistemological claim of research in the constructivist/interpretive paradigm is

that people actively construct their understanding in the world, pragmatic constructivism has a unique perspective to bring to bear while maintaining the non-dualist ontology of the constructivist paradigm. In the following section, I will briefly discuss key features of pragmatically-informed constructivist philosophy before moving on to a discussion of theoretical and conceptual ideas that I take from Dewey in framing my study.

Dewey's Theory of Experience

Although there are many expressions of pragmatism,¹⁰ the roots of pragmatic philosophy can be traced to the work of early 20th century Americans Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1920), and John Dewey (1859–1952). A defining characteristic of all pragmatic philosophy is the epistemological assumption that humans actively make meaning through their interactions with, and participation in, the world (Almeder, 1986). Ontologically speaking, this means that pragmatic philosophy is always non-dualist.

For pragmatists, knowledge is progressively constructed through people's experiences in a process of continual adaptation and inquiry (Garrison, 1994). This on-going inquiry stance is our ontological condition or way of being in the world. Experiences, ideas, and concepts are always interpreted "in terms of their effects" (Goble, 2005, p. 2). In fact, Goble (2005) notes that the term pragmatism was taken by Pearce from Kant who used it to mean, "related to consequences" (p. 4). What is known, pragmatically speaking, is determined by what fits with our current experience, and is therefore open to revision as we have new experiences in the world. Pragmatism, then, is both a constructivist theory of knowledge and a method of

¹⁰ Philosopher F. S. C. Schiller allegedly remarked that there are "as many pragmatisms as there are pragmatists" (Thayer, 1981, p. 5).

philosophizing. It therefore lends itself well to the processes of research in the constructivist/interpretive paradigm.

A Deweyan perspective on music teacher learning centers around two overarching concepts: *Experience* and *growth*. For Dewey, growth results from experience. Experience, in turn, consist of a dialectic interplay between *continuity* and *interaction*, which is mediated by the teacher's *situation*. Growth depends on an individual's *dependence* and *plasticity* and is related to *developing habits, action, reflection, and change*. Together, these concepts constitute the theoretical framing of my study on music teachers' experience of teaching music and professional learning.

The Nature of Experience

John Dewey's pragmatic theory of experience represents the philosopher's attempt to explicate the process through which human beings learn. Dewey sees growth as being propelled by the dialectic relationship of learning and experience. While Dewey's ideas on experience, learning, and the relationship between the two can be traced through much of his work to varying degrees, perhaps the most succinct and clear explanation of his views on the matter comes from the small monograph entitled *Experience and Education* (1938/1997). In it, Dewey suggests that education and learning are intimately tied to experience, although they are by no means synonymous; one, experience, is the vehicle for the other. Wojcikiewicz (2010) is quick to point out that Dewey has a particular kind of experience in mind when he talks about the educative potential of experience. An *educative* experience is one that does not "narrow the field of future growth" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 26) and instead enhances the potential for further learning and development. The kind of experience Dewey has in mind is not mere activity, but "doing something with a certain awareness of what one is about" (Wojcikiewicz, 2010, p. 67). Dewey also suggests that, along

with the learner's situation, the quality of any experience is influenced by two 'criteria' of experience, namely the principles of *continuity* and *interaction*, which are related to the *situation*.

Continuity of experience.

Dewey (1938/1997) views experience as being temporally located on an "experiential continuum" (p. 33). A new experience changes the person who has the experience, which in turn changes all subsequent experiences. Furthermore, a person's current experience is shaped by their previous ones: "...Every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). Learning, then, has ontological consequences (Garrison, 1994). The learner literally becomes someone else through their experiences, which in turn impacts their possible future and who they are in the present. Growth is therefore a "principle of continuity" (p. 36) resulting from educative experiences. Thus, music teacher learning in a Deweyan framework consists of on-going growth resulting from the accumulation of a teacher's experiences.

Situation.

In addition to the temporal criteria of continuity, all experiences are shaped by a person's *situation*. Because the human condition is not just to live, but to live in the world, our experience is located "in a series of situations" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 43). Dewey strongly rejects a separation of the person and their environment, stating, "Experience does not go on simply inside a person...[and it] does not happen in a vacuum. There are sources outside of a person which give rise to experience" (p. 39, 40).¹¹ Experience is always in a particular moment and place in the world that influences the experience. Another way of saying this is that experience is

¹¹ Westerlund (2003) argues that Dewey's philosophy is inherently anti-foundationalist and therefore does not allow for dualism of any kind. Dualism is resolved for Dewey through a dialectic whereby the person and the environment are "held in tension" by a third element (Hills, 2012), in this case, experience.

situated. A music teacher's situation consists of "whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had" (p. 44).

Westerlund (2003) writes, "Dewey's pragmatism...[consists of] humanistic naturalism in which the individual is an integrative part of her dynamic environment" (p. 46). Music teacher professional learning is specific to a particular situation, and the teacher is an important part of their context because of the process of *interaction*.

Interaction.

Just as a teacher's situation influences their experience, the teacher influences their situation. Situation, therefore, is inseparable from the notion of interaction, and interaction is Dewey's second criteria of experience. Dewey sees situation as being formed in the dialectic interaction between the "objective and internal conditions" of the person (p. 42). This interplay between the person's subjectivity and their environment is non-dualist and transactional in nature: "An experience is always what it is because of the transaction taking place between the individual and what, at the time, constitutes his [or her] environment" (p. 43). This is Dewey's non-dualist dialectic in action: People interact with the social and physical world around them in a continual process of mutual adaptation. Teachers adapt to the students in their music classes, and students, in turn adapt to the teacher's instruction just as teachers adapt their instruction to the specific context where they teach.

While educative experiences are desirable and constitute learning, it is important to note that Dewey saw every experience as being shaped by situation and the principles of continuity and interaction. It is the *quality* of the experience and the meaning that the teacher makes of it over time that determines whether or not an experience results in growth/learning. For example, an elementary music teacher may participate in a workshop on choral singing, but if that experience does not lead to a shift in thinking or practice, or lead the teacher to seek out future

experiences with choral singing either as a singer, a conductor, a participant in further workshops or courses, the experience is not, in Dewey's terms, educative.¹² Dewey writes, "if an experience arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over dead places in the future...(this experience) is a moving force" (p. 38). It can therefore retrospectively be judged to be educative based on "what it moves toward and into" (p. 38). Dewey considers this "movement" to be the purpose of education (Dewey, 1916/2008), and it is what other theorists might call learning and what Dewey means by growth.

Growth.

Growth for Dewey is synonymous with learning. Within a Deweyan framework, the process of professional growth depends on a music teacher's dependence and plasticity, and is related to the development of habit, action, reflection, and change. While Dewey frames the goal of education as being growth in *Experience and Education*, he has little to say here on what precisely he means by the term. In order to understand Dewey's conception of learning as growth, I will now turn to two of Dewey's earlier works, *Democracy and Education* (1916/2008) and *How We Think* (1910/1997).

In *Democracy and Education*, it becomes clear that Dewey takes the metaphor of growth from nature. This is not surprising given that Dewey was deeply influenced by the work of Charles Darwin whose landmark work *The Origin of the Species* was published the same year in which Dewey was born.¹³ In fact, Madigan (2009) suggests, "Dewey was a philosopher of change, who consistently sought to apply Darwin's evolutionary theories to all areas of

¹² To be fair, whether an experience is educative or not has much to do with the individual's level of dependence and plasticity. Dewey is not intending to imply that the person is non-agentic. See below for further discussion.

¹³ I find it interesting to think in terms of notions of continuity, interaction, and situation in relation to Dewey's own journey of growth as a scholar.

philosophy” (p. 46). Darwin’s notions of evolution and adaptation served as the foundation of Dewey’s pragmatic theory of learning.

Dewey begins his explanation of learning by discussing growth within the natural world: “Life is a self-renewing process through action upon the environment... Continuity of life means continual readaptation of the environment to the needs of living organisms” (Dewey, 1916/2008, p. 7). Dewey argues that, just as continual and reciprocal adaptation characterizes the ontological condition of all organisms in the biological world, so it is in the social world. A Deweyan conception of growth is first and foremost a process of *mutual adaptation*. Dewey’s ‘biological’ framing of learning (Eisner, 1994) depends on lived experience, and experience for Dewey, as we have seen, is undergirded by principles of interaction, continuity, and situation. Professional growth, then, occurs through the having of experiences, but it also depends on the teacher’s level of dependence and plasticity.

Dependence and plasticity.

A music teacher’s ability to grow depends on having room to grow, so to speak. “Immaturity,” then, is not a negative characteristic for Dewey, but represents “the possibility of growth” (Dewey, 1916/2008, p. 41). One’s potential for growth is impacted by one’s *dependence* and *plasticity*. If, for example, a music teacher is trying to teach West African drumming but has little background in this musical practice, that teacher has the *potential to grow* in understanding and ability to teach African music. The teacher’s ability to grow is directly related to their level of *dependence*, which is essentially their willingness to tap outside expertise to learn. Being dependent does not mean that the teacher is helpless. Rather, it means that he or she is willing and able to engage in social interactions that could lead to growth. This interaction could be with

colleagues, an artist in residence, a book, videos, or a workshop leader.¹⁴ Any social interaction thus has the potential to be educative (Dewey, 1916/2008). However, the teacher in question must also be open to growing. Growth is therefore also impacted by a person's level of *plasticity*. Plasticity for Dewey is the ability to learn from experience (1916/2008):

[Plasticity is] the power to retain from one's experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation. This means the power to modify actions on the basis of the results of prior experiences, the power to develop dispositions.

Without it, the acquisition of habits is impossible. (p. 43)¹⁵

Is the teacher willing to inquire into a way of teaching music aurally instead of through Western music notation? Are they open to engaging in trial and error as a process of continual inquiry into their teaching? Will they take what they have learned with one class, and continue to work out how to teach West African drumming with a different group of students? What about applying their learning to a new project the next year? In other words, will they make teaching West African drumming a *habit*. Developing habits is part of Dewey's schema for learning, and it is the next concept I will explore in relation to the idea of teacher growth.

Developing habits.

Taken negatively, a habit can be a routine way of doing, void of reflection or meaning. According to Dewey, however, habits can also be a key mechanism for growth because of the

¹⁴ Another way of coming at Dewey's notion of dependence might be the common metaphor of scaffolding introduced by Wood, Bruner & Ross (1976) and often used to describe Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). By extension, the ZPD would also be another way of thinking of what Dewey meant by dependence in that the learner requires support for doing what they cannot now do alone.

¹⁵ As I have argued elsewhere (Stark, 2014), in spite of the way Dewey expresses the idea here, I imagine Dewey's plasticity working in much the same way as Schön's (1983) distinction of thinking-in-action, i.e. not only reflection after the fact but also reflection in the moment of teaching. This view is supported by Dewey's description of thinking in "How We Think" (Dewey, 1910/1997).

interactive nature of experience.¹⁶ Dewey calls the process of developing habits leading to growth ‘habituation.’ He writes, “Habituation is... our adjustment to an environment which at the time we are not concerned with modifying and which supplies a leverage to our active habits” (1916/2008, p. 46).¹⁷ This adjustment is active and involves reflection. It results in and from developing dispositions for learning both in terms of ability and in terms of attitude. Learning how to teach music and a music teacher’s evolving teaching practice is one example of the process of habituation. Habits of mind lead to habits of action, which in turn lead to changes in ontology due to the workings of continuity. “The basic characteristic of habit is that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects...the quality of subsequent experiences” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 35). Habits, then, are potentially dispositions to *action*. “A habit does not wait...for a stimulus to turn up so it may get busy; it actively seeks for occasions to pass into full operation” (p. 46). Habits that lead to growth are habits that call the learner to act.

Action.

As a pragmatic philosopher, Dewey sees the impetus of growth whereby one’s dependence and plasticity are engaged as being a problem to solve, a puzzle, or a difficulty to be thoughtfully and actively overcome such as those encountered in the everyday challenges of teaching music (Dewey, 1938/1997). Professional growth, then, is dependent on active engagement of the teacher, and understanding is forged in *action*. In other words, the teacher is engaged in actively constructing their understanding. The learner in Dewey’s theory of

¹⁶ Dewey shares the notion of habit with Peirce. Writing of Peirce, Goble (2005) suggests that the idea has epistemological consequences because it implies a relativist view of truth.

¹⁷ Goble (2005) points out that habits of mind are essentially *beliefs*, another key notion for a Deweyan perspective on learning. See the following page for a discussion of belief as it relates to reflection.

experience is actively engaged in making meaning and in becoming. “Growth is not something done to [learners]; it is something they do” (Dewey, 1916/2008, p. 42). It is our condition in the world to be actively engaged in the processes of growth. One of the ways that human beings actively engage in growth is through the process of reflection.

Reflection.

Reflection is a word that is used extensively in the literature on teacher professional learning to mean thinking about something that has already happened in order to make sense of the situation (Butke, 2003). Many scholars advocate for reflective practices such as journaling (Conway, et al., 2012), participation in mentoring relationships (Field, 2011), and autobiographical work (Chitpin, 2011). While these activities are effective for professional learning, a Deweyan notion of reflection is more than ‘thinking about.’ It is the continual process of refining beliefs about the world, and it is central to Dewey’s conception of growth/learning.

As music teachers engage in the work of teaching in their classroom and interact with students, members of the school community, other music teachers, and facilitators at PD events, they continually refine their beliefs about teaching and learning. When they actively try to solve problems that come up in practice, they are engaging in *reflective thinking*, “...a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of reasons” (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 6). In reflection, Dewey identifies the very mechanism that leads to teachers’ ability to make meaning of their experiences. First, teachers are perplexed by something they notice: There is a student in a class who cannot match pitch, the first step of being able to sing in tune. Secondly, the teacher looks for a possible explanation for what they have observed: The student cannot hear herself singing in the group, the student has not yet discovered her head register, the student is shy and unwilling to risk. They experiment with different solutions for each of their hypotheses over the next few lessons in order to try and help the student and solve the puzzle. The difference between

action that is void of meaning and action that has the potential to lead to growth is this process of reflective inquiry whereby teachers make sense of the situation over time as they notice and reflect upon new information.

Dewey is arguing that we come to know by engaging in reflective thought whenever we are puzzled by something we experience. Reflection is a special form of instrumental thinking that “serves the purpose of transforming a perplexing situation into a settled one by proving a tentative resolution to the initial problem” (Butke, 2003, p. 25).

Reflection is in the service of something specific and is grounded in experience, but it also requires suspension of judgment and a willingness to be uncomfortable as one engages with one’s perplexity. Dewey (1910/1997) writes, “...the most important factor in the training of good mental habits consists in acquiring the attitude of suspended conclusion” (p. 13). Dewey means that we should form the habit of allowing the situation to progressively reveal itself to us instead of jumping to an answer and foreclosing on inquiry. For example, the teacher mentioned earlier who is attempting to determine why a certain student can’t sing in tune could stop their inquiry by accepting the belief that the child can’t sing because they aren’t trying instead of watching the student over several classes, trying various approaches, talking to the child’s parents and allowing their understanding of the situation to unfold over time.

Belief is central to teacher growth. In contrast to Schön (1983) who views reflection as either an active process of sense-making in the moment (reflection-in-action) or a deliberate process of ‘thinking about’ after the fact (reflection-on-action), reflective thinking for Dewey entails changes in teachers’ beliefs. For Dewey, understanding is never final; knowledge– which

is synonymous with belief— is always provisional (Westerlund, 2003).¹⁸ It is continually revised through the processes of interaction and continuity as new information becomes available through one's experiences in the world. In sum, Dewey sees reflection as a process that has ontological consequences rather than merely thinking about a past event; because a teacher's beliefs change as they learn, the teacher changes as well. Change is the next concept important for understanding a Deweyan perspective on teacher learning.

Change.

For Dewey, the universe is not fixed (Dewey, 1922). It is constantly in flux, because our understanding of it is constructed. When our beliefs change, the world changes for us and consequently, we change as well (Boisvert, 1988). This is Dewey's interaction at work, and is, in part, how evolution fits into Dewey's thinking:

Evolution is continuity of change; and the fact that change may take the form of present growth of complexity and interaction. Significant stages in change are found...in those crises in which a seeming fixity of habits gives way to a release of capacities that have not previously functioned...(Dewey, 1922, p. 284)

Teachers change through actively engaging in inquiry fueled by perplexities about practice, and, from a Deweyan perspective, a teacher's practice changes because they change. Deweyan change constitutes growth, and growth is ultimately a process of *becoming*.

It is important to understand that Dewey rejects a view of learning that suggests that we are simply becoming what we are destined to become, a perspective that Dewey calls "the unfolding of latent powers" (Dewey, 1916/2008, p. 53). This theory of learning sees education as

¹⁸ In Dewey's conception of reflection, one clearly sees his pragmatist roots in that he frames thought as inquiry, and sees truth (which he calls belief) as constructed by the person, thereby espousing pragmatism's revisionist ontology (Almeder, 1986).

the attainment of a future fixed goal. Deweyan growth, in contrast, is a potentially never-ending process of evolutionary change. In this regard, Dewey is an optimist. He sees all people as always having the potential to grow and change. A Deweyan view of teacher learning is one of life-long learning with endless potential.

Some have criticized Dewey's pragmatic theory as being grounded in nothing more than a belief in human potential akin to religious faith (Campbell, 1987). While it is true that his theory rests on belief, Dewey was not naïve.¹⁹ McDermott (1984) suggests that the question for pragmatists is not a matter of *faith* but rather one of *hope*. McDermott writes of the human condition, "We have no guarantee that any of this will go well, although it is well worth attempting. Put differently, neither optimism nor pessimism seems to be a proper response, for each approach neglects the data generated by the other" (p. 673). Dewey's *hopeful* pragmatic framing of human ontology may not seem realistic to some, but it has the potential to be empowering. The individual is assumed to be agentic and capable of continually bettering their situation, and, as McDermott (1984) points out, it is no worse than the alternative. Given that this inquiry ultimately seeks to empower elementary music teachers in their journey of professional learning and growth, Dewey's hopeful perspective on professional learning seems more than fitting.

¹⁹ Dewey would not be a pragmatist if his theory did not rest on belief. For both Dewey and Peirce, knowledge is belief arrived at through a process of inquiry (Thayer, 1981).

Chapter Three: Review of the Literature

Music teacher professional learning is a relatively new area of scholarship. In 1992, Verrastro and Leglar reported that there were only a handful of studies on the “inservice education” of music teachers (p. 676), and ten years later, Hookey (2002) suggested that scholarship related to the professional development of music teachers was in an immature state as compared to research on the pre-service learning of music education students. More recently, Conway, Hibbard, Albert and Hourigan (2005a) argued that there is a need for research “regarding professional development for all the arts” (p. 7), and Bauer (2007) affirmed that, “there have been relatively few studies that have systematically examined the professional development of music educators” (p. 12). Within the small body of research on music teacher professional development, there are even fewer studies examining the professional learning of elementary general music teachers, and music teachers in a Canadian context.

In this chapter, I will discuss scholarship from the fields of general education, adult education, and music education that speaks to the professional learning of elementary music teachers. While the intention of this study is to come to understand the professional learning experiences and processes of three elementary music teachers rather than attempting to determine the efficacy of specific professional development programs and activities in which the teachers engaged, research focusing on professional development programs will also be discussed in this review of the literature insofar as it is useful in understanding music teacher learning. The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section discusses the emerging consensus on the characteristics of “effective” professional development for teachers, while the second examines literature on various conceptions of teacher learning including self-directed and collaborative learning, and learning in communities of practice. Finally, the third section

explores research related to the changing professional learning needs of music teachers throughout their careers.

An Emerging Consensus on ‘Effective’ Professional Learning

Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) and G. L. H. Moore (2009) content that a consensus regarding the characteristics of ‘effective’ teacher development activities and programs is emerging in the literature. The first section of this review of the literature examines research in education and music education that contributes to an understanding of ‘effective’ or ‘high quality’ professional development activities for music teachers.

Several papers in the general education literature summarize the characteristics of effective teacher professional development, which Guskey (2000) defines as, “those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students” (Guskey, 2000, p. 16). In spite of Guskey’s attempt to tie teacher professional development to student learning, Garet et al. (2001) argue that “there is little direct evidence on the extent to which these characteristics relate to positive outcomes for teachers and students” (p. 917). These authors conducted a national survey in the U.S. to determine the relationship between ‘effective’ professional development and changes in teachers’ knowledge, skills, and teaching practice. Their survey focused on structural features of professional development experiences such as format, duration, and degree of collective participation, as well as core features including content focus, opportunities for active learning, and coherence with state standards and teacher goals. The study relied on self-reported increases in knowledge and skill, and changes in teaching practice. Garet et al. (2001) found that active learning, coherence with teachers’ goals, and emphasis on content knowledge were more likely to be a feature of the PD activity when it involved more hours and a longer time frame.

They also found that content focus and coherence had significant positive effects on teachers' knowledge and skills, and an increase in knowledge and skill, in turn, was found to have a significant influence on changes in teacher practice. Garet et al. concluded, "sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to have an impact [on teacher knowledge, skills, and practice]" (p. 935). They conclude that it is more important to focus on duration, collective participation, and core features than type of professional learning activity.

Hunzicker (2011) approaches teacher professional development from an adult learning perspective. She emphasizes that adult learners come to learning situations with concrete goals for their learning as well as diverse life experiences that they use to make meaning and find solutions to concrete problems. Hunzicker argues that professional development activities should therefore be open-ended and long-term and allow teachers to set the direction and pace instead of a "one shot, 'sit and get' model" (p. 177).²⁰ Hunzicker provides a checklist of effective professional development, suggesting that effective PD is "anything that engages teachers in learning activities that are supportive, job-embedded, instructionally focused, collaborative, and ongoing" (p. 179).

Like Guskey (2000), Poekert (2012) defines effective professional development as PD that results in changes in teacher practice and student achievement. In his paper comparing teacher leadership and professional development, Poekert summarizes the literature on effective PD into several characteristics: Collaborative, coherent, content-based, focused on pedagogical practice, and sustained. Wells (2013) adds adequate duration, accountability structures, and ongoing support. All of these characteristics could be considered best practices for professional development, an area that Hill, Beisiegel & Jacob (2013) argue needs further research. Hill et al.

²⁰ Hookey (2002) also makes the same assertion.

warn, however, that research that provides lists of successful program attributes is not necessarily helpful to PD developers because professional development initiatives are most often locally developed and implemented.

Wells (2013) sums up several essential elements of high quality professional development:

- results in teacher knowledge;
- draws from local experience and knowledge;
- is inquiry-based; is ongoing/sustained;
- requires/allows for the teacher to be active;
- is collaborative and school-based; includes input from ‘experts’;
- provides support through coaching or mentoring when needed;
- leads to teacher empowerment; involves collecting and analysis of data;
- promotes research as a “core practice” as the basis for changing practice;
- is “embedded” in the real world work of teachers
- builds “a culture of inquiry and reflective practice”;
- facilitates the formation of professional learning communities; and,
- is connected to a larger model of change (Wells, 2013, p. 4).

I will return to discussion of professional learning communities and collaborative learning in the next section in this review of the literature. In sum, the general education literature suggests that effective professional development for teachers is sustained, teacher-driven, related to practice, inquiry-based, and supported and facilitated by administration.

Professional Development for Music Teachers

Although there is a much smaller body of research related to the professional development of music teachers than in the general education literature, there are several studies addressing the efficacy of workshops, conferences, and courses specifically for music educators. Much of this research pertains to music teachers' PD choices and preferences. In fact, one of the major findings in the literature related to music teacher professional development is that music teachers want and need choices related to PD activities both in terms of topics of study and in terms of format.²¹ For example, in their review of the literature on teacher professional development, Conway, Hibbard, Albert, and Hourigan (2005a) argue that arts teachers need administrative support to choose and participate in subject-specific professional learning. They advocate for teacher choice and feedback on professional development activities and conclude that, "the quality and contentment of teachers, as well as their programs, are reflected in the merit of their ongoing professional development" (p. 70). Conway et al. thus argue that teacher expertise and satisfaction are directly linked to the quality of the professional learning opportunities in which teachers are able to engage.

Music teachers have expressed strong preferences for certain formats for professional learning, and certain PD activities have been found to be more meaningful than others. In summarizing the literature on various models for professional development for music educators, Barrett (2006) notes that short courses and workshops are more conducive to "lasting and meaningful change" than conference sessions, particularly when workshop organizers provide time for participants to refine and personalize ideas for their unique school contexts (p. 25). She also discusses findings related to graduate studies as professional development for music

²¹ In addition to Conway, Hibbard, Albert & Hourigan (2005a), see for example Bush, (2007), Hammel (2007), and Stanley, Snell, and Edgar (2013).

teachers, noting, “Many teachers report that rigorous graduate studies allow them to move back and forth from questions that arise from their practice to the theories that inform that practice” (p. 26). Being able to make connections between theory and practice is an important hallmark of effective PD.

The opportunity to make connections between theory and practice may also be why several studies show that music teachers often choose to participate in summer music education courses focusing on a particular teaching method or philosophy. For example, in her PhD study of changes in elementary music teachers’ perceived teaching effectiveness, Williamson (2011) found that, of the 24 teachers she interviewed, all but one felt that they were more effective teachers after participating in one or two levels of an Orff-Schulwerk summer program. Particularly relevant for my study, Williamson also found that the majority of the participants reported having only one elementary methods course in their undergraduate degree, and felt that more elementary pedagogy courses and classroom experience in their initial teacher education would have been beneficial. Williamson writes, “Elementary music educators lack specific training to be effective elementary music educators” (p. 95). This finding points to the importance of professional development and professional learning opportunities specific to elementary music teachers, particularly in a context like Alberta, Canada where music teachers may not have access to adequate pre-service music teacher education.

Various music education approaches such as Comprehensive Musicianship, Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Kodály, Orff Schulwerk and Suzuki seem to provide an important way for music teachers to frame their teaching practice. In her survey of the professional development preferences of members of a state music association, Bowles (2002) found that of the 456 band, choral, orchestra, secondary general, and elementary music teachers that responded to a survey

designed to elicit their professional development preferences, many teachers included courses in Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze and Comprehensive Musicianship as topics that would interest them for PD. Of the 18 possible “hot” topics listed on the survey (p. 37), teachers across the board were interested in PD pertaining to technology, assessment, repertoire, national standards, creativity, and grant writing. In terms of format, the majority of teachers indicated that they preferred intensive summer courses, especially if they could earn graduate or undergraduate credit (and providing they did not have to travel and pay for accommodation to attend) as well as weekend courses.

Bush (2007) also surveyed music teachers about professional development activities. In a questionnaire distributed to band, string, choral, and general music teachers belonging to a particular state music association, Bush asked teachers their opinions about useful professional development activities. Most teachers ranked discussion with other music teachers and participation in summer or weekend courses to be of high importance, and ranked district-sponsored PD events at the bottom of the list. Bush argues that teachers’ voices should be considered by universities and PD developers when designing undergraduate teacher education programs and professional development activities for music teachers.

Young (2013) argues that music teacher professional learning that impacts classroom practice must “involve teachers in pro-actively learning how to learn and transforming their knowledge into practice that in turn enhances the musical learning of their pupils” (p. 243). She notes that teachers often conceive of professional learning as “something done *to* teachers” during formal P.D. events (p. 243), and argues that effective professional learning involves changes in understanding and belief as well as confronting potentially long-held convictions about teaching and learning.

K. Robinson (2005, 2015) studied the transformational impact of an immersive teacher professional development program. In the program, North American teachers had the opportunity to travel to South Africa for six to eight weeks and work with local teachers, children, and community members. The participants for the study consisted of 13 of the 14 teachers registered in a graduate course associated with the South Africa trip during one of four summers. Using transformational learning as a theoretical framework to study the teachers' growth (Mezirow, 2000), Robinson found that 11 of the teachers interviewed felt they had experienced some sort of perspective change or transformation related to changes in self and social understanding due to their participation in the program. This perception shift resulted in a "revision of belief systems" (p. 179). K. Robinson's study speaks to the ontological nature of teacher learning and the impact of experience on teachers' beliefs and their person, which, in turn, has the potential to impact teachers' practice.

Moore (2009) studied a 3-year professional development project for music teachers organized by music supervisors in a large U.S. school district. Based on research related to effective professional learning, music teachers and supervisors designed an action research project with assistance from Moore. Consisting of a "professional development framework" (p. 320), components of the program included formal professional development sessions related to incorporation of technology, teaching music literacy, and teaching composition and arrangement, and professional learning opportunities including mentoring and peer coaching, a 'learning community,' online reflective journaling and study groups, and collaborative curriculum writing and assessment. Teachers rated the program at the end of each year, and a large majority felt that the training sessions improved their teaching. Many of the teachers who participated in the project reported that they developed confidence and leadership skills. Other studies have also

shown that teacher leadership develops out of engagement in professional learning (Collinson, 2012; Poekert, 2012; Smeets & Ponte, 2009). Poekert (2012) asserts that professional learning leads to teacher leadership, which results in further professional development for the teacher and for their colleagues with whom they interact and mentor.

Conway, Hibbard, Albert and Hourigan (2005b) argue that arts teachers not only need subject-specific PD, but also must have access to different types of professional learning opportunities depending on the individual. The three participants in the study (Hibbard, Albert, and Hourigan) all had different needs for professional development, and had different PD experiences within their school districts. Hibbard, for example, remarked on a noticeable disconnect between district administration practices and teachers' professional learning needs. He defined meaningful professional development as those experiences that "contribute[d] positively to teaching and learning in my classroom" (p. 12), and cited experiences such as taking courses towards his masters that fit his definition. As a beginning teacher, Albert participated in a district-mandated induction program that included a full-day orientation and three full-day workshops throughout the year. None of the workshops pertained to teaching music, but Albert met another music teacher with whom he was able to brainstorm. Albert's PD experience as a beginning teacher in the district was one of a "supportive network" which he says was key to him staying in the profession (p. 13). Hourigan shared that festivals and an annual convention run by his state music association were the most prominent sites of professional development throughout his career, and reported that his principal supported his attendance at these events. In particular, Hourigan found watching master conductors work with ensembles and informally sharing ideas with colleagues to be the most valuable aspects of these

experiences. Conway et al.'s (2005b) study underscores the unique learning needs of individual music teachers.

In summary, the literature suggests that meaningful professional learning for music teachers is highly individualized, and that music teachers participate in a variety of formal professional learning activities such as masters-level university courses, summer programs, festivals, and workshops. Perhaps most importantly, the literature paints a picture of music teachers as professionals who know what they need and want to learn in order to grow in their practice. The second section of this literature review explores scholarship that moves towards a focus on the music teacher as agentic professional learner.

A Move Towards Teacher Learning Rather Than Professional Development Programs

In her analysis of the literature on professional development of music teachers, Hookey (2002) suggests that there are four ways that the term professional development (PD) has been used in the literature: (1) as a process of personal change; (2) as the activities that bring about the aforementioned change; (3) as a lifelong endeavor; (4) as a framework for professional change. Hookey defines professional development in the first sense as “the change in a teacher’s knowledge base and actions” (p. 888), a definition that has often been quoted in the music education literature (Bush, 2007; Moore, 2009). She also suggests that when the term PD is conceived as activity leading to learning (definition two), professional development experiences stand in for the knowledge to be developed. A conception of PD as a lifelong process (definition three) intersects with stage theories of teacher development whereby teachers move “through increasing complex and more advanced categories” (p. 888), and the definition of professional development is broadened to include both formal and informal learning experiences spanning the entire professional life of the teacher. Finally, Hookey suggests that professional development

conceived of as a framework for professional learning implies issues of professionalism and power. She writes, “The perspective taken on these issues defines who has the right and responsibility to make or take opportunities for professional development, as well as when these rights and responsibilities apply” (p. 888). Hookey (2002) argues that these different conceptions of teacher learning imply different levels of agency for teachers as learners.²² As the field’s conception of teachers have shifted from technicians who deliver the curriculum to adaptive experts who create learning experiences for their students and engage in on-going professional learning, scholars have responded by asking different questions related to teacher professional learning. Rather than studying specific professional learning events or programs, certain researchers have begun to focus on teacher learning and examinations of self-directed and collaborative learning models and processes. The new conceptions of professional learning being studied not only imply a higher degree of teacher agency, they situate teacher learning as a process rather than as an outcome.

De Vries, Jansen, and van de Grift (2013) contrast past conceptions of teachers as “autonomous, teaching-oriented professional(s)” who applied what they learned from their pre-service teacher education and for whom staff development consisted of “one-shot workshops or short-term courses” (p. 79), with current conceptions of teachers as professionals and learners. They note that teachers are now expected to teach within a variety of situations and to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Implicit in this new understanding of teachers as professionals is an increased need for ongoing teacher learning. De Vries et al. (2103) conceive of contemporary teachers as “adaptive experts” and argue that “the knowledge, skills,

²² Pyhältö, Piertarinen, and Sioni (2015) define teacher agency as “the capacity of teachers to construct the context of their learning” (p. 814).

and attitudes needed to teach... cannot be fully developed in pre-service education programs” (de Vries et al., 2013, p. 790). Because of this, professional learning has become increasingly more critical both in practice and in scholarship. As mentioned above, the literature now acknowledges that teacher learning is an ongoing, career-long process (Garet et al., 2001; Hookey, 2002; Hunzicker, 2011; Poekert, 2012; Wells, 2013) and that “learning to be a teacher is not just a matter of acquiring a number of technical skills and competencies” (Heilbronn, 2010, p. 5). Heilbronn (2010) argues that teacher learning must be more broadly conceived than the past technical rational framing.

One of the criticisms that has been made regarding teacher learning scholarship in general is that much of the research of the past does not account for the situated and complex nature of teaching and learning (Borko, 2004; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Writing in 2011, Opfer and Pedder note, “the majority of writings on the topic (of professional development) continue to focus on specific activities, processes, or programs in isolation from the complex teaching and learning environments in which teachers live” (p. 377). Unlike many of their colleagues, Opfer and Pedder do not see the purpose of PD scholarship as primarily one of causally determining program effectiveness. With Hookey (2002), they allege that researchers in this area have often conflated PD programs and structures and their effects with the actual learning of teachers.

Opfer and Pedder (2011) advocate for a shift in focus from professional development programs to teacher learning:

We believe the professional development effects literature has committed an epistemological fallacy by taking empirical relationships between forms of activity or task (e.g., being activity based), structures for learning (e.g., collaboration between teachers), location (e.g., situated in practice), and so on, and some measure of teacher

change to *be* teacher learning. For the most part, this research is based on the assumption that teacher professional development consists of a repertoire of activities and methods for learning and that teacher learning follows more or less directly from the frequency with which professional development programs use these specific activities, structures, and so on... And yet, regardless of how strong these relationships between forms of activity and teacher change may be, they do not address the ultimate causal question—*why?* (p. 377-8)

In response to this issue, Opfer and Pedder propose a conceptual framework that sees teacher learning as a complex system consisting of the individual teacher, the school, and the activity. Opfer and Pedder's (2011) framework for teacher learning comprises both individual and sociocultural perspectives without linking professional learning to a specific program. This broadened conception is used as a basis for teasing out the complexity of teachers' learning, drawing on the work of other complexity theorists. Their framework is robust in that it allows for both constructivist and sociocultural perspectives on learning, and it moves away from a causal conception of PD programs, teacher development, and student achievement by acknowledging the incredibly complex and iterative nature of teacher learning. Opfer and Pedder are attempting to get at *how* teachers learn.²³ The extensive body of literature which Opfer and Pedder review suggests that professional development that leads to change in teaching practice must, in Gibson and Brooks' (2012) words, "be ongoing, sustained, intensive and supported by modeling and coaching; allow educators to see and share their own and student work reflectively and

²³ The authors are explicit about this point. They write, "In our review process, we focus on 'elaborating' the identified relationships in the literature on teacher learning and teacher professional development to unpack how they have their effect" (p. 382).

collaboratively; be embedded in the curriculum, classroom, and school; and foster a supportive and inspiring environment for testing new ideas and new teaching idea” (p. 21).

Easton (2008) discusses the insufficiency of professional development programs as the sole location for teacher learning. Like Hookey (2002), she contends that the term professional development assumes that someone else is in charge of teacher learning. Easton writes, “In education, professional development has, in fact, often been what someone does to others” (p. 755). ‘Development,’ Easton argues, is a process of improvement that may or may not result in change. Changing teacher practice, she argues, requires giving teachers agency and a collaborative structure to engage in meaningful learning directly related to their practice. She explains, “Educators often find that more and better are not enough. They find they often need to change what they do...as they respond to the needs of the learners they serve. Doing this takes learning” (p. 755). In distinguishing between professional development and professional learning, Easton seems to be differentiating between formal events that school districts provide for teachers (professional development) and collaborative learning opportunities specific to the contexts in which teachers work (professional learning). She lists activities such as “taking part in school-based conversations, ... follow up activities and problem solving, ...coaching, mentoring, and observing, and being coached, mentored, and observed,” and “collecting data...analyzing data, making recommendations, and planning” (p. 756) as helpful forms of professional learning that should be part of teachers’ structures for learning along with traditional professional development events such as workshops and in-servicing.²⁴ Making a similar argument, Barrett (2006) suggests that a better term for formal activities organized for teachers

²⁴ An in-service is a professional learning event organized by someone other than the teacher, often the school district. To recap, Hookey (2002) suggests that the term implies that someone other than the teacher is responsible for teacher learning.

that allegedly lead to professional growth might be staff development rather than professional development.

Cordingley (2013) asserts that professional learning must be driven by the teacher, and notes the conflation of teacher learning and teacher performance that is often seen in the literature, particularly in large-scale evaluations that link student achievement and teacher learning. She argues that while some teacher learning experiences such as graduate courses address the “acquisition and interrogation of a body of knowledge” as opposed to performance, that “even the focus on developing understanding of teaching and learning is not quite the same as a focus on the process of learning about teaching and learning” (p. 22). Cordingley maintains that teacher learning, not performance, will ultimately result in improved teaching.²⁵ Rather than attending to specific behaviors and performance measures, Cordingley argues that, as professionals, teachers must focus on learning how to learn and be responsible for their own learning. In turn, administrators must facilitate and enable effective continuing professional development (CPD) for the teachers in their building. Effective CPD, she asserts, requires peer support structures, dialogue pertaining to teachers’ practice, a focus on why things don’t work, not just how, data collection from classrooms being used to plan future teaching, active leadership through modeling or sustained inquiry, observing and reflecting on the practice of others, goal-oriented practice with ambitious goals for students, and the use of targeted specialist expertise. Regarding this last point, she writes, “Teachers who are effective professional learners use specialist sources of advice or information to identify high-leverage strategies that address their concerns and aspirations for pupils” (p. 25). Cordingley’s assertion that specialist expertise is necessary for high quality professional learning is congruent with much of the professional

²⁵ This is also the assumption of my study.

learning literature in music education, which suggests that music teachers need music-specific professional learning opportunities.

The Professionalization of Music Teachers

As de Vries et al. (2013) note above, a shift in focus from professional learning events to teachers as professional learners is implicit in a conception of teachers as “adaptive experts.” Those who argue that teachers are autonomous and collegial professionals who exercise judgment and expertise in their work in schools (Gratch, 2000) are quick to make the connection between teacher quality and career-long professional learning.²⁶

Barrett (2006), for example, argues for a reconception of music teachers as change agents who seek out growth rather than viewing teachers as practitioners who are just fulfilling requirements for licensing. She advocates for “substantive professional development offerings that build on [music teachers’] passionate and dedicated commitment to improving classrooms” (p. 20), and cites her earlier work with Thiessen (Thiessen & Barrett, 2002) in mapping the actions and reflections of a “reform-minded” music teacher. Thiessen and Barrett (2002) define reform-minded teachers as professionals who seek to improve their practice on multiple inter-related fronts: In the classroom, in the corridor, and as part of other communities.²⁷ Barrett explains, “reform-minded music teachers...work on multiple fronts for the benefit of students, the music program, the school in general, the community in which the school is located, and the profession at large” (Barret, 2006, p. 22). She notes that reform-minded music teachers require

²⁶ See, for example, Darling-Hammond & Sykes (1999) *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice*.

²⁷ Thiessen and Barrett’s “reform-minded teacher” intersects in many ways with the concept of teacher leadership in the general education literature. See below and also Collinson (2012) and Poekert (2012) for a discussion of how PD impacts the development of teacher leadership, as well as Margolis (2012) and Smeets & Ponte (2009).

professional learning opportunities that complement their plans for growth instead of disrupting them. Furthermore, music teachers must be allowed to “frame their own problems of practice, seek a range of solutions, reflect on multiple outcomes, and ultimately reshape and reform underlying beliefs that guide action” (p. 23).²⁸ Barrett argues for broadening the study of sites for professional learning beyond conferences, short courses, and workshops to include networks, institutes, graduate programs, and school-based reform activities, as well as working with student teachers, partnerships with community and arts organizations, national board certification, and participating in community ensembles.

Related to professional learning and the professionalization of teachers is the concept of teacher leadership. Danielson (2006) defines teacher leadership as, “that set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but who also have influence that extends beyond their own classroom to others within their school and elsewhere” (p. 12). Schmidt and Robbins (2011) argue that professional development initiatives for music teachers should have the development of teacher leadership as their aim. They advocate for policy for professional development to be situated within what they call a “strategic architecture framework” as an alternative to structures driven by “rationales situated within an economics-based logic” (p. 96). In such a framework, music teachers are recast as curriculum leaders, and the complexity of learning and teaching is acknowledged. “Teaching,” they write, “involves much more than the execution of a series of techniques” (p. 97) and professional development must therefore provide various options to teachers. Schmidt and Robbins assert that, “the choice should exist and be theirs to make” (p. 98) and recommend expanding the scope of professional

²⁸ Barrett’s conception of reform-oriented music teacher learning has many parallels with the literature regarding expertise and how experts think about their practice (Ex. Berliner, 1986; Schön, 1983).

development to foster teachers' capacity for curriculum development, inclusive assessment, growth in "critical dispositions," and cultural responsiveness (p. 98), as well as facilitating the development of professional communities for inquiry and partnerships with universities.

Teacher research is one way of developing teacher leadership, and also provides a useful structure for a professional development framework. In their historical review of the field of teacher research in music teacher education, Leglar and Collay (2002) affirm that teaching is, by its very nature, a way of engaging in research. They argue that teachers don't only apply theory, they also theorize about their work. These authors suggest that teaching has always struggled to be seen as a profession, and that the teacher research movement comes out of desire to recognize teachers' authority and voice and move towards teacher professionalization. Leglar and Collay advocate for the inclusion of reflective practices and research in teacher education programs in order to teach dispositions that are important to teacher research (and, I would add, good practice). "It is clear that the development of reflective, knowing, inquiring music teachers requires deep, systemic changes in undergraduate teacher preparation programs" (p. 868). Although not the focus of their review, Leglar and Collay are advocating for a model of life-long learning and inquiry beginning in pre-service music teacher education and lasting throughout teachers' entire careers.

In sum, a focus on teacher learning is congruent with a view of music teachers as agentic professionals. In addition to teacher inquiry and research, I will now turn to a discussion of three specific conceptions of professionalizing learning practices for music teachers found in the literature. These practices include self-directed learning, collaborative learning, and learning within a community of practice. I will also consider two studies that explore the value of music making as music teacher professional learning.

Self-directed learning.

While Hookey's (2002) four definitions of professional development for music teachers could be plotted along a continuum representing the level of responsibility for teacher professional growth with the school district at one end and the music teacher at the other, the use of the term professional development in the literature does not often encompass music teachers' informal *self-directed learning* which occurs outside of the accountability structure of a school district. Self-directed learning is an important research topic in the field of adult education and a central tenet of M. J. Knowles' (1975) concept of *andragogy*, or the practice of teaching adults. Essentially, self-directed learning (SDL) is a form of informal learning consisting of "a process...in which people take the primary initiative for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences" (Merriam et al, 2007, p. 110). M. J. Knowles (1975) concurs. He defines SDL as being a kind of learning where, "individuals take the initiative without the help of others in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources, and evaluating learning outcomes" (p. 18).²⁹ To be clear, it is not the activity that defines self-directed professional learning, but the fact that the teacher is independently directing his or her learning (Terehoff, 2002). Terehoff explains, "adults learn what they think they ought to learn based on their professional needs" (2002, p. 74). The ability to determine the what, when, and how of learning is the essence of self-directed professional learning for teachers, and music teachers' self-directed learning is potentially a significant mechanism for professional growth and is therefore worthy of study. Folkestad (2005) agrees and argues for research in

²⁹ Guglielmino (2008) notes that all people engage in self-directed learning to some degree and SDL can occur in a variety of contexts. She also points out that the degree to which SDL takes place is dependent on the learner's personal characteristics such as the person's attitudes, beliefs, values, and abilities.

music education that encompasses all kinds of learning, not just that which takes place in formalized settings.

There is a notable body of scholarship in adult education pertaining to the goals and process of self-directed learning as well as the attributes of the learner as a self-directed learner. In the following section, I will briefly discuss theoretical models of the process of self-directed learning from the field of adult education, scholarship related to self-directed learning in general education, and self-directed learning and music teacher learning from the field of music education.

Theoretical models of self-directed learning. Merriam et al. (2007) credit Tough (1967, 1971) as being the first to provide a comprehensive portrait of SDL, which he referred to as *self-planned learning*. Along with M. J. Knowles (1975), Tough sees self-directed learning as a mostly linear process. In contrast, several models proposed in the last 30 years have characterized self-directed learning as being interactive in nature. For example, Spear (1988) suggests that SDL depends on the opportunities people encounter in their environment, their past and current knowledge, and chance. Similarly, Brockett and Hiemstra's (1991) framework for "self-direction in learning" consists of the process of learning, the level of personal responsibility of the learner, or "learner self-direction" (p. 26), and the milieu in which the learner is located. Brockett and Hiemstra also allow for resource people which are part of the milieu that may serve to facilitate the person's learning.

Garrison (1997) views self-directed learning through a "collaborative constructivist" lens. His framework incorporates self-management, self-monitoring, and the learner's level of motivation. Like Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), Garrison sees the social context of the learner as being important. Unlike Brockett and Hiemstra, he focuses particularly on the cognitive and

metacognitive strategies of the learner which are represented in the concepts of self-management and self-monitoring. Garrison writes, “Motivation and responsibility are reciprocally related and both are facilitated by collaborative control of the educational transaction” (1997, p.29). Also interested in the cognitive aspects of SDL, Cavaliere (1992) suggests a five stage model to a self-directed learning project: Inquiring, modelling, experimenting, theorizing, and actualizing, while Danis (1992) proposes a framework consisting of learning strategies, phases of the activity, the content being learned, the learner’s characteristics, and the context in which learning occurs. All of these sociocultural models of self-directed learning see the learner as situated, agentic, and in interaction with their environment.

Self-directed learning of teachers in the field of education. As previously noted, scholarship on teacher professional learning has begun to focus on “teachers as active learners (who shape) their professional growth through reflective participation in professional development programs and practice” (Lom & Sullenger, 2011, p. 58). While informal and self-directed teacher professional development is “less understood and least researched” compared to formal professional learning models and contexts (Lom & Sullenger, 2011, p. 58), this topic is beginning to be explored in the general education literature. In this section, I will discuss four studies that relate to teachers’ self-directed learning.

Lom and Sullenger (2011) studied the informal learning of teachers involved in designing and teaching an after school science education project for upper-elementary and middle-school students. The study lasted for four years, and involved between four and 13 elementary and middle-school science teachers depending on the year, along with a variety of experts from the field of science. While only one of the participants indicated that they got involved in the project as a means for professional learning, all of the teachers felt that their involvement constituted an

opportunity for professional learning. In their analysis, Lom and Sullinger identified three common characteristics of the teachers' self-directed learning experiences during the project: First, participants felt that learning was easier in an informal and collaborative setting, particularly since they had access to outside expertise. Secondly, having the chance to actually try out new ideas, rather than mere exposure to new ideas, was integral to making the teachers' participation in the project into a learning experience. Thirdly, interactions within the network of resource people the teachers built as a result of their involvement in the project resulted in professional learning. The character of the participants' self-directed learning in Lom and Sullinger's study was informal, active, and interactive/social in nature.

An earlier study of pre-service teachers undertaken by Moran (1997) examines the extent to which student teachers assumed responsibility for their own professional learning in a specific teacher education partnership program. Moran attempted to trace the contribution of self-directed learning to the student teachers' development. She found that the student teachers in the study were required to accept a great deal of responsibility for their own professional growth and therefore developed the ability to engage in critical analysis of their teaching and the teaching of others. However, Moran also notes that the student teachers still learned a great deal from their interactions with others. She concludes that, "self-directed development is therefore not a sufficient condition for professional learning" (p. 94) for pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers in her study needed input from others at this stage in their professional lives.

In her paper on adult learning theory and teacher professional development, Terehoff (2002) argues that school leaders can improve school-based teacher professional development by creating an environment that is congruent with principles from adult learning theory or *androgogy*, rather than those of *pedagogy*, or the instruction of children. Terehoff challenges

administrators to attend to teachers' self-concept as independent and capable learners who value having choice and freedom to learn, and to tap into teachers' previous experience. She explains, "there ought to be an attempt during learning activities to link presented material to the prior experiences of learners" (p. 68). Terehoff also notes that teachers' learning needs will differ from person to person and teachers may have different levels of readiness for learning. Finally, using the words, of Malcolm Knowles, the author reminds the school administrator that, "To adults, education is a process of improving their ability to cope with life problems they face now" (M. J. Knowles in Terehoff, 2002, p. 69). While Terehoff focuses on formal school-based teacher education initiatives, her essay contributes a clear articulation of principles of adult learning which apply in self-directed learning situations.

Zepeda, Parylo, and Bengston (2014) examined common professional development practices instituted for principals of four school systems in Georgia. The authors identified nine common practices related to principal professional development which align with characteristics of adult learning such as being problem- and goal-centered and relevant. However, the authors also found that the existing structures for professional learning seldom allowed for self-directed learning. Zepeda et al. recommend that school districts "consider providing (principals) with more autonomy to direct their professional development" (p. 312). Zepeda et al.'s call for agency for principals related to their professional learning echoes scholarship on teacher learning.³⁰

Self-directed learning and music teachers. While there are many studies related to the informal and self-directed learning of students, the self-directed learning of music teachers as professional learners seems to be an emerging topic of scholarship.³¹ Conway, Edgar, Hansen,

³⁰ See for example Easton (2008) and Riveros, Newton, & Burgess (2012).

³¹ Lucy Green's work (2002), for example, provides a framework for understanding the self-directed learning of western pop musicians. Other scholars such as Fornas et al. (1995) have also studied rock

and Palmer (2012) suggest that the concept of self-directed learning “relates strongly to the music teacher professional development literature, which suggests ‘informal interactions’ to be among the most beneficial professional development experiences for music teachers” (p. 72).³² Only a handful of scholars have investigated SDL as professional learning for music teachers to date.

Finney and Philpott (2010) conducted a case study of 20 students enrolled in a year-long music education course in the U. K. which focused on reflective pedagogy. Students in the 36-week course spent 12 weeks in classes at the university and 24 weeks in secondary schools as student teachers. The researchers explored what it would mean to help students develop a meta-pedagogy, or “a growing system of interwoven knowledge and methodology” (Golson & Glover, 2009, p. 1), which encompassed informal and formal pedagogies. The researchers had students engage in informal learning and then invited five of the student teachers to share their thoughts on the experience via independently made digital recordings. Finney and Philpott found that all five students experienced shifts in *habitus*, or the “unconscious habituated ways of thinking and acting socially” (p. 10). For example, all five student teachers seemed to now view instruction as facilitation rather than curriculum delivery, and different pedagogical approaches were inherent in all five participants’ thinking at the end of this experience. The authors advocate for the development of a meta-pedagogy for informal learning and pedagogy (ILP) in music.

T. Robinson (2012) explored the relationship between eight popular musicians’ informal learning practices and their studio teaching. He found that the participants in his study generally

musicians’ informal learning, and Westerlund (2006) and Green (2008) go so far as to propose a model of informal learning for the formal school music program based on how rock musicians learn music.

³² See Bauer (2007), Bauer, Forsythe & Kinney (2009), and Conway (2007) for examples of this literature.

did not want to replicate the way they learned in their teaching. Instead, they devised teaching strategies “to compensate, as it were, for their own shortcomings as players, while adopting in some form methods which had been effective for them” (p. 369). While the participants all drew from their own experience as music learners, several of the participants began their teaching career with “a kind of stereotyped version of the classical model in mind” (p. 369) which gradually evolved into a more informal approach involving watching and listening. The author writes, “this research suggests that, while musicians have to learn how to play, teachers have to learn how to teach” (p. 369). Robinson’s study affirms that teaching is a learned behavior.

Kastner (2015) studied the perceptions and practices of four music teachers who were part of a professional development community working to implement informal music practices. While the purpose of the study was primarily to examine how the teachers implemented informal learning practices in their work with students, the design of the project featured some elements of self-directed learning such as having the teachers decide what to work on and how to carry out their plans. Participants met eight times to discuss research articles related to informal learning, to share student work, and to socialize. These meetings were video recorded, and participants were also interviewed by the researcher. Kastner found that the participants developed informal learning activities by modifying ideas from the research articles they read together and by modifying lessons they had taught in the past. Participants also used a variety of pedagogical practices to enact the activities they developed in the group. Kastner shares that these practices ranged in the degree of student versus teacher control, and also the level of teacher scaffolding provided. The teachers grew to appreciate the level of motivation and musical independence the students developed through a more informal pedagogy. However, Kastner notes, “the participants seemed to view informal music learning as activities to use in addition to their

formal instruction” (p. 85). In addition to studying music teacher informal learning, Kastner’s study sheds lights on the ways teachers adapt ideas for their own practice as they engage in professional learning.

While not directly studying the informal learning of music teachers themselves, Hallam, Creech, and McQueen (2017) examined the impact of implementing a Musical Futures (MF) approach on 28 music teachers and their pedagogy. Based on the work of Green (2002, 2008) who studied the way popular musicians learn music, MF uses student-centered pedagogy including informal and self-directed learning to provide music making experiences for students. The authors note that the teacher is cast in the role of a facilitator and responds to the interests and needs of students rather than directing activities as is common in a regular music classroom. Hallam et al. looked at how participation in MF impacted teachers’ professional learning, pedagogy, and assessment practices, and also sought to understand any resource-related barriers to adoption and perceived difficulties in teaching using an MF approach. Most of the music teachers in the study felt that this approach to music education had made them more effective teachers, and the authors found that teachers adapted MF to suit their own personal pedagogy and the needs of their students. One exciting finding is that participating teachers seemed to focus more on how students learn rather than how to teach. Other changes in pedagogy noted by the participants included lessons that consisted of more group music making and that were more student led than in a traditional approach to music teaching. In fact, the authors conclude that there was “considerable change” to the teachers’ pedagogical and assessment practices (p. 50). Hallam et al. caution that the greatest difficulty in implementing this approach appeared to be the teachers’ fear of losing of control.

Music-making as self-directed professional learning for music teachers. Along with Barrett (2006), Pellegrino (2011) maintains that music-making can be a valuable and relevant self-directed professional learning activity for music teachers. She suggests that participating in musical activities fosters the development of a musical identity,³³ which is invaluable for teaching music to students, and is also important to the well-being of the music educator as a person. Pellegrino also argues that music-making informs teachers' beliefs about music and teaching, provides social connections, fosters presence in teaching, and serves as "a powerful pedagogical tool" (p. 79). Pellegrino argues that participation in music-making should be considered as a form of professional learning in fulfillment of teachers' professional growth requirements.

Scott Kassner and Kassner's (2001) study speaks to the relationship between music-making and teaching music. They also studied music teachers' music-making and musical identities. The authors conducted an informal survey of 100 preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, and university music educators across the U.S. about "factors that have contributing to [their] ongoing sense of being musical" (p. 22). Results were quite diverse, but respondents overwhelming agreed that teaching music to others was "significantly important" in developing their musicianship (p. 23). Many participants also responded that listening to recordings, attending concerts, and talking to professional musicians were significant forms of professional learning as well as attending conferences and graduate courses. Some respondents wrote extensively about the impact of master teachers and mentors and courses in Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Kodály pedagogy, and Orff Schulwerk. While informal in nature, Scott Kassner

³³ Pellegrino's assertion is congruent with scholarship on participatory music-making which shows "significant influences on identity building and social development" (Kenny, 2017, p. 112).

and Kassner's survey points to the fact that teaching music is a form of music making, and teaching and making music are both sites for professional learning. The authors assert that, "the teaching of music is itself a performing musical art" (pp. 25-6) and suggest that teaching can provide a structure for continued professional growth.

In conclusion, the self-directed learning of music teachers is an emerging and promising area of research congruent with education scholar Webster-Wright's (2009) call for a move away from "how best to provide PD activities towards understanding the fundamental question of how professionals learn" (p. 704-5). Another area of promise is that of collaborative models of professional learning.

Collaborative learning for music teachers.

Hammel (2007) suggests that music teachers "may find value in professional development if given more time to collaborate; serve as mentors and protégés; consult with each other regarding students, teaching strategies and methods; and observe others in their field" (p. 29). As early as the 1990s scholars in music education were turning their attention towards collaborative models of teacher learning. The following six studies examine music teacher professional learning in collaborative research groups, conversations, teacher study, and inquiry groups, and suggest characteristics for meaningful learning for music teachers through collaboration.

J. Robbins (1994/1995) studied a group of six teachers who participated in a new Orff-Schulwerk program and agreed to be part of a group who met four times a year for two years following participation in level one and then level two of the program. The teachers met to discuss teaching and implementing the ideas they had learned in the summer Orff-Schulwerk program and also kept reflective journals. In the second year of the study, their work was guided in part by an inquiry handbook for teacher-researchers. The teachers were asked to focus on

specific areas of inquiry which the group then explored. Robbins explains that, “teachers began to identify those aspects of their teaching that continued to cause uncertainty or create some tension between the training and practice” (p. 50). She found that teachers used the group to collaboratively explore questions of organization, pedagogy, and what it meant to teach using an Orff approach. Robbins’ study provides a potential model for what long-term collaborative learning around a common experience might look like for music teachers.

More recently, Roulston et al. (2005) conducted a self-study inquiry into a year-long collaborative research group of early-career music teachers and university researchers. The purpose of the group was to: a) develop supportive relationships between the members of the group; b) develop a collaborative research group that served as a support for teachers using action research to study issues in their teaching practice; and c) create a practice-based research group. The group met once a month over the course of a school year as a supplement to a formal teacher induction program. Roulston et al. found that the group provided a supportive environment for the group members, which helped the music teachers to feel less isolated. They also found that early-career teachers’ perspectives related to classroom practice and research shifted as a result of their mutual experiences in the group. However, the authors write, “for now, it appears, the impact of this particular collaboration has taken place at an individual level” (p. 14). While the university researchers learned about the concerns of the early-career teachers and the participants learned about teacher research, Roulston et al.’s teacher participants were somewhat reticent to share their learning with other teachers.

Gruenhagen (2009) studied collaborative conversations and their potential for professional learning for early childhood music educators. She hosted 11 monthly conversations of five to 12 music teachers who all taught for a multi-campus community music school. The

teachers determined the topics they wanted to explore and decided how to “go about learning” (p. 135). Gruenhagen found that a core group of five teachers emerged from the initial group over the course of the study. These teachers regularly attended group events and were active participants in the conversations. She theorizes that the core group evolved into a community of practice who developed a common understanding about teaching and learning and related knowledge, practices, and approaches to their teaching (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). She asserts that the core group members came to value their time learning together, and that their collaborative conversations resulted in professional growth for the members.

Stanley (2009) studied the experiences of three elementary music teachers who engaged with her in a collaborative teacher study group (CTSG) that studied collaborative learning in the context of their music programs. The group met weekly over a period of seven weeks to discuss the collaborative learning of music students in their schools. Using a protocol for guided conversation for discussing student work, Stanley and the participants analyzed and discussed student collaborations observed on video from the participants’ classrooms. In addition to video recording the meetings, Stanley collected written notes from their conversations as well as e-mailed comments and suggestions from the participants. She also interviewed each participant twice over the course of the study and kept a “researcher-participant log” (p. 105). Stanley found that participating in the group impacted the teaching practice of the three participants. One participant reported feeling more confident in her professional knowledge, and participation in the group helped another teacher to shift her focus from a preoccupation with teaching to student learning (Stanley, 2012). Stanley also documents instances of “collectively generated knowledge” (p. 206) and reflects that the process of using the protocol to analyze videos of each other’s classrooms was integral in facilitating a focus on student work rather than teacher work.

She concludes that the experience of being part of a CTSG constituted meaningful professional development and also served to create a sense of community and belonging for the teacher participants.

In a follow up article, Stanley (2011) discusses the factors that make collaborative teacher study groups potential sites for professional learning. She contends that not all study groups are effective. “Simply creating a music teacher community does not ensure that it will provide meaningful professional development” (p. 73). Groups can serve to reinforce the status quo or can avoid conflict instead of working through difficult questions. She also notes that music teachers are often exceptionally busy after school and that the performative nature of music as a discipline can lead to competition between teachers. Other authors confirm such complicating factors for music teacher collaboration (Ex. Barrett, 2006). Stanley notes, “A problem with professional development in general and CTSGs specifically is that teachers may obtain new ideas and skills but be unable to implement them in their particular context because of the specific characteristics or idiosyncrasies of their workplace” (p. 76). If attention is given to how the group is formed, she maintains, a CTSG model has the potential to provide a place for teachers to “talk through what works well for them and, in the process, engage in reflective discussion with colleagues about why these approaches work well” (p. 77). Whether a group is initiated and/or led by teachers, administrators, or university professors, Stanley suggests that successful groups have shared goals related to the participants’ specific contexts.

Finally, Stanley, Snell, and Edgar (2013) reviewed the literature related to collaborative learning for music teachers and summarized several characteristics that are common to meaningful collaborative learning experiences. They see collaborative learning as potentially happening between music teachers and their subject area peers, in cross-curricular groups of

teachers, across teachers of various grade levels, between teachers in different career stages, and between teachers, university faculty, and others who provide professional learning for music teachers. Stanley, Snell, and Edgar enumerate seven elements that characterize effective collaborative learning for music teachers. They suggest that the activity in question must: (a) develop musicianship and music teaching; (b) be sustained; (c) be voluntary and offers choices for teachers; (d) honour and builds on teachers' knowledge and experience; (e) present opportunities for reflection during and after the experiences; (f) provide "site-specific support" (p. 3); and (g) facilitate meaningful mentorship opportunities (being mentored for newer teachers and being a mentor for more experienced teachers). Not only do these authors provide a picture of what effective collaborative learning might look like for music teachers, they go so far as to assert that effective professional learning *is* collaborative in nature.

Communities of practice.

The studies of collaborative music teacher professional learning discussed above begin with the assumption that learning is a situated and social act. Lave and Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral participation, which serves as a vehicle for learning within *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2000), provides another example of a sociocultural framing of professional learning. A community of practice is "[a group] of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Through mutual engagement in a joint enterprise, members create and use a shared repertoire of resources for their local practice (Wenger, 1998). As the community continually engages in and negotiates their shared practices, the members also construct and reconstruct the meaning of those practices and their identity in relation to the group. Members of

the group learn the practices and values of the group through their *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Hanks (1991) explains:

The individual learner is not gaining a discrete body of abstract knowledge which (s)he will then transport and reapply in later contexts. Instead (s)he acquires the skill to perform by actually engaging in the process, under the attenuated conditions of *legitimate peripheral participation*. (p. 14).

While there are a few studies in music education that examine music teacher professional learning through the lens of communities of practice, Kenny (2014) notes that the concept has not yet been widely used. In addition to Gruenhagen's (2007, 2009) work on collaborative conversations as professional learning, the following six studies use Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998)'s social learning theory as part of their conceptual and/or analytical framework related to music teacher education and professional learning.

Blair (2008) uses the concept of communities of practice to theorize about the induction experiences of early-career music teachers. She studied a mentor group for early-career music teachers that she facilitated as part of a school-board sanctioned induction program. The group met once at an initial orientation event and twice a month over the course of one school year. Three out of the five teachers who came to the initial meeting chose to be members of the group for the duration of the study. Blair found that participating in the group supported the development of the teachers' identities. She writes, "As teachers participate in a community of practitioners whose jobs closely resemble their own, they experience a sense of mutuality, with participation enabling a source of identity and possibilities for learning" (p. 110). Blair notes that the three teachers developed a sense of trust "that was key to their ability to grow together as a

community of learners” (p. 111). She argues that having a community of music teacher practice provided empowerment, community, and shared identity for the music teachers in her study.

Ilari (2010) used Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice theory to trace the relationships and workings of a group of preservice teachers volunteering at the *Musicalização Infantil* early childhood music program at the university in Brazil where Ilari taught. The author asserts that the group became a community of practice over time in that the members developed a shared purpose, co-constructed meaning, developed their identities in relation to the group, and experienced a sense of community. She explains:

the negotiation of shared enterprises (in this case, a children’s recital, a collectively elaborated CD or a lesson plan) gives rise to the emergence of mutual accountability among those involved, helping to define how individuals and the community think and act. (p. 54)

In her paper, Ilari also documents the experience of one student who was not accepted into the community. This anecdote supports Ilari’s claim that the group had become a community of practice with rules, a common repertoire of practices, and a shared identity. Ilari affirms that the concept of communities of practice is a useful one both for analysis and for thinking about the social dimension of teacher education/professional learning.

Kenny (2014) employed a community of practice framework in her instrumental case study of an after-school music education program established through a partnership between a post-secondary teacher education program, a community agency, and a primary school. The program consisted of five workshops for children in grades three to six from the school which was located in a “disadvantaged context” (p. 403). The workshops were facilitated by teams of five or six student teachers from the university, and 15 children participated. Kenny notes,

“leadership roles were intended to be fluid and negotiated through musical practice...(and) children played a significant role in guiding their own learning” (p. 397). In addition to thematic analysis of group and interview transcripts, Kenny used the concepts of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) as categories for analysis of the data. The student teachers in Kenny’s study reported that, not only did the children learn from the student teachers, but that they, in turn, learned from the children. The author frames this as an example of mutual engagement, and theorizes that this mutual engagement was facilitated by the collaborative nature of participation in the project. Kenny also notes that the teacher candidates frequently shared leadership as they planned and taught in the program, and that this led to the development of what Wenger (1998) calls “sustained mutual relationships” (Wenger in Kenny, 2017, p. 404). The student teachers also developed a shared repertoire of routines, ways of behaving, and activities, as did the children who were working in groups together as part of the program.

In a more recent study exploring the concept of communities of practice as an “analytical tool” for teacher learning (Kenny, 2017, p. 112), Kenny (2017) studied education students’ values, assumptions, level of participation, learning, and identity formation during participatory music-making activities in the context of a creative arts module within a teacher education program. She explains, “a ‘community of practice’ model provides an interesting lens with which to view pre-service teachers’ musical engagements” (p. 112). In the 12 hours of instructional time dedicated to music education, students engaged in music-making, performing, listening, and responding to music. 33 students from the class volunteered to participate in one of eight focus groups where they discussed their prior experience, valuing of, and current engagement with the arts, as well as the module’s impact on their participation in and teaching of

the arts. The students also provided a general evaluation of the course. Reflective assignments from 106 students were also collected and analyzed. Kenny found that even though the student teachers began the course with a diversity of backgrounds in music, they generally felt that everyone was able to participate right from the outset. She theorizes that students experienced mutual engagement as they took part in a form of peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998) whereby those with less music background learned from the group. Kenny also found that learning within the community encouraged active participation and helped students to “think about music education in new ways” (p. 117). She noted that there was some evidence of transformations in the student teachers’ identities.

Fitzpatrick (2014) studied the ways an interactive class blog facilitated the development of a community of practice among nine student teachers in a music education seminar during a practicum. Students met as a class once per week over the 13-week term, and were asked to contribute weekly to a class blog. Data was coded for mutual engagement, evidence of community, and sharing of resources relating to the practice of teaching music.

Fitzpatrick found that the blog posts documented the participants shifting identities as they transitioned from student to teacher as well as their common concerns related to classroom management, finding a work/life and teacher/musician balance, and relationships with their cooperating teachers. The blog also served as a “facilitator of interactions” which led to the development of a community amongst the participants (p. 99). Students used the blog as a place to give and receive advice, feedback, and support, and express emotion. Fitzpatrick noted that students shared resources for learning to teach music primarily in the form of personal narratives of their experience, including sharing what they had learned from others. Fitzpatrick concludes

that the community facilitated by the blog was, indeed, a community of practice and suggests that virtual communities may be beneficial for music teacher candidates.

Bell-Robertson (2013) also used Wenger (1998, 2006) as a framing for her analysis of an online community for music teachers. The participants in Bell-Robertson's study consisted of 11 middle and high school instrumental teachers in the first three years of their careers. The participants were invited to contribute to a wiki (an online space accessible only by invitation) and were each interviewed three times during the year-long study. Bell-Robertson found that the wiki was used primarily by teachers to share their experiences rather than discussing ways to improve practice. She concludes that the wiki primarily fulfilled an emotional need for the participants and notes that "the actions of reading and posting in the online community seemed to help participants feel that they were not alone" (p. 440). Participants reported feeling a sense of relief that others were having similar experiences and struggles, and characterized the community as a "support system" rather than a "tool box" for getting teaching advice (p. 442). The wiki provided a place to vent and to have philosophical discussions about issues specific to teaching music, and many of the participants reported experiencing satisfaction that they could offer support to their peers.

Self-directed and collaborative models of professional learning, and professional learning within communities of practice show tremendous promise for music teachers as learning structures and as supports for teachers in that they allow access to peers who could serve as resource people and provide community for music teachers as persons. The following section will speak to literature related to the changing professional learning needs of teachers throughout their careers.

The Changing Professional Learning Needs of Music Teachers

In addition to an increasing consensus regarding the characteristics of high quality professional learning in the literature, there is also strong evidence that teachers' learning needs change over the course of their careers. This section will examine the literature on teachers' changing professional development and learning needs. As early as 1983, Brand advocated for research that took into account music teachers' subjectivity and the impact of teachers' personal lives over the course of their professional lives. Brand saw teachers as continually responding to changing circumstances and phases of life and characterized the careers of music teachers as being dynamic. He wrote, "meaningful growth takes place throughout a teacher's career—not just during the first few years" (1983, p. 51). Brand's assertion has been echoed by more recent scholarship in the literature on the professional learning of music teachers and in general education.

Although mid-career and late-career teachers are often grouped together as "experienced" teachers (Bauer, 2007; Conway, 2008, 2011), more recently, scholars have also looked at the experiences of mid-career (Abramo & Austin, 2014; Baker, 2005a; Eros, 2009, 2011, 2013), and late career, veteran or 'expert' teachers separately (Duke & Simmons, 2006; Evans, 2011). Other scholars have focused specifically on the first year or early years of teachers' careers (Ballantyne, 2007; Barnes, 2010; Blair, 2013; Conway, 2001; Conway & Christensen, 2006; Fredrickson & Neill, 2004; Gruenhagen, 2012; Jakhelln, 2011; Kennedy & McKay, 2011; Kreuger, 2001; Schmidt, 2008; Yourn, 2000), often examining the relationships between induction, mentoring, and teacher retention. It is to this body of scholarship examining early, mid- and late-career teachers and music teachers I will now turn.

Professional Development and Early Career Music Teachers

Much of the literature on early career music teachers examines the experiences and perceptions of pre-service and first-year teachers. Eros (2013), however, defines an early career teacher as someone in the first five years of their career. He bases his definition of a “first stage teacher” on the literature related to teacher attrition. Indeed, much of the literature exploring this stage in teachers’ careers speaks of an overwhelming sense of survival (Berg & Miksza, 2010; Peterson, 2005) and a preoccupation with classroom management concerns (Barnes, 2010; Kreuger, 2001; Fredrickson & Neill, 2004). While several studies explore the experience of being an early career music teacher (Ballantyne, 2007; Barnes, 2010; Blair, 2013; Fredrickson & Neill, 2004; Kreuger, 2001) there is little research related to the professional learning of early career teachers outside the literature on teacher induction programs.

One notable exception is Greunhagen’s (2012) study of a first-year early childhood music teacher in the U.S. who had no formal university training in music pedagogy and had not attended music workshops, conferences, or certification courses of any kind prior to working as a music educator. Gruenhagen’s inquiry is essentially a study of professional learning; the researcher studied her participant’s experiences, perceptions, and evolving practice as she learned to teach music. Grueunhagen found that the participant in her study successfully transferred professional knowledge from her previous experiences as a classroom teacher into her new role as a music educator in part because of her involvement in a music teacher learning community. Because beginning teachers with a non-conventional music background have different professional learning needs, the author suggests further research on learning communities for these teachers. This study is particularly relevant to a Canadian context where, depending where they are located, music teachers may have limited background in music and/or may experience a scarcity of pre-service music education opportunities.

Mentoring and induction for early career music teachers.

While there is little literature on the professional learning of early career music teachers, there is a relatively robust body of scholarship on the mentoring and induction of beginning music teachers. The following four studies relate specifically to mentoring programs for early career music teachers.

The first study speaks to the impact of mentoring programs on the isolation of early career music teachers. Kreuger (1999) interviewed 20 new music teachers in the state of Washington in order to determine the kinds of support to which new music teachers had access. Many teachers indicated that they felt isolated from other music teachers and sometimes even other teachers in their building. Their isolation made it hard to access the informal mentoring opportunities that often arise for teachers in other subject areas. By contrast, the four teachers that participated in formal mentoring programs where they were teamed with more experienced music teachers did not report feeling isolated. Kreuger's results speak to the social nature of learning how to teach and the importance of interaction with other music teachers for teacher learning.

Blair (2008) argues that mentoring is critical for the retention of new music teachers and to support early career teachers in becoming "reflective practitioners" (p. 99). In her study of five first-year elementary music teachers employed by the same U.S. school district, Blair reported that teachers struggled with classroom management and the school district's evaluation process. Of the three teachers who continued in the study for the year, only one of them had an elementary music methods course as part of their degree program. Blair documents a shift in teacher confidence over the course of the year, and also reports that the group developed into a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), as discussed earlier. Initially, she was the

mentor for the group, but as the group evolved, the three teachers became peer mentors for one another.

M. V. Smith (1994) also designed and studied a mentoring program for beginning music teachers. His purpose was to ascertain critical elements of such a program. Over a course of two years, 14 first- and second-year music teachers met with seven mentor teachers in a ‘mentoring triad.’ Both mentees and mentors found informal monthly conversations over dinner to be important in creating a safe place to share with each other. M. V. Smith’s findings are supported by other studies indicating that music teachers value informal conversations with peers more than formal workshops (Conway, 2008; Conway et al., 2005b).

Schmidt (2008) documents the journey of Jelani, an early career elementary strings teacher who volunteered to teach in a string project run by Schmidt and her colleagues at a U.S. university. Jelani had many difficulties meeting the expectations of his school district’s music supervisor. Through the process of mentoring undergraduate students in the string project and being mentored by a new music supervisor, Jelani’s understanding of music teaching grew and his practice gradually transformed. Schmidt argues that the quality of mentoring that early career teachers receive can contribute to their failure or success. Her findings also suggest that mentoring others can be a valuable form of professional learning for teachers who are not “experts.” Schmidt’s study is significant for my research in part because she was able to document the impact that professional learning opportunities had on a teacher’s thinking and practice.

Induction programs. While induction may be critical to retain early career music teachers, DeLorenzo’s (1992) research speaks to the need for subject specific professional learning for music mentees. She examined the perceived problems of beginning music teachers

as well as the perceived usefulness of the professional assistance they received. The results of her survey indicated that early career music teachers found district induction programs to be the least helpful professional learning support to which they had access, while being paired with a mentor teacher and having discussions with more experienced colleagues were the most beneficial. Teachers also reported frustration due to a lack of time to engage in their own musical growth.

Conway's (2001, 2003) work may provide insight as to why music teachers often find formal induction programs to be only moderately helpful. Conway reports that few school divisions in the U.S. have induction programs but when they do, they usually consist of formal meetings for all first-year teachers regardless of subject area. In her study of seven early career music teachers' perceptions of district-sponsored induction programs in Michigan, Conway (2001) found that music teachers who participated in teacher induction activities were dissatisfied with the programs offered by their school districts because "they were already overwhelmed by their first year teaching responsibilities and the induction program did not provide them with a place to work through the problems they were experiencing" (p. 57). Conway (2003) suggests that music teachers have different needs than teachers of other subjects and must have access to professional learning opportunities specific to music.

While early career music teachers have many things in common with first-stage teachers of other subject areas, the literature suggests there are several ways in which the experiences of music teachers are unique. Isolation is a common experience of early career music teachers that could be lessened by well-designed mentoring and induction programs that help teachers develop a sense of belonging and serve as a place to work out issues of practice. In terms of professional learning needs, research suggests that early career teachers are often looking for help with classroom management, and that journaling and other informal professional learning

opportunities including mentoring and playing or singing with an ensemble may be beneficial to these teachers.

Professional development and second-stage music teachers.

Eros (2003) defines a second-stage teacher as someone who has taught for six to ten years.

Generally, teachers at this stage have achieved tenure (Berg et al., 2005)³⁴ and enjoy some level of stability in their professional lives (Huberman, 1993). These teachers are considered to be past the survival stage which characterizes the first-stage in much of the literature (Fuller and Bown, 1975). Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch & Enz (2000) used the term “professional teacher” to describe teachers in the second-stage and suggest they often possess growing confidence and pedagogical skills. In much of the music education literature, these teachers are simply called “experienced teachers” (ex. Bauer, 2007; Conway, 2011). In this section, I will review several studies that relate to the experiences and professional learning needs of second-stage music educators.

Eros (2009) studied three second-stage urban music teachers’ experiences and career development. True to Steffy et al.’s (2000) *Life Cycle of the Career Teacher* model, all three of Eros’ participants clearly demonstrated that their concern had shifted from themselves to their students as they have become more competent and comfortable with teaching. However, beyond this, Eros’ participants did not represent a “unified picture of what it means to be a second-stage music teacher” (p. 239). There were significant differences in the participants’ levels of confidence, career trajectory, and level of interactions with peers. Eros suggests, “The exploratory nature of this study indicates...that the second stage is a complex time for music teachers” (p. 236). Eros also argues that his study raises several implications for professional development. He asserts that administrators must ensure that second-stage teachers have access

³⁴ In Alberta, tenure constitutes a continuing teaching contract with a district which is the same as contracts given to all teachers regardless of subject area.

to appropriate professional development and that second-stage teachers need to be proactive in directing their own professional growth.

In a more recent article, Eros (2011) summarizes findings related to appropriate professional learning for second-stage teachers. First, second-stage teachers often are looking to “make a difference” (p. 67) beyond the walls of their classroom and therefore may benefit from leadership roles in schools, school districts, and professional associations (Berg et al., 2005; Baker, 2005a, 2005b). Similarly, second-stage teachers often seem to be looking for “occupational diversification” (Baker, 2005b, p. 270) or new challenges. All of the teachers in Eros’ (2009) study found that participation in the research project served as a context for professional learning (Eros, 2013). Eros (2011) notes that “professional development needs are more likely to diverge among [second-stage] teachers” (p. 69). While Eros suggests that second-stage teachers could become certified in the Orff or Kodály approach or serve as mentors to newer teachers as a way of engaging in professional learning, even more so than for beginning teachers, no one approach will be appropriate for all second-stage teachers. Eros cautions:

One of the most immediate and powerful implications of career cycle research is the realization that if teachers are to continue growing and contributing to music education, they require *sustained* professional development for the duration of their careers.

Development is not an issue of ensuring that teachers have enough workshops or appropriate classes to attend at various career stages. Rather, we must recognize the necessity of career-long professional development, as well as the need to analyze each teacher’s particular professional development needs. (Eros, 2011, p. 68)

Eros advocates for more research on second-stage teachers.

Like Eros (2009), Conway (2008) also used Steffy et al.'s model in her research on the professional development of experienced music teachers. Conway studied the perceptions of 19 music teachers regarding their most and least valuable professional development experiences and whether teachers' perceptions changed over the course of their careers. All of the participants in the study were music teachers whom Conway identified as being in the "expert" or "distinguished" phase of Steffy et al.'s (2000) *Life Cycle of the Career Teacher*. Her analysis found that all the teachers considered informal interactions with other music educators to be "the most powerful form of professional development" (p. 12). Teachers expressed frustration at the kinds of district-level PD they were obliged to attend and the difficulty in convincing administration to allow them to attend music conferences instead. Conway also found that mid-career teachers were pro-active about seeking out meaningful professional learning, and that they had grown into this pro-active stance over their careers. Conway affirms that teachers need individualized professional learning, and suggests several directions for future research: Inquiry regarding how to design professional development that capitalizes on interactions with other music teachers, further study related to how music teachers' needs change over their careers, and examinations of graduate programs as professional development. She concludes, "The professional development of the inservice music teacher is an area ripe for every possible kind of research" (p. 16).

Baker (2005b) constructed a portrait of British peripatetic instrumental and vocal teachers in the "professional apex phase" which corresponds to the middle of their careers (Baker, 2005a).³⁵ The data for Baker's portrait consisted of narratives collected from five teachers

³⁵ Peripatetic teachers are itinerant vocal and instrumental instructors who provide lessons to children after school through a music service as opposed to being hired by the school.

ranging from 36 to 42 years of age, and fifteen teachers who were older and had already passed through this career phase. The author's constructed portrait represented the third "biographical" stage in Baker's (2005a) *Model of Peripatetic Music Teachers' Life Phases* (Baker, 2005b, p. 141) where teachers benefit from their "longitudinal experience; increased maturity in relation to students; and a heightened comprehension of children sourced from parenthood" (2005b, p. 143). While Baker's data shows that these teachers had developed what he termed a "buoyant self" (p. 145), he also found that teachers commonly had some sort of a career crisis that they had to work through at this point in their professional lives. Baker's study has implications for the professional learning of mid-career music teachers. It may be that these teachers need new stimulation, ideas, and opportunities for growth including leadership, mentoring other teachers, and entering administration.

In sum, the literature suggests that the professional learning needs of mid-career music teachers are complex and varied. Teachers at this stage of their career seem to have the ability and desire to be pro-active about seeking out learning experiences that correspond with their interests, and may also need opportunities to grow by being leaders who contribute to their field.

Professional Development and Late-Career Teachers

There is a substantial body of general education literature on "expert" teachers, teacher expertise, and comparisons between novice and expert teachers including the work of Calderhead (1983); Housner & Griffey (1985); Huberman (1989); Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986); Berliner (1986); and Leinhardt & Greeno, (1986). I will also include here Schön's (1983) study of expert thinking and practice, although Schön does not explicitly study teachers. Those who have studied teacher expertise argue that knowing what experts do may provide a conceptual map for learning how to teach.

Studies of ‘experts’ confirm that teaching expertise is highly situated, and that ‘expert’ teachers are able to habituate certain routines thereby freeing up their attention for a more nuanced understanding of classroom problems (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1986). Berliner (1986) also found that expert teachers represent problems encountered in practice differently than novices. In his study of expertise across several fields, Schön (1983) found that rather than engaging in problem *solving*, experts engage in problem *setting*: “In real–world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations...” (p. 39-40). Once the expert sets a problem, he or she acts based on their theory and then “listens” to the situation and adjusts before acting again.³⁶ Schön theorized that professional knowledge in any field is highly situated and described the process of thinking like an expert in a given context as a reflective conversation with the situation. Schön calls this way of thinking *reflection-in-action*. A significant finding from this body of research is that experts think differently than those with less expertise. Teaching expertise, then, seems largely to be an issue of how teachers frame and think about their work.

Studies of expert music teachers and implications for professional learning.

Duke and Simmons (2006), King (1998), and Goolsby (1996, 1999) have all studied the practice of expert music teachers and confirmed that expert teachers think differently than novices. However, only one of the studies mentions elementary music teachers, and only King studied a Canadian music educator. Two additional studies will be discussed here.

Cutietta and Thompson (2000) interviewed twenty-five veteran music teachers from across the U.S. and asked them how the field, and their practice, philosophy, and priorities had changed over their careers. They also asked the teachers to identify an event or development that

³⁶ Schön’s description of expert practice is similar to Dewey’s (1910/1997) description of thinking or an action research cycle (Elliott, 1991).

impacted their teaching. While the teachers taught music in a variety of contexts (band, choral, orchestra, elementary general music), they had all taught at least fifteen years. Participants consistently reported that they had become more student-centered over time, but that their philosophy had not really changed. Instead, they noted that it had been modified or had “mellowed” over the years (p. 42). Significant for my study is that the majority of teachers cited some kind of professional learning activity as having made the biggest impact on their teaching. Many teachers mentioned the impact of getting a master’s degree, and several talked about observing performances of exemplary ensembles at music conferences, and receiving adjudication at festivals as contributing to their practice. Some teachers even spoke about in-services offered by their school districts. However, specific in-service topics that were covered such as multicultural music education and differentiated instruction were seldom noted as being significant.

As mentioned above, Conway (2008) interviewed 19 music teachers in the “expert” or “distinguished” phase of their careers (Steffy et al. 2000) regarding their perceptions of professional learning. A distinguished teacher as defined by Steffy et al. (2000) is someone who is seen as gifted in their field and who “exceed[s] current expectations of what teachers are supposed to do” (p. 9). As discussed above in the section on second-stage teachers, all participants identified as distinguished teachers reported informal interactions with peers to be their most valuable professional development activity. Some veteran teachers, however, were looking for different professional development opportunities than the second-stage teachers as they entered a new phase of their career. Many were considering teaching university courses and supervising student teachers and were looking for input about how to prepare for these new roles. In fact, Conway found that many of the veteran teachers were involved in providing PD for other

teachers and which they noted was valuable professional learning for them as well. She also found that they had become proficient at learning something from every experience. Conway's study clearly shows that teachers have different professional learning needs at different stages of their careers.

While most of the studies of late-career teachers relate to their characteristics and practice, there are several implications for professional learning that can be surmised from this literature. First, many of these teachers have learned how to learn and would therefore potentially be excellent mentors for early career teachers. Through a process of making their learning and expertise explicit while coaching novice and mid-career teachers, experienced teachers may have new insights about their own practice. Secondly, late-stage teachers may benefit from learning experiences with individuals who are "brokers" between teaching and other communities and professions (Wenger, 1998). Opportunities for professional development sessions with experts in management, coaching, technology, sport, design, or other fields may lead to fruitful learning for these teachers. Finally, schools, school divisions, and universities could benefit by accessing these teachers' expertise as instructors, PD facilitators, and mentors at the same time as these teachers engage in professional learning.

Conclusion

The literature clearly speaks to teachers' different professional learning needs at various stages of their careers. Kennedy and McKay (2011) warn, however, that just as it is a mistake to generalize about teachers' characteristics and professional learning needs without considering differences in experience and expertise, it is also a mistake to generalize about teachers only based on career stage. These authors provide a reminder that, "it is...important not to lose sight of the teachers within these career stages as individuals with individual professional and personal

needs, working in a variety of different contexts” (p. 565). This may be especially true in a Canadian context where elementary music teachers come to teaching music with a diversity of backgrounds in music and in music education.

The following chapter will discuss the methodology and methods for data collection and analysis for this study.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Research Methods

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and methods of this study. In it, I will discuss the study design, research process, data collection activities, and process of analysis employed to come to a deeper understanding of the two research questions at the heart of this inquiry:

1. What does teaching music mean to elementary music teachers?
2. How do music teachers experience professional learning?

I will also briefly discuss criteria for evaluating an interpretive inquiry and ethical concerns in enacting relational research with human participants.

Because it is an interpretive inquiry situated in the constructivist paradigm, the goal of my study was not to test hypotheses or simply explain the phenomenon of professional learning, but rather, to come to “ever more informed and sophisticated constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114) regarding the complexities of three elementary music teachers’ experience of their work and their professional learning.³⁷ Given that “the object of [interpretive] research is to develop insight or new learning that transforms the researcher’s understanding such that he or she can think more richly and act more usefully in relation to the problem or question studied” (Ellis, 2006, p. 114), interpretive inquiry was a good fit for my study. Stemming from concerned engagement for elementary music teachers and a desire to support their professional learning, my purpose in engaging in this research was to come to a deeper and more complex understanding of the experience of three elementary music teachers.

³⁷ Peshkin (1993) suggests that providing insight into the complexity of the social world is one of the aims of interpretive qualitative research.

Qualitative Case Study Research

Case study methodology is unique in that it transcends research paradigms (positivist, post-positivist, constructivist/interpretive, constructionist) and can be used successfully in both quantitative and qualitative research designs (Yin, 2014). Regardless of framing or discipline, case study is an appropriate methodology when the research is focused on answering how or why questions (Yin, 2014), and when those questions can best be investigated in a real-life context as the phenomenon of study unfolds (Stake, 1995). S. B. Merriam (1998) suggests that case study works well when “it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context” (p. 29). As a *qualitative* approach, case study can be helpful in getting at an “in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 19); the researcher’s intent in carrying out a qualitative case study is to study *process* not outcomes, *context* as opposed to a specific variable, and in *discovery* not confirmation (S. B. Merriam, 1998).

While there is some confusion about what the term case study means due to the widespread and diverse use of the terms “case” and “case study” in teaching, medicine, business, and research, Stake (1995) argues that the defining feature of case study as a research methodology is that the unit of study is the *case*. S. B. Merriam (1998) concurs and defines a case as “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27). Stake sees a case as “an integrated system” (p. 2), while Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest a case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). All of these definitions see a case as a *specific* and *bounded* person, program, group, community, policy, etc. that is the focus of investigation.

In case study methodology, one or more cases are studied in detail towards a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest. By examining an “instance in action” (MacDonald & Walker, 1977, p. 181), the case researcher is able to provide a particularistic, descriptive, and

heuristic account that serves to illuminate the phenomenon (S. B. Merriam, 1998). A case study is *particularistic* in that it examines “a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent” (S. B. Merriam, p. 29). It is *descriptive* in that it results in what Geertz (1983) terms *thick description*.³⁸ Geertz argues that thick description is ultimately interpretative description; it stems from field observations and conversations that focus in on the ordinary, daily occurrences *in situ* in such a way that “takes the capital letters off of them” (Geertz, 1983, p. 52). Geertz means that the focus is not on broad principles but the meaning of what participants say and do in their local context and culture. This focus on the local is a key principle in case study research; case researchers try to understand how a specific case works in a particular setting.

Case studies are also *heuristic*. In part through the thick description necessary for a good case account,³⁹ case study research can engage the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon and enable them to make connections with their prior experiences and come to their own conclusions. “The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case... The utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience” (Stake, 2000, p. 448-9). Good case studies help the reader to engage their imagination; by being immersed in thick description of a particular case, readers are able to imagine the implications for other cases.

³⁸ Geertz (1983) credits Gilbert Ryle with coining the term.

³⁹ This is Stenhouse’s (1988) term to describe the final product of a case study inquiry. Stake (2000) means the same thing when he says, “case report.”

Different Purposes of Case Study Research

While the unit of study is always the case and case studies are always particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic in nature, not all case studies have the same purpose. Stake (2000) notes that researcher's interest in a case may be *intrinsic* or *instrumental*. Intrinsic case studies are those that are undertaken in order to come to a better understanding of a specific case. As a teacher educator, I might undertake to study my former student Violet as a case to try and figure out how she continues to learn to teach music, and how she constructed her understanding of our course together. In this situation, I am more interested in Violet than I am in the phenomenon of professional learning. My purpose is not "to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon...The purpose is not theory building...Study is undertaken because of an interest in...this particular child, clinic, conference, or curriculum" (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

Intrinsic case study is the study of the particular case.

Instrumental case studies, in contrast, are those where the case itself is of secondary interest while of primary interest is an issue or phenomenon. Here, "a particular case...plays a supporting role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). If, instead of wanting primarily to understand Violet's learning, I wanted to understand the phenomenon of the professional learning of elementary music teachers *through* Violet's experience, my case study would be an instrumental one.⁴⁰

A collective case study design.

Stake distinguishes a third kind of case study which he calls the *collective case study*. This kind of case study consists of an instrumental study "extending to several cases." Collective case study was the design for my study. In a collective case study, several cases are chosen

⁴⁰ Although Violet was not be a participant in my study, this is exactly what I sought to understand.

“because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases” (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest that collective case studies create “robust and reliable” results because this design allows the researcher to analyze “within each setting and across settings” (p. 550), while Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that a study of multiple cases helps the researcher to construct “an even deeper understanding of processes and outcomes” (p. 26).

I chose collective case study as my research design for several reasons. First, multi-case research provides a window into how a phenomenon ‘works’ in different environments (Stake, 2006). A multiple case study design provided the means to get a sense of the variety of ways three elementary music teachers experience of their work and professional learning as compared to a single case. Furthermore, in-service music teachers’ learning and ability to grow is intimately related to the context in which they work, their past experiences and background, and their identity.⁴¹ Having the opportunity to research three instances of professional learning in action and then compare and contrast the cases provided a way to see how different contexts, experiences, and identities interplayed with the complex phenomenon of professional learning.

Finally, my research questions express my interest in the processes of professional learning and growth as I inquire into *how* teachers grow and *how* they integrate their learning into their practice. Patton (1990) suggests, “a focus on process is a focus on how something happens rather than on the outcomes or results obtained” (p. 94). Case study research, as I have noted above, is particularly well-suited to studying processes (S. B. Merriam, 1998), and being able to study three cases helped me to notice processes as I compared across cases. In sum,

⁴¹ I am thinking here in part of Dewey’s (1916/2008) notion that dependence and plasticity are necessary for growth.

because of an interest in mapping out the diverse ways that elementary music teachers experience teaching and professional learning, a multiple case study design was an excellent ‘fit’ for my study.

Defining and binding the case.

Given that a case study focuses on a specific case or cases as a way of learning about the phenomenon of study, defining and selecting the case(s) is of critical importance. As discussed above, a case must be a specific bounded system of “one among others” (Stake, 2000, p. 436). S. B. Merriam (1998) suggests that, “to find the best case to study, you would first establish the criteria that will guide case selection and then select a case that meets those criteria” (p. 65). For the purposes of my study, each case consisted of one teacher working for the same large school board in a Western Canadian city. In order to be considered as a case for my inquiry, the teacher had to meet the following criteria:

- The teacher taught music to all or the majority of classes in a public elementary school in the selected school board and would be considered ‘the music teacher’ by the teacher, staff, and students of the school;
- The individual was a certified teacher with a Bachelor of Education degree;⁴²
- The potential participant was open to sharing their experience.

Cases were selected intentionally based on the above criteria. In an attempt to come to a deeper understanding of music teacher professional learning, I also chose participants who represented different career stages (beginning, mid- and late-career), and who differed in their music and music education backgrounds and teaching contexts. While I hoped my participants would

⁴² Having a Masters degree in Education or another discipline did not preclude participation. In fact, one participant (Deborah) did have a Masters.

represent a small slice of the diversity of music teachers, teaching contexts, and approaches to teaching music in Alberta's elementary schools, it is important to note that:

case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case... selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance" (Stake, 1995, p. 4, 6).

As Stake suggests, the most important criterion in selecting cases is therefore not representation, but the opportunity to learn about the phenomenon under study through the case.

First, with input from my supervisor, I made a list of potential elementary music teachers working for the same school board who met the criteria to participate. The list was organized by career stage. From here, I chose potential cases from each career stage based on differences in background. I decided to invite Gabriel to participate in my study because he was a male teaching elementary music and had a music degree, both of which were unique in the school district where he worked. We did not know each other before I approached him. Holly, in contrast, was someone who I knew prior to the study. I had met her many years earlier when she attended a workshop for which I was the clinician, and she had also participated in Kodály level I and II at a university where I taught the pedagogy and materials components for the Kodály summer program. I decided to ask Holly to participate in my study because she had taught for an arts-focused school and had just changed schools, and I knew she had a unique perspective on teaching music that was not framed through either Kodály or Orff practice. In spite of having participated in the Kodály program at the local university, I was very aware that Holly had developed her own pedagogy and thought for herself rather than blindly accepting anyone else's ideas about music teaching and learning (including mine). When I asked Holly if she would

consider being a participant in my study, I did so carefully and in a way that made it clear that she had the freedom to choose to participate or not to participate, and also the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time if she did accept. I felt confident that Holly would say no if she did not want to be involved, as I knew her to be someone who was careful about managing her commitments and her life and who was assertive in dealing with other people. Deborah was one of a few names on my list of potential late career teachers. We were acquaintances who knew of each other through the music education community, but we had never worked together. After we met for coffee and I explained what was involved, Deborah thought about it for a few days and then contacted me to say she would be pleased to be a participant. Just as I did with Holly, I made sure to communicate to Gabriel and Deborah that they were under no obligation to participate in my study and could withdraw at any time. I am thrilled that Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah all said yes. All three participants were instrumental to my new understanding of what it is like to be an elementary music teacher and how elementary music teachers learn. Before moving on to a description of my data collection activities, I will say a brief word on interpretive inquiry.

Interpretive Inquiry

While the design of this inquiry was collective case study, *interpretive inquiry* was the research process that guided my work (Ellis, 1998a). Interpretive inquiry is hermeneutic research. In fact, the word hermeneutic *means* interpretation.⁴³ My intention of coming to understand the participants' worldview related to their practice and professional learning places my study within the hermeneutic tradition (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997).

⁴³ More specifically, the word 'hermeneutic' comes from the Greek, and means to interpret, explain, or clarify (Prasad, 2005).

According to D. G. Smith (1991), the hermeneutic project has a long history dating back to Aristotle and Alexandria. Often associated with its early (and still current) application to Bible scholarship, hermeneutics is now viewed more generally as being the interpretation of any text, including human behavior (Patterson & Williams, 2002). The broader application of hermeneutics stems from the work of Dilthey, Schleiermacher and others in the 19th century, and was further refined in the early 20th century under the influences of Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer. For Heidegger and Gadamer, *hermeneutics* became *philosophical hermeneutics*, a branch of philosophy concerned with ontological questions of being (Ramberg & Gjesdal, n.d.).

A key assumption of philosophical hermeneutics is that understanding is not located in the text itself, but in the interplay between text and interpreter.⁴⁴ My understanding as a researcher is influenced by the traditions and horizon of understanding I bring to the interpretive task. Gadamer (1975) calls these pre-understandings *prejudices* and argues that prejudices are not, in fact, negative, but actually make interpretation possible; pre-understandings create a *horizon* from which to apprehend the world. The interpretive task is one of learning to ‘read’ the text in order to uncover the deeper meanings that are not immediately apparent (Prasad, 2005), and to thereby come to the most coherent interpretation that is possible at the time (Ellis, 1998a).

Central Themes for Hermeneutic Research

D. G. Smith (1991) discusses three themes that have characterized the hermeneutic tradition beginning with Schleiermacher: The creative nature of interpretive work, the centrality of language in shaping our understanding, and the critical interplay of part and whole in the process

⁴⁴ This idea intersects for me with Dewey’s notion of interaction, a key concept of my theoretical framework in terms of how teachers learn, but it also applies to how I have learned about my participants’ experiences.

of coming to understand. I will briefly address these three themes before moving on to a discussion of interpretive inquiry as a research process.

The creative character of hermeneutic interpretation.

Interpretive inquiry is constructivist in nature. The creative nature of hermeneutic thought is a key concept reaching back to Schleiermacher who viewed interpretation and understanding as “creative acts, not just technical functions” (D. G. Smith, 1991, p. 190). The end product of an interpretive inquiry is an interpretation created by the researcher. This interpretation is *creative* in that it is constructed and, as such, it is unique. Interpretation is informed by everything the researcher knows about the participants and the phenomenon under study, and also the researcher’s life experiences and worldview. Essentially, the inquirer creates a provisional construct of what they understand of a phenomenon informed by their interactions with participants and the data they are collecting. Ellis (2006) notes:

The interpreter— the one hearing and perceiving— actively constructs the meaning of what someone else says and does so by drawing on everything else he or she has heard or observed...There is no meaning until it is constructed by the one hearing or perceiving.
(p. 115)

Every experience of the researcher before, during, and after an interpretive inquiry, whether it be personal experience, reading the literature, collecting and analyzing data, observations, casual conversations, analysis of documents, informal e-mails and impressions, and so on, potentially informs the interpretation. Thus, the experiences I have had as a student, an elementary music teacher, a teacher educator, and a researcher, along with books and articles I have read, my experiences as a parent, conversations with others, etc. informs the interpretative account offered in Chapters Four to Eight of this dissertation.

The importance of language.

A second theme implicit in a hermeneutic understanding of research is the notion that the very language used to think and to express ideas both limits and enables one's understanding. On the one hand, language is integral to interpretation and is intimately linked to the creative nature of hermeneutics. Not only is language the vehicle of understanding, but interpretations are created through language. In other words, language does not merely mirror our reality. In fact, Gadamer (1970) argues that language *is* interpretation:

Language, then, is not the finally-found anonymous subject of all social-historical processes and action, which presents the whole of its activities as objectifications to our observing gaze; rather, it is by itself the game of interpretation which we all are everyday engaged in. In this game nobody is above and before all the others; everybody is at the center, is "it" in this game, and thus it is always his turn to be interpreting. This process of interpretation takes place whenever we "understand," and especially when we see through prejudices or tear away the pretenses that hide reality. There, indeed, understanding comes into its own. (p. 88)

By using language, we are by default engaging in an act of interpretation, and we use language to structure our understanding of the world around us.

On the other hand, the language used to express our ideas and thoughts does not come out of a vacuum. Language is part of the very world it interprets. Thus, interpretation is always situated. The hermeneutic tradition understands the nature of our very existence as being intertwined with the reality one is trying to describe and sees language as the medium of that interpretation. Because our reality and the language used to interpret it are situated in both time and place, they are temporally and culturally specific. It is thus important to keep in mind that

“inquirers do not begin their thinking and research from scratch” (Carson, 1986, p. 75). Rather, “the interpretation offered by a researcher or any person reflects a time and place in history and the influence of community” (Ellis, 2006, p. 117). Interpretation is never objective, and the shared history and story of a community comes to us through language.

Language is important for the interpretive inquirer in at least two ways. First, it provides a “window into the discourses of communities in which participants live and from which they derive meaning” (Ellis, 2006, p. 117). Secondly, because it “both enables and limits interpretation” (Ellis, 2006, p. 116), language also allows the researcher to transcend current language to construct a new understanding of a phenomenon. In fact, a piece of writing, an obvious expression of language, *is* the interpretation in hermeneutical inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Hermeneutic inquirers both study the language of their participants to better understand the social discourse in which that person is situated (the “whole”), and use language to create an interpretation to make meaning of the phenomenon under study. I will come back to the importance of language in hermeneutic inquiry in the section on analysis.

Part/whole relationships and the hermeneutic circle.

D. G. Smith’s (1991) final theme relates to the interplay between part and whole implicit in good interpretation. In fact, this interplay is what is meant by Heidegger’s (1962) metaphor of the *hermeneutic circle*. Patterson and Williams (2002) explain: “Broadly speaking, the hermeneutic circle refers to the inter-relationship between the part and the whole,” but the metaphor can also represent “the dialogical encounter between enabling prejudices (forestructures of understanding) and the phenomenon researchers are trying to understand” (p. 26). In hermeneutic research, understanding is always circular and involves movement back and forward between the researcher’s *prejudices* (i.e. pre-understanding) and the “text” he or she is trying to understand. The ongoing hermeneutic analysis in which the researcher engages

throughout a study is thus part/whole analysis. For, as Ellis (1998b) explains, “To understand the part, one must understand the whole, and to understand the whole, one must understand the individual parts.” (p. 16). This part–whole relationship is the essence of the hermeneutic circle. Every saying and doing of the participant and every document is measured against a bigger picture to try and determine its significance in order to “get closer to what one hopes to understand” (Ellis, 1998a, p. 20). The metaphor of a circle thus describes “the interplay between our self–understanding and our understanding of the world” (Ramberg & Gjesdal, n.d.).

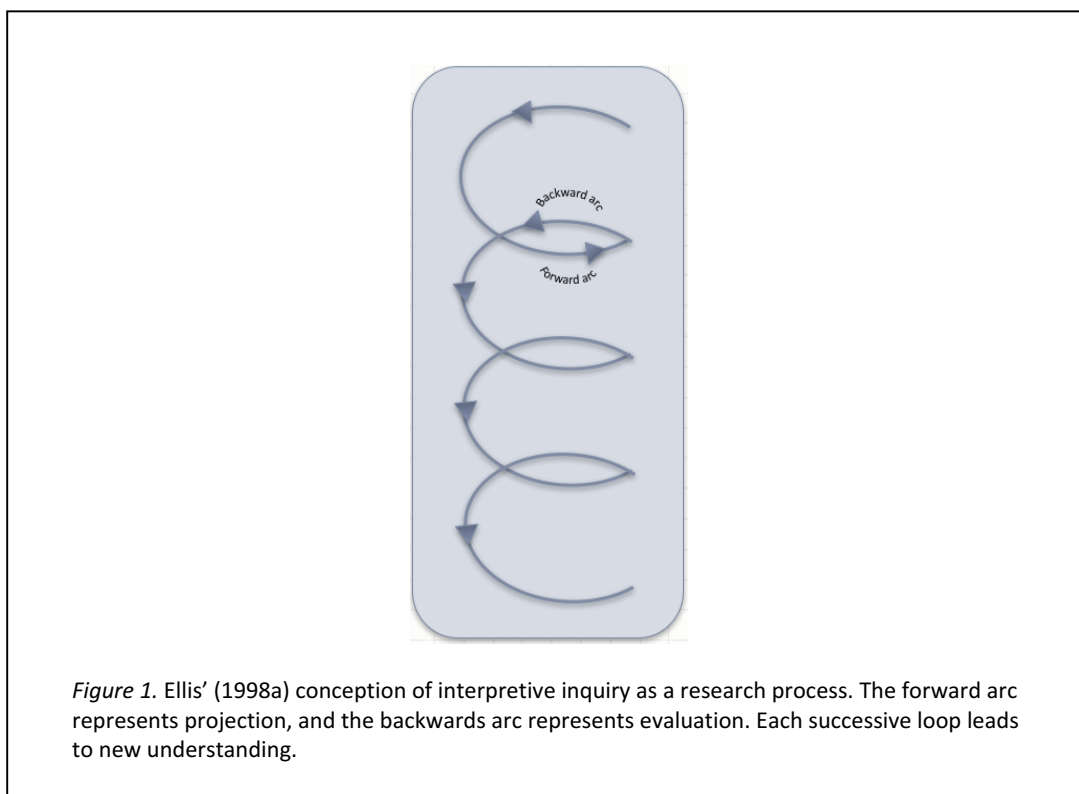
An example of hermeneutic part/whole analysis from my study is the relationship between observations and interviews as data collection activities. To understand how my participants experienced professional learning and their practice, I spent time in their classrooms and schools (whole), and had semi-structured interviews with them where we discuss specific aspects of teaching and professional learning (part). Each of these elements was analyzed in relation to the other throughout the inquiry. Other examples of part/whole analysis for my dissertation research include each teacher’s experiences (part) and the phenomenon of professional learning of elementary music teachers in general (whole), my emerging understanding of professional growth and how teachers integrate new understandings into their practice (part) against the three cases (whole), the data from one single interview (part) in relation to what the participant shared about their life and preoccupations through their Pre-Interview Activity (whole), and my unfolding analysis (part) against the literature in the field of professional learning (whole).

Interpretive Inquiry as a Research Process

While the metaphor of the hermeneutic circle is helpful in understanding the iterative and circular process of coming to understand, Ellis (1998a) suggests that the metaphor could also be

used as a framework for conceiving of interpretive inquiry as a “formal research process” (p. 15). Ellis takes Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle and stretches it into a spiral consisting of several successive loops that together lead to a new understanding developed by the researcher throughout the inquiry. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of hermeneutic circle as research process as described by Ellis (1998a).

Figure 1: Ellis’s Conception of Interpretive Inquiry



First, the researcher begins with an entry question. A good entry question is one that is simple and open-ended, and expresses a desire to understand and to offer practical help. In other words, interpretive inquiry begins with a practical concern.⁴⁵ Each loop of Ellis’ spiral represents

⁴⁵ For example, the practical concern that motivated my study was “how do elementary music teachers get better at teaching?”

a new data collection and/or analysis activity. What is learned during the new interview, observation, reflection, examination of documents, or re-examination of the data provides added depth of understanding and a new or corrected course for inquiry with which to enter the next loop. Each loop gives a more refined understanding and a more refined question, getting the researcher one step closer to a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of study.

In hermeneutic inquiry, the researcher cycles back and forth between the forward and a backwards arc of each loop. In the forward arc, the researcher asks the question which is guiding the loop of the participant and/or the data and attempts to make sense of specific data, a participant's experience, or a situation from their current forestructure or horizon of understanding (i.e. the part). In the backward arc, the inquirer reevaluates their initial interpretation looking for confirmations, gaps in understanding, or inconsistencies in an attempt to fit the new part into the whole. This process occurs over and over again throughout an interpretive inquiry. In sum, hermeneutic inquiry allows the qualitative inquirer to examine how the parts fit together to give a more complete picture of a whole (S. B. Merriam, 1998), much like a puzzle.

When findings from a loop are unexpected and lead the researcher in a different direction in their understanding and thinking, hermeneutically, this is referred to as an *uncovering* (Ellis, 1998b). The idea of hermeneutic uncovering comes from Heidegger, and Packer and Addison (1989) argue that it is synonymous with the backward arc in the hermeneutic circle. Ellis (1998b) explains:

Uncovering something unexpected is a critical event in interpretive research, enabling the researcher to get closer to a more sophisticated understanding of their research question.

If some aspect of a person or situation has eluded our awareness, our research works “to let it show itself”...Thus, if no surprises occur, we either do not yet “see” what can be uncovered, or we have not yet approached the research participant or situation in a way that respects the way it can show itself. (p. 23)

Without ‘surprises’ and paradigmatic shifts in understanding, interpretive inquiry is unable to move forward.

Ellis also points to an important principle in entering the hermeneutic circle, that of entering the right way. As mentioned above, hermeneutic inquiry is fueled by a practical concern about the phenomenon at hand, and a desire, borne out of caring, to understand why something is happening or why people do what they do. This is part of the fore-structure with which the researcher begins their inquiry. Packer and Addison (1989) explain:

Interpretation is the working out of possibilities that have become apparent in a preliminary, dim understanding of events. And this pre-understanding embodies a particular concern, a kind of caring. It provides a way of reading, a preliminary initial accessibility, a stance or perspective (a fore-structure) that opens up the field being investigated (p. 279).

This fore-structure “always begins from concerned engagement” (p. 279). It is rooted in care for a practical concern that is the driving force behind and reason for the investigation, and therefore the stepping off place to get closer to a more complete understanding about the phenomenon at hand. The researcher’s concern, coupled with “openness, humility, and genuine engagement” (Ellis, 1998a, p. 18) gets the researcher into the hermeneutic circle. When we are able to accept that what we think we know is not the whole picture and may even be erroneous we are able to get closer to understanding. Each loop of the circle opens “a growing awareness, a gradual

learning of what to pay attention to” (Boostrom, 1994, p. 63) when we allow the environment and participants to show us what is significant in their world. The depths of our uncovering, “depends on the access that we have developed, the kind of entry into the circle we have achieved” (in Packer and Addison, 1989, p. 279). An attitude of caring and openness are necessary for uncovering to occur, and this is the attitude I strove to cultivate with the three participants in my study.

Beginning with my entry question “how do elementary music teachers experience professional learning?”, I began to read the literature on professional learning and also had the opportunity to interview an elementary music teacher as part of a course assignment. Both of these activities provided me with insights that changed my understanding and resulted in new loops in the research process. For example, as I read the literature on professional learning, I began to understand that there is a continuum of teacher learning models ranging from almost no teacher agency and control on the one end (in-services), to the teacher having complete control of their learning on the opposite pole (self-directed learning). This helped to broaden my understanding of professional learning and begin to see it as a *process* rather than being something that only happens in workshops, hence the name of my study. It also helped me to focus my inquiry on teacher learning rather than on techniques and ways of teaching teachers. A second loop occurred when I interviewed “Ivy” for my class assignment and came to understand that her professional learning was intimately connected with the development of her identity and her sense of belonging in a community. Previous to this, I saw music teacher professional learning as an individual cognitive process. Both of these loops constituted major hermeneutic *uncoverings* in my understanding of professional learning.

In conclusion, interpretive inquiry provided a research process for my collective case study and allowed me to develop a new understanding of how three elementary music teachers understood their work as music educators and their experiences of professional learning. I will now move on to a discussion of the data collective activities employed in my study.

Data Collection Activities

In addition to providing opportunities for part/whole analysis intrinsic to interpretive inquiry as a research method, having multiple data sources allows the inquirer to come to a rich understanding of each case. In fact, Yin (2000) suggests that, more than any other approach to research, the use of multiple data sources in case research is not just desirable, but needed. S. B. Merriam (1998) writes, “Understanding the case in its totality, as well as the intensive *holistic* description and analysis characteristic of a case study, mandates both breadth and depth of data collection” (p. 134). Multiple methods of collecting data provide a way to “triangulate emerging findings...[and] to substantiate the findings” (S. B. Merriam, 1998, p. 96). To this end, data for this study was collected primarily through short, frequent semi-structured interviews, but also included one longer and more in-depth interview at the beginning of the study. Data also included field notes from participant observation, documents that participants shared as the opportunity arose such as professional growth plans, handouts from professional learning events, and lesson and evaluation plans, and, one or two artifacts created by participants as part of a Pre-Interview Activity (Ellis, 2006) prior to our first meeting. I will address each of these data collection activities in turn.

Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is guided by a set of structured questions which are then followed up with more “open-form questions” to flush out the topic (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 246). Data for this study was primarily collected through short semi-structured interviews which took place at lunch time, after school, or on a participant’s day off, depending on what worked best for each participant. I called these short interviews *Drop-ins* to reflect their frequent, brief, and somewhat informal tone and in order to distinguish them from the longer interview at the beginning of the study, which I refer to as *Interview 1*. Drop-ins were usually about 30 minutes long depending on the day and the participant. The exception was Holly who sometimes wanted to meet for coffee on her day off which allowed us to spend more time together. After the initial Interview 1, I met with Holly and Deborah four times and Gabriel five times. Each of the Drop-ins was guided by a set of pre-determined open-ended questions influenced by observations and past conversations, some of which were asked of all three teachers, but most often they were specific to each case. For example, I asked all three participants about their professional growth plans, but asked Deborah several questions about her collaborative learning when this came up in an earlier conversation with her.

Interview 1 consisted of a 60- to 75-minute semi-structured interview where participants shared their Pre-Interview Activities and, in the case of Deborah and Gabriel, responded to a few structured questions mostly designed to get to know the participant and their horizon of understanding related to professional learning. Holly’s Interview 1 ended up being around two hours in length (which was Holly’s choice), and consisted almost entirely of her sharing related to the Pre-Interview Activity artifacts she chose to prepare. Audio of Interview 1 and the Drop-ins was digitally recorded and transcribed, and transcriptions were member checked with the participants.

To the best of my ability, interview questions were carefully worded to ensure use of familiar language and avoid shaping the participants' understanding. I was also careful to avoid certain kinds of questions to elicit helpful responses such as questions asking for more than one answer, leading questions, and yes or no questions in order (S. B. Merriam, 1998). I went into each interview with the guiding question, "How does the participant experience the topic of interest?" at the forefront of my mind in order to try and learn about the participant's experiences in a holistic manner (Ellis, Janjic-Watrich, Macris & Marynowski, 2011, p. 12).⁴⁶ Ellis et al. (2011) suggest that whatever is learned holistically in this manner can then be "mined" for relationships to the inquiry's research question(s).

Entering into the interview: A hermeneutic endeavour.

Interviews are essentially purposeful conversations (S. B. Merriam, 1998). I chose interviews as the primary data collection activity for my study because they provided a relational way to "enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 1990, p. 196), providing a window into how the participants thought and viewed their experiences and the world. Weber (1986) suggests that interviews must begin with a genuine invitation to conversation where the interviewer and interviewee engage in mutual reflection "one human being to another" (p. 65). The goal is to create a space resulting in "seeing the between" for both researcher and participant where the between is the understanding created through mutual engagement (Weber, 1986, p. 65).⁴⁷ This is the kind of space I sought to create with each of the participants in my study.

⁴⁶ In fact, this question was written across the top of my page for each interview.

⁴⁷ I can't help but think of the Hegelian dialectic that undergirds both Dewey's conception of interaction and continuity (Ex. How We Think, Chapter 3), and Vygotsky's conception of development.

Carson (1986) sees conversation as a “hermeneutic endeavor” (p. 74) where what Gadamer (1975) terms “the hermeneutic priority of the question” emerges in the interaction between researcher and participant. In this sense, an interview is not so much a direct means of answering one’s research questions, but a way of learning what the topic is about for the participant (Ellis, 2006). In fact, Ellis (2006) reminded me that participants cannot just tell the researcher the answer to a research question. In the interviews for my study, I attempted to facilitate each participant’s recall of experiences and elicit reflection and analysis on that experience (Ellis, 2006). While there were always confirmatory and follow up questions from observations and previous conversations, many of the interview questions were designed to elicit story and comment from participants in order to construct an interpretive account. These questions were intended to facilitate the development of a holistic understanding of each participant necessary for part/whole analysis and hermeneutic interpretation. Careful consideration was given in the construction of the questions to ensure that the data I collected reflected the worldview of the participants and not my own (Ellis, 2006). Samples of interview questions are included in Appendix A.

Empathetic listening.

Key to eliciting story is the researcher’s ability to listen in a way that he or she “hears the exact words used... captures the mood and affective components, understands the context from which the interviewee is perceiving the world, and infers the meaning intended by the interviewee” (Yin, 2014, p. 74). This was especially important for my study as an interpretive inquiry. Being a “good listener” requires a certain attitude towards the participant and the content of what they say. In my interactions with participants, I was intentional about being genuine, present, and open (Weber, 1986) as well as being respectful, nonjudgmental and nonthreatening (S. B. Merriam, 1998). I took S. B. Merriam’s (1998) maxim that “(e)mpathy is the foundation of

rapport” (p. 23) to heart. Ellis et al. (2011) use the metaphor of the hermeneutic circle as a metaphor for the process of data collection and analysis. Along with Packer & Addison (1989) and D. G. Smith (1991), these authors emphasize that one must enter the circle “the right way,” i.e. with humility and openness. Being a good listener, then, is not really a strategy. Rather it is an ethically informed attitude of care and respect for one’s participants and the way they see the world that results in connecting with the meaning they have constructed of their experiences. I consciously cultivated this attitude of care and respect in conversations with the participants in my study.

Classroom and School Observations

In addition to interviewing each participant several times over the course of the study, I also spent time observing in each teacher’s classroom, school, and – in Holly’s case – her studio. I visited each school twice, and also observed a music festival that Deborah had helped to organize where her school choir was singing, attended a school event that Holly had organized, and observed two private piano lessons in Holly’s studio at her invitation. The goal of these observations was to develop a more holistic understanding of the teachers’ context, practice, and conception of their work in order to enable the construction of a meaningful and coherent interpretation related to my research questions.⁴⁸ Table 2 provides a detailed summary of the observations for my study.

While Deborah was quite comfortable with me observing any class, Holly made it clear that there were certain classes in her timetable that she did not want me to observe. Holly was

⁴⁸ As discussed earlier, this understanding is in fact necessary for hermeneutic analysis, which involves movement back and forward between part and whole (Smith, 1991).

new in her school and thus was still working to establish her relationship with students and her authority. Gabriel did not make a specific request about the classes I watched.

Table 2: Detailed Summary of Observations Throughout the Study

	Gabriel	Holly	Deborah
Observation 1	School observation of Grade 3 and Kindergarten music classes and a rehearsal of gr. 2 and 3 classes for an assembly*	School observation of grade 3 music class and Grade 1 noon hour choir rehearsal	School observation of grade 6, grade 5/6 French Immersion, grade 1/2 French Immersion, and combined grade 1/2 and grade 2 classes and a school assembly*
Observation 2	School observation of Grade 5 and 2/3 music class	Studio observation of 2 piano lessons	School observation of gr. 3 sing along and grade 2 music class
Observation 3	N/A	School observation of a grade 1 and grade 4 music class	N/A
Special Event	*Rehearsal of a dance to be performed by a grade 2 and a grade 3 class at an assembly during Observation 1	Observation of Canada concert	Observation of choral festival/Deborah's choir *Observation of a school assembly during Observation 1.

In addition to providing a more holistic understanding of the teachers and their contexts, observations also allowed the opportunity to triangulate my emerging interpretations and served as reference points for subsequent interviews (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Opie (2004) notes that observations can have varying degree of structure depending on what the observer is attempting to find out, even within the same inquiry. On the one extreme, observation is flexible and the researcher changes focus as needed. On the other, the researcher comes to the observation with a checklist or worksheet that structures how they interpret the actions and events they are

observing. Because of the interpretive and constructive nature of this inquiry, my approach to observation was closer to the flexible end of the continuum. As I spent time in each teachers' classroom, school or studio, I simply noted what happened and, after the fact, my reflections on what I noticed. Often the observations provided the opportunity to confirm or flush out my understanding related to a specific topic such as a participant's beliefs about learning, and they provided a window into the relationships each teacher had with their students.

While the role I took on was that of an observer, on two occasions, Gabriel asked me to participate in his classroom, and I acquiesced. Once, he asked me to take over a flashcard activity he was doing with a class when his principal called and he was on the phone for several minutes. I did this to be of service as Gabriel needed some way to manage the class while he attended to this important phone call. The second time, Gabriel asked me to work with three boys who were struggling to play the low C on their recorders and it would have been awkward to refuse in front of the class. While doing this meant that I could no longer observe Gabriel working as he went from student to student, it did give me a brief opportunity to informally talk to the three boys about their experience of music class which provided insight for me about Gabriel's context, the students, and, by extension, how Gabriel perceived his context and understood his work. Gabriel did not observe me teaching in either of these situations, he simply needed help, and so I agreed. Once or twice, Gabriel also somewhat jokingly invited me to take over teaching his classes. In these moments, I respectfully declined and reminded Gabriel that I was learning from him.

As the above anecdote suggests, my relationship with the teachers in my study and my presence in Gabriel's classroom occasionally engendered moral, relational, and ethical issues that had to be worked through on an ongoing basis. Gabriel often seemed to want me to step into

the role of *expert* in our relationship, and I worked hard to negotiate a different role, that of *researcher*. This was not really an issue with either of the other two participants.

Field Notes

During and immediately after each observation, I constructed field notes which served as part of the data for this study. I was mindful of Phelps, Sadoff, Warburton, and Ferrara's (2005) advice that it is best to "re-create those activities and interactions in field notes written during the activities as quickly as possible after their happening" (p. 92). As this quote suggests, the effectiveness of field notes as a data source depends largely on when they are made, i.e. the closer to the time of the observation, the better (Berg, 1995; Opie, 2004). I recorded my observations and impressions by hand on loose leaf paper during the observations, and then immediately after I left the school I augmented those notes with details, impressions, and preliminary interpretations. I sometimes typed out my notes, reading through them and adding further detail and interpretation as well as notes to myself on potential themes and questions for follow up. On two occasions, I also took photographs that served as reminders and placeholders for me. One day, I photographed the posters on Deborah's back wall at her suggestion, and on another, I took pictures of the art and decorations throughout the school the day of a special Canada concert I attended at Holly's school. I considered these photographs as part of my field notes.

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) suggest that field notes should be descriptive and reflective, detailed and concrete, and should include visual details when appropriate, and Berg (1995) gives several helpful strategies for constructing field notes such as recording key words and phrases, making notes about the temporal sequence of events, and limiting the time for each visit. I did my best to heed the advice of these authors in my work, being careful to make detailed notes,

include visual descriptions of each teacher's classroom, children, and school, and to write out my reflections and impressions. I also carefully recorded key words and phrases to help facilitate hermeneutic analysis. I organized my notes for each visit chronologically, noting the classes that came to the music room and the activities in each period in order all the while making notes of what I observed while the activity unfolded. For each visit, I stayed for 2-4 periods. An example of my field notes can be found in Appendix B.

Pre-interview Activities (PIAs)

Once Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah confirmed their participation in my study, I arranged a time for a first interview (Interview 1) with each of them individually. A few days before we met, I sent each participant an e-mail with the details of our meeting and invited them to complete one or more Pre-Interview Activities or (PIAs) as a way to facilitate recall and reflection (Ellis, 2006). I attached a list of possible PIAs to the e-mail and indicated to the participants that they were not required to do the activity if they were unable or simply did not care to. Prompts included an invitation to: Make a timeline of significant events in their musical lives, bring a favorite piece of music to share and talk about,⁴⁹ make a list of different kinds of professional learning activities and divide this list into two groups, and make a colour-coded schedule of a typical school day, week, or year. Appendix C contains a complete list of the PIAs sent to the participants before Interview 1.

I was careful to give the participants the choice of whether to do the activity because when I pre-tested the PIAs and my interview questions with three elementary music teachers

⁴⁹ This activity is loosely based on one suggested by Clandinin & Connelly (2000) called a "memory box" (p. 114) where participants are encouraged to share a collection of items in order to trigger memories of important events or people.

prior to beginning data collection, two of the teachers were not keen to do this. One noted that she was bad at drawing and just “doesn’t think that way” and therefore wouldn’t want to do any of the PIAs that involved drawing. However, she agreed that there were two or three activities on the list that she would be comfortable doing and that would not take her long to complete. A second teacher suggested that she would feel too busy to complete one or more of these activities before meeting, but would be willing to do so during the interview. Based on this feedback and because I did not want to overburden my participants, I gave them the choice. I was very grateful and pleased that all three participants chose to complete at least one PIA and bring the artifacts they made/ materials they compiled to Interview 1 to share with me. Table 3 indicates the PIA prompts to which each participant chose to respond. PIAs are intentionally designed so that the participant is given choices in how to respond and what to share (Ellis, 2006), and prompts relate either to the phenomenon being researched or the participant’s life (Ellis et al., 2011). Regardless of which activity the participant chooses, the researcher is given a window into their understanding and worldview. Ellis (2006) advocates for the use of this strategy as a way to research people’s experience holistically. In her article on researching the experiences of children, she states:

Although the researcher may be focused on one component or dimension of a child’s experience, she or he needs to have a sense of the wholeness and complexity of the child’s life in order to interpret the significance of what the child says or shows regarding the research topic itself (p. 118).

The participants are given the prompts ahead of time and bring what they chose to prepare to the interview. The researcher simply asks the participant to tell them about what they brought. In essence, the participant teaches the researcher about what is important to them and about their

life. Inviting the participants to complete PIAs for my study proved to be a powerful way of eliciting both their preoccupations and story related to their experience, and also provided useful information for hermeneutic part/whole analysis.

Table 3: PIAs Chosen by Each Participant

<u>Participant</u>	<u>PIA Prompt</u>
Gabriel	<p>“Make a timeline that shows key events or experiences that changed the ways that you have experienced working with music.”</p> <p>“Make a schedule of a typical school day, week or year. Use colours to indicate how your time is spent and make a legend to explain the colours.”</p>
Holly	<p>“Make a timeline that shows key events or experiences that changed the ways that you have experienced working with music.”</p> <p>“Bring a favorite piece of music to share in some way (recording, sing it, play it, etc.). Write about why it speaks to you (or you can tell me in person. What is your history with this piece?”</p>
Deborah	<p>“Make a timeline that shows key events or experiences that changed the ways that you have experienced working with music.”</p>

Other Artifacts

In addition to interview transcripts, field notes, and PIA artifacts, there were a few other kinds of documents I collected over the course of the study. Some of these became data or background information simply because the participant offered to share them. For example, after she agreed to be a participant in my study, Holly started sending me pictures and recordings of her choir, Christmas concert, and bulletin boards even prior to our first meeting, and brought me handouts of workshops and first year teacher sessions she attended throughout the study. She also shared multiple documents related to her Christmas concert including the outline of the concert she had just prepared and ideas for her concert the following year.⁵⁰ In the fall after data collection was

⁵⁰ I had the sense that Holly was thrilled to be able to share her world with someone. She also clearly thought a lot about what would be helpful to me in my research and tried to anticipate what I might need.

completed, I got an unexpected e-mail from Holly containing a summary of all the formal professional learning activities in which she had participated the previous year. Finally, she lent me three books that everyone in her school was asked to read on Assessment for Learning which I read. Deborah and Gabriel also offered to share. Deborah sent me an example of the assessment plan she was developing with her colleague and offered me a copy of a composition workshop she was using with her grade six class while Gabriel wanted to share the outline of his Christmas concert. I also respectfully asked for the participants' Professional Growth Plans. If one of the participants was reticent to share something, I did not insist. My priority was on developing and maintaining a safe and caring relationship.

Finally, I collected some documents that were publically available in the three schools such as a promotional brochure, a school newsletter, and a brochure related to a safe and caring school initiative.

Summary of Data Collection Activities

In sum, data for this study was collected through the following activities:

- One 60- to 75-minute semi-structured interview at the beginning of the study (Interview 1)⁵¹
- Four or five short Drop-in interviews (Drop-in 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)
- Field notes from two classroom observations in each school (and one studio observation with Holly)
- Field notes from special events (Canada concert at Holly's school and a choral festival where Deborah's students performed)

⁵¹ The exception was Holly. We met for 120 minutes because she wanted to share what she had prepared for her PIA activities. This was her choice.

- Artifacts made/documents assembled by each participant in response to one or two PIA prompts
- A variety of other documents provided by the participants or found in their schools (professional growth plans, an assessment plan from Deborah, workshop handouts, Christmas concert plans and programs, a worksheet, photos I took in the school as placeholders for an idea, school brochures, and a newsletter)

The following section discusses the analysis of the data which resulted in the interpretive accounts in Chapters Four to Eight.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As I collected data, I also engaged in analysis. The two processes were inseparable in developing a new understanding related to my research questions and beginning to formulate my interpretation. Each loop of the inquiry resulted in analysis and interpretation which led to the next loop of the research process. As I prepared for each subsequent interview with a participant, I first transcribed, then reread the transcripts and my notes for the previous interview and/or observation. This preliminary analysis helped me to construct the data collection questions for the subsequent interview, but it was also integral in shaping my interpretation. I had a file on my computer where I wrote notes and wonderings to myself as I went along which helped me to pay attention to certain themes and ideas when I began a more in-depth analysis.

However, there was also a period of intense analysis after data collection was completed where I laid transcripts, PIA responses, field notes, and any other artifacts I had for each participant side by side. S. B. Merriam (1998) notes that in a collective case study design, there are two stages of analysis: within-case and cross-case. I began by first constructing a narrative

portrait of each participant (with-in case analysis) to aid in part/whole analysis. Once I had done this, I examined the data, including the narrative portraits, for each participant and began to look for themes, new insights, and inconsistencies. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven provide my analysis for each of the three cases in turn. I then examined the data for all three participants together (cross-case analysis), comparing and contrasting, looking for larger themes, similarities, and differences, and going back and forth between each participants' story and experience as I also went back to the literature. The interpretation resulting from this analytical work is discussed in chapter eight. This section describes specific procedures of data analysis beginning with the construction of a narrative portrait, case by case analysis, cross-case analysis and attending to language.

Constructing a Narrative Portrait

Ellis (2006, 2009) suggests that a helpful first step in beginning analysis is to construct a narrative portrait of the participant. The purpose of this exercise is to give a sense of who the person is in context. By taking the time to make a narrative portrait, the researcher may begin to see how the person views themselves and their experiences and what is important and meaningful to them (Ellis, 2006). Writing a narrative portrait is one way of beginning to 'story' the participant's experiences, organizing what they said about their experiences thematically instead of by topic (Ellis, 1998b). From here, the researcher can ask questions of the data looking for part/whole relationships, preoccupations across themes, the person's significant influences and relationships, and also what is missing from the data in order to have a place to enter the next loop of data collection or analysis.

I began by looking first for what was "topical" in the participant's responses (Ellis, 2006, p. 123). I relied heavily on the transcripts from Interview 1 and each participant's PIA responses

in constructing a narrative portrait while also referring to transcripts from the Drop-in interviews and observations to confirm hunches and look for themes. In writing the narratives, I literally organized data into a storyline with a plot, characters, timeframe, and setting. Polkinghorne (1995) explains the use of plots in narrative data analysis:

In a story, events and actions are drawn together into an organized whole by means of a plot. A plot is a type of conceptual scheme by which a contextual meaning of individual events can be displayed...A storied narrative is the linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts...Storied memories retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it (p. 7, 11).

The organization of data into plots thus serves as a construct for the synthesis and interpretation of data. As I wrote each narrative, I began to have a sense of important themes in each participant's life and in their understanding and experience of music, teaching, and professional learning. For example, it was in constructing Holly's narrative portrait that I realized that her experience of professional development was characterized by her need for voice.

Constructing narrative plots has several advantages in analysis and interpretation of data. First, doing so serves to give events a finite scope and form, with a beginning and end to the story. Secondly, by forcing the researcher to group data by what is relevant to the storyline, it becomes obvious what pieces of the data fit together and which pieces are not relevant as part of an answer to a particular bigger question. Thirdly, plots serve to highlight the part-whole relationships between events and their bigger context or story, calling attention to the meaning and contribution of individual events to the whole (Polkinghorne, 1995).

According to Polkinghorne, there are two ways of analyzing narrative data: *narrative analysis* and *analysis of narratives*. I will discuss the first here, and return to the second in the section on cross case analysis below. Narrative analysis relies on what Bruner (1985) calls *narrative knowledge* and involves organizing data into a coherent whole in the form of a plot. This approach provides a way of synthesizing rather than separating data into categories, which is extremely helpful for studying lived experience and for part/whole analysis. For narrative analysis, events are assembled into an explanation of how something came to be. In other words, “the researcher attends to the temporal and unfolding dimension of human experience by organizing the events of the data along a before–after continuum” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16). This is precisely the kind of analytical work in which I engaged when I wrote a narrative portrait for each participant, and it was integral to my work of case by case analysis.

Case by Case Analysis

Once I constructed a narrative portrait for each participant, I went back to all the data at my disposal for one case and attempted to respond to each of the research questions. For example, for Gabriel, the question guiding a second layer of analysis was “What does teaching elementary music mean to Gabriel?” while the next analytical pass focused on responding to the question, “How does Gabriel experience professional learning?”

For each pass, I went back and reread transcripts and notes from all the interviews for each participant, read through my field notes for observations, looked at documents I had collected including PIA responses and my notes, and made additional notes to begin to synthesize my thoughts into categories and themes “indicated by the data” (S. B. Merriam, 1998, p. 179). I worked hard to make sense of each ‘part’ by working through how it fit with the whole for each person. Throughout the process, I was mindful of S. B. Merriam’s (1998) advice that, in

addition to “reflect(ing) the purpose of the research” (p. 183), the categories and themes I was generating should also be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing and conceptually congruent.⁵² I began by highlighting phrases or ideas that struck me and then looking for connections, nuances and similarities across data sources for one participant and in the literature. From here, I pulled out concepts, ideas, and phrases that seemed salient and began to develop categories and themes by looking across the data for the participant and returning to the literature to concepts that formed my horizon of understanding. I also sometimes read extensively related to certain themes to help me theorize about and put words to new concepts. Often the themes shifted as my understanding deepened, or I chose not to include something that I initially thought was important as I got deeper into conceptualizing an interpretation. Throughout the process, I wrote as a way of making sense of my emerging understanding, working through each theme or concept one at a time, and sometimes returning multiple times. After working through this process for one case, I did the same for the second and third. At this point, my case accounts were primarily descriptive in nature. So, once I had worked through the three cases at this level of analysis, I returned to each one again and honed my interpretation and writing, ensuring that there was a strong connection between the literature, the narrative portrait, and my interpretation related to each research question, and began to write notes and think in the direction of theorizing. I also tried to ensure that there was a similar level of abstraction across the three case accounts. I then went on to analyzing across cases, using the notes I had generated to guide this analysis. The next section describes my process for cross case analysis.

⁵² By *exhaustive*, S. B. Merriam (1998) means that the category is robust enough that all the related data fits under the umbrella; *mutually exclusive* means that data only fits into one category, although it can be related to other categories; *sensitizing* means that the name of the category should allow an outsider to have some sense of what the category is about; *conceptually congruent* means that the same level of abstraction should characterize all categories at the same level” (p. 184).

Analysis Across Cases

Polkinghorne's (1995) second approach to analysis is called "analysis of narratives." Based on Bruner's (1985) conception of paradigmatic knowledge, analysis of narratives involves examining emplotted data looking for themes and common ideas across stories. "Whereas paradigmatic knowledge (analysis of narratives) is focused on what is common among actions, narrative knowledge (narrative analysis) focuses on the particular and special characteristics of each action" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11). This is the kind of analytical work I did when I compared the three narrative portraits from each case, and also when I returned to stories from the data searching for commonalities, differences, and nuances across the three cases. Polkinghorne notes that the researcher can move in two directions across the narratives in this kind of analysis: Searching for concepts in the data that correspond to pre-existing theories, or inductively developing new theories based on the data. In my cross case analysis, I did both. For example, I saw several instances of concepts from Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1999) Community of Practice theory across the narratives including brokering and social learning. I also engaged in theorizing from the data, arguing, for example, that workshops primarily serve the function of affirming practice rather than being a place to learn new practices.

As I went back and forth between the data for the three cases, I also returned to the literature looking for concepts and theories that helped to conceptualize the themes and concepts that were beginning to crystalize in my interpretation. Just as I did with the analysis of each case, I worked through my thinking by writing. The result of my cross case analysis can be found in Chapter Eight.

Attending to Language

As discussed above, language is integral to interpretation in that it is used to construct an interpretation and it also expresses and contains the speaker's worldview. Thus, when analyzing data in hermeneutic research, the language used by the participants provides a powerful window into their understanding and experience. It also provides a glimpse into the discourse of the communities of which the participants are a member and which shapes their understanding. D.

G. Smith (1991) notes:

gaining a sense of how one's collective language works, what drives it, what are its predispositions in terms of metaphor, analogy, and structure, and so on, such understanding is quite essential for the work of the interpretive imagination, because in a deep sense our language contains the story of who we are as a people. (p. 199)

A further analytical pass for each stage described above involved attending to the language that the participants' used to describe and explain their lifeworld, and their understanding and experience. I had tried in the interviews to avoid giving the participants words for what they were describing, simply writing notes to myself if our conversations evoked a certain concept or idea in my own forestructure. Later as I engaged in further analysis, I was listening hard for the language that shaped their understanding. As I re-examined transcripts and other data, I noted any specific phrases or terms the participants used to express their understanding of their work and their experiences of professional learning. When appropriate in Chapters Five to Seven, I used the participants' words or phrases as headings and then attempted to characterize what I understood them to mean by that act of speech. For example, in Chapter Six, one of the headings in the section about Holly's understanding of her work is "Finding 'jumping off points'." These were Holly's words that she had used to express how she thought about her work teaching elementary music. The participant's language not only provided a valuable window into their

understanding and experience, but helped me to develop a new horizon of understanding. The participants literally gave me new words to think about the work of elementary music teachers and their professional learning.

Before moving onto the three case accounts, I will address three final topics: (1) Evaluating the results of an interpretive account; (2) Issues of ethics and validity; and (3) Limitations and delimitations of this study.

Evaluating the Results of an Interpretive Account

Smagorinsky (1995) cautions that there is no such thing as “pure” data that can be observed and recorded because data are social constructs (p. 191). Given that there is no objective construct of truth to be found in a constructivist research paradigm, no experiment to replicate, no theory to test, how does one then evaluate the findings of this kind of research? Smith and Deemer (2000) argue that acknowledging that one constructs meaning is to also acknowledge the moral responsibility for what one constructs. Judgments about research in the constructivist paradigm must therefore be practical and moral instead of solely epistemological. Ellis (1998b) writes, “knowledge is the product of human activity. We create rather than find meaning or knowledge. Therefore we can relinquish any fear that we will somehow miss finding ‘objective reality’” (p. 8).

As the aim of my inquiry was not to look for “the truth” but to deepen my understanding of my research questions, one way of evaluating my findings is simply to ask, “Does this research deepen understanding about the phenomenon of study?” In other words, has “the concern which motivated the inquiry...been advanced?” (Ellis, 1998a, p. 30). This can be ascertained by looking at whether the interpretive account is plausible, fits with other scholarship, and has the potential to change practice. An additional consideration is whether my

account demonstrates that my understanding has undergone transformation, has uncovered a solution, and/or has opened up new possibilities (Ellis, 1998a). These very practical suggestions echo Packer and Addison's (1989) list of *approaches to evaluation* which include coherence, relation to "external evidence," consensus building, and assessing the account against the future (p. 279–80). Packer and Addison write that evaluating an interpretive account ultimately consists of "considering whether our concern has been answered" (p. 279). Thus, coherence of interpretation is an important goal of an interpretive inquiry. Because participants' experiences can only be accessed through story (Ellis, 2009), evaluation of an interpretive account depends on the researcher's use of what he or she has heard and observed "to show illustratively" (Ellis, 2006, p. 116) the coherence of their interpretations. Polkinghorne (1995) cautions that narratives in the account must be plausible to the reader: "The explanation needs to satisfy the subjective needs of the reader...to understand how the occurrence could have come about (p. 19)."

I have attempted to construct an interpretation that is plausible and grounded both in the literature and in the participants' experience. My hope is that my interpretation will provide new insights which could lead to changes in the practice of teacher educators, those who design professional learning opportunities, and to teachers as they learn. My new understanding has certainly changed my practice as a teacher educator and a clinician.

Ethical Issues and Validity

While engaged in planning, fieldwork, analysis, and reporting related to this study, I adhered to the ethical guidelines of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research with Humans* (Canadian Institute of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). Participants were informed of the benefits and risk of their participation in the study, the fact that

the interviews were to be recorded, and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants and others in their circles were protected through the use of pseudonyms and by obscuring particular details that might reveal their identity.

While I carefully conformed to the university's ethical guidelines, I was mindful that relational qualitative research often engenders many ethical considerations beyond informed consent (Howe and Moses, 1999). In fact, there were several times where situations of an ethical nature arose while I engaged in this research. First, there were ethical issues that came up during data collection that resulted from the relational nature of my research approach. I expected to have to navigate requests from participants to teach their class or share information rather than watching and learning from them,⁵³ to have to negotiate the number of times I observed in their schools and which lessons, to negotiate the content and portrayal of each participant in the narrative portraits that I wrote and so on. While I was prepared to negotiate concerns of an ethical nature that arose during data collection, I encountered another ethical issue that I did not anticipate once data collection was complete.

As S. B. Merriam (1998) points out, the use of interviews and observation of participants in a naturalistic environment as means of collecting data in qualitative research “present their own ethical dilemmas” (p. 214). Because my inquiry consisted of an interpretive case study where my task was to come to an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants, by the end of the study, I knew a lot about each of the participants and their experiences. Classrooms are semi-private spaces where the teacher and students generally go about their work without scrutiny from the outside world. It was challenging at times to decide what was okay to say about what I was seeing and noticing and still respect the participants' privacy. It was even

⁵³ For example, see Chapter Five for a description of this negotiation with Gabriel

more challenging to write about the participants' experiences of teaching and learning in a way that would not result in negative judgment when they were experiencing challenges in their work as teachers. For example, writing about some of the lessons I watched took several tries. It was difficult at times to find the right balance between giving the reader enough detail to support my interpretation and protecting the participant from judgment.

Another ethical issue arose because I chose an early-, mid-, and late-career teacher for each of my three cases. I did this to try and get a sense of the diversity of teachers' experiences as educators and professional learners. However, the fact that I had only one participant from each career stage meant that no matter what, Gabriel would never come across as being as accomplished as Holly and Deborah even though he had many outstanding skills as a first-year teacher. I also felt that I could not discuss issues related to music teacher education in a significant way based on one early-career participant. If I were to do it over again, I would consider either having three early-career teachers as participants, or I would perhaps add more participants in order to have two or three participants of each career stage, although having more participants would have made the inquiry a much more daunting undertaking for a PhD study. As I go forward in my academic career, it is my intent to add more cases to this initial study. I am pleased to know that I will be able to more adequately protect Gabriel and the other early-year teachers who consent to be a part of this work in the future by virtue of having more cases while being able to more adequately discuss issues related to music teacher education that a study of early-career music teachers may make apparent.

As I mentioned above, I entered into the hermeneutic circle knowing that I would encounter ethical issues throughout the process of research that would have to be negotiated with participants on an ongoing basis. I mentioned several examples of these ethical negotiations

above (i.e. negotiating my role in the participants' classrooms, the number of times I observed, which classes I watched, each participants' narrative portrait) and would add negotiating the frequency of visits to the schools, which stories from data would be included, and member checking interview transcripts. While some of these issues may seem to be procedural or methodological ones, because they were also relational, they were inherently ethical. For example, Noddings (1986) argues that the relationship between researcher and participant must be based on trust and mutual respect, while Lather (2001) argues for "transgressive validity" where validity is moved "from a discourse about quality as normative to a discourse of relational practices that evoke an epistemic disruption, a transgression of set forms" (p. 247). In other words, Lather sees validity as an issue of epistemology whereby how we learn what we learn as researchers must legitimize the knowledge gained from research. Reason and Rowan concur. They suggest that "any notion of validity must concern itself both with the knower and with what is to be known: Valid knowledge is a matter of relationship" (in Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 279). Validity, then, is intimately connected to relational ethics. I acknowledge that while there was a formal process I followed to protect my participants from harm, the burden of ethical conduct, good scholarship, and validity throughout the research process rests primarily on me as the researcher (Bhattacharya, 2007).

Delimitations and Limitations

This study is delimited to three elementary school music teachers working in three different schools for a single school board in a Western Canadian city. Because I am the primary instrument of data collection, my inquiry is limited by my abilities as a listener, observer, interviewer, and interpreter, and is further limited by what artifacts, experiences, and stories the

participants were willing to share with me. I acknowledge that my construction of data, analysis, and interpretation are framed through my own shifting horizon as a former elementary music teacher, a teacher educator, and as a researcher, and that my interpretations are contextually bound.

Chapter Five: Gabriel, a First-Year Music Teacher

Ultimately, my purpose in this research was to develop a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the kinds of things music teachers might need, want, or appreciate from professional learning activities or events. With each case study I endeavored to identify whole-part relationships in the person's experience of teaching music. I wanted to make sense of "how music teaching worked" for each person. I knew that if I could understand "where each person was coming from" in his or her music teaching, I would be better able to appreciate or make sense of his or her comments about what professional learning had been like for them.

Furthermore, as a music teacher educator who evaluates music teaching and plans professional development activities, I would also have further ideas about what could be usefully included in such activities. It was important to take a holistic approach to the case studies in order to have the opportunity to identify part/whole relationships and to see how each person's ways of teaching music were reasonable and coherent actions. In my analysis, I searched for connections *among* each music teacher's ways of approaching elementary music teaching and also *between* their current music teaching approaches and their past music related experiences.

Each of the following three chapters consists of a narrative portrait, findings, and discussion related to the research questions for one of the cases for this collective case study. Chapter Eight is a discussion of several themes that emerged from analysis of all three cases taken together.

At the beginning of Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I have shared a narrative portrait of each of the participants in order to highlight what has been important in their prior experience with music and teaching (Ellis, 2006). Writing these narrative portraits was an invaluable part of the data analysis process in that it helped me to develop my storied understanding of the

connections between past and present for each of the participants. While none of the narrative portraits is exhaustive, my hope is that they will provide a sense of the context and background that has informed my interpretation. In this chapter, I will provide a narrative portrait of Gabriel and discuss each of the research questions in turn. First, I will share a little of my experience of working with Gabriel.

Working with Gabriel

I first met Gabriel when I contacted him to ask if he would consider being a participant in my study. I approached him on the advice of several colleagues when I was looking for an early career participant. Gabriel was a first-year music teacher working in a large city school board. I found him to be affable and open, and willing to help in spite of being in the vulnerable position of being a first year teacher. Throughout our time together, I felt tremendous responsibility to earn and merit his trust. I did my best to consistently assure Gabriel I was not judging him or his practice and that, in fact, I was the one learning from him. I believe that he came to feel comfortable with me over the course of the study in part because I had been an elementary music teacher. On some level I did have a basic understanding of Gabriel's first year teaching experience and lifeworld. But in spite of this common ground, I am mindful that Gabriel made a choice to trust me. I am very honored that he did. I hope that Gabriel's participation in my study provided an experience of being supported and having a safe place to talk about the challenges of his new professional life.

I met with Gabriel six times over the course of the study, once for an initial 75-minute interview where he shared his Pre-Interview Activity responses, and five other times for more informal drop-in interviews after school or at lunch time. I also observed Gabriel teach on two occasions when I came to visit his school for part of a day. During the shorter drop-in interviews,

I followed up with Gabriel about questions that arose for me during analysis of the data from previous interviews and observations. The following narrative portrait was constructed from the transcripts from our interviews together and was confirmed with Gabriel.

A Narrative Portrait of Gabriel

Gabriel grew up in a family that valued music and, consequently, he had many musical experiences and opportunities as a child. Gabriel noted that music “runs in [the] family” (Interview 1). Not only did his parents provide a music education for Gabriel and his sister, but both of his parents were involved in music; his dad sang in a choir and his mom was a school music teacher. Music was also an integral part of Gabriel’s experiences with his extended family. At family gatherings, there was always music. At Christmas get-togethers, for example, Gabriel shared that “we bust out the Christmas carols– English and Ukrainian– and we go at it” (Interview 1). Singing and music were important to the family’s cultural identity, and both sides of his family had a strong connection to their Ukrainian heritage. Gabriel and his sister were also members of a Ukrainian dance troupe growing up, and his sister continued dancing well into adulthood.

In addition to coming from a family that broke into song in restaurants (“it’s just what we do”), Gabriel’s music teacher mom was intentional about providing formal music education for her children. Gabriel studied music from a young age. He explained, “Music in my family was a huge thing. I had to. I had no choice.” (Interview 1). As a preschooler, Gabriel remembers his mother taking him to early childhood music classes, and he began taking piano lessons from his auntie in elementary school and then switched to cello in grade five. Taking music lessons was non-negotiable, but the instrument was. Gabriel “hated doing piano” and his parents let him choose a different instrument and found him a well-known and respected teacher. When I asked

him why picked cello, he explained: “I thought, ‘what’s the biggest thing I can grab?’ Double bass was too big. And so the cello became the next biggest thing, right? (laughs) and I stuck with it. So, that’s how I started with it” (Interview 1).

In junior high, Gabriel began playing with a local youth orchestra and also began to learn French horn in the school band. As it became clear that orchestra and cello were important to him, his parents paid for him to attend a summer string academy, and Gabriel participated in the program for three summers. As a university student, Gabriel returned to his youth orchestra, this time as an instructor and conductor. He was happy to do so and saw it as his duty to give back: “I think like when you’re up there and you have a skill to give back, you’re going to do it” (Interview 1). As he came into his own as a musician, Gabriel grew increasingly to see himself as a music educator. Even though he was teaching privately and did not yet have formal training in music education, being a music educator was part of his identity. He saw connections between his work and what he knew of the work of teachers in schools. He explained, “I didn’t feel that it was a piece of paper that made me an educator. I felt that I was an educator teaching cello lessons. That’s what I felt” (Interview 1). Gabriel was able to make this connection in part because he could easily imagine a life as a school music teacher. Both of his parents were teachers in the school system as was his grandmother and several other family members, and he was also now married to a teacher. He commented, “That’s all I know. It’s a 10-month year for me. That’s my life” (Interview 1). Gabriel was used to the rhythm of his family life revolving around the school year. He valued having summers off to go on family vacations because of the many family holidays he experienced growing up. He also had some understanding of what it meant to be an elementary music teacher thanks to his mother and his aunt.

Gabriel seemed to have long seen teaching school music as a viable career option. He auditioned for music school when he was in grade 12, and he initially planned to do a combined Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Education. However, he enjoyed his music studies so much, that he decided to focus only on music:

When I auditioned to get into the program when I was in grade 12 still, you know, I was thinking, you know, I want to do the B. Mus./ B. Ed. program...But once I started, I was like, “Well, I think I just want to just scrap this Ed. stuff and just pursue this cello business.” And so I did that. (Interview 1)

Gabriel chose to focus on only music because he was enjoying playing cello so much. He shared, “once I got [to university] I was like “Oh thank God that I can do it [i.e. play cello]. And I wished that I did it more [when I was younger]” (Interview 1). Gabriel felt grateful that he had this opportunity to study and play music. Being in music school was a seminal experience for him as a person and musician.

Although he enjoyed his music studies, Gabriel ultimately decided to pursue an Education After Degree to be able to teach school music. Gabriel had recently married, and he framed this decision as one of considering the long-term impact of his future career on his family. He reflected:

I just knew I always would be teaching, and then it was just what route do I want to go with it. I love my string playing, I love teaching my strings, I love conducting, I love doing that too. I think it comes down also to an economic standpoint. How can I have stability in my life and still do music. (Interview 1)

Gabriel was not immune to the tension many musicians must confront between musical fulfillment and financial/lifestyle stability. He seemed hopeful at this point that teaching

elementary music would allow him to find a balance between the two. During his studies, Gabriel participated in Level I and Level II courses of a certified Orff-Schulwerk program and chose to use Level I for credit towards his B. Ed. degree. He knew about Orff-Schulwerk because of his family and from working with the cooperating teacher in one of his practicum placements during his Education degree. In the following section, I will explore several themes that emerged related to how Gabriel experienced teaching elementary music as a first year music educator.

What Does Teaching Music Mean to Gabriel?

Gabriel's work as an elementary school music teacher was shaped by his previous experiences as a musician, studio teacher, conductor, and as a person. These experiences included his practicum experiences in his B. Ed. After-Degree, his participation in Orff-Schulwerk Levels I and II, and interactions with family members who were educators. His understanding was also informed by his experiences as a music learner. In this section I seek to examine and trace the relationships between Gabriel's previous musical learning experiences and his ways of approaching teaching elementary music. First, a word about Gabriel's school.

Gabriel's teaching context.

The school where Gabriel taught was a community school within a large public school board. It was located in a middle-class city neighbourhood with many town houses, rental properties, some single family dwellings, and a large high-rise apartment building nearby. There seemed to be a mixture of socio-economic (SES) levels represented in the school population, ranging from middle class to low SES, and the school population was ethnically diverse. For example, Gabriel estimated that about 30% of the students were of Aboriginal heritage.

The population at Gabriel's school was somewhat transient. Students enrolled in and left the school on a regular basis throughout the year. Gabriel noted, "It happens all the time... A new student just shows up right at my door" (Drop-in 1).⁵⁴ This movement in and out of the school community understandably posed a challenge for Gabriel and his colleagues. The students who arrived part way through the year did not know the routines and rules in Gabriel's classroom, nor did they always have prior background in music. There was also a small number of students in almost every class who had difficulty with reading and writing and other basic skills. This was a challenging teaching assignment, but Gabriel was grateful to have it.

For most of the year, Gabriel taught all the music in the school which added up to roughly four and a half days of teaching per week. However, his assignment changed part way through our time together. In the spring, Gabriel's teaching contract became full-time; in addition to teaching music, he began working with individual grade six students to help prepare them for writing provincial achievement tests.⁵⁵ Gabriel was very busy. In addition to teaching full-time in an elementary school, he also worked as a private string teacher four nights a week and on Saturday mornings. His string teaching consisted both of one-on-one lessons and group classes for a community organization.

Part-whole relationships in Gabriel's teaching practices and thinking.

In this section I will explore three themes that emerged in my analysis of Gabriel's experience of music learning which showed connections between his experiences of learning and learning music: (a) the relationship between being a musician and teaching; (b) having a

⁵⁴ For example, one day when we met near the end of the school year, Gabriel mentioned then that he had two new students that day and two more the week before (Drop-in 3).

⁵⁵ As noted in chapter 1, teachers in Alberta are certified as generalists and technically could teach any subject from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

relational space for learning; and (c) setting goals for problem reduction; and (d) repetition as an instructional strategy. These four themes provide a window into what was important to Gabriel as a music learner as well as some of the key approaches to music learning he employed in his own learning and in his teaching.

Being a musician and teaching go “hand in hand.” As Lucy Green (2002) argues, “almost everyone in any social context is musically encultured” (p. 22). Green sees enculturation as a process of learning musical skills and knowledge through immersion in specific social contexts. Gabriel’s family provided one such context and facilitated Gabriel’s introduction into and participation in others. Family get-togethers, Ukrainian dancing, cello lessons, a summer string and conducting program, and playing in an orchestra were some of the experiences that led to Gabriel coming to see himself as a musician. In addition, Gabriel’s many music teachers provided models of what it meant to be a musician and influenced Gabriel’s understanding of what it meant to be a music educator. In reflecting on his experiences with his childhood and university cello teachers, Gabriel commented that he admired their passion not only for music, but also for teaching and “how music is everything for them” (Drop-in 4). Bonneyville-Roussy, Lavigne, and Vallerand (2011) argue that having a passion for music results in music becoming part of a person’s identity. Gabriel had literally learned how to *be* a musician from his teachers. Part of his teachers’ passion for music was sharing music with others, and so, Gabriel took up teaching as a natural part of his identity as a musician. Once he came to see himself as a string player, he “just assumed– like it just comes hand in hand” that teaching would be part of his work as a musician. Gabriel felt a moral imperative to teach music. Others had invested in him and now it was his responsibility to “give back” (Interview 1).

A safe relationship as the context for learning music. Gabriel clearly had a strong personal connection with his cello teachers, and part of how Gabriel seemed to conceive of learning music is that it takes place in a caring relationship. In discussing his lessons with his university cello teacher, he tended to talk about her as a person rather than as his cello teacher. Furthermore, in talking about his own teaching, he often seemed to be thinking about his relationship with, and the needs of, individual students. This was true in both his studio and school teaching contexts. For example, he described his approach to getting a student in kindergarten to sing in his school context, explaining that when she expressed fear about singing, he stopped his lesson and facilitated a conversation to help her work through that fear:

So we talked about it, in the class, with her classmates, is it all right if we make mistakes or are afraid to try something? She ended up singing, and enjoying it so we kind of talked through it. Don't necessarily know the root of all that fear but just by talking through it she felt comfortable enough... (Interview 1)

This was one of many examples of Gabriel's care for his students.

Gabriel experienced learning music in the context of a safe relationship. His experience as a music learner was that of having his music teachers attend to his *personhood* (Elliott & Silverman, 2015), and within that caring relationship, his teachers also engaged in *ethical idealization* of Gabriel, treating him as though he already was a musician as he was becoming a musician (Chappell, 2011). As a result, Gabriel became a musician and a caring music educator.

Problem reduction as a strategy for learning music. Gabriel talked at length about learning specific pieces as a soloist and for his quartet and commented more than once that he was looking for longer songs and "valuable repertoire" (Drop-in 3) to teach in his elementary music program. His focus on finding "valuable repertoire" suggested to me that he saw learning

pieces as the vehicle for musical learning. Gabriel's experience of learning repertoire/learning music is a common one, particularly in music education contexts where performance is emphasized such as school band programs, school and community choirs and orchestras, and private music lessons.⁵⁶ Apfelstadt (2000), for example, notes that curricular content is taught through the repertoire choral teachers choose and Reynolds (2000) suggests that repertoire *is* the curriculum for instrumental ensembles. However, Gabriel not only saw learning repertoire as the mechanism for musical learning, he understood it as a process. He had learned how to break down the task of learning a specific piece of music and to manage smaller goals towards being able to perform the given piece. These goals consisted of mastering the technique and skills necessary to play the piece. This approach to learning music is part of what Gabriel modelled and taught to his instrumental students. He shared:

I get my students to set smaller goals...like what are my outcomes? Well, maybe today we're going to get this 16th note pattern done. How are we going to achieve it? So I go through how you're going to practice it, because if I'm not there... So it's smaller goals, it's goal setting. That's what it comes down to. Small goals. (Interview 1)

Gabriel taught his private students to identify problems in practice and to work to solve them. This is what he meant by goal setting in this context. Elliott and Silverman (2015) suggest that the skill of setting and solving goals is important for developing musical expertise. They call this process of identifying a technical issue and working to reduce the problem "problem reduction" (p. 232).⁵⁷ These goals, like the goals Gabriel sets for himself as a cellist, were personal and

⁵⁶ In fact, *learning music* is often used interchangeably to mean learning musical concepts and skills and learning specific repertoire, both of which are accurate in the sense that repertoire is generally the vehicle for learning concepts within traditional music learning contexts.

⁵⁷ I think here of Schön's (1983) distinction between problem solving and problem setting which I will discuss later in the chapter. According to Schön, professionals must discover and frame problems before

based on the specific issues the individual needed to work through to be able to play the piece well. In addition to being the way Gabriel learned specific repertoire and helped students learn repertoire, problem reduction was a key component of Gabriel's intense enjoyment of making music. Gabriel experienced flow when he played cello and made music. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (1990) describes flow as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4). Csikszentmihaly (1990) notes that an important component of achieving a state of flow is being able to set clear and achievable goals and work towards them. Gabriel had learned how to create a state of flow for himself in part by breaking down learning tasks. In fact, achieving flow was one of the main learnings from his university experience, and he, like all music teachers, wanted his cello students to experience flow in their music making.⁵⁸

"You need repetition of everything." When I talked with Gabriel about how children learn music in an elementary school context, he was quick to focus on the importance of repetition. He noted, "You need repetition of everything. You know, that's how they learn the songs especially if they're not reading music" (Drop-in 3). Gabriel's thinking moved back and forth between repetition as a mechanism for learning repertoire, and repetition as a strategy for learning the musical concepts and skills laid out in the elementary music curriculum.

Gabriel's focus on repetition seemed to be connected to his practice of learning music by finding and reducing problems where he would "[buckle] down and then... find out what you

they can work toward a solution. They essentially create a new understanding of their work as they go. In many ways, this is what Gabriel was doing in learning a piece.

⁵⁸ I am reminded here of Gabriel's comment about his university experience: "But then once I got [to university], I was like "Oh thank God that I can do it [i.e. play cello]" (Interview 1).

need to practice and then you just puzzle piece... Gotta do small chunks and create the bigger picture” (Drop-in 4). While Gabriel seemed to view repetition of trouble spots in his instrumental practicing as something he would work on over several practice sessions, in the lessons I observed, Gabriel spent a significant amount of time in one lesson repeating the same task. I felt as though I could see Gabriel working out how to relate his experience as a music learner and studio teacher to a new context with different goals and a different structure. Gabriel was making connections between his experiences as a music learner, his previous teaching experience as a studio teacher, and his new situation. In the next section I will discuss how Gabriel experienced teaching music in an elementary school context.

Gabriel’s approach to teaching music.

In this section, I explore what was important to Gabriel as a first year music teacher and some of the key approaches he used in his teaching. These include the importance of relationship in teaching, providing a variety of experiences with music to students, and learning on the job.

Relationship is foundational to teaching. As a result of his relational understanding of learning music, Gabriel saw his work as an elementary music teacher as dependent on creating a safe space for the students. I saw many examples of Gabriel’s respectful and relational approach. He established and reinforced his authority as a teacher in a warm but firm way, disciplining children when needed by reasoning with them and ensuring that they understood that he was concerned for their safety and well-being. Gabriel also used his authority as a teacher in a respectful way when the class needed to adjust their behavior and attention. For example, I overheard him tell a grade five student who was climbing on some equipment, “It’s safety that I’m concerned about” when he asked the student to get down (Field Notes, Observation 2), and in one class I observed he told a group of grade three students, “Ladies and gentlemen, we’re being very rude” (Field Notes, Observation 1) as he redirected their attention back to the activity

he was trying to facilitate from the front of the room. Gabriel had strong classroom management skills for a first year teacher. It was evident that he had prior experience working with children, and that he was working hard at creating a safe learning environment. Many of his students seemed to value his clear expectations and having a safe place. For example, I overheard a grade three student tell his peer who was disrupting the lesson, “That’s not funny. You’re wasting our time” (Field Notes, Observation 1).

Part of what Gabriel seemed to enjoy about his role as the school music teacher was the chance to have a relationship with every student, noting, “That’s the real joy... You’re connected to every student in the school” (Drop-in 3). However, in music class, Gabriel found that he was unable to spend one-on-one time with students. Gabriel’s experience teaching music stood in sharp contrast to the experiences he had teaching in a homeroom setting in his school, which he occasionally did when he served as a substitute teacher before his contract became full time:

That time when I’m in there where I’m like, “Wow. I actually get to talk to this person”... more than I would inside the [music] classroom... when they’re all working at their desks you have an opportunity...to talk about things. (Interview 1)

Gabriel clearly valued having individual connections with students and found it challenging that he could not easily cultivate one-on-one relationships in the context of a music lesson. He wryly commented, “If you stop to say, ‘I’m gonna stop to talk to this student right now’ good luck, eh? (laughs)” (Interview 1). He could not see a workable way to connect individually with students in the music classroom.

Even though it was more challenging to build individual relationships in music class, there were a few instances where I saw Gabriel have a special moment with a student. For example, a grade two boy asked if he could sit beside Gabriel in the circle on the floor, and then

later he went on his own initiative to close the classroom door. Gabriel gave him a ‘thumbs up’ when the boy looked at him for affirmation (Field notes, Observation 2). Gabriel also had posted many drawings that students had made for him on his classroom door. The artists of these colourful pictures often had written affirming messages about Gabriel as a teacher.

Wherever you are at is “okay.” Part of Gabriel’s approach to making students feel safe was to tell them in a variety of ways that wherever they were at in terms of skill and ability was “okay.” I often heard him say some version of, “That’s okay. Just try your best” (Field notes, Observation 2) as he introduced a new activity. For example, in a grade five recorder lesson I observed, Gabriel told the class as he explained the task of getting low C to sound, “If it’s not working for you, that’s okay” (Field notes, Observation 2). In addition to being helpful for creating a safe classroom environment, Gabriel’s comments perhaps also reflected his experience teaching privately where everyone learned at their own speed, and the technique and concepts Gabriel taught came out of his personal interactions with the students. For example, the first time we met, I asked Gabriel how he approached the group cello lessons he taught. He responded:

It depends on the day. Depends on the group of kids, it depends on where they are at.

Obviously, we have different learners. I’m not bound by a curriculum with my cello teaching, which is great in one sense because it’s the freedom of taking a direction.

(Interview 1)

Gabriel had the freedom as a cello teacher to build his own curriculum for his students in response to individual students’ level of skill and their interests. He could differentiate his instruction based on the specific students in a given group or in a private lesson, and seemed to see learning music as a personal journey.

The concept of individualized learning was also evident in his thinking about his work in an elementary music classroom, and it may be that Gabriel also encountered the discourse of *differentiation* in his Bachelor of Education After Degree. When I asked him to describe a specific lesson or activity that had worked well in his teaching, he commented, “What’s worked well? Depends on the group” (Interview 1). He noted that different students liked different activities:

I don’t know, I find it kind of difficult to answer what works well because I think it works well for different kids. There’s some kids who are just [over] the moon to just sing on the spot. They don’t want to be moving around, they’re okay. And then there’s kids who need to be active, need to be engaged that way. Hand games, when we are doing singing and hand games— love it. They’re engaged. Partner work? They love that. Being able to work with one another. (Interview 1)

While Gabriel clearly saw learning music as being personal, I was also mindful that he was still learning ‘what worked.’ In fact, learning what worked was the major focus of his professional learning throughout the year.

“Providing a variety of experiences.” In the above excerpt, Gabriel mentioned a variety of activities in which he might have students engage during music class. “Providing a variety of experiences” was an important idea in Gabriel’s talk about his work as an elementary music teacher, and he seemed to see this as both one of his main purposes in teaching, and as the main mechanism for musical learning in an elementary music class.

“Providing a variety of experiences” in the first sense was intimately connected to Gabriel’s experiences with Orff pedagogy, which provided much of the framework he currently had for thinking about teaching elementary music. When I asked him how he would explain

Orff-Schulwerk to one of his Bachelor of Music colleagues, Gabriel mentioned *media*, which is one of the elements in Orff-inspired pedagogy. According to Frazee (1987), media are the activities through which children learn music in an Orff program and consist of speech, movement, song, instruments, and listening. The idea of media was important to Gabriel, and he used it to describe his Orff-centered approach to teaching music. In describing Orff practice he explained that:

[Orff-Schulwerk is] a holistic approach to childhood musical and medias is the way that I approach what I do. It's a holistic approach in terms of encompassing voice, movement, rhythm, form, expression... All combined together... So each one of those is necessary for the other. (Drop-in 3)

Gabriel was engaged in making sense of what a holistic approach to teaching music meant for his own teaching in his new teaching context. Gabriel helped me to understand that teachers learn new ideas and concepts and then spend a great deal of time working out what those concepts mean in practice.⁵⁹

While “providing a variety of experiences” through various media was one of Gabriel’s overarching goals for his teaching and a framing idea he used to plan what he did in his elementary music classes, Gabriel also saw working with various media as constituting *how* students learn music. When I asked him what he hoped his students would say about their experience in his school music class, he responded, “I would like them to say that they have a variety of ways of learning...that we don’t just do one thing” (Interview 1). The idea of engaging in a variety of experiences not only undergirded what Gabriel did in his elementary music

⁵⁹ I will come back to this idea in the discussion on Gabriel’s professional learning later in the chapter, and in the final two chapters.

classes, but had also impacted his cello teaching. According to Gabriel, after participating in the Orff courses he started having students sing more in their private and group lessons and was incorporating a bit of movement as strategies for learning pieces (Drop-in 2). Gabriel saw this as different to what other studio teachers normally did. Gabriel noted, “you don’t only learn a song in Orff, I think. You’re doing a lot with it through the process” (Drop-in 3).

Teaching repertoire was still an important part of Gabriel’s approach to teaching music. ‘Learning repertoire’ was an important idea framing Gabriel’s work teaching instrumental students whereas ‘learning music through engaging in a variety of experiences’ was central in Gabriel’s thinking about teaching music in an elementary school context, although both ideas were present in his thinking related to both contexts. Gabriel seemed to see conceptual learning as coming from the “valuable experiences” students had with the various media (Drop-in 3). He explained, “the thing I like about Orff is the students experience concepts without even knowing it. That’s part of the whole approach” (Drop-in 3). Here, Gabriel’s comment demonstrates the common music education practice of “sound before symbol”⁶⁰ where students experience musical concepts before naming them and being introduced to their “symbolic representation” (Montgomery, 2002, p. 15).

Learning on the job. Because it was his first year of teaching, Gabriel was working hard to make sense of what it meant to teach elementary music. Two of his preoccupations gave me a small window into what it was like for him to be learning on the job. These were teaching “valuable repertoire” to his students, and teaching students to read music (Drop-in 3). As a first year teacher, Gabriel had a nascent understanding of what “valuable repertoire” meant. He knew

⁶⁰ This idea originated with Heinrich Pestalozzi and can also be seen in the work of Jerome Bruner and American music education pioneer Lowell Mason (Houlihan & Tacka, 2008).

it was something that many other music educators stressed but he was unclear what specifically would make a piece of music “valuable.” His conception of quality repertoire was that:

Quality repertoire would probably be something that offers multiple, kind of, areas of music that you can incorporate into [students’] learning and teaching— rhythm, emphasis form, kind of all those concepts I think [pause] and I’m still learning what quality is too (Drop-in 4).⁶¹

I find Gabriel’s answer interesting because, in it, I see the idea of “providing a variety of experiences” in his thinking about teaching classroom music. I interpret Gabriel’s answer to mean that he sees quality repertoire as those pieces with which one could engage students in a variety of activities and teach the elements of form and rhythm. I see his thoughtful comment as being an example of how Gabriel was working out what Orff-Schulwerk and teaching elementary music meant in practice. Once again, Gabriel was actively trying to make connections between his experiences studying Orff-Schulwerk, teaching and learning cello, and teaching in a new context.

Another example of Gabriel making sense of teaching music comes from our conversations about teaching reading and writing music. Traditional music literacy is something that is generally emphasized in classical instrumental lessons and is also often an area of focus in school music. Gabriel mentioned music literacy as something that was important to him. He commented, “I think that my background trains me to say that reading and writing music is important, and I believe that it is” (Drop-in 3). While Gabriel knew he valued reading and writing music, he did not yet have many pictures of what learning to read music might look like

⁶¹ This was a place where I felt Gabriel was hoping that I would tell him what I believed about this issue. Gabriel was adept at social learning, and talking with more experienced teachers was one of primary ways Gabriel was learning how to be an elementary music teacher.

in an elementary school context. This became clear to me when he asked me what I considered to be an interesting question related to music literacy and the curriculum during one of our conversations:

G: Does it say [students] have to say the notes of the staff in [the curriculum]? Does it?

J: Well they say– there’s that reading and writing section, right?

G: There is that reading and writing section but it doesn’t say directly they have to know– it’s implied–

J: Yeah, well that’s an interesting point, Gabe.

G: It does not say– the other aspects of that outcome or the outcomes on there, yeah– note naming, note writing– I don’t believe from what I’m looking at– it’s not a specific outcome.

J: It’s more– it’s more framed like in grade one they should be able to read and write *so*, *mi*, *la* on the staff. So it’s more framed like the little melodic turns.

G: Yes. Those are in there for sure. But the actual letter names of whether teachers take that extra step, it’s not clear as a very specific outcome I think. (Drop-in 3)

I take Gabriel’s comments to mean that, for him, reading music meant being able to name the notes on the staff using letter names. Because Gabriel saw reading music as being able to label notes, he gave students opportunities to practice labeling notes on the staff, which is something he had learned to do as an instrumentalist. This is the activity I saw him undertake with his grade five students in a recorder lesson. But the curriculum does not have labelling notes as a learning outcome. Instead, it frames reading and writing music as being able to recognize, perform, and write certain melodic patterns and turns. Gabriel was working hard to make sense of how this fit with his current understanding of what it meant to read music.

Many successes in the midst of tremendous growth.

While the learning curve was steep for Gabriel as a first year teacher, he had many moments of success and fulfillment throughout the year. He was excited to share about his winter concert and was also excited to talk about the progress of his grade one students. Gabriel had been teaching them to sing *so, mi, la* patterns, a tone set emphasized in the provincial Program of Studies, and he had organized his teaching to allow the grade one students to practice that skill over time. He shared:

Two weeks ago I did a singing assessment for...my grade ones. It was just *so, mi* and *la*. That was it, and they were all able to confidently do it. Now, I'm wondering, okay well, if I tried to do that with different classes would it work out that way? No, it wouldn't have...And I don't know why. Maybe it's just the group of kids, perhaps we spent more time on me hammering it into their heads... [laughs]. (Interview 1)⁶²

I also had the opportunity to observe a very successful kindergarten music class near the beginning of our time together. I wrote in my notes, "he has a nice way with the Kindergarteners. He's figured out how to do well with this age group," and this was certainly true (Field notes, Observation 1). The students were engaged, his lesson moved quickly, and Gabriel managed the class with great skill. All in all, Gabriel seemed to enjoy teaching even though he acknowledged that it was, at times, challenging.

Conclusion. Gabriel's approach to teaching music involved creating safe relationships and providing a variety of experiences with music and was characterized by much growth and

⁶² As an aside, I find it interesting that Gabriel understands this activity as a singing task where I would see it primarily as a precursor to reading and writing music in a sound before symbol approach. This is a good reminder to me that understanding is personal.

many successes. In the following section, I will turn to three salient aspects of Gabriel's experience of being a first year music teacher.

What is Gabriel's Experience of Teaching Elementary Music?

In this section, I will work through three themes related to Gabriel's first year teaching experience including the overwhelming feeling of survival, the limited support to which Gabriel had access because he was a music teacher, and Gabriel's evolving sense of classroom management.

Survival.

It is commonly understood that the first few years of teaching can be very difficult for novice teachers. This is not a new problem. Over forty years ago, Fuller (1969) and Fuller and Bown (1975) theorized that beginning teachers go through a stage where survival and a need for approval are their predominant concerns. More recently, a preoccupation with survival for early career music teachers has been documented in the literature through the work of Ballantyne (2007), Berg and Miksza (2010), Blair (2008), and Peterson (2005). Like the teachers in these studies, Gabriel mentioned several times over the course of the study that his goal for the year was survival. He is clearly not alone in experiencing his first year of music teaching as something he needed to survive. I will begin with an exploration of Gabriel's preoccupation with survival and what surviving first year teaching meant to him.

"Every day brings its own challenges." On more than one occasion, Gabriel mentioned that his personal goal was surviving his first year of teaching, and there were several times where he seemed to want an appraisal of his lesson when I observed in his music class. I came to understand that not only was Gabriel feeling unsure of his teaching, but he did not really have the space to reflect on his own practice to any significant degree. Because teaching elementary

music was a new experience, he sometimes genuinely did not know if things were going well and therefore he understandably wanted feedback and affirmation.

Dewey argues that reflection consists of an ongoing process of refining belief that is undertaken when faced with something puzzling in practice (Dewey, 1910/1997). The problem for Gabriel was that he was puzzled by almost everything. While he was aware he was growing and experienced first year teaching as “learning so much” (Drop-in 1), Gabriel could not step out of the day-to-dayness⁶³ of his experience to make sense of what he was learning or even to set meaningful goals for his practice or for his students’ learning. The continuity of Gabriel’s experience was overtaken by the present to such a large degree that he had limited access to either the past in terms of reflection or the future in terms of planning and direction. I came to see Gabriel’s experience of first year teaching as one of being almost completely tied up with the present and the very real concerns of each day. For example, Gabriel shared:

I think a lot of times it’s hitting me and I’m just absorbing like a sponge but not necessarily processing it right away. But I am for sure learning so much. I’m definitely a completely different person than I was at the beginning of the year (Drop-in 1).

Gabriel was aware that he was growing but unable to reflect on this learning. He noted that he was sure something had changed in his practice but “I mean not ...that I really realize” (Drop-in 2), and the next time we met he again commented on his growth, saying, “If you’re watching me, I’m sure you’d find it...But looking with my own eyes, I don’t know right now” (Drop-in 3).

While he could not see his own professional growth, Gabriel was, however, able to describe something of the quality of his lived experience of first year music teaching. He shared that, “it’s

⁶³ This is actually Holly’s term to describe her experience of teaching as a new teacher. She used it to describe the shift in her thinking from “day-to-dayness” to being able to think about a week, a month, a term and even a year as she became more experienced.

always adjusting, always changing...kind of the amount of opportunities...and the different variety of opportunities to work on different concepts... Survival's a big one" (Drop-in 2). Survival loomed large in Gabriel's experience of first year teaching along with a preoccupation for working out the mechanics of how to teach concepts to his students. He noted that "every day brings its own challenges" (Drop-in 3), and those challenges took up most of his available attention. Being preoccupied by the day's challenges was what it meant to survive first year music teaching for Gabriel, and being in this state of survival impacted Gabriel's professional learning.

Being in limbo. As I spent time with Gabriel, I came to understand that a significant area of self-concern that contributed to Gabriel's feeling of "day-to-dayness" and survival was the uncertainty he felt about his future. Up until the last week of the school year, Gabriel did not know if he would have a job with his school board the following year, and, if he did, if he would be able to come back to the same school or would be forced to start over in a new school. I came to understand Gabriel's situation as one of *being in limbo*, and as the year drew to a close, the uncertainty of what he called "the waiting game" (Drop-in 2) seemed to become more of a preoccupation. The day of our last conversation, I asked him what his goals were for the following year and he responded, "Being back here. That's a goal. [laughs]. Having a job in a school [laughs]" (Drop-in 5).

Survival concerns related to future job security took up a lot of space in Gabriel's thoughts, and this aspect of being in limbo affected his teaching and limited his professional growth (Ballentyne, 2007). As we chatted about his work with the school choir, for example, Gabriel noted that he was not making any plans beyond what he had done in the fall but was "just doing the status quo" (Drop-in 2) because he didn't yet know if he would be back. This was

also true when it came to intentionally improving his practice. Gabriel intimated that he was not really thinking ahead to the next year and what he wanted to work on because “I don’t know where I might be in the fall, so—” (Drop-in 2). Gabriel was preoccupied with his very real and immediate experience of survival; he did not know what the next year held and whether it was safe to put down roots and invest in this school. Gabriel was playing the game and biding his time to see what would happen for the following year.

Playing the game. While Gabriel was careful not to invest too much into his teaching and looking ahead, at the same time he made sure to do what he felt was necessary to prove himself to his school community. Gabriel intimated that he felt lucky to have gotten a job in the first place given the large number of people who had graduated with a B. Ed. the previous year, and he was actively engaged in and preoccupied with what I came to see as *playing the game*. By playing the game, I mean that Gabriel felt the need to prove himself publically in order to be offered a contract for the following year. He was very aware that his staff, principal, and the parents in the school were watching and evaluating his performance. Gabriel wisely seemed to have this in mind as he prepared students for assemblies, put together his Christmas concert, and when it came time to volunteer for other tasks at the staff meeting. He commented that he felt the pressure to go “over and beyond” as a first year teacher because there were few teaching jobs available with the district (Drop-in 5) but at the same time, he held back in case he didn’t get to return to his school. Gabriel believed that, in order to have a position the following year, what he did “has to be top, top notch to stick around. If you’re not doing everything you can, it gets noticed and there’s another person waiting for your position” (Drop-in 5). Gabriel’s experience of survival was thus characterized by tension between not investing too much privately and exceeding expectations publically. The pressure to be “top notch” in his work in his school was

tremendous. He experienced this pressure in part due to his own belief about of the shortage of available teaching positions, and also felt it from other members of the staff when it came time to volunteer for a variety of things where “you get some eyes looking your way,” and felt that other teachers might be questioning his motivation because “maybe Gabriel’s on his prob [i.e. probationary contract] and that’s why he’s doing this” (Drop-in 5). I came to appreciate that survival for Gabriel meant far more than making it through his lessons with the students. Gabriel experienced tremendous uncertainty about his future and enormous pressure to prove himself as a staff member and music educator.

Having to “go out and make the branches.” In Ballantyne’s (2007) study of early career instrumental teachers, she found that beginning music teachers’ physical and professional isolation from the rest of the school staff contributed to their feelings of survival. This was certainly Gabriel’s experience. He noted that his classroom was physically isolated from the other classrooms in the building, and so he had to be intentional to connect with his colleagues. He felt his physical separation acutely. One of the main mechanisms Gabriel relied on to learn how to teach was interacting with other teachers, and being in a different part of the building meant that he could not easily access an important source of informal learning. Gabriel did not have the benefit of many of the organic interactions arising in the course of a school day and had to proactively seek out his colleagues when in need. He noted that while he was coping with his experience of first year teaching,

I think some of the expectation of some of the things might have been a little bit smoother... in terms of just the transition into the profession with the students...I’m in a separate spot in the building. I’m segregated from everybody else. But it was quick for

me to realize that...nobody's going to come to me. I have to go out and make the branches. (Drop-in 1)

“Making the branches” was Gabriel’s metaphor for developing relationships with colleagues and building a network of support for his on-going learning.

While he realized quickly that he needed to connect with his colleagues in his school, when Gabriel did manage to access them, he found they often had little in common because of the nature of his position as a music teacher compared to that of the homeroom teachers. Gabriel explains:

I mean all the time stuff's going on in the school that I am just completely left out with and they talk all this lingo about the LA and these assessments and this and that and IPPs⁶⁴ and all these different things which they connect and bond with, but [the only thing] we mostly connect over ... is behavior issues...That's [the music teacher's] connection with the rest of the teachers mostly. (Drop-in 5)

Like most school music teachers, Gabriel had no one to talk to in his building about how to teach music or to suggest activities, repertoire, and solutions for music-specific classroom management issues. While he occasionally asked the former music teacher, his mom, or his aunt for help, all of who were retired music teachers, Gabriel seldom availed himself of this support. The nature of what Gabriel needed was not really someone of whom he could ask questions. In fact, he noted that, “I really haven’t had too many questions” (Drop-in 3). Gabriel was engaged in a complex and personal process of making what he had learned about teaching “more real” (Drop-in 3). He

⁶⁴ By “LA,” Gabriel means Language Arts. IPPs are Individualized Program Plans. They are a provincially regulated document that is drafted by a teacher in consultation with the administration, student, and their family in order to accommodate special learning needs. See <https://education.alberta.ca/media/511715/ipp.pdf> for more information.

more likely needed someone with whom he could check in regularly as he worked out what “real” might look like in his specific situation beginning with what it meant to teach musical concepts. He more likely needed models and feedback on his teaching.

Limited support for Gabriel as a music teacher.

Another element that contributed to Gabriel’s experience of professional isolation was the district mandated first year teacher and mentorship program. While the school district had put measures in place to support Gabriel and other first year teachers, the support offered was not specific to Gabriel’s unique role as a music teacher in an elementary school. Gabriel attended 10 hours of first year teacher sessions throughout the year and also was assigned a very supportive mentor who checked in with Gabriel from time to time, even visiting Gabriel at school. Unfortunately, Gabriel’s diligent and caring mentor had no music teaching experience. While he offered to help Gabriel in any way he could, he could not help Gabriel sort out how to teach music, or help Gabriel learn how to teach musical concepts which is the area where Gabriel felt he needed help. Gabriel and his mentor both knew that the situation was not ideal.

Compounding the problem of the lack of music-specific support for Gabriel was the fact that the school board had recently eliminated the position of music consultant. In previous years the consultant had been available to first year teachers to help them transition into the profession, and had organized music-specific professional learning opportunities and helped build a community of music teachers within the district. Gabriel needed music specific support and had few avenues within his school board to access this.

Gabriel’s experience of first year teaching as something to be survived had a marked impact on his teaching and on his professional growth. The day-to-dayness of his experience along with the feeling of being in limbo in terms of his future job security were large preoccupations, and he had limited access to other people who could help him grow in his

practice because of his isolation in his school and the limited support for music specialists in his school division. A further preoccupation that marked Gabriel's understanding of first year music teaching was his understanding of classroom management and its importance in his work as an elementary music teacher.

An evolving sense of classroom management.

Fredrickson and Neill (2004) and Kreuger (2001) report that classroom management poses a significant challenge for first year music teachers. While Gabriel understood his primary task as teaching the concepts in the curriculum to his students, it turned out that this was not easy to do. Because he was a musician, Gabriel indicated that he felt confident about the music part of his job, but in spite of his music background and experience teaching privately, he found teaching music in an elementary school (particularly his school) was difficult:

I think the struggles aren't curricular for me in terms of music... It's the life-skills aspect of things that the children bring [to the music room that is challenging]... it's a short amount of time that I have with them. It's difficult spending so much time on management. (Interview 1)

While classroom management is arguably always more challenging for music teachers than for homeroom teachers, Gabriel also had many students who would not actively or positively engage in music class, and who "need a lot of coaxing, a lot of work—" (Interview 1). I witnessed this in every class I observed, particularly with upper elementary groups.

Gabriel understood that classroom management was an issue that interfered with musical learning and his goal of "providing a variety of experiences," and he seemed to initially locate the difficulty primarily with the students and the fact that they were in a new learning environment in the music room. He commented that "I think the ability to go off-task inside the music room or the gymnasium is larger potentially... than in the classroom" (Interview 1). Being

in an unstructured environment such as the music room or the gym made classroom management difficult, but as the year went on, Gabriel seemed to be slowly making the connection between student engagement and behavior, and the way he taught. After watching a grade three lesson where the students worked on performing an ostinato and played a singing game, I asked Gabriel what he thought about the lesson. He responded, “While I thought it was better for them than lessons that they’ve had in the past. Whether [it’s] being engaged and—” (Drop-in 1). When I asked him why he thought the students were more engaged, he responded that part of it was “not having the opportunity for them to pause and get too far off track...and choosing activities that limit time in between or the transitions between different things” (Drop-in 1). Gabriel was learning how to pace and structure a lesson so that the students were more likely to be engaged. His understanding about classroom management was shifting from managing student behavior to managing teaching and learning. Gabriel shared, “throughout the year I’ve gotten more of a gist of what can be achieved in a week, what can be achieved in a class, so... You always want to over plan than under plan” (Drop-in 3) and he was considering having more than one activity in a lesson.

Problem solving versus problem setting. Perhaps because of the student population, Gabriel’s main preoccupation with classroom management was finding consequences for misbehavior. This was an area in which he felt ill-equipped:

That is an aspect that I wish would be touched on...Natural consequences... is the child acting up because he doesn’t want to participate? So is he sitting out because he doesn’t want to participate, he’s acting up and that’s his goal? Is that the right connection then of a consequence?... That’s my largest struggle professionally is how to find appropriate consequences for misbehaviors. (Interview 1)

Here we see Gabriel's framing of the problem as needing appropriate consequences for misbehavior. However, Gabriel was also clearly thinking about the students. He seemed to genuinely want to understand what was going on with them. For example, Gabriel shared this about one of his students:

I have one in particular that I'm thinking of in my mind...I'm trying to connect with him. Trying to talk with him... and he just wants to shut himself down. He will openly say "I don't like music." ... "Well why?" ... And he has yet to open up to me. It's just very difficult right now with that student and his performance. (Interview 1)

Gabriel had clearly thought a lot about the boy in question. Learning and being able to play music provided significant joy for Gabriel, and he wanted his students to experience a meaningful connection with music too. He believed wholeheartedly that music class provided something worthwhile to his students even if some of the children, including the boy he discussed above, could not yet see how. This was one of the problems Gabriel was trying to solve. I came to appreciate that Gabriel had a strong belief in the importance of music education.

In sum, Gabriel's experience of first year teaching was characterized by a need to survive and be safe professionally, an overwhelming preoccupation with the present, limited support as a music specialist, and an evolving sense of classroom management. While Gabriel was unable to step out of the present to frame problems in his practice to any great degree, he was working hard to address the problems he could see. Gabriel was experiencing tremendous growth, messy and all-encompassing though it was.

How Does Gabriel Experience Professional Learning?

Gabriel was learning how to teach on many levels as a first year music teacher. First, as we have seen in exploring what learning and teaching music means to Gabriel, he was actively engaged in

the process of making connections between his previous understanding of learning and teaching music as an instrumentalist and private teacher, and teaching music in an elementary school context. Secondly, Gabriel's understanding of his work as an elementary music teacher was evolving and changing as he endeavored to put into practice the framing ideas he held about teaching and teaching music, some of which he took from his formal teacher education. Not surprisingly, most of Gabriel's professional growth resulted from his work learning how to teach in his specific school and making sense of what he had learned in university rather than from formal professional learning events he attended throughout the year. Gabriel was literally learning to *be* an elementary music teacher. In this section, I will discuss several aspects of how Gabriel experienced professional learning and I will try to provide a sense of the quality and mechanisms of this learning. Themes related to Gabriel's professional learning include "jumping through hoops," Orff-Schulwerk as a "big helper" to his practice, a movement from general to specific understanding, the social nature of Gabriel's professional learning, and professional learning as identity-making.

Jumping through hoops.

There were several formal professional learning structures in which Gabriel was obliged to participate. First, as mentioned earlier, Gabriel was required to attend 10 hours of mandatory after-school sessions as part of a district-wide first year teacher program. Topics covered in the program included working with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNMI) students, classroom management, assessment, universal design for learning, and planning. Secondly, he was also assigned a mentor who was to meet with him periodically throughout Gabriel's first and second year of teaching with the school board. Gabriel was also expected to complete an Annual Professional Growth Plan, which he was required to submit to his principal near the beginning of

the year.⁶⁵ Gabriel's participation in these formal mechanisms had the quality of what I came to think of as "jumping through hoops." Instead of being meaningful structures for learning, Gabriel experienced these events and relationships as obligations he had to go through in order to achieve his goal of being an elementary music teacher and obtaining a permanent teaching contract.

First year teacher program. Of the sessions Gabriel attended for first year teachers, the one that stood out for him was on the topic of working with FNMI students. He valued "getting more background information about... the culture and how their history has [affected FNMI peoples] in terms of the... residential school system [and how the] trickle-down effect is still affecting these kids" (Drop-in 5). Gabriel was making connections between the many FNMI students and families in his school and what he learned in the session. Other than this specific session, Gabriel did not experience the first year teacher program as being particularly meaningful. It wasn't that he was disinterested or found the topics to be irrelevant to his work. Rather, Gabriel had already encountered most of the big ideas on which the program focused while he was a student completing his education degree, and so the sessions felt like a review:

I've noticed that, being fresh out of university and going to all these PDs that teachers are going to now and talking all the stuff about assessment and you know, universal design for learning— it's just like I was in university...with the same language. (Drop-in 5)

Gabriel was already familiar with many of the concepts covered in the first year teacher sessions, although his understanding was still at a surface level. Although the concepts covered were not

⁶⁵ A Professional Growth Plan is required from all teachers in the province under the Provincial Government's Teacher Growth, Supervision, and Evaluation Policy
<https://www.education.gov.ab.ca/media/1626684/tgse.pdf>

new, perhaps what Gabriel did learn from these sessions is that his school board valued these particular big ideas.

A further difficulty with the program for Gabriel was that there was no music-specific focus in any of the sessions. Conway, Hibbard, Albert and Hourigan (2005b) argue that music teachers need subject-specific professional learning, and choices in their learning, neither of which Gabriel had in this particular context. While Gabriel could at least sit with other music teachers at the meetings, because each session was offered multiple times, he was seldom with the same colleagues. Gabriel had met two or three other music teachers attending the first year teacher sessions, but he clearly lacked a cohort.

When I asked Gabriel what advice he would have for the consultants that ran the first year teacher program, he responded, “Put in a music consultant for [the program]” (Drop-in 5). He mentioned that he would have appreciated a mentor who was a music teacher, and music-specific sessions in the program. The quality of Gabriel’s experience that I have characterized as jumping through hoops seemed to stem in part from a lack of relevance to Gabriel’s specific teaching situation and a lack of music colleagues.

Annual Teacher Professional Growth Plan. Like all teachers in the province, Gabriel was required to complete an Annual Professional Growth Plan. While the Alberta Teachers’ Association, the professional association and union of teachers in the province, suggests that meaningful professional learning goals must “have substance and meaning for the teacher” and “stretch current thinking and practice” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2015), Gabriel’s Professional Growth Plan consisted of two goals: Going through the materials that his mother and the previous teacher had left him, and to “continue ... with my Orff development and engaging and renewing my membership [to the local Orff chapter] and participating in the PDs

and the sessions [offered by the chapter]” (Interview 1). When I asked him about his principal’s expectations for his Professional Growth Plan at our first meeting in the spring, Gabriel noted:

I had to just write down briefly [one or two goals]– write what they are at the beginning of the year ... Next week I’m going to be meeting up with my admin... she wants just a conversation. How is it going? What are your next steps and so forth going onward?

(Interview 1)

Gabriel’s principal offered some support for his professional growth, but the process of developing an Annual Professional Growth Plan did not seem to be a meaningful one. While Gabriel *solved* problems as they came up such as dealing with inappropriate behavior and planning his lessons or events as he went, he was not yet able to step outside of his practice and *set* problems. As mentioned earlier, this distinction comes from Schön (1983) who notes that problem solving consists in choosing the best solution from “available means” (p. 39) whereas problem setting is a process whereby a practitioner interacts with and within their environment in order to “*name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them” (1983, p. 40). I am suggesting that Gabriel could not yet name and frame professional goals in his practice, and so his goals for his Professional Growth Plan had a surface quality; he did not yet have insight into what to address in his work as an elementary music teacher and was only able to apply techniques that he already knew to the problems he could see.

Orff-Schulwerk as a “big helper.”

A second theme in Gabriel’s experience of professional learning related to his experiences with the Orff-Schulwerk levels course he had taken prior to his first year of teaching elementary music. Gabriel mentioned several times how beneficial the Orff courses were for his “survival.” He shared, “[getting] my Orff training– That’s probably the big helper of where I am

today” (Interview 1). While Gabriel had taught private cello lessons, these experiences did not necessarily help with teaching music in an elementary school setting. Gabriel noted that “because of taking [the Orff courses], I know...how to at least start to do something with [the students]. If I didn’t have that? Oh my goodness. I would– I don’t know. I’d be lost” (Interview 1). The Orff courses provided a place to start for Gabriel, making both his practicum experiences in his Education degree and his first year of teaching more manageable.

Inquiring into Gabriel’s professional learning experiences and processes, I came to understand that a major component of Gabriel’s professional learning in his first year of teaching had to do with learning what Orff pedagogy meant in practice in a particular setting. Participating in the Orff-Schulwerk courses had resulted in professional learning for Gabriel in at least two significant ways. First, Gabriel found the courses meaningful to his work teaching elementary music because a salient instructional strategy used by the instructors for both levels was to demonstrate activities as though the course participants were children in an elementary music class. Gabriel therefore had exemplars of teaching practice from which he could draw. Secondly, Orff-Schulwerk seemed to provide a framework for Gabriel to think about teaching music. As we have seen, Gabriel framed his practice around the idea of providing “a variety of experiences,” which was related to how he understood Orff pedagogy.

“Experiencing it as the student.” Gabriel was an enthusiastic adherent of Orff-Schulwerk even though he was a novice practitioner, and he seemed to especially value the various teaching activities to which he was introduced in the levels courses. In fact, Gabriel experienced the Orff-Schulwerk courses as a meaningful and significant professional learning opportunity in large part because the courses provided an opportunity to see models of what Orff practice could look like

in action. Many if not all of his instructors used modelling as an instructional strategy. Gabriel explained the value of what he called “experiencing it as the student”:

You get to experience it as the student... It’s just a completely different world when you can sit on the opposite side ... the instructors are teaching us, but they are doing it almost very similarly to the [way they would do it with children]...it’s a lot quicker and they don’t have to use the same language necessarily, but...you’re experiencing what the children would experience: The movement, the voice, the instruments– it’s all what they would be doing. (Drop-in 2)

Participating in this way provided Gabriel with exemplars on which he could base his own teaching including strategies and activities that he could take right into his classroom. But even more than this, experiencing it as the student provided Gabriel with “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*” or “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 72): A way of being in his classroom which added up to “being an Orff teacher.”

A framework for thinking about teaching: “The way I approach what I do.” Gabriel contrasted his Orff-Schulwerk instructors’ approach of presenting multiple activities and strategies with his experience of learning cello where lessons mostly consisted of, “we’re only learning a song” (Drop-in 3). The idea of “a variety of experiences” was central to Gabriel’s understanding of Orff pedagogy.

Through his multiple encounters with Orff-Schulwerk, Gabriel had constructed a guiding framework for thinking about teaching elementary music which he thought of as “teaching Orff.” Gabriel’s emerging framework seemed to consist mainly of the following two principles: (1) Orff-Schulwerk covers “all aspects of the musical experience” (Interview 1) and is therefore “a

holistic approach to childhood music education” (Drop-in 3);⁶⁶ and (2) music is taught in such a way that concepts are “intertwined” with different aspects of music (Ex. voice, body, movement, percussion) (Drop-in 3).⁶⁷ These two notions together constituted what Gabriel meant when he said “a variety of experiences.”

Gabriel’s framework was both the product and a mechanism of his professional learning. It represented his unfolding understanding of what Orff-Schulwerk *meant*, and this understanding served as a starting place to sort out what “teaching Orff” was in practice. For example, while working out his weekly plans, Gabriel used his framework to weigh whether he was providing a variety of experiences. Provided that students participated in different activities in successive class periods, Gabriel seemed to be satisfied that he was “teaching Orff.”

The framework Gabriel had constructed to represent his understanding of “teaching Orff” was not the only consideration in planning the activities Gabriel did in his music classes. Gabriel also measured his practice against the provincial music curriculum and the commercial resource he had purchased, and in turn, measured these two documents against his framework. Gabriel explained that his planning process started with choosing learning outcomes and then selecting music and a variety of activities, and that through engaging in this process he was learning how to teach elementary music within his specific situation:

I look at the outcome— the outcomes are the big thing, and then I see how I get there.

With those outcomes, what pieces will get me there. What processes do I need work on

⁶⁶ Gabriel explained further that a holistic approach included, “voice, movement, rhythm, form, expression, everything, you know. It’s what it’s all about...All combined together for sure in all aspects. So each one of those is necessary for the other in a sense where you can- it’s a holistic approach for the students— music in all of those different forms and ways” (Drop-in 3).

⁶⁷ I interpret Gabriel’s second point to mean that he understands the process of learning music in Orff practice to happen through engaging in different forms of embodied activity.

this day or this week... every class will be slightly different because I'm still learning too, so how long will it take this class to learn this material. (Drop-in 2)

This process of measuring between Gabriel's guiding framework and his practice, his framework and the curriculum, and his framework and the activities and lessons of the commercial curriculum resource was an important mechanism of Gabriel's professional learning. In sum, Gabriel had a general understanding of what Orff-Schulwerk *meant* (a holistic approach to music education through which concepts were intertwined), and he was engaged in a dialectical and iterative process of learning what Orff-Schulwerk meant *in practice* in relation to the curriculum, the resource he had purchased, and his specific teaching situation.

From general to specific.

As Gabriel engaged in a dialectic process of professional learning between the framework of understanding he had constructed, and the curriculum, the commercial resource he had purchased, and his practice, Gabriel's understanding of teaching music was constantly shifting and evolving. This shift in understanding is what I interpret as being professional growth for Gabriel. As Gabriel added new concepts to the framework he had constructed about teaching music, his understanding moved from a general to a specific understanding. First, Gabriel became aware of a term connected to an idea at a workshop, in a course, at a meeting, or in a conversation. The term/idea was sometimes completely new to him, but most often it seemed to be an idea Gabriel had already encountered. Next, he began to notice the idea in practice, in conversation, in workshops, etc. and, when he noticed it, Gabriel began to label the concept in question. As Gabriel noticed the phenomenon and labelled it, he also began to fill in more detail in his thinking. Thus, Gabriel's framework of understanding became more complex and increasingly more nuanced as he grounded it in his experience.

An example of this movement from general to more specific understanding can be found in Gabriel's comments related to the concept of "valuable repertoire" that I shared earlier. One day when we were talking, Gabriel mentioned that he felt that students need to learn valuable repertoire. The next time we met, I asked him what he meant by quality repertoire:

Quality repertoire would probably be something that offers multiple, kind of, areas of music that you can incorporate into... learning and teaching— rhythm, emphasis form, kind of all those concepts I think, and I'm still learning what quality is too (Drop-in 4).

Thus, Gabriel clarified that quality repertoire consisted of songs that can be used for teaching and reinforcing music concepts, as opposed to songs that one would just sing for entertainment, pleasure, or for a performance. Here Gabriel has added a new refinement to his understanding of quality repertoire: pedagogically useful pieces.⁶⁸

As mentioned earlier, quality repertoire was on Gabriel's mind earlier in the year as well, albeit with less clarity. One day when we chatted Gabriel suggested that the commercial curriculum he was using lacked a "repertoire of pieces, vocal pieces" (Drop-in 2). He also noted that he was looking for choral pieces that were longer, in part because students had commented to him, "These songs are pretty short. Is that it? (Interview 1)." His interactions with me and with his students provided another clarification to his understanding of quality repertoire: Quality repertoire consisted in part of more substantial choral pieces in addition to short folk songs.

Just as he worked out his understanding by moving back and forth between his framework and his practice, Gabriel was also engaged in an iterative process of moving back and forth between a given concept, in this case the idea of 'valuable repertoire,' and his lived

⁶⁸ Note also that Gabriel's answer is clearly provisional. He is trying to fit the idea of quality repertoire into his framework of "teaching Orff as a holistic approach taught through intertwined concepts."

experience as he developed his thinking (Dewey, 1910). Dewey notes that “to think means, in any case, to bridge a gap in experience” (1910, p. 80), and Gabriel was progressively settling “unsettled situations” in his practice, adding more nuance and specific details to enrich his understanding (Thayer, 1981, p. 171). Gabriel experienced this aspect of his learning as having his understanding become more concrete. He explained, “There’s probably things I knew but it just became more real” (Drop-in 3). The ideas and concepts he ‘knew’ on some level were becoming more tangible.

While part of how Gabriel’s understanding was becoming more concrete was through a process of fitting his framework of “teaching Orff” with the provincial curriculum as mentioned above, another aspect was learning how to take the curriculum and the commercial resource he was using, and translate these two documents into the time frame of a lesson, a week, a month, a term, and a year with his students. The transition from thinking broadly and conceptually to thinking specifically in time was not easy for Gabriel:

I don’t like thinking day by day. You gotta think big picture and...break it down from there I guess. Yeah, [a] week is kind of the big thing and if stuff needs to be more than a couple of weeks long, that’s fine...So I’m kind of thinking little goals throughout the year need to be, you know... shorter than a couple of weeks, and then, I don’t know– I just– I go with it– get there. I get it done [laughs] (Drop-in 2).

Gabriel was gradually developing the capacity to think about the concrete reality and time frame of a week or a class period rather than thinking uniquely in broad and theoretical terms. His was learning what his framework meant in action and modifying it as he went. This process of clarification was a key mechanism of his professional learning resulting in growth in Gabriel’s thinking and practice.

“It’s whoever I know, I’ll talk to:” The social nature of professional learning.

One of the main mechanisms through which Gabriel refined his understanding related to teaching music was his interaction with other people. He refined his understanding of what valuable repertoire was through his interactions with his students and through articulating what valuable repertoire meant in the context of our conversations, and he also refined what it meant to teach Orff-Schulwerk through interacting with members of the Orff-Schulwerk community. Interestingly, Gabriel knew that his learning was social on some level. Returning to Gabriel’s discussion of quality repertoire again, he shared, “I think well established pieces have sustained through time because of being higher quality” (Drop-in 4). He then went on to clarify that he relied on “people who have been in this business for years” and their recommendations and repertoire choices as well as what he saw in published resources as the measure of quality. Essentially, Gabriel was suggesting that quality repertoire is that repertoire which has been vetted by more experienced teachers such as the authors of the resource he was using, or experienced teachers that he knew. He relied on other teachers to learn about teaching elementary music commenting that “It’s whoever I know, I’ll talk to” (Drop-in 4). He depended on other music teachers that he knew to help him learn what it meant to teach elementary music. Ironically, while Gabriel needed interaction because it was the primary mechanism of his professional learning, his experience was one of being isolated from his peers. Being around other music teachers constituted an important opportunity for learning for Gabriel.

Workshops as sites of intersection with a community of practice. A major shift in my own understanding related to the professional learning of music teachers is that workshops are incredibly important— not so much for the content that is shared— but because they are an opportunity for music teachers to interact with a community of practice. In fact, Gabriel noted that workshops allowed him to be “immersed in the community. Being immersed in the

community is the biggest impact for me” (Drop-in 4). While Cochran-Smith (2004) and Stanley (2011) argue that workshops have little long-term impact on teaching practice, Gabriel helped me to see that the value of workshops was not so much in changing teachers’ practice, but in providing occasions for teachers to learn the values and big ideas that a community sees as important as they become members of the community. As Wenger (1999) argues, “working with others who share the same conditions is...a central factor in defining the enterprise they engage in” (p. 45). Workshops are thus an important mechanism for not only the community which is defined by its members shared practices, but for the community’s individual members who, in the process of negotiating their place and membership in the community, are constructing an identity.⁶⁹ In other words, it is through interaction with other members of the community that the individual constructs their identity.

Professional learning as identity making.

I have argued above that the individual comes to know themselves in relation to the community and that “building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities.” (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). While identities are personally experienced, they are a socially constructed understanding of the self (Dolloff, 1999). Implied in a social and constructivist conception of identity is that a person’s identity is not static but “ever evolving, constantly shifting in response to our experiences and to the social context” (Bernard, 2004, p. 14). Participating in music-making for Gabriel had gradually fostered the development of a musical identity (Pellegrino, 2011). Gabriel had developed an identity as a string player over the many years of his music education. Interestingly, this identity included being a music educator. Gabriel saw these two parts of his identity as going “hand in hand” (Interview 1).

⁶⁹ I will come back to a discussion of workshops in subsequent chapters.

Through his interactions with his cello teachers and his experiences of teaching privately, Gabriel had developed what J. G. Knowles (1992) would call a strong *teacher role identity*, a positive sense of self as a teacher. Being a music educator in a specific context (teaching strings, being a conductor) was already part of Gabriel's identity and now he was learning who he was in relation to at least two new communities: His school staff and the Orff-Schulwerk teachers in his community. In other words, Gabriel was learning what acceptable practice looked like in both of these contexts and was simultaneously being transformed into a practitioner in these communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In short, Gabriel was learning how to *be* an elementary music teacher through his personal experiences as a first year teacher and through his interactions with the communities of which he was a member. He experienced this process of change as a change of *mindset*. While he may not have noticed how his practice was evolving, Gabriel was noticing that *he* was changing. I return to the following conversation I had with Gabriel:

G: I think a lot of times it's hitting me and I'm just absorbing like a sponge but not necessarily processing it right away. But I am, for sure, learning so much I'm definitely a completely different person than I was at the beginning of the year...

J: What's changed for you do you think?

G: Mindset for sure is number one. That went out right away from the beginning.

J: Mindset as— in terms of how to relate to the kids or, what do you mean by that?

G: Just coming into the profession from doing, you know, student teaching in the spring time and then job in the fall...I think some of the expectation of some of the things might have been a little bit smoother... in terms of just the transition into the profession. (Drop-in 1)

Gabriel's identity was shifting and he was beginning to see himself as an elementary music teacher but this shift in how he saw himself was not easy for Gabriel. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that, "identity in relation with practice, and hence knowledge and skill and their significance to the subject and the community, are never unproblematic" (p. 116). There were aspects of becoming an elementary music teacher that were unfamiliar and challenging for Gabriel. Issues of pedagogy and identity construction were not easy matters.

Conclusion

The case of Gabriel has provided an opportunity for me to develop a more complex understanding of what teaching music meant to one first-year music teacher and how he experienced professional learning. After providing a narrative portrait of Gabriel to facilitate part/whole analysis, I explored Gabriel's experiences and beliefs as a music learner and as a teacher. Finally, I analyzed how Gabriel experienced professional learning through discussion of several themes: Jumping through hoops, Orff-Schulwerk as a big helper, moving from general to specific understanding, the social nature of Gabriel's professional learning, and identity construction as professional learning. The following two chapters consist of a similar analysis of the other two cases in the study, while Chapter Eight represents a further layer of analysis across cases.

Chapter Six: Holly, a Mid-Career Music Teacher in a New School

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore my storied understanding of Holly's experience of music, teaching, and learning. The chapter is divided into three larger sections: A narrative portrait which is part of my data analysis in coming to understand Holly's experience; a discussion of what music and teaching music mean to Holly; and, finally, an exploration of Holly's experience of professional learning.

Working with Holly

Holly and I first crossed paths when she was an early-career grade one teacher who attended a Kindergarten music session for which I was the clinician at a teachers' convention. Many years later, I had the opportunity to get to know her when she took two summer courses that I taught, and she was also a friend of a friend. I approached her about being a participant in my study because I was interested in her non-conventional take on teaching and professional learning. Holly was in her 11th year of teaching and her first year of teaching in a new school for a new school district. She was helpful, relational, interested in my learning as a novice researcher, and she seemed to genuinely enjoy reflecting on her life, her teaching, and her learning. I feel incredibly honoured that Holly chose to trust me by participating in my study and I am deeply indebted to her for her tremendous help in learning about what teaching music meant to her and how she experienced professional learning.

I met with Holly five times over the course of the study, once for a longer introductory interview lasting around two hours and four times for what I called "drop-in" interviews where we had a brief conversation over lunch, on her day off, or over coffee. I also observed her music classes twice at school and once in her private studio. Each observation was approximately two

hours long. Finally, I attended a school event Holly had organized. As I did with Gabriel, I followed up with Holly at each drop-in interview about questions that arose for me during ongoing data analysis of interview transcripts and observations.

For our first meeting, Holly asked me into her home and we had tea. I can't help but reflect now that this is an excellent window into the generous way that Holly allowed me into her life for the duration of the study and beyond. When I arrived, I discovered that Holly had spent hours the evening before preparing for our conversation based on the Pre-Interview Activity (PIA) prompts I had sent her ahead of time. She had several pages of drawings and jottings where she had organized her thoughts, printouts about some of her favorite childhood artists, and sound files of songs to share. When I marveled at how organized she was, she smiled and responded "Well, it's kind of fun" (Interview 1). Holly clearly enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on her relationship with music, her teaching, and her life.

My first interview with Holly was also the first interview of the study and it was truly a magical experience for me. In spite of the fact that I had asked Holly for only an hour of her time, we spent almost two hours together. This was Holly's choice. In that time, Holly walked me through all of the PIA artifacts that she had prepared, leading me through what she wanted to share with me about her life. In doing so, she gave me a rich window into who she was and how she experienced music and teaching. At the end of her sharing, I looked down at the sheet of open-ended questions I had prepared and realized that she had answered all of them in her own way through our conversation without me asking a single question. It was a humbling experience. I walked away feeling truly blessed. Holly had been incredibly generous in allowing me into her world, and I felt truly grateful and blessed to be able to spend that time with her. The fact that she shared so openly about her life and experience on her own terms was a tremendous

resource to me in coming to understand her experience hermeneutically. The following narrative portrait was constructed from the transcripts from our interviews together and was confirmed with Holly.

A Narrative Portrait of Holly

Holly grew up in a small town in a family that valued music. In fact, her father was a gospel singer who often travelled with his family to large events where he and his group would perform. At times, Holly's mother was part of her dad's band. Holly remembers singing on the road and staying awake for hours in the motor home listening to one of her beloved tapes over and over through the headphones of her Walkman while her mom and two sisters slept. She was immersed in the southern gospel style and even got to meet her musical hero, a young gospel singer who Holly greatly admired. Holly listened to recordings of the singer's music until she literally wore out the tapes.

Holly remembers singing in church as a very young child, but as she got older, she got more and more reticent to perform in front of people. She also sang in choir at church and at school, and took piano lessons along with her two sisters. She explained, "So we all took piano. We didn't have a choice. We had to... in our family, we take piano" (Interview 1). Holly began lessons when she was seven and although she didn't enjoy the "big, scary recitals" put on in her town by all of the piano teachers, after a few years of playing, something "clicked" for her about music. She noted, "I fell in love with the piano on a personal level, right? So in my piano lessons, I was doing Royal Conservatory,⁷⁰ but on my own, I did other stuff. (Interview 1) Exploring gospel music, Elton John piano arrangements, and learning how to chord from her

⁷⁰ The Royal Conservatory of Music is an institution in Toronto, Canada that sends examiners out all over the country to adjudicate practical performance exams on many instruments including piano.

mom who played by ear, Holly discovered a powerful passion for music. Although she loved to play, she did not love to perform. She was a bright young woman who soon figured out that performing opened her up to being criticized:

When I was little, I was uninhibited, and then later, I just become more inhibited and I feared critique. Because you know, you take piano lessons and we had these big, scary recitals and I had to do piano exams. And so for a lot of my childhood... music resulted in my music being critiqued. (Interview 1)

As she matured, Holly became more and more protective of her special relationship with music, and by the time she was in high school, she was refusing to play in the town-wide piano recital. As mentioned above, she had “fallen in love with the piano on a personal level” and had discovered a growing passion for music. In our first conversation, she remarked on the roots of this passion: “I think that’s ... where my passion comes from... music is a spiritual experience for me” (Interview 1). Throughout her youth, Holly gradually figured out that music tapped into something spiritual and deeply personal for her, and she refused to perform because being criticized was antithetical to her spiritual connection with music.

While playing the piano was an important musical outlet for Holly, it was not her only outlet. A significant way that Holly developed her connection with music was through attending concerts and listening to recordings. In addition to being a gospel singer, her father was also a concert promoter, and Holly had many opportunities as a youth to go to concerts and musical events, often taking tickets at the door. She noted:

I always...I knew I loved [music], and I knew I had a passion but ...I didn’t personally make the music. I listened to the music. I listened to my tapes and CDs, and I went to tons and tons of concerts. So I was always an audience member...I was friends with all

these people that made the music, but I was not a person that made the music. (Interview 1)

Holly did not see herself as “a person who made the music” even though playing the piano was an important part of her budding musical identity.

As Holly walked me through her list of specific songs and artists that she had prepared prior to our first interview, she had a story to tell about each piece and what it meant to her, commenting that these pieces were “important songs through different stages of my life” (Interview 1). She confessed that she continued to be an avid concertgoer and that, in recent years, she has gone to several concerts of many of her teenage idols. Holly noted that attending performances is important musically for her, remarking, “How I engage with music in my life... I just go to a lot of concerts” (Interview 1). She also listened to a wide range of recordings across genres, including hymns, gospel music, and Christmas songs (regardless of the time of year), pop and classical music, and musical theatre. Holly allowed herself to be moved by a variety of musics, and when she had a connection to a particular piece, she listened to it over and over again:

I sort of, like, will often kind of become obsessed with one song, and then I’ll listen to it for however long that lasts, if it’s like, two weeks or a month or six months, whatever. But I’ll, like, kind of get obsessed with a certain song for— and I’ll listen to it, like, every day...I’ll listen to it for, like an hour and a half on repeat...and then— and then it’ll change, and I’ll be into something else. (Interview 1)

While Holly continually nurtured her connection with music through listening and attending concerts, she also talked about the joy she felt singing. Reflecting on her own school music education, Holly reminisced about her time as a student in Mrs. Boyle's⁷¹ music class:

So I had her for grade one, two, and three. And I loved to sing in her class. We sang, sang, sang, sang. And we had these little songbooks. And she taught us to read. Like you read verse one and then you go back and you sing the chorus, and you go back and read verse two, and that's how I learned to read, and that's how I could follow the hymn book then, right? And so I loved – that's where I learned– I loved to sing in [Mrs. Boyle's] class. (Interview 1)

Holly had several experiences of singing with church and community choirs as a youth and adult, but she especially valued the experience of singing with a choir that she joined in her first years of teaching in a small community. Part of the reason this choir experience was important in her story was that, in Holly's words, she "really developed as a singer" (Interview 1). With only two or three people on a part, Holly had to learn to hold her own. She noted, "we were actually really good ... So that was a very exciting time for me" (Interview 1). The other reason this choir experience was significant for Holly was that it helped her to realize her true vocation.

Holly had not gone blindly into teaching. Her mother was a teacher and had even taught elementary school music. Growing up, Holly had seen how hard her mother worked, taking marking with her to her sister's gymnastic meets and spending many hours preparing her students' report cards. Holly was leery about teaching as a career. Upon graduating from high school, she first completed a teaching assistant diploma before she realized that she needed to be

⁷¹ All names and place names in Holly's story have been changed to protect Holly's identity and the identity of those around her.

the one making the pedagogical decisions and went back to school to pursue a Bachelor of Education. At the time she was singing with the community choir, Holly was teaching grade one and hadn't really considered teaching music even though going to choir rehearsal was the highlight of her week:

It was very stretching for me...And I would be... so tired [because I was teaching grade one full time. I would] go home and have a nap, eat some supper. Our choir thing started 7 o'clock on Monday nights. And it was just sort of the peak of my week...So that's how I realized that I should become a music teacher. Because if that was the peak of my week, then why not-- why am I not doing that every day? (Interview 1)

Holly had connected with her passion for music. The last year she taught grade one, Holly attended a Math PD session. Part of the session took place in the music room of the school hosting the event. While everyone else watched a Math video, Holly had something else on her mind:

So we sat in this music room, and it was like a circular room with the levels. It wasn't even that big, and I was, like, looking at the bulletin boards and [the teacher] had ...the classical composers on the bulletin boards, and I was looking at the books behind the teacher's desk, and I was just sitting there in this room...I had no idea what was on the video. But the room was dark, and I had this, like, moment. I started to cry. And it was like this overwhelming-- you know what I mean? I went home and applied to...

[university where she did her Bachelor of Education], like, right after that...I had always kind of had it in my mind-- (Interview 1)

Holly had found her professional passion. She gave notice to her principal, taught out the school year, and moved back to the city where she had gone to university to start work on a one-year

music education diploma. At the same time, she found a position teaching piano lessons for a local music academy. After she completed her diploma, Holly began teaching at a fine arts focused elementary school where she stayed for seven years while continuing to teach private piano lessons. The year of the study was Holly's first year in a new school and a new school district. In addition to teaching part-time in her new school, Holly also taught a few private piano and voice students two evenings a week.

What Does Teaching Music Mean to Holly?

Holly's work as an elementary music teacher was shaped by her experiences growing up, as a student in elementary school and university, and in some ways, by her professional learning opportunities. Her practice has also been influenced by her journey to find her own musical and professional identity. In this section, I will explore Holly's experience of music and teaching and what teaching music means to Holly. First, however, I will briefly discuss Holly's teaching context.

Holly's teaching context.

The year of the study was Holly's first year teaching in a public elementary school in a large school division, and it was her 11th year of teaching. Holly taught music to all of the students from Kindergarten to grade six. There were approximately 200 students attending the school with one class of each grade, and the staff consisted of seven homeroom teachers, an administrative assistant, the music teacher, custodian, and the principal. Holly seemed to feel she was a good fit with the school staff and noted that she was enjoying the change. She shared, "I am really enjoying the professionalism there" (Drop-In 3). She also clearly felt a connection with the strong ethic of care for the children that she saw in the principal's work in the school.

Holly's new school was situated in a middle class neighborhood with many single-family homes and a large number of rental units such as townhouses and apartment buildings within walking distance from the school. Some of the students at Holly's school were recent immigrants or visitors to Canada for whom English was a second language, and the students she taught were ethnically and culturally diverse. Few children in her school took music lessons outside of school, and so, like Gabriel, Holly's school music program was often the only formal music education her students had the opportunity to experience.

One of the biggest challenges for Holly in building a music program in her new position was that the population of the school seemed to constantly be in flux. She reflected, "When I look at my class lists [from] September compared to the class lists I have now, there has been a huge turnover... so then you're always kind of working to establish your culture as new students come" (Drop-in 2). The clientele in Holly's new school was vastly different from the school she had just left. Thus, much of Holly's professional learning over the course of the study was related to learning how to teach music in her new context.

How does Holly experience music?

Music was an important part of Holly's emotional and spiritual life and her identity as a person. The music that she enjoyed and chose to teach to her students was significant to Holly on many levels. First, Holly had a strong affective relationship with music. She listened to pieces over and over again, a practice that dated back to her childhood and those long trips in the family motor home. She used the words "love" and "passion" to describe how she experienced a variety of pieces, artists, and also the experience of playing the piano. In fact, she used the word "love" to represent the intense passion she experienced through music almost 20 times in our first interview alone. Secondly, music was a way that Holly connected with music spiritually. Finally, the songs she taught to her students provided Holly with a way to be a musician. After many

years of understanding herself as “not a person that made the music,” (Interview 1), she had come to see that teaching music, which she conceived of as teaching specific repertoire, provided an alternate pathway to performing for a musical identity.

Affect at the centre.

Holly’s passion and love of music was a thread that ran from childhood to the present day and it was central to Holly’s conception of her work as an elementary music teacher. In fact, the overriding consideration for choosing specific music to share with her students was that Holly “loved” the song.⁷² For example, in reflecting on why she choose to teach the song *This Land is Your Land* as part of a project she was doing on Canadian music, Holly explained that it was a “song I learned when I was in elementary school so, like, I love it so I picked it” (Drop-In 3). Holly chose the song because she had fond memories of the good feelings singing the piece evoked for her as a child.

Holly described how much she “loved” singing in Mrs. Boyle’s elementary music class and how she “fell in love” with the piano almost in spite of her piano lessons, her dad’s strong musical presence in her life, and the expectation of parents and teachers that she perform publicly. She also spoke of loving specific pieces of music and specific artists.

Listening as a way of nurturing a relationship with music.

The strong affect evoked by listening to specific songs and artists in childhood was foundational in nurturing Holly’s developing connection with music. At the age of nine, Holly “fell in love” with a particular singer.⁷³ During our first interview, Holly played a recording of a beloved piece for me, and she commented on how listening to the music of this particular artist

⁷² I would argue that while it is common for all music teachers to pick music to teach that they like, Holly’s passion for specific songs and artists was notable.

⁷³ This is the young gospel singer mentioned earlier of whom Holly had a picture on her bed.

provided “the foundation” for her life-long relationship with music (Interview 1). In fact, Holly had listened to the singer’s tapes so many times, they would no longer play in her tape recorder because the tape was so stretched. Listening in this way is something Holly continued to do into adulthood:

As an adult now, I...will often kind of become obsessed with one song, and then I'll listen to it for however long that lasts, if it's, like, two weeks or a month or six months, whatever. But I'll, like, kind of get obsessed with a certain song and I'll listen to it, like, every day...In my car, I'll listen to it for, like, an hour and a half on repeat...And then—and then it'll change, and I'll be into something else. (Interview 1)

Listening “until the tape is stretched” is an important part of how Holly engaged with music.

When given the choice of what to share about herself for our first interview, Holly compiled and shared a list of songs that were meaningful to her.⁷⁴ The list traced her growing relationship with music beginning with listening to her favorite gospel singer as a nine-year-old girl and then moving outward to other gospel and church music, the music of specific popular artists in high school, music she could play on the piano, certain pieces she sang in choirs as a young adult and beginning teacher, and moving through songs that she has taught and enjoyed more recently in concerts and on the radio.

Holly also had opportunities growing up to discover that attending live concerts also fulfilled a musical need. Because her dad was a concert promoter, as a youth, Holly worked as an usher “ripping tickets at the door” (Interview 1). As a result, she had the chance to go to many concerts which was still an important part of how she participated in music as an adult:

⁷⁴ The PIA prompt Holly chose from the list was: “Bring a favorite piece of music to share in some way (recording, sing it, play it, etc.). Write about why it speaks to you (or you can tell me in person). What is your history with this piece?”

How I engage with music in my life, that I— I just go to a lot of concerts...I go to so many concerts...If I have a favourite singer that comes...to the big— you know, I'll go to [the stadium in her city]. And I'll do that. I have gone out to— you know the theatre in [a nearby community]? I have gone out there. So I will have taken in three there this year.

(Interview 1)

Holly's primary way of participating in music was through listening. As mentioned earlier, Holly did not see herself as "the person who made the music" (Interview 1):

I knew I loved [music], and I knew I had a passion...but it wasn't something that I personally— I didn't personally make the music...I listened to the music. I listened to my tapes and CDs, and I went to tons and tons of concerts. So I was always an audience member. (Interview 1)

As Cavicchi (1998) discovered in his study of Bruce Springsteen fans, being a fan is a way of actively participating in music. In fact, some of Cavicchi's study participants described going to a concert as being akin to a "spiritual experience" (p. 95) or a "religious revival" (p. 93). Holly also experienced music as being intimately linked with her spirituality.

A spiritual connection with music.

Part of the reason Holly had invested a great deal of energy in nurturing her relationship with music through listening and attending concerts is that, like for Cavicchi's (1998) participants, music evoked what Holly described as a spiritual response. Holly explained that spiritual experiences with music provided the foundation for her passion as a music educator:

I didn't feel like I was particularly good at piano... and I still don't feel that way. But I just simply am passionate about music, and I guess for me, because music is spiritual for me...I think that's...where my passion comes from, is because music is a spiritual experience for me. (Interview 1)

In addition to providing aesthetic enjoyment (A. Merriam, 1964), music provided a way for Holly to tap into her spirituality. First, Holly experienced her Christian faith through music. She explained organized religion as being an invented way to make sense of the vast realm of faith, calling each domination's interpretation and rituals a "bubble" that did not allow people to truly comprehend God and faith in God. She added, "I think my bubble is music... my way of making sense of what is so vast— my faith... is through music" (Interview 1).

Secondly, listening to music created a spiritual experience for Holly much like the flow experiences Gabriel had while playing cello. While Gabriel experienced intense enjoyment playing, Holly's spiritual experiences of listening to music seemed to play a key part in constructing her identity as a musical person and as a teacher (Czikszentmihaly, 1990). Listening deeply to music allowed Holly to be "in control of [her] psychic energy" (p. 40), but performing produced the opposite of a flow experience. For example, after having the opportunity to play the piano and sing with her colleague at the school concert at the city's concert hall, she shared: "So this is the scariest thing I have ever done in my life, and now that I have done it, I'm done. I don't need to do anything like that ever again" (Interview 1). Performing for Holly was nerve-racking and did not build her confidence or sense of self. Participating in music as a listener and concert goer, however, provided a 'consummatory experience' of music for Holly. A consummatory experience, in Dewey's (1934) terms, is a "good" and fulfilling experience whereby "in the immediacy of the present moment...one's prior efforts are brought to fruition" (Westerlund, 2003, p. 54). The result of such an experience is both growth and an end in itself. Recently, Holly had come to realize that another vehicle for having these personally fulfilling experiences with music was through teaching music. In fact, Holly has discovered that teaching music provided her with a musical identity that she has not found through performance.

Teaching as a pathway to a musical identity: Finding a voice as a musical person.

Music Education scholar Paul Woodford (2002) defines identity as the “imaginative view or role that individuals project for themselves in particular social positions, occupations, or situations” (p. 675) and argues that identities are fluid and socially constructed. Much of the literature on music teachers and identity suggests that pre-service and early career music teachers experience conflict between their musician and a teacher identity.⁷⁵ This was not the case for Holly. Holly’s musical identity, as mentioned above, had long been that of someone who didn’t make the music. However, one of the most exciting hermeneutic uncoverings that arose during the course of this study was not mine, but Holly’s. She realized in working through one of the Pre-Interview Activity prompts that teaching afforded her a way to be a musician. The day of our first interview, Holly excitedly shared, “this is what I realized last night...because as a music teacher, this is a way that I can make music” (Interview 1). This was a new and empowering development in Holly’s identity formation and in her journey to find and nurture her *voice* as a musical person.

Related to the concept of identity, “voice” moves beyond the ontological into the realm of power and empowerment (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). While identity is the imagined role that people project of themselves, voice is a metaphor for “the individual’s struggle to create and fashion meaning, assert standpoints, and negotiate with others” (Britzman, 2003, p. 34). It involves that aspect of the self which negotiates one’s participation in the social world (Britzman, 2003). Holly’s insight helped me to see her professional journey as being rooted in a personal one of finding an identity as a teacher and musician, and of becoming

⁷⁵ See for example Beynon, 1998, Prescesky, 1997, Roberts, 1991, Rose, 1998, and Woodford, 2002.

empowered as a musical person. Holly was engaged in negotiating her voice as a musician in the world.⁷⁶

Early in her journey, Holly seemed to grapple with finding a musical identity separate from her family and an identity as a musician separate from being a performer. Next, Holly struggled with finding a professional identity, first resisting and then deciding to become a teacher, and later realizing in a darkened music room that her truest self, professionally speaking, was to be a music educator. This was clearly an important turning point for Holly in her professional life and, more importantly, in how she understood herself as a person. Holly's newest insight that she could be a musician by teaching music was another important moment in her growth as a person and as a teacher. Just as her passion for music stemmed from the spiritual connection she experienced when engaging with music, Holly's passion for teaching music came in part from the fact that teaching allowed her to be a musician. Holly's passion was integral to her teaching, and teaching was integral to her identity as a musical person. Holly noted, "I am a firm believer in following your passion no matter what it is...it will always lead you" (Interview 1). Holly's journey of self-discovery had been one of finding and following her passion for music.

Key ideas that informed Holly's teaching.

The fact that Holly was in her first year teaching in a new school provided a unique opportunity to glimpse what she valued as a music educator and to see her set, and begin to work toward, her goals for her students and for her teaching. While Holly was aware of and guided by the official music curriculum, this document did not seem to provide the framework for her thinking about her purposes as an elementary music teacher. Instead, Holly's curricular thinking

⁷⁶ I will return to the idea of voice in my discussion of the three cases together in Chapter Eight.

and actions seemed to be informed by the overarching aim of developing affect through musical experiences. Holly was engaged in creating curriculum for her specific students that would evoke an affective response to music.

Developing affect. Sloboda (2001) argues that many school music teachers do not concern themselves with the musical lives of their students. Holly's personal curriculum, in contrast, was rooted in care for the students' musical lives and for music. Her teaching was grounded in "caring deeply for the subject matter," (Dewey, 1934, p. 48) and focused on helping students to develop a meaningful relationship with music. Based on her own consummatory experience of music, Holly's predominant orientation for her teaching was in the realm of affect. She spoke often of wanting her students to like the specific songs they learned in music class, and considered her program successful in part when she heard kids singing the songs she had taught them outside of the music room. For much of the study, Holly was preparing her students for the visit of a Canadian children's entertainer and was working at teaching her classes the songs he was going to perform for the school. She framed her work leading up to the concert as follows: "So between now and then, I have to...make my kids love those songs. That's my number one goal between now and then" (Interview 1). Developing a meaningful relationship with those specific songs was her primary focus in her teaching for all the classes in the weeks leading up to the performance. Depending on the grade, the students sang Canadian folk songs, learned to chord along to folk songs on the ukulele, worked on Orff arrangements of Canadian songs, listened to stories about the Bluenose, or participated in movement activities while Holly played recordings of Canadian folk songs.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ The Bluenose is a famous Canadian racing and fishing schooner that is featured on the Canadian dime. It was built in Nova Scotia in 1921.

Interestingly, the project evolved out of happenstance. Earlier in the year, the grade one teacher had asked Holly to teach a specific song to his grade one class that intersected with a mathematics concept the class was exploring. A short time later, Holly discovered that there was money left in the school's culture budget to bring in a performer, and so she immediately made arrangements with her principal to contact the singer who had written the song. Once she confirmed that the artist was available to come to her school, Holly negotiated with him about the songs that he would do at their school concert. She chose well-known Canadian folk songs which she then taught to all of the students in the school. Holly then invited her colleagues to incorporate the Canada theme into their work in other subjects. At a staff meeting, Holly gave her colleagues a typed document with ideas on how to integrate the theme into Art, Language Arts, and other classes and talked through what the project could look like, and most teachers took up the invitation.

By the day of the performance, the school was decorated with Group of Seven inspired art and pictures of Canadian landmarks created by the staff, as well as student artwork of grain elevators, provincial parks, Inuit families, Canadian landscapes and animals, and Math related to Canadian coins. There was also a model of the Bluenose in the display cabinet at the front entrance of the school and red and white flowers in pots leading up to the front doors. Every day the week of the concert, the entire school listened to Canadian music over the intercom to start the afternoon. The librarian and another teacher also made life-size totem poles that were displayed on either side of the school's special guest at the concert and later used as decorations for the parent tea. The Canada theme was carried over into the tea and party favors were made by the students and consisted of paper canoes containing party favors. One of the highlights of the concert was that Holly had arranged with the performer to have the grade one students to join

him on stage to sing the song they had learned. While returning to their seats, one of the grade one students exclaimed to Holly, “That was exciting!” The grade one students were thrilled to meet the performer whose recordings they had listened to and even more thrilled to sing with him.

The Canada project fit with two of Holly’s primary goals for her students: Evoking passion for music and a love of singing. Regarding the first, she explained, “So my main goal for them has been to make them appreciate the music that they’re doing– and to become passionate about the music that they’re doing” (Interview 1). Her second goal of helping students learn to love singing and to “make them singers” was related to the first. In order to accomplish both of these goals, Holly saw her work as teaching the students a “repertoire of songs that are their songs” (Interview 1). The measure of her efficacy seemed to be whether or not kids asked to sing specific songs in music class, and whether they chose to sing those songs outside of music class in the hallways and at home. She mentioned her success with this approach in her previous school where parents often told her that her former students still sang and enjoyed the songs Holly had taught them even years later. When I asked what specific songs or kind of repertoire she wanted the students to love, she responded: “Oh, it can be any repertoire...It can be anything...But it just– they need to fall in love with some songs, period” (Interview 1). Holly wanted her students to have a similar relationship with music to hers and mentioned several times that she wants the students to become “passionate” about the repertoire they are learning.

In fact, repertoire seemed to be the primary consideration in Holly’s thinking about her teaching. Although she had taken many music methods courses and workshops, she noted that her focus was “more about repertoire...than my teaching method” (Interview 1). When I asked her how she decided if she wanted to teach a particular piece, without hesitation she responded,

“I feel excited about it” (Interview 1). Holly’s affective response to music guided her pedagogical choices. She was confident that if she loved the songs she chose, the students would too. “Whatever songs we have inside us that we know, those are the ones we’re going to like, so I feel like as long as— and my experience is, for the most part, if I’m teaching things I like, more often than not the kids do buy in, and more often than not, they do intrinsically develop a like of the music” (Drop-in 2). She spoke several times about an influential music educator she admired who often shared the opinion that students like the music that they know. This idea was something Holly thought about in picking the repertoire that was the basis of her music program, and she had tremendous faith in her professional instincts to this end.

Finally, Holly also focused on making connections with the students’ prior experiences in her teaching. The Canada project was related to the ‘Northern Lights’ theme Holly had chosen for her Christmas concert earlier in the year. In fact, several students made connections in music class between the two themes, which was Holly’s intention. Helping students “to link new learning to previous understandings and to construct this new knowledge through experience” is a key orientation in a constructivist approach to teaching music (Scott, 2006, p. 26), and Holly was intentionally engaged in helping her students to construct an affective understanding of music through the experiences she planned for them.

“Singing is the centre.” Campbell and Scott-Kasner (2014) write, “to sing is to turn interests, experiences, and feelings into a personal musical expression” (p. 71). As mentioned above, Holly’s second goal for her teaching was to tap into this very personal experience of music and to help students see themselves as singers. Holly viewed singing as foundational to developing her students’ affective relationship with music. She noted that she wanted her students to “fall in love with singing period” and to be able to say, “I like singing. I’m a person

who can sing and I'm a person that likes to sing" (Drop-In 2). When she arrived in her new school in September, Holly was somewhat surprised that many of the students did not love to sing. As a result, she had to go back to the drawing board regarding her first concert because she had planned it based on the assumption that the students would enjoy singing. Holly explained:

H: I want them to be able to sing choral music in harmony... That is what I love the most of everything. That's what I want them to be able to do. And that's what I came in in September— I did a lot of that at [my previous school].

J: Right. And you told me you had to change your concert.

H: And that was the shock I got in the fall— was that these kids cannot do it. And singing in canon is hard for them.⁷⁸ It's just— so I kind of take a step back and think for them, okay, this is actually going to be a two-year process or a three-year process I think. I want to be able to give them choral octavos and teach them to sing in parts. You know? (Drop-In 1).⁷⁹

Thus, Holly revised her goals for the year and chose different repertoire. Actually, it is probably more accurate to say that Holly increased the timeframe it would take for her students to achieve the goals she had set for them and chose different repertoire for the concert. Instead of focusing on teaching specific choral repertoire, Holly backed up a few steps and began by focusing on helping her students learn to love singing.

⁷⁸ A canon is a song that can be sung as a round like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." One group starts at the beginning of the song, and when they get to the next phrase, another group starts singing from the beginning.

⁷⁹ An octavo is a published score of music named for its formatting.

A characteristic feature of how Holly thought about her work as a music teacher in general and this project in specific was that she thought in terms of years, not months and weeks. She took the long view. Her approach was to provide numerous opportunities for positive experiences with singing over time. Holly trusted that, eventually, as she built a relationship with each student and shared pieces that she loved, students would come around to loving singing:

I think time is sort of the only thing there. I think building a safe environment, and then, I think sometimes those kids, they're not going to do it for you in a month, but if you keep that nurturing feeling and keep that safety thing, I think two or three years is actually a reasonable window of time to build that safety net. (Drop-In 2)

She described the way she went about this with a former student who initially would not speak to her in class when he arrived in kindergarten. By grade two, he sang with the other children.

Holly explained that she never commented on his participation but “when I did, like, echo singing and stuff, I would call his name, and then I would sing his response for him, and then I’d just bump down to the next kid on the list. And I never ever made a big deal out of it” (Drop-In 2). She noted his growth over time: By the end of grade one, Holly noticed that he would move his lips as the class was singing, and by mid-grade two he was actually singing and could sing in tune. Holly’s teaching came out of a place of caring where the needs of the student were more important than Holly’s pre-determined schedule or curricular hopes (Noddings, 1984). Holly’s teaching was based on “specific knowledge of concrete others” (Hamington, 2010, p. 122) as opposed to abstract curricular goals for “faceless” students (Aoki, 2005, p. 160). In addition to caring for her students, Holly was also caring for herself. Part of the reason that Holly wanted her students to see themselves as singers was that she enjoyed teaching choral music, especially

part-singing. Teaching choral pieces and part songs fulfilled a musical need for Holly and nurtured her own musical identity and connection with music.

I was curious how Holly understood teaching singing in an elementary school context, and I asked her if she taught students to sing or just trusted they would catch on from their experiences in her music class. She responded, “I think you have to have some intention around that, actually...” She explained that she did “voice placement exercises” particularly in kindergarten and grade one (Drop-in 2) and that kindergarten is where:

I use my Kodály book the most.⁸⁰ I really do start out with so mi⁸¹ and I really do go very slowly, because I think- I guess that I can see that it’s proven, that it works and their range really is small at that age, and so often, at the beginning of kindergarten, I find a lot of those students actually don’t understand their singing voice yet, and a lot of the September/October of kindergarten is discovering that they do indeed have a singing voice inside because maybe they didn’t realize. And what’s the difference between speaking and singing. (Drop-in 2)

Holly viewed her students’ journey to becoming someone who loves to sing as beginning with specific intentions for learning how to match pitch in younger grades and continuing with many positive experiences singing. Much of her planning for this overarching goal of her music program was directly related to choosing specific pieces about which she felt passionate and which she hoped her students would enjoy.

⁸⁰ The book Holly is referring to was the textbook for the summer Kodály courses she had taken which provides a sequential outline of how to teach children to sing in tune.

⁸¹ Tonic solfa syllables (do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do). So and mi are often used as the introduction to ear training and reading music in school music education.

Holly's approach to teaching music.

Pinar (2004) argues for a reconception of curriculum that is based in the biography of those involved in the educational act. Rather than being a program of studies to be replicated or applied, Pinar sees curriculum as *currere*, or “the different ways each teacher or student runs the course established by schooling’s pre-established structures” (Triche, 2002, p. 37). Holly clearly had intentions for her music program, but those intentions came mostly from her own experience and from her relationship with her students rather than from the outcomes of the provincial curriculum. This is not to say that Holly did not consult the provincial Program of Studies, only that it was not the primary arbiter of what went on her classroom. Part of what I found fascinating about Holly’s approach is that, while she had intentions for her students (Ex. loving singing, being able to sing in tune), she allowed the ‘how’ of achieving these intentions to unfold based on the opportunities that presented themselves in the school community. She characterized this approach as finding and taking advantage of ‘jumping off points.’

Finding ‘jumping off points.’ Holly used this term several times in our conversations to talk about how she made decisions about her teaching throughout the year. She used performance projects almost as units of study, dividing up her year by time spent working towards specific musical events rather than choosing skill and knowledge outcomes from the curriculum document as a basis of her planning. Once she chose a project, Holly would gear her teaching to helping her students make connections with the music for that event just as she did with the Canada project. For example, she arranged to take her kindergarten students to a symphony concert to hear Peter and the Wolf by Prokofiev. This event served as a ‘jumping off point’ for her teaching for the weeks leading up to and immediately following the concert. She spent a significant amount of class time helping her students make connections with the music they were going to hear. In the classes leading up to the concert, Holly read the story to the

students, played the students the themes of the various animals, and did a variety of other activities. Her pedagogical choices reflected her belief that a central part of her role as a music educator was to facilitate meaningful connections with music: “if you really do it up before you go, then they’re going to get more out of it” (Drop-In 1). According to Holly, both she and the kindergarten teacher noticed the students making meaningful connections due to Holly’s effort in preparing the students:

Their comments when they talk about [the concert] tell me that they did get a lot out of it, you know: “I liked this part,” “I liked that part,” “I noticed this,” and “I noticed that,” and I think the prep before you go makes all the difference. And the kindergarten teacher did tell me that. She said, “I really feel a difference this year. Because I can tell that you’ve prepared them before we went.” (Drop-in 1)

Holly felt that she had successfully paved the way for her students to have an affective experience at the symphony concert.

While Holly decided to take her students to the symphony and prepared them to encounter the music the symphony had programmed, she was also open to finding and exploring a jumping off point if it presented itself. This was her approach with the Canada concert. The impetus for the project, to recap, was a request from the grade one teacher to teach his class a specific song related to money because of an activity he was doing in Math class. This led to Holly inviting the artist who wrote and performed the song give a concert at her school. Holly spent a significant amount of class time preparing the students for his visit. She had chosen songs from the performer’s repertoire which they had agreed he would sing, and she set to work ensuring the students knew those songs and had a relationship with the pieces:

So, usually, the last, like say, 15 minutes of class, we'll just pass out the song sheets and kids will– they'll just start asking “Can we do this? Can we do that?” and we'll just sort of have a little sing along. I like that...it's just pure pleasure really, you know what I mean? Where we're not that fussy about little things, we're just singing. (Drop-In 1)⁸²

Although the Canada theme was a stand-alone project, it was not only connected to Holly's Northern Lights Christmas concert a few months earlier, but also to what the former music teacher had done the previous year. Holly noted that in the past the school had done “a lot with music around the world and multiculturalism and I think they did Christmas around the world a couple of years ago” (Drop-In 1) and thus, the Canada project was a natural extension of the students' previous experiences.

Near the end of our time together, Holly had already started working on the next theme she would use in this way. This time, the project was next year's Christmas concert. She had found a series of storybooks with lovely photographs of animals and winter scenes. The inspiration for the idea came from a maple leaf on one of the book covers, although the books were not Canadian. She shared, “I was just thinking about using that as a jumping off point and then I could do a lot of Canadian content...” (Drop-in 1). As with the Canada project, Holly had also done some thinking about what students could do in other subject areas to deepen their experience of the theme. She had generated a list of potential art projects and ideas of what the final concert might look like. I found myself getting swept up in her obvious enthusiasm for this new project. Creating enthusiasm amongst the students and staff was part of Holly's method and her goal for any project: “I kind of ...take the small theme and make it larger, and I find that that way, there gets to be this energy...” She explained that, “if you pick a theme and then it's

⁸² Once again, we see Holly's focus on affect and singing for pleasure.

integrated throughout the school elsewhere then the kids, they get really excited about it” (Drop-in 2). Just as listening to music fulfilled an affective need for Holly as a person, the energy created by a collaborative project like the Christmas concert fulfilled an affective need for her as a teacher. Doing projects was part of how Holly created and maintained her identity as a musician and, in turn, her passion for music, which fueled that identity.

Trusting her professional instincts.

Holly had a remarkable ability to be responsive to her situation and to take up emergent opportunities in her teaching. Often she would plan an activity around a piece of music and would extend or truncate the activity based on the response of the students. For example, she introduced an Orff arrangement in her grade four class that she had learned in a summer Orff-Schulwerk Levels course, and she noticed that the students were very engaged. She therefore decided to stay with the activity and develop it further, following the students’ interests and reading their cues as to how far to go. In the end, the class performed the final product at a school assembly and were then asked to perform it at the grade six graduation celebration. The students were thrilled. While she planned to introduce the piece to this group of students, Holly did not plan how far the activity would be extended. She allowed her teaching to unfold over several weeks based on the interest and engagement of her students.

Holly was able to be responsive in part because she experienced expertise in teaching as ‘trusting her professional instincts.’ She commented on this while exploring how she continued to learn as a teacher:

I guess I feel like, at the end of the day, I glean what I can from many, many places and then I bring it all together and I try to trust my own professional instincts at that point. Because I feel that if I’ve covered what I feel, you know, are all the areas and all the bases, then, as a professional, I can trust myself. So I just do. You know? (Drop-in 2)

Berliner (1986, 1992) theorizes that, as teachers grow in expertise, they are able to respond in more personalized ways to pedagogical situations. In fact, Berliner sees expert teachers as those teachers who respond intuitively to situations that arise in their practice. There is no question that Holly had developed expertise in many aspects of her work of teaching music. She knew the curriculum well and had a variety of strategies from which she could draw for teaching and classroom management. Perhaps even more important than her expertise was the fact that Holly had developed self-efficacy, or the belief in her proficiency as a music educator (Bandura, 1997). Holly had developed a belief in her own powers as a knower and saw herself as having authority as an “instrument of understanding” in her work teaching music (Belenky *et al.*, 1997, p. 141). This is essentially what I mean when I say that Holly had developed her voice as a music educator.

While Holly took care of the ‘basics’ of the mandated curriculum on some level in that she knew what concepts were prescribed for each grade, her focus was on following her instinct and what felt right with her students. She considered herself an experienced teacher who had “fine-tuned [her] instincts” (Drop-in 4). Holly relied on these instincts to decide what her students needed next, keeping her overarching goals of an affective relationship with music and singing in mind. Reflecting on how her practice has changed over time, she shared:

I’m more confident in trusting my own instincts and not worrying about, you know, going by the book because I’ve noticed that not all the books are the same [laughs] and so I’m more confident in my decision making. When I make a choice and I make a decision...I don’t second-guess myself as much as I used to. I used to really struggle with trying to cover everything. Because I would go to a lot of workshops and coming out of university or whatever and you realize that there’s so much to do, and...it would kind of

bother me in my mind to make sure I'd done everything...I'm more relaxed about that, and I...cover what I can and I tend to cover things a little more thoroughly now. I like to go into depth with things more than what I used to, like, I used to touch on things to try and cover all the things and now I find value in really riding the wave and going...more into depth. (Drop-in 4)

Part of Holly's journey of finding her voice as a music teacher has been learning to "ride the wave." As she has come into her own as a teacher, she has let go of trying to 'cover' the sanctioned curriculum. Part of the reason she seems able to let go is that she now has a working knowledge of the elementary music curriculum/program of studies and what it means for her practice, noting, "I've been through the curriculum many, many, many times in many different places, so I feel like I do actually know it quite well, and, in fact, have it memorized" (Drop-in 3). Even more importantly than knowing the concepts to 'cover,' Holly had a working understanding of what the provincial curriculum meant to her.

Her ability to turn inward to discern what to do in her practice instead of looking to others outside of her situation (i.e. curriculum writers, workshop presenters, professors, colleagues) was directly related to the development of her voice as a music educator. Holly was comfortable and confident in creating the curriculum for and in response to her students based on her long-term goals for their musical learning. Her pedagogical thinking did not focus on learning outcomes or come from a specific pedagogical approach. Instead she attended to creating learning activities for her specific students based on where they were in relation to her long-term goals for their learning. When I invited Holly to reflect on how she got to this place of authority, she quipped, "Myself. Just myself. Yeah. Because you're shaped through all of the

experiences and at the end of the day, I become me— who I am, and it's just me [laughs]" (Drop-in 3). Holly seemed to feel she has become who she is meant to be.

Planting seeds. One of the main features of Holly's thinking about her work as a music teacher is a notion I came to think of as "planting seeds." Holly initially called this idea "group management" and brought it up when we were talking about a workshop she had been to where the presenters taught the group a small part of a larger piece and then put it into context later (Drop-In 3). When I asked her what she meant by the term group management, she had a hard time expressing her thinking at first:

Oh, how do you put words to something like that? It's just magic. I don't know what to say... You know what it is, it's-... thinking ahead and knowing if I do this right now, it's because I'm going to do this later but you don't know that it's happening later. So when it's happening right now you follow the directions not realizing where it's going to lead.

(Drop-in 3)

Later on, we both came to understand this way of approaching teaching as providing pedagogical scaffolding where a music teacher builds "small pieces towards the bigger" (Holly, Drop-in 4). An example of this might be teaching an accompaniment, rhythmic pattern, or melodic motif needed to be successful in a larger piece or arrangement before introducing the whole piece. Holly conceived of "providing scaffolding" as giving students chances to practice more complex skills a few times before trying the whole so that the tricky parts can "sink in" a bit more each time they are practiced beforehand (Drop-in 4). Holly clarified in our conversation that the reason she noticed the clinicians teaching in this way is that she "intrinsically leans that way" in her own pedagogical thinking (Drop-in 4). This was apparent in the way she introduced the students to the Canada project, i.e. first beginning to learn Canadian folksongs and model her

own love for this music, and then later revealing that the artist to whose recordings they had been listening in music class was going to come to their school and that the purpose for learning the songs was to be able to sing with him and enjoy the concert.

Holly's role in her school.

By virtue of their position, the music teacher is a leader in an elementary school (Ciorba & McLay, 2010). School music educators are integral to organizing and shaping the school's public events such as Christmas concerts, assemblies, celebrations, and parent and volunteer teas, and their ensembles are often the public face of the school in the community. Music teachers are generally a key player in deciding what cultural events happen in the school, and, because they teach every student in the school, they must also work closely with every staff member and the administration. One of the most intriguing aspects of working with Holly during her first year in a new school was watching her intentionally negotiate her role based on her understanding of what it meant to be the music teacher in an elementary school. Holly's leadership was evident in the Christmas concert, in bringing in and preparing the students for a guest performance, and in her approach to establishing a positive climate in the school through character education.

Music teacher leadership: Holly as intellectual leader in her school. York-Barr and Duke (2004) suggest that there is a kind of leadership in schools that does not depend on structural power or authority. They call this form of distributed leadership *teacher leadership*, which they define as a process whereby teachers "influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices" (pp. 287–288).

Because they teach every student in the school and organize school-wide events and community projects, music teachers have many opportunities for teacher leadership beyond their classrooms. Holly was no exception. She was a teacher leader by virtue of her position in her

school, coordinating many school wide events, organizing the daily listening program in which all students participated, and organizing the cultural events to take place in the school. However, being cast in a public leadership role did not come easily to Holly. She shared, “I do have lots of ideas and I know I’m a pretty good teacher but...[I’m] very uncomfortable in front of colleagues. I don’t even like talking in the staff meetings. So, I get really, really shy in those situations” (Drop-in 2). In spite of her nervousness, Holly used her role as the music teacher to influence the curriculum for the school.⁸³ I have described how Holly invited the other teachers in her building to take up the theme for her Canada and Christmas concerts, suggesting learning activities and curricular connections. I have also described what I saw in Holly’s school on the day of the Canada concert and the degree to which the members of her staff took up Holly’s invitation. There is no question that Holly was influencing the curriculum for the school through her approach to school-wide projects, and in the process, she was changing the culture of her school for students and teachers alike.

In some ways, Holly might be considered what Thiessen and Barrett (1999) call a reform-minded music teacher: Someone whose reach extends beyond the music classroom and into social and ethical realms (Barret, 2006). While Holly focused her energy mostly on impacting the school community rather than the community at large, she clearly positioned herself as a change agent with intentions to influence not only the pedagogical, but the social and moral culture of her school. Holly was very aware of the influence her position afforded her and was intentional in using this influence to shift the culture in her school. She explained, “As the music teacher, you see every student...So actually it’s a very powerful position considering that you

⁸³ I mean curriculum here in the traditional sense of what is taught and how it is taught (Egan, 1978), rather than in the broader and existential sense favored by contemporary curriculum theorists of questions of what it means to be human (Ex. Aoki, 2005; Pinar, 2004).

influence every single child so you can influence culture, and that's actually very important to me and that's why I do bucket filling" (Drop-in 2). Bucket filling was a character education program Holly had introduced as a way to help encourage positive behavior based on the book *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* She noted that she had introduced the idea of bucket filling in her previous school and that within two years, all of the other teachers were using the concept and language of bucket filling in their interactions with students.

Holly was essentially providing intellectual leadership to her colleagues (Gramsci, 1971). Stevenson (2012) explains that intellectual leaders are constructors and organizers who challenge the status quo "from below" (p. 349). Holly was subtly and intentionally changing her school culture by introducing specific 'lingo' in her work with the students which she then used in her interactions with colleagues. She was using the discursive quality of school life to influence her colleagues' and her administrator's practice, and she was creating curriculum for whole-school integration. There is no question that, in her quiet way, Holly was a teacher leader in her school.

After exploring how Holly understood her work as an elementary music teacher, I will now move on to Holly's experience of professional learning. The following section seeks to respond to the second research question of the study: How does Holly experience professional learning?

How Does Holly Experience Professional Learning?

Holly showed many characteristics of being what popular discourse would call a "life-long learner." She was inquisitive, interested in the people and world around her, and loved learning new things related to her passion for music. She participated in many formal learning opportunities over the school year including attending workshops put on by the local Orff association, taking part in three school-board mandated sessions related to First Nations, Metis,

and Inuit students (she was one of two teachers selected by the principal to attend on behalf of their school), and, like Gabriel, attending a total of 10 hours of compulsory first year teacher sessions, as she was new to the board. She also attended concerts, a workshop put on by a local music store on how to run sound, and spoke to her mom, who was also teaching music, daily. Her mom was her closest confident and colleague. Finally, Holly walked most evenings with a friend who was also an elementary music teacher, and inevitably, the conversation with her friend and her mom turned to teaching music.

Holly was also actively engaged in learning related specifically to her new position. She spoke often of learning the ‘lingo’ of her new board so she could fit in and communicate with her colleagues and be professional, and she noted that learning how to play and teach ukuleles and reconnecting with Orff pedagogy were two significant goals for her professional learning at the time of the study.

In this section, I will examine how Holly experienced professional learning, beginning with her understanding of professional learning and moving on to the way she learned through her teaching and through formal professional learning events. Finally, I will explore the social nature of Holly’s professional learning and the importance of music-making to her growth as a person and teacher.

Holly’s conception of professional learning.

Garet *et al.* (2001) note that workshops are the most common form of professional learning activity for teachers in spite of criticisms as to their efficacy. Holly saw professional learning as being located in formal events including workshops, conferences, and courses. Although we talked about informal and more personal learning opportunities, organized events were Holly’s main focus when thinking about her learning.

It is perhaps not surprising that Holly's conception of professional learning reflected the dominant discourse. I did, however, find it curious that Holly demonstrated a great deal of agency in her work as a teacher, but as a learner, she seemed to see herself as significantly less agentic. By agency, I mean Holly's capacity to act autonomously related to her professional learning (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley & Miller, 2012). While Holly clearly made discerning choices about what professional learning events she attended and very carefully chose to take up certain ideas espoused by presenters and other teachers while she rejected other ideas, Holly did not seem to see herself as the author of her professional learning opportunities. Instead of creating structures for herself to grow professionally, Holly accepted whatever structures were on offer even though she wished that music education was not framed through the lens of a particular methodology at these formal events, as was often the case. She commented, "I just would love, when teachers get together, if we could just talk about music as music" (Drop-in 2). The exception was the instrumental learning related to issues in Holly's practice in which she engaged. In these situations, Holly did design structures for her learning. Interestingly, she did not seem to frame the process of choosing a learning goal, determining how to learn about the topic or learning how to do something, and working out her understanding in practice as professional learning even though this was the learning practice she engaged in most often.

Reflective problem solving as instrumental learning.

Not surprisingly given that she had just started a new teaching position, much of Holly's learning over the course of the study was related to working out how best to teach the students in her new school. Having to readjust for her choral singing project was one example of this kind of learning, and another was teaching ukulele. Because the previous music teacher had purchased a class set of ukuleles for the school, Holly felt pressure to ensure they were used in her music program even though she had never played ukulele before. Learning to play and to teach ukulele

was one of the main focuses of Holly's learning for the year. She bought a well-known ukulele method book and started working through it with her older students but she discovered very quickly that she had to adapt the method. While the book suggested one tuning, she found this created a lot of work for her because it didn't fit with the repertoire she wanted to do:

I ended up not really following the [method book]. I thought in the end it would just be easier to just do chords and singing and that's what we did... Then I ended up having to change the key for all of these songs— put them in the key of D because that was all the chords that I taught them [laughs]... I just think if I could do C tuning... there's more songs that I can use and there's more— it's more universal, right? So I guess that's what I'm learning now is C tuning ukuleles [laughs]... (Drop-in 4)

Holly's professional learning regarding teaching ukuleles was instrumental in nature and consisted in a process of reflective thinking akin to trial and error whereby Holly was engaged in continually refining her understanding of the practical problem at hand (Dewey, 1919/1997). First, she decided on a provisional solution to her problem of how best to teach ukuleles (Butke, 2003). She settled on a method book that had been recommended to her by a number of peers, and she began to work through the book with her students. Her approach was similar to what Schön (1983) calls a "move-testing experiment" (p. 146). Holly undertook deliberate action to see what would happen and the move was negated in part, and so she modified her practice. She decided that the tuning in the book did not work very well for her, and so Holly redirected her project and began engaging in figuring out how to teach in C instead of in D. She also decided to focus on teaching three chords to accompany singing rather than having students learn to finger pick melodies as the book suggested. This pedagogical decision is a good example of what Holly

would call ‘trusting her professional instincts’ and the decision to just teach chords and have students sing along may have come from her desire to foreground singing.

While the initial impetus for Holly’s experiment was addressing a problem in her practice, note that Holly was also engaged in learning. Schön (1983) explains, “When the practitioner tries to solve the problem [she] has set, [she] seeks both to understand the situation and to change it” (p. 134). Holly was refining her understanding of teaching ukuleles in an elementary music classroom through the process of solving a problem in practice.

Engaging in reflective problem solving takes up space; Holly noted that because she was engaged in learning how to teach ukuleles, she was unable to concentrate on learning other things. Her plate was full. In other parts of her teaching, she was relying on activities that she had already worked out in a different context so she could devote space to her new learning. She explained:

Ukulele was new to me so the amount of attention I needed to put into ukulele, I put into ukulele. I didn’t put into other things that I had in the past and I just redid the activities to teach other things. (Drop-in 4)

Holly focused her energy on learning how to teach ukulele, engaging in what she referred to as a “balancing act” between new learning and established practice (Drop-in 4).

Holly’s professional learning was largely instrumental in nature. As outlined above, this learning began with a specific problem in Holly’s practice and consisted in a gradual process of refining her understanding through her experimentations. However, Holly did not see her work in her classroom as professional learning. Instead, she located professional learning in formal events organized by others which she could attend. As Opfer and Pedder (2011) note, attendance at workshops is often conflated with teacher learning in the dominate discourse, and Holly’s

view of professional learning aligned with that discourse. While Holly acknowledged that she might not learn much related to teaching at these events, she noted that they provided her with an opportunity to learn the values and discourse of the various communities of which she was a member.

Mandated professional learning: A chance to ‘learn the lingo’.

As a new teacher in her district and a member of a school staff, Holly was required to attend specific professional learning events. While Holly attended many professional learning events throughout the year, she had little opportunity for professional learning related to teaching music, at least not officially. Her school-sanctioned professional learning time consisted of staff meetings and catchment PD days with her staff, sessions she was asked to attend on behalf of her school, and a first-year teacher program, none of which had any content specifically related to teaching music. When she did attend music education sessions, it was on her own time, and she paid for these opportunities out of her own pocket.

A few times a year, Holly’s school district had catchment PD days where teachers from a particular area of the city got together to discuss topics of their choice. While Holly was aware that some catchments had arranged meetings for music teachers, hers had not yet done so. When the staff was asked for feedback from the catchment PD committee, Holly brought up the idea of a track for music teachers with the hopes that the committee would organize something specifically for those who taught music. Because there was not a program for music teachers thus far, Holly met with the other homeroom teachers in her catchment on these days.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ I should note once again that until recently, the participants’ school district had a music consultant who arranged professional learning groups for music teachers using a provincial government grant to pay for substitute teachers in order for teachers to attend. The entire consultancy program for all subject areas was cancelled due to government cutbacks, thus there was no longer a music consultant to oversee music teacher professional learning at the time of the study.

In addition to catchment PD days, Holly also attended sessions on teaching First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students. Holly's principal chose her and the grade two teacher to be staff representatives for this district-wide in-servicing program. The two of them attended meetings for three full days over the year and then reported back to the staff at their staff meetings. Holly enjoyed the sessions very much and brought back materials and resources to share with the teachers in her school, but she noted that the experience had not greatly impacted her teaching. There was only a small FNMI population at her new school and the sessions were geared more to homeroom teachers. What Holly did find useful, however, was a list of resource people that was given to the participants:

Music-wise, for myself, I think the most helpful thing I've gotten is [laughs] the list of phone numbers of people... I sit there in that PD session ready for that kind of information and it flashes up on the Smartboard and I write as fast as I can... So for me, that's the most valuable thing is those hoop dancers, entertainers, music people. I have their contact information so that what I did today with [the children's entertainer] I can again do with whoever. (Drop-in 3A)

It is not surprising that Holly found the list of resource people to be the most valuable part of the in-service given that the educational kits related to other subject areas taught by homeroom teachers, and as we've seen above, Holly's approach to teaching music was to seek out "jumping off spots" to introduce specific music to her students and to facilitate an affective response to that music.

Like Gabriel, Holly was also required by her school board to attend an induction program over the first two years of her employ. While she was not a new teacher, Holly was new to the board and so she attended 10 hours of sessions throughout the year. Holly felt that the sessions

were designed for teachers in the first year of their careers. They covered topics such as classroom management, planning, assessment, and current ideas in learning theory and practice. As part of the program, Holly was assigned a formal mentor who was a more experienced teacher in the district. The lines were very carefully drawn to ensure that the mentor/mentee relationship was safe and Holly's mentor was a caring and helpful person in her life.⁸⁵ However, Holly took limited advantage of her mentor over the year. She confessed, "You know what? She's an amazing person and I totally love her. She's awesome... I feel sort of a little bit guilty that I haven't used her more but I don't know what I would use her for, you know?" (Drop-In 3A). Part of the issue was that Holly is not a new teacher and therefore she had already learned strategies for many of the things with which first year teachers struggle such as classroom management and assessment. Also, Holly's position entailed teaching only music while her mentor was a homeroom teacher with no experience in the music classroom. Thus, their intersections were small in terms of practice. Mostly, Holly asked her mentor for help with administrative issues such as how to go on sick leave and how to work the district's computer interface for report cards.

While I was imagining the frustration of having to sit through 10 hours of sessions designed for first-year teachers while in the 11th year of my teaching career, Holly remarked that she still learned something from attending. I asked her what she found helpful about the program:

Um, in a sense, everything. Because if you think you're above that, you're arrogant. So in a sense, it's okay to always be cognizant of everything that people have to present...

⁸⁵ For example, according to Holly, mentors are not allowed to serve as references for their mentees, and all interactions are supposed to be confidential and non-judgmental. The intent seems to be that mentors support their mentees, not evaluate them in any way (Drop-in 3).

And then you can... think as deeply as you do that day... I would just say it's nice to be exposed to the trends and the lingo that are happening because I feel like in education there's always these, like words that you need to know, and sometimes, they're different words that kind of mean the same thing 10 years ago and then, 10 years from now the lingo changes and it's like you sort of have to be up on that... So, I feel like in a way, it keeps me up on the lingo that I need to know to be, you know, a good teacher. And it's not necessarily the practicality of what you're doing here but it's the ability to converse with other educators and sound intelligent [laughs]. (Drop-in 3A)

Holly did not feel she needed support with classroom management and other early-career teacher concerns, however, the first year teacher sessions served as a way for her to learn what her board valued and gave her the specific words to be on the same page and talk about those ideas with her colleagues. The first year teacher sessions provided a way for Holly to learn how her board framed teaching and learning, and thus, what she needed to focus on to be valued in her new position. The next time we met, she circled back to this idea and explained further:

And so I had a little time to think about it and maybe explain my answer a bit better. Because I said to you... that what I get out of it is being able to converse in the correct lingo. And I do stand behind that answer... Because I think there's always stuff like that going on, and part of your job is to be up with whatever is going on. And the other part that that does for me is it allows me a bit of insight into what's important to [my new school board]. Because if I'm a teacher in [name of board], I need to function within, you know? Because...that kind of thing was different at [my previous school]. I had to speak the lingo of mastery and parents being involved and nurturing and I had to speak that lingo, and so I see, coming into [name of board], sort of different lingo, and so it's part of

my job to be up on that and to sort of function within their value system. And so, it has provided me with a little bit of insight into what that is. (Drop-in 3B)

Much of Holly's formal professional learning in the first year in her new school board involved learning the value system of her professional community. Holly was essentially participating in a process of overt socialization. Writing about music education, Jorgensen (1997) defines socialization as "the process whereby a group or institution inculcates its beliefs, values, and mores in its membership and ensures that its members continue to act in certain approved ways and hold particular shared beliefs" (p. 18). Holly recognized that socialization was the purpose of the first year teacher sessions and attended to the specific ideas and language used in this new community of practice in which she found herself.

"Gleaning what you can": An orientation to learning.

As mentioned above, Holly approached mandated PD events with an attitude of humility and openness to learning. She often commented that things were "interesting" to her regardless of the topic of conversation, and she was open to potential learning even when she had already had similar experiences. Just like the expert teachers in Conway's (2008) study of experienced music teachers' perceptions of professional learning, Holly was able to learn something from practically any situation. She even approached attending concerts as learning opportunities, noting that she often watched the conductor and studied their actions as she enjoyed the music. Over the course of our time together Holly commented that she would like to "take more conducting" and attend a local university that had a well-known jazz program (Drop-in 1). She also admitted that she had thought about doing a Masters degree in Music Education. Other comments Holly made that show her learning orientation included: "I would like to learn more about chords," "I would also be interested in learning more about sound," "I would be interested

in developing my piano more,” and “I would love to get back into choir.” Holly clearly was interested in growing musically. In Holly’s words, “There’s always more you can do, right?” (Drop-in 1).

Relating to her growth as a teacher, Holly summed up her learning orientation as follows: “I guess I feel sort of like you glean what you can” (Drop-in 1). “Gleaning what you can” is an apt description of Holly’s primary approach to professional learning. She attends sessions with a spirit of openness and without specific expectations of what she might get out of the experience whether she has chosen to be at the event because she is interested in the topic or obliged to be there:

J: When you go to something like that, what do you get out of being there? Is it- is it partly just being able to go and be around music teachers or is it songs or is it teaching ideas or all of those things? Why do you go?

H: Um... It’s going to vary a little from thing to thing. It’s all of those things. Sometimes it’s a teaching strategy or a management strategy. Sometimes I get a certain song that then you get tons of mileage out of.

J: Seems to me that you just go and you’re just open. And whatever strikes you– Is that accurate?

H: Yeah. Absolutely. That is accurate because over time, you kind of realize that you’re not going to get everything out of everything and you get what you get. And if you go home with– if you’re open, then you’ll get– you will receive what is there for you that day. But if you’re always looking for something and then maybe you don’t find it, you’re going to be disappointed. So if you go with an open mind and an open heart, and then,

you know, something kind of clicks for you and then, “Oh, hey, I like that.” Then you put that little trick in your pocket and off you go. (Drop-in 3)

Holly’s predominant approach to professional learning reminds me very much of her approach to teaching where, instead of focusing on specific learner outcomes, Holly allows her students to construct their own meaning out of the experiences they have in her classes.

While she saw these ‘gleaning’ professional learning experiences as valuable, Holly defined a ‘good’ professional learning event as a session that intersected with “the nitty-gritty” issues that she was working through with her practice (Drop-in 2). For example, she shared about a session on report cards for music teachers she attended:

I remember that session a lot because it was really useful for me...At that time, report cards were being changed, and I was feeling like, ‘Okay. Where do I go? What do I do?’ You know? So it was helpful to find out what other people do and what’s sort of reasonable, you know?” (Drop-in 2)

Holly appreciated the chance to learn how others approached report cards because this was something she was trying to sort out for herself. ‘Good’ formal PD to Holly, then, was relevant and applicable to her practice. In fact, learning that is directly related to teachers’ practical intentions is noted as being important in the literature on high quality professional learning. Garet *et al.* (2001), for example, found that coherence with teachers’ goals is an important factor in professional learning that causes growth.

Repertoire, not techniques or practices.

In the interview excerpt on the previous page, Holly acknowledged that she was open to different things depending on the learning experience. While Holly did talk in our conversations about learning valuable teaching techniques and management strategies, perhaps not surprisingly given her goal of creating affective responses to certain pieces of music, what she seemed to

value the most from the formal professional learning events she attended was being exposed to new pieces of music. This was true whether we talked about workshops, her university music education courses, or collaborating with an artist in residence who did some teaching in her school. For example, when I asked Holly what kinds of professional learning events she found most helpful, she thoughtfully responded, “I naturally gravitate towards choral music...choral PD things are the thing[s] that entice me” (Drop-in 3). She also mentioned that she recently considered attending a choral workshop in BC for which I had posted a link on Facebook. While focusing on repertoire rather than strategies might be common for a mid- or late-career teacher, it seems that this has always been Holly’s orientation. When talking about her experience while working toward her music education diploma upon her return to university, Holly told this story of her desire to get all she could out of the experience:

I just felt like, and I’ve said this before, I was a sponge, and it’s...almost impossible to soak it all up. And, I even remember one day [the instructor] put up some posters for this one activity or song we were going to do, and then we ran out of time that day, and we didn’t do that song. And I remember [laughs]...feeling so, “But I didn’t learn that one!” and I remember asking him a couple of weeks later, “What about the—” whatever it was— “the train song?”... I just felt like I couldn’t get enough. (Drop-in 2)

While Holly’s focus here was on specific songs and activities that she was learning from the instructor, we also get a glimpse of the passion and intentionality Holly has as a learner. Holly fittingly characterizes her approach to music professional learning as ‘soaking it up like a sponge.’

‘Soaking it up like a sponge:’ Strong intentions for learning.

Holly must have been a model student for her instructors when she returned to university in that she worked hard and “couldn’t get enough.” She clearly had strong intrinsic motivation as

a learner, and I suspect her prior teaching experiences and intelligence made her adept at making connections between what her professors taught and her experience in schools. Holly's clear intention for learning how to teach music and her excitement at being able to do something she had discovered that she was called to do was fueled by her personal passion for music and coupled with the openness she seemed to bring to bear in all situations. This potent combination made for an incredibly meaningful learning experience and, not surprisingly, also led to academic success:

That was my intention at the time...because I was already a teacher...I wasn't going there looking to get my Bachelor of Education and become a teacher. I was going there because I wanted to learn how to teach music. So I didn't care what marks I got, I didn't care about any of that. I actually wanted to learn the stuff. As a result, it was the highest marks I ever got you know, because I was just so interested. (Drop-in 2)

Holly was seriously interested in knowing how to teach music and so she excelled in her courses.

She brought this same level of intention to her learning when she went to workshops and other music education events. She tended to focus on specific clinicians that she respected and often would attend multiple sessions by the same person. For example, when she first started teaching music, she contacted a clinician that she had seen at a teachers' convention a few years earlier when she was a student teacher and asked the presenter where she could see her present again. After attending several of the clinician's sessions in a short period of time, the presenter recognized Holly at a workshop and expressed concern that Holly would not learn anything new from her teaching:

I had just seen her several times in a row, and so she stands up there on the first day and there I am and she recognized me, and then of course she was teaching...a lot of the same

songs and same activities that I had seen in one of her other sessions, and I remember her saying to me... “I hope this session is okay for you because a lot of this stuff you’ve seen before.” And I remember saying... “No, because every time I see it, I’ll catch something different. No, I would love to see it again. And the more times I see it, the more I soak in. So don’t feel that way at all.” (Drop-in 3)

‘Soaking it up/in’ is a powerful metaphor for Holly regarding her professional learning. Thinking about her learning this way allowed Holly to be in almost any situation and remain open to learning in a way that helped her connect what she experienced in workshops and other formal learning settings with her practice. Holly’s metaphor also allowed a small glimpse into the character of her professional learning: Holly was engaged in a process of constructing her own evolving understanding of what teaching music means to her, experiencing new insights or ‘unlocking moments’ (Drop-in 2) and returning to key ideas which she then incorporated into or foregrounded in her practice.

Formal professional learning events as affirmation of practice.

While seeing the same workshop session or speaker many times helped Holly to engage in the learning practice she called ‘soaking it in,’ this learning practice also served another purpose for Holly. In addition to looking for new insights, Holly was looking for affirmation of her practice. Holly explained:

The more times I see it, the more I soak in...sometimes it’s okay to hear things over and over and the sometimes if you leave that session with a feeling of affirmation like I’m doing a good job, that’s also important. Because not always to feel like, “Oh, there’s always so much more to do and I’ll never get there.” Sometimes it’s okay to feel like, “Hey, I’m doing okay.” (Drop-in 3)

At this point in her career, Holly used formal professional learning events as an opportunity to engage in a kind of measuring process. In addition to looking for repertoire she could use, Holly compared the clinician's ideas and how they taught with what she did in her own practice. She seemed to be looking for small tweaks and clarifications and seeking "affirmation" of the principles and practices she had embraced in her own teaching. For example, in sharing what she learned from attending the report card session mentioned earlier, the reader might recall that Holly commented, "So it was helpful to find out what other people do and what's sort of reasonable" (Drop-in 2). Not only was she looking for ideas, but she was looking to affirm her own thinking and practice. Holly also found affirmation of her practice in the Orff workshop where she noticed the clinicians' "group management strategies" and realized that she attended to their subtle approach because she uses the same strategy in her own teaching. While Holly saw professional learning as an individual pursuit, in this unique way, her learning was social in nature.

Learning alone in a community of practice.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning takes place through participation in communities rather than exclusively in the learner's mind. While Holly's learning was social in nature, she intentionally positioned herself on the fringes of the predominant elementary music education communities. She was very aware of the different but limiting values transmitted and espoused by the adherents of both the Orff and Kodály philosophies. Most often she was not a member of either association, although she did occasionally take out a membership for a year if there were workshops coming up in which she was interested. Earlier in the chapter I mentioned the diagram that Holly had made consisting of circles or bubbles all over a page, with the name of a music education philosophy or method in each bubble. She explained:

... music education is a way of expressing music. Okay? But then I run into all these other bubbles. Orff, Kodály, Suzuki, Royal Conservatory– These are also – they’re music education methods. They’re also a man-made construct to make sense of what is vast. They’re tools that are designed to assist us to teach, to present material in an effective way to make sense. But, again, it’s a bubble. It’s a box. And music is more vast than that.

(Interview 1)

While Holly saw the value of having a framework for thinking about teaching, she did not want to limit herself to a specific bubble. She was more interested in what was around the bubbles on the rest of the page, the part she had labeled “music.” She was very aware that most elementary music teachers identified with a specific music education method and that there was some sort of community pressure that guided everyone’s teaching practice within the community. She also understood this professional peer pressure as a feature of being part of a human society:

...the ideas are in the air and you’re taught this and then you begin to value that and then you begin to believe in that thing. Sure. And I also think there’s a certain amount of like, “Oh, this is what’s cool and so this is what I need to do.” ... That’s the way people are with everything. Why do we get the brand of backpack we do or the shoes that we get? We tend to get what’s cool and I think there is an element of that...I do take a step back and just sort of– okay. How am I going to view this? But I just see a certain element of this. Who are the cool kids and what are they doing? Oh, I guess I should join that camp...And it happens in the senior citizens homes. I watched it where my grandma lived. It happens everywhere in society. (Drop-in 3)

While Holly regularly attended both Orff and Kodály workshops, has taken comprehensive courses in both pedagogies, taught private piano lessons sometimes using Royal Conservatory

materials, and has some background in Suzuki pedagogy, she did not see herself as an ‘Orff teacher,’ ‘Kodály teacher,’ ‘Royal Conservatory teacher,’ or ‘Suzuki teacher.’ She attended elementary music education events put on by the Kodály and Orff associations and was good friends with adherents of both philosophies, but she did not espouse the practices and beliefs of either community in their entirety. In this, she felt she was almost entirely alone amongst the teachers she knew. As I noted earlier, Holly stated, “I just would love, when teachers get together, if we could just talk about music as music... So sometimes I wish there could be just a general music teacher session that wasn’t necessarily associated with [the methods], you know?” (Drop-in 2). Holly engaged with the two communities and her practice was thus influenced to some degree, but she actively resisted the enculturation that is part of learning within a community of practice.⁸⁶ While she wanted something different for her own learning, she believed that the current system worked for many teachers because “teachers like to have a framework” (Drop-in 3). However, Holly’s own framework overrode the frameworks of the methodologies. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter Eight.

At this stage in her career, Holly was now mostly looking for confirmation of her practice. To some degree she had figured out what worked for her and was engaged more in refining her understanding and practice than in new learning related to her day-to-day teaching.

Meaningful (and doable) formal professional learning events.

Of all the professional learning opportunities Holly and I discussed ranging from workshops, courses, conversations with colleagues and so on, one experience stood out for Holly as particularly meaningful. She had attended a summer choral program at a local university that

⁸⁶ By enculturation, I am thinking here of what Lave and Wenger (1991) call *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* although Jorgensen’s (1997) definition mentioned earlier applies as well.

was structured around watching choral conductors work with a choir. What she liked about it was that, regardless of what input she was looking for in her practice, the program provided an excellent structure to engage in the learning practice she had termed ‘gleaning.’ She noted:

I’ve always really enjoyed [the summer choral program] actually, because I can just go and...glean what you feel is applicable to you at the time. Which, from year to year ...what I might be looking for might be different at different times. (Drop-in 2)

Holly valued this experience because it allowed her to engage in gleaning. I also noted to myself that the program’s focus aligned with Holly’s focus on and affinity for choral music education. While Holly did not say this, I also was aware that the format worked for her. It was a summer course of a relatively short duration⁸⁷ and was far less demanding on the participants than the levels courses or other summer events like the conducting course in which Holly had participated as part of her music education diploma. Unlike many school music teachers, Holly was also a private studio teacher. This meant that she was often unavailable after school because she was teaching. This time limitation made it difficult for Holly to attend professional learning events after school. She noted that she didn’t mind the “Saturday thing” but would prefer that events started later and ended earlier: “Two hours, in and out and you can still do something with your day. Those ones that go from 9am to like 2pm or something, your whole day– and by the time you get home, you’re exhausted” (Drop-in 3). While Garet *et al.* (2001) suggest that professional learning events that are sustained and intensive are more likely to impact teachers’ practice, Holly clearly valued her time away from thinking about teaching and she was also a studio teacher outside of school hours. Furthermore, her goal in attending professional learning events

⁸⁷ Participants can attend for a day, a half-week, or a week, and can take the program for credit or simply attend. Holly attended several times but did not participate for credit.

was not so much transformation of her practice, but checking in and making small tweaks. Shorter events allowed her to engage in the learning practices she called ‘gleaning’ and ‘soaking it in,’ and also provided adequate opportunities for Holly to evaluate her practice against what she saw in the workshop.

Growing as a musician as teacher professional learning.

Pellegrino (2011) argues that music-making is important to the professional growth of music teachers in that it has great potential to increase their well-being, professional presence, and understanding of their students. For Holly, much of what she seemed to consider as professional growth was actually musical growth, or perhaps more accurately, there seemed to be no separation in her thinking between her growth as a musician and her growth as a teacher. For example, when talking about future professional learning, Holly mentioned her desire to sing in a choir as a possible means of professional growth and, as noted above, we also talked about how much she would love to do a jazz degree and learn chording on the piano. Perhaps most telling is Holly’s comment when discussing the requirement to complete an Annual Professional Growth Plan as a teacher. Holly shared that she did not find the exercise particularly meaningful because she felt she was naturally growth oriented: “But then, I guess, if we’re talking about growing and development, I take that on personally, right? So what becomes my development as a teacher is perhaps more my personal development as a musician” (Drop-in 2). Holly was always looking for ways to engage and grow through music, whether it was singing in a choir, attending concerts and watching the conductor, or taking courses when time and energy permitted.

As noted earlier, Holly did not see herself as a performer but she had recently come to understand that teaching music provided a way for her to be a musician. While this new development was exciting and significant to Holly’s self-understanding, Holly’s identity had always been shaped by her engagement with music. Holly enjoyed and needed to make music.

Like the teachers in Bernard's (2004) study, Holly seemed to "figure out who [she was] in relation to the music and in relation to other people" (p. 182). Thus, engaging in music making had a direct impact on Holly's understanding of herself as a musical person and as a teacher. Furthermore, Holly taught out of her biography. She needed to maintain her strong connection with music so she could help students discover and build their own connection which was the primary goal of her pedagogy. As she stated earlier, Holly's passion for teaching came out of her spiritual connection with music and this passion was what sustained her teaching. However, it was also necessary to her well-being. Pellegrino (2011) notes the relationship between sustained happiness, health, and intentional activities like making music. Engaging in music-making was an important aspect of Holly's professional learning and professional and personal self-care.

Conclusion

Holly's biography informed both her understanding of her work as an elementary music teacher and her professional learning. While she understood professional learning as something located in formal events, Holly used a variety of self-directed learning strategies to help her integrate any new understanding into her thinking and practice. Holly was not only engaged in learning about teaching, but was also learning the discursive practices of the communities in which she was situated. Furthermore, Holly's professional learning was always framed through her need to develop and nurture her identity and voice.

Chapter Seven: Deborah, a Late-Career Music Teacher

The third case in this collective case study was that of Deborah, a music teacher nearing the end of her career. In this chapter, I will explore Deborah's experience of teaching music and professional learning beginning with a narrative portrait, discussion of what teaching music means to Deborah and ending with an exploration of Deborah's experience of professional learning.

Working with Deborah

Deborah was an experienced music educator who was in her 29th year of teaching at the time of the study. She had taught elementary music and been a homeroom teacher at a number of schools over her career. Deborah had been in her current position teaching music in an elementary school for seven years. I approached Deborah to be a participant in my study because I was looking for a late-career teacher. I was thrilled when she agreed. As I got to know Deborah, it became clear that she was used to collaborating and learning from others. In fact, she seemed to view participating in my study as a learning opportunity. For example, when we met for the last time, I thanked Deborah for her help and asked her why she agreed to be a participant in my study. Deborah responded without hesitation, "Because I'm intrigued. I never knew anybody that's ever done a PhD before" (Drop-in 4).

I met with Deborah five times over the study, once for an hour-long interview where she shared her Pre-Interview Activity responses, and then four times for shorter drop-in interviews at lunchtime or after school where I followed up about questions that arose for me during ongoing data analysis. I also observed in Deborah's classroom for two half days, and attended a music festival where her choir performed.

I am grateful to Deborah for welcoming me into her classroom and professional life, and my admiration for her as a learner, an educator, and a person grew enormously over the time that I spent with her. The following narrative portrait was constructed from interview transcripts and was confirmed with Deborah.

A Narrative Portrait of Deborah

Deborah was one of the younger children of a large family in which studying music was expected. Before Deborah was born, her mother taught school music in the small town where the family lived, and she also ensured that all of her children had piano lessons. Although Deborah's mother claimed that she could not play, she clearly wanted her children to have a music education: "The piano was always in the house and someone was always playing it" (Interview 1). As a young child, Deborah begged to take piano lessons. She was hearing her older brothers and sisters practice and wanted to learn too. Deborah shared, "I begged and begged and begged, and my mom wouldn't put me in [piano lessons] until I was in grade 2 [laughs]" (Interview 1). Deborah studied piano from grade 2 to grade 12, and in grade 12, she worked toward and completed her grade 10 Royal Conservatory of Music piano exam. While she did not always enjoy her lessons, working toward the exam motivated her to keep playing:

I didn't love piano, but by the time I got to high school...I think I really wanted to do that exam. I was really motivated by that exam and I thought "I'm gonna to do this" and that kept me playing. (Interview 1)

Successfully completing the exam made Deborah think about herself a little differently. She noted that the exam "kind of gave me the feeling that 'while maybe I'm not such a bad piano player,' you know? I thought, 'Yeah. I can really do this'" (Interview 1). The experience of preparing for and succeeding in completing her goal left a lasting impression of Deborah.

Deborah's family moved a few times throughout her childhood. While Deborah and her siblings took piano lessons regardless of where they lived, sometimes there was little or no music offered in the schools. At one point, Deborah's mother volunteered to teach music in Deborah's elementary school because no music class was being offered. Deborah remembers singing *Minka, Minka I Adore Thee* with her elementary class under her mom's direction. In spite of enjoying singing, Deborah noted that she "wasn't really a singer. I was never in a choir or anything like that" (Interview 1). She did, however, participate in a summer choral music camp with her friend one year and also had two choral camp experiences later on as an adult.

"It wasn't really my choice."

After Deborah finished high school, she entered the Education Faculty at the local university in spite of the fact that she initially did not see herself as a teacher. Like taking piano lessons, teaching "was in [the] family" (Drop-in 4). Not only was Deborah's mom a teacher, but her older sister became one as well. As Deborah neared adulthood, others seem to see teaching as a good fit for Deborah, but she resisted:

People always said to me, "Oh, you're going to be a teacher, be a teacher." Even in grade 12, I remember my English teacher saying, "You're going to be a teacher." "I am not going to be a teacher. I am not going to be a teacher." and then, I don't know, I just came to the realization that maybe I should be a teacher [laughing]. (Drop-in 4)

And so, Deborah went to university in pursuit of a Bachelor of Education. In the mid 1980s when Deborah graduated from university, the government provided funding for a one-year teacher internship program for new teachers. Deborah worked as an intern in an elementary school alongside two teachers and their students in an open area classroom for her first year of her career. Near the end of the year, she was informed that the music teacher in the school was leaving and Deborah was asked if she would apply for the job. Deborah agreed:

[Those] was the days where there were not very many...teaching jobs... that was my way into teaching. It really wasn't my choice. I don't think I probably would have chosen to be a music teacher but it was kind of thrown at me, and then I realized...how much I didn't know. (Interview 1)

When Deborah got the job, she quickly sought help. Even though she had taken music education courses as part of her general Education degree, she did not feel she had enough music background to be successful, and didn't really know where to start. She shared:

When I found out I had to sing, oh my gosh, that was...huge. What do you mean I have to sing? I didn't know how to teach a song to kids... I did not feel prepared to teach music (Interview 1).

The summer before she started, she took Orff-Schulwerk level 1 which turned out to be a seminal experience. Deborah noted, "when I think back, that was very influential in the way that my whole thinking about music education progressed. It's interesting to reflect on that now" (Interview 1). In spite of not being sure initially if she wanted to teach, Deborah embraced her new career.

In her third or fourth year in the position, a new teacher was hired to teach at the school. Deborah's new colleague mentioned that she would really like to teach music. The new teacher had participated in a Kodály music teacher education program and also had a background in musical theatre. Deborah suggested they combine their two assignments and the principal and her new colleague agreed. Deborah and the other music teacher shared a grade six classroom and the music program with Deborah teaching grades four to six music while her colleague taught music to the younger grades. It was a fruitful collaboration that lasted for several years until Deborah went on maternity leave. When her leave was over, Deborah decided it was time for a

change. She took a part-time grade five/six position at a different school which eventually turned into a full-time position. A few years later, she received funding from her school board and took another leave, this time to do her master's degree on "something to do with computer integration in the classroom" (Interview 1):

Music was...probably the furthest thing [from my mind]...I don't even remember what I was doing with music [at that point in my life]. And then when I came back from that leave, there was a music position at another school and that was my way back in. So there wasn't a lot of classroom jobs again when I was coming back, so I thought "Okay, I'll teach music." (Interview 1)

Deborah stayed at that school for seven or eight years.

"I can play handbells."

When Deborah arrived at her new school she found that she was expected to teach handbells. Having never worked with bells, Deborah joined her church handbell choir to learn how to ring. She discovered that being part of a handbell choir was something that she really enjoyed, and so she stuck with it. In addition to working with her school handbell ensembles, Deborah also eventually took over directing the handbell choir at her church, and this led to several professional learning experiences after she realized "Oh, I need some help directing" (Interview 1). She began attending handbell conferences and even drove all the way to the Manitoba/North Dakota border to participate in a summer handbell camp. Being around others who enjoyed working with handbells was an affirming experience.

Back to music again.

A few years later, Deborah took the year off to travel with her family. Her school district allowed teachers to defer a portion of their salary over 4 years and take the fifth year off, which is what Deborah did. When she came back to her school district, she once again needed to find a

new position. She took two part-time music jobs in two different schools and at the end of the year she began looking for a position in a single school. Deborah found a full-time music position closer to where she lived, and this is where she was still teaching at the time of the study.

Throughout her time in the school division, Deborah had worked on a district-wide project to create assessment resources for music teachers, had attended many Orff workshops and assessment conferences, been part of a catchment area professional learning group, and most recently was involved in a collaborative learning project with a colleague from a nearby school. Assessment for learning had been a major interest and focus of both her professional learning and her practice.

Over the years, Deborah had become a master teacher who was clearly learning oriented and focused on continually improving her practice. A small anecdote from our first conversation serves to illustrate Deborah's growth orientation. After she had walked me through a timeline of key musical events or experiences that she had completed in preparation for our first interview, Deborah pointed at the end of the line and quipped, "And then... I'm now here— I cut the timeline off but it really should keep going I guess" (Interview 1). The learning is never over for Deborah. After this brief narrative portrait, I will now turn to an exploration of what teaching music means to Deborah.

What Does Teaching Music Mean to Deborah?

While it has been suggested that music educators must reconcile their musician and teacher identities,⁸⁸ Bernard (2005) contends that music teacher identity is not an either/or dichotomy,

⁸⁸ See note 75 in Chapter Six for a list of authors who espouse this view.

but a multifaceted construct that includes being a musician *and* being a teacher. All three of the participants in my study constructed their professional identities differently. Gabriel, for example, seems to have integrated teacher and musician into one unified identity where teaching fell under the umbrella of musician, while Holly derived her musician identity from her teaching. Deborah, on the other hand, clearly saw herself primarily as a teacher. In fact, being a musician did not seem to be a large part of her identity even though she was an avid fan of music. As Deborah mentioned, she initially became a music teacher because she needed the job, although she has enjoyed teaching music immensely and has become an extremely skilled music educator. Unlike the other two participants, Deborah did not have much to say about her relationship with music or the place of music in her life. She did, however, have a lot to say about her students' learning. As a result, I will discuss how Deborah experienced her work as a music educator and teacher beginning with Deborah's focus on learning.⁸⁹ First, I will provide a descriptive portrait of Deborah's teaching context.

Deborah's teaching context.

Deborah taught in a large kindergarten to grade six school which had both an English and a French Immersion program. It was also one of several sites for a district-wide literacy program for students who needed support in developing reading and comprehension skills. The clientele of this school had a higher socio-economic status than those of the other two teachers in the study. The school was situated in a residential neighbourhood where the majority of dwellings were single-family units with some apartments and townhouses further afield. Like Gabriel and Holly's schools, Deborah's school was ethnically and culturally diverse.

⁸⁹ Ellis (2006) argues that the role of the interpretive inquirer is to tease out the participant's preoccupations and interests rather than forcing them to conform to the researcher's interests.

Deborah was a full-time music teacher. She taught music to every class in the school including the French Immersion students who she taught in English. In fact, the year of the study, the school had too many classes to fit into Deborah's schedule and so, Deborah had arranged to combine classes for one period a week and do what she called a 'sing along' with two or three classes in the music room at a time. She enlisted the help of a first-year teacher in the school and arranged with the principal to have the sing along counted towards her new colleague's teaching load. Deborah had built a strong relationship with her administrator who clearly valued her professionalism and the music program she provided in the school. Her principal was willing to let Deborah take the lead working out innovative ways to organize the music program (and in meeting her professional learning needs). Part of the reason, I suspect, that Deborah's principal was so supportive was that Deborah was a gifted educator with a tremendous work ethic. She provided many rich opportunities for the students in the school to experience music, and her understanding of teaching music centered on student learning. In this section, I will explore four themes related to Deborah's thinking on and experience of the practice of teaching elementary music beginning with Deborah's focus on learning, the central place of teaching the curriculum in her thinking, Deborah's understanding of teaching music as supporting individual students, and finally, her constructivist stance related to assessment for learning practices and coaching from the side.

A focus on learning.

Deborah thought of her work as an elementary music teacher as facilitating student learning about music. Her primary focus was on helping each student to learn the concepts and skills in the music curriculum.⁹⁰ Even the way the room was decorated spoke to this orientation,

⁹⁰ It may seem unremarkable to say that a teacher is focused on student learning, but Deborah was unique in the level of her commitment to this focus among the music teachers I have encountered. Many music

with samples of student work in the hallway leading up to the music room and posters and displays outlining major strands of the curriculum on the back wall of the classroom. There were no mere ‘decorations’ in Deborah’s classroom; everything on the walls served a pedagogical purpose.

Rather than focusing on exposing the students to certain songs, or providing a variety of experiences through specific activities or pieces of music, Deborah thought about what concepts and skills she wanted her students to learn and how to facilitate that learning. The importance of student learning in Deborah’s thinking can clearly be seen in the following comment about her ‘pet peeve’ as an elementary music teacher: “You know what irks me the most?...When teachers drop off their kids and they say, ‘Have fun’ [laughs]. Yes, have fun, but why not say, ‘learn something’ or ‘I’m coming back to see what you’ve learned?’” (Drop in 1). Deborah wanted the other teachers in her building, who were most likely learning focused in their own classrooms, to reinforce the importance of learning in the music room instead of just seeing music as ‘fun’ or ‘a break from learning.’

A focus on teaching the curriculum.

Deborah knew the provincial music curriculum document well.⁹¹ She had used it extensively in her work with assessment, and she used the curriculum’s learning outcomes not only to choose what to teach but to measure and track her students’ learning on an on-going basis. ‘Teaching the curriculum’ for Deborah meant choosing activities to help students develop the musical skills and concepts outlined in the curriculum document for each grade over the

educators focus primarily on providing musical experiences, teaching repertoire, or on preparing ensembles for performance rather than specifically on student learning.

⁹¹ Arguably part of the reason Deborah knew the music curriculum so well is that the document has not changed since 1989 and so it has been in force for all but three years of Deborah’s teaching career.

course of the year. Deborah gave an example of how she thought about working from the curriculum:

Today, we're developing our skills in singing. And we're singing solfege and we're singing a 5-note song...you kind of work the skills. But a lot of that teaching is verbalizing it and just making [the students] conscious that it is a skill, or is a concept.
(Interview 1)

Not only did she pick a specific curricular objective to frame her hypothetical teaching in her example, but we can see in the excerpt above that Deborah was thinking about making sure her students were aware of the curricular outcome and what they were learning. The posters on the back wall of Deborah's classroom summarized her understanding of the key tenets of the Program of Studies across all the grades. For example, one poster said, "I am a musician. I can appreciate music by listening and performing." Deborah often used these posters as a form of self-assessment for the students. She explained, "So, at the end of a lesson, I'll often say, 'Okay, turn around and look at the posters...what did we just do? How does that fit?' You know, 'What are we learning?' basically" (Drop-in 1).⁹² While Deborah did not feel bound to the curriculum, she noted that she did "feel responsible" for teaching it (Drop-in 3). She used outcomes from the curriculum to give purpose to her teaching, but she did not feel pressured to 'cover' all the material in the document. Curricular outcomes provided the context for her teaching and her students' learning. However, Deborah reserved the right to select appropriate curricular content and to teach it in a way that was best for her and her students. Deborah noted, "You need to know why...whatever you're doing, you should have a reason for doing it" (Drop-in 3). Deborah

⁹² Ensuring that students know what specifically they are learning is a key principle of quality assessment. Deborah has worked extensively with Sandra Herbst and Anne Davies' materials on assessment and has attended many workshops and conferences on assessment for learning.

had a tremendous professional ethic. She was committed to continually improving her practice and working to ensure that her students experienced musical learning instead of just “throwing a few songs at the kids” and filling the time (Drop-in 3).

Supporting individual learners.

Deborah’s focus on learning was both general and specific. While she thought in broad strokes about what she wanted the students to learn as evidenced by her “I am a musician” posters on the back wall, she focused on the content through which that learning could happen by choosing specific curricular outcomes and then planning activities that would forward the students’ understanding of those outcomes. The idea of student learning as a general goal guided her actions as she planned and taught. However, Deborah viewed her work as supporting the learning of *each individual student*. She had a strong sense of where her students were in terms of their journey of musical learning, and the fact that there were close to 500 students in the school made this all the more remarkable. For example, in sharing a video that she had made of students singing a folksong during an assessment in class, Deborah commented on one student’s performance as we watched, “So, I’m playing my ukulele, everybody’s singing in the class. [The student] doesn’t know the words to the song, which was interesting to me...we’ve sung that song about 40 million times and he doesn’t know all the words” (Drop-in 3). Deborah’s assessment practices were allowing her to think deeply about one student’s learning and the complex nature of what was happening for him. While we listened to the student struggle to match pitch, Deborah noted, “He can sing in tune because I’ve heard him sing in tune, so what’s that about?... It’s just so fascinating to me” (Drop-in 3). Deborah was intrigued by the student’s experience and his learning and also clearly had an in-depth understanding of his progress related to the learning outcome of singing in tune. In this short excerpt, it is clear that Deborah not only knows this individual student’s capabilities well, but that she thinks about and sees his learning as a

puzzle. Deborah approached the learning of each of her students in the same way. She knew where her students were in relation to the learning outcomes she had chosen because she saw assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.

Part of the reason Deborah knew exactly where each student was is that she and a colleague had been working together to develop an assessment plan for elementary music.⁹³ She had been experimenting with different ways of gathering data to make judgements on her students' musical learning including making video and sound recordings, developing rubrics both with descriptive words and with actual exemplars of student work, and experimenting with iPad applications for assessment checklists and other assessment tools. Aoki (2005) suggests that the work of teachers is to engage in interpretive work pertaining to the curriculum and what it means for the specific students before them. Deborah was continually engaged in inquiry to this end. One of the main outcomes of Deborah's focus on assessment for learning is that she had a remarkable sense of what the curriculum meant and what it meant for individual students. Rather than using the curriculum as a fixed measure of student performance, Deborah's practice consisted of working out what each curricular outcome meant in relation to individual student's personal path of musical learning.

“Making connections”: Students constructing their understanding of music.

As noted above, Deborah had great insight as to where each student was located on their individual path of musical learning. She understood learning as being “complicated,” as opposed to being a “cut and dried” process that one could “stick... in little boxes” (Drop-in 3). Deborah shared that part of the reason she was so aware of student learning was that she had had the opportunity to be an elementary homeroom teacher where, “we would delve into things quite

⁹³ This project was a major source of professional learning for Deborah and I will discuss it further in the final section of this chapter.

deeply— like writing, for example. I realized what a complex process that is and...how long it takes kids to get better at what they're doing and how much work has to go into that" (Drop in 3).

Over her career, Deborah had come to view learning as a process in which students were actively making connections with their prior understanding. In other words, her teaching reflected a constructivist theory of learning. Constructivist learning theory focuses on the learner's actions in making sense of their learning experiences rather than the teacher's actions in transmitting knowledge (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Learners are assumed to be active in deepening their own understanding, and learning is facilitated through interaction with others and depends on previous experience and understanding (Kauchak & Eggen, 1997). After her experience teaching homeroom, Deborah began to attend to how students construct their understanding in her music classes. Her teaching reflected her understanding of learning; instead of telling students information or primarily directing activities from the front of the room, Deborah planned lessons where the students had the chance to draw from their current understanding. Often her approach was to give students the opportunity to problem solve rather than simply working on the development of skills. For example, one day I observed a grade six lesson where Deborah had the class writing individual compositions for soprano recorders. First, she had the students sight-read several student compositions on their recorders, drawing their attention to the home tone and pointing out certain features which were part of the criteria for the assignment and which related to the students' current understanding of music. She then gave the students time to work on their own compositions. During that time, Deborah moved around the room offering support and guidance, and one of the students moved to the Orff instrument to try

out her composition while two boys collaborated on a two-part piece.⁹⁴ All the students were actively engaged in their work.

Deborah described another lesson where she had students constructing their understanding of music:

With the other grade sixes we were doing *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* so I just charted the notes with letter names up there and taught them the melody on their recorder and then said, “Now here’s the harmony line” so then, and then I said, “Here’s the accompaniment chords. You guys figure out accompaniment on the instruments. You figure it out on the bells, you guys take the chimes and figure it out.” And I just kind of turned them loose. I was just kind of curious to see what they’d do. (Drop-in 4)

The students met in groups and began working out how to play the chords on their assigned instruments and those working on the handbells and chimes “figured it out no problem.” The students working on the Orff instruments, however, “were a little bit less sure...how their role would be” because they could only play two notes at a time on one instrument, whereas the chords on the board each had three notes (Drop-in 4). Deborah worked with the third group, making some suggestions and asking guiding questions to help the students figure out a solution. In each group, the students had the opportunity to make connections between their current understanding of music and accompanying the melody with chords.

Deborah clearly saw learning as a process of “making connections” (Drop-in 3), and saw her role as providing experiences with music in order to facilitate this. For example, she shared:

⁹⁴ Orff instruments are classroom instruments which are modelled on xylophones and metallophones. They are barred and played by striking the bars with mallets. Each key on an Orff instrument has a specific pitch.

when you're doing something and a kid will say, "That's just like in that other song when we did blah blah..." Some kid said to me, "That low so— that's exactly what we did last year with that song "The Train On the Track." I had completely forgotten that, but he had made that connection...It's neat to teach something so powerful that the memory is there six/eight months later. It's in their nature, it's in their minds somewhere, right? Because you've experienced it (Drop-in 3).

In sum, Deborah saw her students as agentic in their learning and saw learning as a process of making connections.

Assessment is part of learning.

Assessment was also integral to Deborah's understanding of learning. Deborah framed learning through the lens of 'assessment for learning' where learning is understood as a cyclical process whereby teachers choose curricular learning goals, describe what learning would look like in relation to that endpoint, support their students in working towards the goal, and then give students opportunities to demonstrate their competency and together take stock of where they are in relation to the goal (Davies, Herbst, and Reynolds, 2012). Deborah's orientation to assessment for learning shaped her teaching practice. The concrete goals Deborah choose for her students (including the ones posted on the back wall) came from the Alberta music curriculum. Deborah consistently shared learning goals with her students and regularly gathered samples of their work to be able to judge where they were in relation to those goals. For example, Deborah had students use her iPad to individually record themselves playing a recorder piece. After the recordings were collected, she would later listen to and assign a grade based on a rubric. She also showed me videos of individual students singing the melody of a folksong in the context of a singing game or movement activity. Each individual student stepped up to a microphone in turn as the class sang around them and the singer's performance was filmed on Deborah's iPad. Later,

she evaluated the students' singing in relation to the descriptors from a rubric she had developed with her colleague. Deborah also used the process of evaluating the recordings to think about each students' progress and where to go next in her teaching, and she shared the data she collected with students to help them evaluate their own progress. For example, the lesson I described earlier with the grade six students composing a recorder melody began with Deborah sharing several samples of student work and talking through how each piece met the criteria of the assignment. She did this in order to help the students make judgments about their own work.

“Coaching on the side.”

Scott (2006) notes that teachers who espouse a constructivist theory of learning are facilitators rather than givers of information, and this was congruent with Deborah's understanding of her role. Deborah explained:

You're not just giving them knowledge and expecting them to spit it out, right? They're creating with what you're giving them, and they're taking that responsibility for saying ... I'm here, I need to go here. This is where I need to go. (Drop-in 3)

Once again, we see that Deborah viewed her students as agentic in their learning. As a result of this understanding, she positioned herself as a learning “coach” rather than as an instructor who transmitted information. She explained how her assessment for learning practices have resulted in being able to come alongside her students in this coaching role:

I think another thing I've learned is that kids can take over a lot of responsibility that we take away from them... if a kid can say to you... “I don't deserve my karate belt. I couldn't play those notes very well. That didn't work very well.” Or, “I'm not using my tongue so I don't deserve my belt,” or, “I think this is an A because”... when they can

take ownership for that, it's very cool. Because then you're just on the side. You're sort of coaching them along. (Drop-in 3)⁹⁵

Two thoughts come to mind for me in thinking about the above excerpt. First, Deborah has clearly attended to creating a safe learning environment for her students. In order for students to be able to honestly assess their learning and share where they are with Deborah, they must feel comfortable both with her and with their learning. Deborah has somehow communicated that learning is a process rather than a destination, and her students seemed to know that they were not being judged personally for where they were in their learning journey.

Secondly, it is clear that for Deborah, “teaching is about relationships, right?” (Drop-in 4). Time and again, Deborah demonstrated tremendous caring towards each individual student. Noddings (2013) notes that caring for others entails receptivity on the part of the *one-caring* and Deborah was clearly receptive to her students. She gave them opportunities to share, listened carefully and respectfully when students spoke, made connections with what she knew of them from their lives outside of class, and consistently attributed good intent to their actions. For example, in a grade one/two lesson that I observed, one little boy was wearing a hat to commemorate St. Patrick's Day and Deborah pointed his hat out to the class and gave him the opportunity to share where he got it. Deborah knew that his family was from Ireland and created an opening for him to share about himself with the class. Later in the lesson as the students were doing a dance, two boys spontaneously put their arms on each other's shoulders while they were doing the dance steps. Instead of telling them to stop or assuming they were joking around,

⁹⁵ Deborah uses a common system to encourage students to practice recorder called “Recorder Karate” where the teacher sets certain progressively more challenging milestones (Ex. being able to play certain pieces) and the students work toward them at their own pace. When the students are ready to share their learning, they play for the teacher and can earn a coloured “belt” made of yarn or elastic to put on the end of their recorder.

Deborah simply responded, “That’s a good idea. Can you jig without kicking each other?” and she encouraged everyone in the class to try doing the same with a partner (Observation 1).

Deborah also showed tremendous caring in the activity described earlier where the grade sixes were working on their recorder compositions. When the student mentioned earlier moved to the barred instruments at the side of the room to work out her melody, instead of admonishing the girl for not following the instructions to work on her recorder or questioning her about what she was doing, Deborah simply caught the student’s eye and nodded at her. Deborah thus communicated that she trusted the student and knew that she was on-task, and she also gave the girl permission to do what she felt was best for her own learning. The student in question got straight to work, trying out her composition and adjusting it on her page as she worked. I suspect she felt valued both as a person and as a musical learner.

Giving students responsibility for their own learning and the corresponding role of teacher as learning coach was clearly something Deborah was working through and toward in her practice. The last time we visited, she talked about experimenting with “stepping off the stage” with her students:

Lately, I’ve been thinking a little bit more about... how can I step off the stage, how can I give ownership to them for the work that they’re doing so that it’s not always listen to me and follow what I’m doing... (Drop-in 4)

For example, she decided to have her grade sixes learn a recorder song without using the strategy of direct instruction:

I put [the grade sixes] into groups [this week] and I ran off a bunch of [familiar] songs... and then plunked them on music stands and put them around the room and said, “Learn a new song.” So I didn’t go through the songs together, I didn’t teach them the notes or the

fingering. I wanted to see what they would do. I grouped them...by playing ability and... put a little suggestion at the bottom for how they could perform it. You know, “add an instrument to this, add a triangle.” “What would it sound like if you did this?” And then we did a little sharing today. (Drop-in 4)

It quickly became obvious to me that Deborah not only focused on student learning, but on her own learning. The above quote provides one of many examples of her stance as a learner (Ex. “I wanted to see what they could do”). Deborah saw her work as a teacher as being dependant on growing and learning, always striving to improve her practice. In fact, when she shared her timeline of her musical journey with me at our first interview, it struck me that many of the significant events she had outlined were framed around what she had learned either about herself or about teaching. For example, Deborah wrote, “I understand the curriculum and I can see how assessment can work” in relation to working on a school board assessment resource and “I can be a music teacher” about her first job teaching music. Both are statements of what she learned from the experience, one about the curriculum and assessment, and one about herself and her identity.

Deborah’s role in her school.

Like Holly, Deborah understood the practice of teaching elementary music as going beyond the teaching and learning in the music classroom. Deborah also saw her role as a music teacher as being a leader in the school. In addition to the learning experiences she provided in her music classes, Deborah was very aware of her contribution to the school’s culture and image through events such as the Christmas concert, assemblies, parent teas, and her extra-curricular ensembles. She commented, for example, on:

the power that music can play in the building of your community and the school, and bringing your kids together. It’s the one place you’ve got all the kids so you can, so you have lots of power in that as a music teacher. And, as an administrator, I would hope you

would recognize that in a positive kind of way, the power that the music teacher has to make changes, really, in the culture of the school and in what kids are learning.

(Interview 1)

Deborah embraced the opportunity to help shape the school culture and willingly took up the work of being a *teacher leader* in her school community (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). She invested time and energy in running extra-curricular ensembles and worked hard to create and reinforce an inclusive and safe learning environment in her building. She also attended to building strong relationships with the rest of the school staff and parents.

Like Gabriel and Holly, one of Deborah's main leadership roles in her school was planning a Christmas concert each year. When she first started working at the school, the staff and administration were not keen to have a concert:

They were going to cancel the concert because they'd had such negative experiences in the years previous, so when I first came it was kind of like, "Are you sure you really want to do a concert? You know, the parents don't like it very much, they're not very well-behaved" all this kind of stuff, but we did it, it was great, and every year it's just gotten better and better and better. And now, it's like, "Oh, what are you doing for Christmas this year? We can hardly wait!" [laughs]. (Interview 1)

In addition to being a project that she enjoyed, Deborah saw the concert as a way of communicating the value and content of her music program. She quipped, "I always say that my parent teacher interview *is* that concert" (Interview 1). Putting on a successful concert, however, was not easy. Deborah noted that it involved tremendous organizational and leadership skills from the music teacher: "A concert is a huge leadership thing ... you're having to bring together your whole staff and get them on your side and sell the concert to your kids and then, organize

your parents” (Interview 1). Deborah excelled in building consensus and support for the concert project. She approached the concert as a school-wide project and involved students, staff, and parents in making it successful.

Providing cultural leadership: Advocating for the arts. Deborah also provided leadership in arranging school-wide cultural and arts-based experiences for the students such as artist-in-residencies, taking students to cultural events in the community, and organizing visiting productions. For example, she shared:

We’re doing an artist-in-residency next year, and I kind of have taken that over...I want to influence who’s brought into the school for that so I wrote the grant, I researched it all, I, you know, figured out what would be good, I sold it to the parents, you know, that kind of thing. (Interview 1)

As the music teacher, Deborah felt responsible for ensuring that the students in her school had a variety of experiences with music, drama, dance, and art, and worked to ensure the school culture supported and embraced the arts. She understood part of her role as the music teacher as providing cultural leadership in her school and she took this cultural leadership responsibility very seriously.

In addition to organizing public events like the concert, Deborah viewed advocacy for the arts and her music program as part of her leadership role in her school. Deborah had worked hard to educate her principal, for example, about what she needed in order to enact a quality music program and her administrator supported Deborah’s program by spending money to purchase specific equipment, allowing Deborah to participate in music-specific professional learning, and paying for a substitute teacher to cover Deborah’s classes and a bus for choir trips. Deborah also

developed meaningful professional relationships with others on her staff and in the community which sometimes led to unique opportunities to collaborate with others.

An openness to collaborating. Deborah engaged in multiple collaborations both in and outside her school. During the study, I was aware that Deborah was collaborating with school colleagues who she had recruited and arranged to help with her choral program, to teach extra-curricular handbell ensembles, and to team-teach combined music classes. She was also engaged in collaboratively planning a zone music festival with two other music teachers, met regularly with a small group in the handbell community, and collaborated regularly with a colleague from another school on making an assessment plan. Stanley, Snell, and Edgar (2013) argue that collaboration is a key feature of meaningful professional learning, and while many of Deborah's collaborations were not primarily intended as learning activities, there is no question that collaborating resulted in professional learning, particularly her work with her colleague on assessment. I will discuss her collaborative learning in more detail later in the chapter.

Deborah's collaborations arose from her engagement in the world around her. She was relational, open to others and to new opportunities, and exhibited high levels of dependence and plasticity in her approach to her work (Dewey, 1916/2008). I have already mentioned the collaborative teaching arrangement Deborah had negotiated at the beginning of her career resulting in shared teaching of the music program in her first school, and there were many other examples that I saw as I spent time with Deborah as noted above. Two illustrations serve to give the sense of how Deborah's collaborations came about.

As Deborah and another teacher were chatting one day in the staff room, Deborah's colleague commented that she was fascinated by handbells and would love to learn how to ring someday. Deborah invited her to come and be part of the bell choir with the students at their

school, and the teacher took her up on the invitation. A few years later, Deborah's colleague retired, but she offered to come every week and direct handbells at the school. Deborah noted, "I'm really lucky otherwise I'd never do four groups. So she does two of them and I do two of them...She comes at lunch twice a week" (Drop-in 2). Deborah shared leadership of the ensembles, and gave her colleague many opportunities to direct, encouraging her to conduct the school's handbells at a youth handbell festival and sharing the podium at the school's parent tea.

Another example involved a first-year teacher in Deborah's school. The year of the study, Deborah took it upon herself to mentor a first-year colleague who had been hired part-time to teach kindergarten. Deborah's school was too big for her to teach all of the music classes, and so, as I mentioned earlier, Deborah decided to combine some of the groups for one period a week to do sing-alongs. Deborah approached the new teacher because she knew she was interested in music and asked her if she would like to help her with the combined music classes. Deborah planned the lessons, but then when the first-year teacher arrived to help with the classes, Deborah shared what she had planned and why, and asked her opinion on what to do. Deborah also gave her new colleague an opportunity to substitute teach in the music room whenever she was away. I asked Deborah how she envisioned their relationship when she first approached the new teacher:

J: Do you see yourself as mentoring [name of teacher] a little bit?

D: A little bit, but because she's not actually teaching music, it's difficult. Like she's so busy with her kindergarten assignment. I thought it would be more of a mentoring at the beginning of it– I was hoping it would be so she would consider teaching music because we need teachers to teach music. (Drop-in 4)

Deborah approached her new colleague with the intention of solving a problem in the timetable and at the same time worked out a way she could mentor a potential music educator. The way Deborah approached the situation provides yet another example of how Deborah acted as a leader in her school and in the community, and also provides an example of Deborah's relational stance. Deborah had clearly made an effort to get to know her young colleague and therefore knew that she would be interested in learning how to teach music.

In sum, Deborah was an excellent example of what Thiessen and Barrett (2002) call a *reform-minded music teacher*. She exhibited a “deeply ingrained and habitual dedication to improvement” (p. 762) extending past the walls of the music classroom and into “collaborative efforts with colleagues” (Barrett, 2006, p. 21) in the school and in the community.

How Does Deborah Experience Professional Learning?

As is clear from exploring Deborah's understanding of what it means to teach elementary music, not only was Deborah focused on student learning in her teaching, but she constantly put herself in situations where she could grow as a teacher, musician, and person. As I looked back on the transcripts of our interviews, it struck me that the word Deborah used most often was the word “interesting.” She was curious, engaged with her students and the world around her, and thought hard about her work. Deborah's drive to be an excellent teacher compelled her to participate in many professional learning events and activities throughout her career and resulted in her developing significant expertise as a music educator. The root of Deborah's growth was a forward-thinking attitude and tremendous professional ethic. In this section, I will explore how Deborah developed her expertise and how she experienced professional learning through several mechanisms of professional learning in which she engaged (thinking pedagogically, imitating and adapting models, reflection, and playing around and gradual shifts). I will then discuss how

Deborah experienced learning with others through a professional learning community and through engaging in collaboration, and conclude with some thoughts on the timeframe of professional learning.

Developing expertise.

While Deborah did occasionally attend workshops or other events not related to a specific goal in her practice, at this point in her career, Deborah most often experienced professional learning by tackling specific aspects of her teaching practice that she wanted to improve or develop, whether it was bringing in alto recorders in grade six for the first time and figuring out how best to use them for musical learning, playing with a new tool for assessing student performance, or incorporating new repertoire. Each year, Deborah chose goals for what she wanted to improve or explore and then began working through how best to enact these goals in her classroom. Essentially, Deborah engaged in a carefully thought out process of trial and error with her classes, adjusting and refining her teaching practice as she went. Once Deborah settled an issue, she expanded her goal or moved on to a new one.

Deborah was engaged in developing and refining her expertise, and as she did so, she was engaging in professional learning. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1993) see expertise as a dynamic process of on-going problem solving whereby specific aspects of practice are habituated. This habituation allows practitioners to attend to their practice at a higher level. Like the experts described by Scardamalia and Bereiter (1993), Deborah worked on a particular issue in her work, settling specific elements so that she was able to habituate certain routines. This habituation enabled her to move on to a new element of practice and also allowed her to attend to the nuances of what was happening around her as she taught, including being able to focus on student learning.

While teaching had gotten easier as she habituated certain aspects of her practice, Deborah pointed out that the amount of work she did hadn't really changed. As she became more adept at teaching, Deborah's expectations for her work also increased:

It's easier to do the teaching part of the job. I think what's more difficult is the level of expectation of yourself goes up... So you expect more of yourself to be able to do more and do it better and be more efficient and it never seems to get more efficient. I never really get faster really at what I do, or maybe I just take on more. I just decide I'm going to do more things or do them in a different way. It... never seems to get easier but more satisfying in lots of ways. (Interview 1)

Deborah clearly enjoyed learning new things and got tremendous satisfaction out of improving her practice. Continually attending to and settling different aspects of her practice was a powerful structure for professional learning, and through this practice, Deborah had become an expert teacher.

Mechanisms of professional learning.

Deborah often sought out formal professional learning structures when there was something new she wanted to learn. For example, as previously mentioned, at the beginning of her career, she took an Orff-Schulwerk Level 1 course because she needed help learning how to teach elementary music. Later, she began ringing in a handbell choir at her church because she was expected to teach handbells at her school and "didn't know anything about it" (Interview 1). When she took over directing her church handbell group, she went to Manitoba for a summer handbell camp to learn how to direct handballs and also began to attend handbell workshops. Deborah also engaged in informal instrumental professional learning, playing around with a new iPad application to support her assessment practices and swapping tips with her friend and colleague about the 'app' when she was working out how to assess her students' learning in

music class. In this section, I will explore several mechanisms of Deborah's professional learning.

Models of practice and thinking pedagogically. When Deborah accepted her first teaching position as a music teacher, she immediately sought help to do the job. The summer before she started, she took Orff-Schulwerk level one and then returned the following summer for Orff level two. Deborah noted that, looking back, the experience of studying with her level two instructor was "very influential in the way that my whole thinking about music education progressed" (Interview 1). Part of the reason Deborah's experience with Orff level two seemed to have such a profound effect on her thinking is that the instructor provided meaningful pedagogical models. He had the class engage in activities that were designed to impact the teachers' understanding and improve their skills instead of only modelling activities to do with children. Deborah noted that this experience allowed her to come into contact with "a living philosophy" of music education (Drop-in 2), and felt that this experience had a powerful impact on her thinking about teaching music. Several years later, Deborah had the opportunity to do a workshop with a pair of clinicians who had also studied with her level two teacher. The workshop helped her to come to a deeper understanding of Orff-Schulwerk and to further make sense of her level two experience:

working with them really showed me... the pedagogy behind what you're teaching, so then knowledge of what you're teaching and then the pedagogy of how to get there and that whole spiral kind of way of approaching concepts and skills... just the whole experience... led me back to [my level two teacher]...you could really see that whole...pedagogy coming through their work but in a little more accessible way... there was this same idea but now in a way that I could really just fly. (Interview 1)

While Deborah's level two instructor provided a lived experience of Orff-Schulwerk, the workshop helped her to "understand the pedagogy behind the activities" (Pre-Interview Activity Timeline). Deborah began to notice the pedagogical thinking and sequencing that had previously been tacit to her. Having access to both theory and practice helped Deborah to build and refine her own theory-in-use about teaching music (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Deborah also alluded to the need for having examples of practice and pedagogical thinking when we were discussing workshops. She shared that she found it meaningful when workshop clinicians presented activities as children in music class would experience them, but that she also wanted to think about the activities from the teacher's perspective after the fact:

And I do appreciate when they stop and reflect on the process in those workshops, so it's not just that you've done the activity but let's step back and talk about why we're doing this and where we're going with this and what philosophy is underlying this...Because sometimes in Orff that gets very lost. It's just the Orff process but you never have any connection to the root of what Carl Orff was doing. (Drop-in 3)

Meaningful formal professional learning for Deborah was fueled by a combination of modelling and having the opportunity to think pedagogically. Having examples of activities she could do in her own classroom was useful for Deborah, but having models *and* having access to the pedagogical principles behind the activities allowed Deborah to go back to her teaching situation and work out what was best for her and her students.

Imitating and adapting models of practice. Modelling was integral to how Deborah learned how to teach music and was a key mechanism of her continued professional learning. Along with having the chance to encounter models of pedagogy at workshops, Deborah also noted that "inter-visitations [i.e. going to someone else's school] have been really powerful for

me too” because they provided models to imitate (Drop-in 3). Whether she watched someone else teach a lesson in their school or participated in a workshop, Deborah noted that she was often thinking “that’s very clever. I could do that. It’s so easy” (Drop-in 3). As she observed, she was actively trying on whether the activities and practices she was seeing ‘fit’ with her teaching and her students in her own music program. When she felt that something fit, the model she saw allowed her to go back to her school and imitate the pedagogy. Deborah noted that imitating models was the primary way that she had learned how to teach music:

I think I’ve learned teaching practice mostly from working with or... sometimes watching but usually being involved in kinds of workshop situations with someone who’s going through the process with me. So I think teachers are really good imitators. I think I’m a very good imitator so if I see a practice that works really well I have no trouble taking that into my own portfolio and using it. (Drop-in 3)

While Deborah called this learning practice ‘imitation,’ at this point in her career Deborah clearly did not simply imitate someone else’s teaching. She consistently tailored the models she encountered for her situation, for her, and for her students. For example, a pedagogical model with which she regularly engaged was the music curriculum resource she had purchased. As she sketched out what she was going to do with each grade for the week, Deborah looked to this resource for models of activities, but instead of following the program like a recipe, she used the teaching suggestions as guidelines and modified them to suit her situation while using the general sequence it outlined. I saw her do this in the grade six lesson described earlier where students were writing a recorder melody based on a given rhythm. The idea for the activity and the student worksheet she used to structure it had come from the commercial resource, but Deborah’s approach to using the activity was clearly her own: putting examples on the

smartboard, pointing out elements that made a good melody, having the students play each other's compositions, and allowing students to put their compositions together to make a 2-part song were all part of her personal approach and orientation towards learning.⁹⁶ She ran the model through her own framework of understanding and principles for teaching music and made it her own. Deborah could do this almost instantaneously. Her strong and explicit sense of the aims of the provincial curriculum and key principles for teaching and learning allowed her to adapt any activity to fit her situation and her epistemological understanding of her work as an elementary music teacher.⁹⁷

Reflection in and on practice as a mechanism for professional learning. Part of the reason Deborah could adapt models and incorporate them into practice in her situation was that she continually engaged in reflection. She was adept at what Schön (1983) describes as “reflecting-in-action.” Schön describes reflection as “(focusing) interactively on the outcomes of action, the action itself, and the intuitive knowing implicit in the action” (p. 580). He argues that reflective practitioners engage in a kind of real-time conversation with the situation. Deborah was an expert at ‘conversing with her situation,’ thinking on her feet and learning as she went. She was a professional in Schön’s sense of the word in that she had encountered the same types of situations many times, and therefore could choose to think about very specific parts of what was happening. I saw evidence of Deborah’s thinking-in-action many times as she reframed and adapted in the midst of a lesson. Two examples I have already described come to mind: Adapting when two grade two boys turned the activity Deborah was teaching into a partner dance, and

⁹⁶ I should also mention that the resource in question only goes up to grade five. In addition to adapting the activities to her understanding of teaching and learning and to her practice, Deborah was also adapting the grade five program in the series for her grade six students.

⁹⁷ I am thinking of the term ‘situation’ here in Dewey’s (1938/1997) sense of the word. See Chapter Two for a discussion.

allowing the student working on her recorder composition to go to the Orff instruments when this was not originally what Deborah had envisioned.

Not only did Deborah reflect *in* action, but she also spent a great deal of time reflecting *on* action. In fact, reflecting after the fact was an important professional learning practice in which Deborah engaged that was intimately tied to her planning and teaching and to her stance as a life-long learner. The quality of Deborah's reflection was that of inquiring into her teaching practice and her students' learning, and her inquiry stance enabled her to tweak how she taught in order to enhance the learning of her students. For example, after she took her choir to participate in a zone festival, she watched the video of her choir's performance and spent some time reflecting on what she saw:

It was funny because I was watching the video of my kids singing from that festival, and I thought: (a) they're not singing as well as they usually do; (b) some of them aren't even looking at me. Their eyes are all over the place; (c) All those performance things that you work so hard on— it seems like they didn't really apply them in that situation, and I thought, is it because we're in a gym? Is it because they've been sitting on the floor in the gym for the morning? Is it because it's boring? Like I wasn't quite sure exactly why my kids didn't perform as well as I thought they should have. (Drop-in 2)

Reflecting on the video led Deborah to speak to the other teachers who helped to organize the festival and discuss whether or not they should change venues or bring in a clinician to work with the choirs for the following year in order to enhance the students' learning experience. Deborah was engaged in learning what would make a choral festival a meaningful learning experience for her students.

In addition to reflecting after specific events or lessons, Deborah also took the opportunity for reflection as she completed certain projects throughout the year. For example, when her handbell and choral programs ended for the year, she commented that she was “trying to think about next year and how to streamline things a little bit” and noted, “I have a few ideas floating around in my head” (Drop-in 4). As soon as her season for these two programs ended, she began reflecting what she would do differently for next time.

Reflection was a constant in Deborah’s teaching practice, in part because it was integral to her understanding of assessment for learning. As Deborah watched the videos or listened to the audio recordings she had made of student performances for assessment purposes, she continually reflected on her teaching, where her students were at in their learning, and how she could help them achieve the learning goal in question. I have already mentioned the video she shared of a lower elementary student singing a folksong into the microphone. The student was having difficulty singing the melody and then, as we watched, he found his head voice and began to sing the tune of the song. By reflecting on the videos, Deborah was learning about how her students learned to sing in tune.

Deborah was aware that reflection was a powerful process for professional learning which helped her to hone her teaching practice. She shared about a significant opportunity for reflection that she had when she took a year off of teaching to complete her Masters in Education. While she learned many things about her topic through her studies, Deborah commented that what she appreciated most about the experience was the extended opportunity it provided for reflection:

I think, for me, the biggest benefit of doing that masters and doing it away from a teaching context, so actually stepping...out of the job for a year was the part of teaching

that you never get time to do. The actually sitting and reflecting on big ideas, and why am I doing what I'm doing. (Drop-in 2)

It was as if this experience provided an opportunity for deep pedagogical thinking much like the workshop Deborah described that helped her see the thinking behind the practice of Orff-Schulwerk, but over an extended period of time.

Playing around and gradual shifts. Another mechanism of Deborah's professional learning involved experimenting with technology and teaching processes for teaching music. Much of her learning at the time of the study was connected to an assessment for learning project in which she was engaged with a colleague. Deborah and her colleague Jennifer were experimenting with various technological tools to aid in assessing student work in the music classroom.⁹⁸ As Deborah shared the videos of her students singing, I had a small window into the nature of her learning related to using technology for assessment. Deborah's learning was driven by a sense of experimentation and curiosity not unlike the way children approach a new video game or toy. One of the processes Deborah used to learn how to use the assessment technology she was exploring was simply *playing around* with the technology. I take this term from Salerno (2016) who uses it to describe how the children in her study of video game construction learned to use the programming tool with which they created their own video games.⁹⁹ Often Deborah engaged in this kind of experimentation with Jennifer. Deborah described one of their coffee dates:

Anyway, Jennifer and I sat together for maybe half an hour last night– I learned more in that half an hour [laughs] just– She said, “I figured this out,” and I said, “Okay, I’ve

⁹⁸ Jennifer's name is a pseudonym as are all the names in this document.

⁹⁹ Deborah also referred to the need to ‘play’ to learn how to use the assessment tool she and Jennifer were exploring.

figured this out” “If you try this, this is what happens,”[laughs] “If you try this, this is what happens.” (Drop-in 2)

Deborah then showed me what she knew how to do with the assessment program on her iPad in much the same way:

So let me show you. It’s so cool...So, all my classes are here. I had to import them all from [the school district’s classroom management software] and then, it gives me this columnar kind of look, so if I’m tracking who’s had turns for [the song] Jack and Jill so I can look at it in this form or in a seating plan. Isn’t that cool? And if I decide that she can’t sit there today, I can move her or put her back. It has this dice thing where you can decide who gets a turn next...You know, when you have to pick kids.¹⁰⁰ I just love that. And then, if you’re going to assess...this is what I was learning last night...it tells me who’s had their turns. It gives me the checkmark there, and if I’m assessing here– I haven’t used it much for assessment, I just quickly– yes, no, yes. (Drop-in 2)

One of the things that strikes me about this excerpt is that Deborah was clearly excited about what the program could do and the possibilities it held for her practice. She was thinking hard about how she might incorporate this new tool into her teaching and assessment practices, and was comfortable not knowing everything about the program before she began to use it in her classroom even though it was “little bit awkward because I’m not used to it” (Drop-in 2). Rather than learning several features of the software and trying to incorporate them into her practice all at once, Deborah began to use the technology gradually:

¹⁰⁰ Deborah means that the application had an icon of a die that she could press and it would randomly choose a student.

So I started just with class lists. I thought, “Okay. I’m just going to get used to having their class lists when they come in”...it’s like any technology. You’ve got to play with it to get...comfortable with it (Drop-in 2).

Deborah set a small, instrumental goal for learning how to use the application and focused on getting comfortable with one feature, using class lists. She allowed herself to learn how to use the new technology gradually and at her own speed, exploring different aspects of the program without pressure and thinking about how each one might support her teaching and assessment practice. Once she was comfortable, she moved onto another feature and engaged in the same process of exploration and learning. Just as when Deborah watched someone modelling, the quality of Deborah’s learning was highly reflective and centered around fit with her own situation and practice.¹⁰¹

Learning with others.

Much of Deborah’s professional learning arose out of her engagement with the people around her. She invested not only in her students, but in her staff, and various music education communities in her city. As mentioned earlier, in the short time I worked with Deborah, I became aware of the many collaborations in which she was involved including: Arranging for another teacher to manage some administrative details for the school choirs, collaborating with a retired colleague who directed two of the school’s four handbell choirs, working with a first-year teacher in the sing-along classes with the thought of mentoring her, planning a zone music festival with two colleagues from other schools, participating in a professional learning community, meeting with Jennifer regularly to work on their assessment plan, and working with community members to plan a junior high community handbell program.

¹⁰¹ This is another example of how Deborah engaged in learning processes that developed her expertise, settling one issue at a time.

Because Deborah engaged with the people around her and was involved in the community, opportunities for collaboration and professional growth frequently presented themselves:

You know, things come to me. I don't... seek them out but they come to me. And maybe because I'm connected to the community a little bit too... I don't know how that happens. I mean, partly it's just relationships, right? So being involved in the Orff association has opened lots of doors for me and given me lots of opportunities for collaboration or to know people and see what they're doing. And same with the handbell ringing through the community. (Drop-in 4)

Deborah was an eager collaborator and was ever keen to learn something new. When opportunities came up, she almost always chose to engage:

For example, one time I got a call from somebody...at [a university in Eastern Canada]. There was a student who had done her undergrad stuff at [the university in question] and needed a placement for her student teaching but her husband was moving here because of the military so could I accommodate her in my class? So we were doing this long distance sort of APT¹⁰² program through [the student's university]...I don't know how they got my name to call. It was a great experience for both of us. (Drop-in 4)

Deborah seemed to take pleasure in her work and from working with others. Much like Holly's practice of "gleaning," Deborah's openness led her to be able to learn from the people around her and from every situation.¹⁰³ Not only did Deborah respond with openness when learning

¹⁰² APT stands for "Advanced Professional Term" which is a name sometimes used for the final student teaching experience in a Bachelor of Education program. I can't help but note that agreeing to be a participant in my study is another example of Deborah's openness and willingness to engage.

¹⁰³ As I discussed in the previous chapter, Conway (2008) found that the experienced music teachers in her study could learn something from any experience. This was certainly true of Deborah.

opportunities came her way, but she also sought out and created structures for professional learning for herself. The quality of the learning she sought out was always instrumental in nature. Here, I will talk briefly about Deborah's experience of learning in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in order to contrast it with the collaborative learning in which she engaged with Jennifer. The chapter will conclude with an exploration of how Deborah learned from collaborating with Jennifer.

A professional learning community. Battersby and Verdi (2015) argue that Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) offer legitimate professional learning for music teachers. They define a PLC as a community of teachers with the aim of establishing a “collaborative professional culture” (p. 23). Dufour (2004) suggests that, among other characteristics, PLCs must be learning-focused, facilitate inquiry into best practices, and promote a collaborative culture, shared values, and trust. Deborah was part of a PLC consisting of music teachers from the same region in her school district. They met together on district-wide professional development days. Deborah and her colleagues had organized themselves into a music-specific professional learning community because they were required to engage in professional learning on certain mandated days, but they had found that the sessions organized by the catchment PD committee had little or no relevance to them as music teachers. Several years earlier, the school board had obtained funding from a provincial government program entitled the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) and part of this funding covered the costs of substitute teachers so that music teachers could meet together for professional learning. The music consultant organized and facilitated these days where teachers from a certain area of the city or ‘catchment’ met, however, AISI no longer existed and, due to government cutbacks, the school district no

longer had a music consultant. The music teacher group in Deborah's catchment was one of the only groups of which I am aware that had continued to meet.

Deborah's PLC met several times throughout the year, and together, they determined what topics they wanted to explore. While Deborah valued the group and attended regularly, she found that their meetings were not always conducive to learning. Often she felt that the group didn't get very far because of the differences in background knowledge, approaches, and goals of the participants. For example, she shared this about the group's work learning to use the assessment application for iPad Deborah was exploring: "We just kind of spin our wheels. You know what it's like when you're in a group, right? Somebody doesn't know how to turn their computer on, and somebody else does" (Drop-in 2). She contrasted this with her one-on-one collaboration with Jennifer which she found highly engaging and resulted in significant learning for them both.

The main issue Deborah seemed to have with the group is that the structure was imposed from the outside. While the members of the group had taken the initiative to make an elementary music teacher PLC, they had done so because all teachers in the catchment were required to participate in professional learning on specific days and there was nothing specifically for music teachers. Even though the music teachers were allowed to meet with their music colleagues, they could not choose who was a member in the group based on interest or similar goals. Membership depended on being a music teacher in that catchment, just as membership for the other catchment PLCs did. Deborah reflected on this arrangement:

Why do we impose this construct on teachers and say "collaborate" because then you're going to be such a better teacher, and yet, sometimes, it just happens from below and the good work happens, and you need to celebrate that and you need to somehow formalize

that and give teachers space to do that. But when you impose... at least the music teachers are fabulous people to work with, but other people are talking about their grade groups, and it's like, some of them are great and some of them are totally dysfunctional ...they can't get along personally, they don't see the value in it. (Drop-in 2)

Deborah experienced attending the music teacher group as more of an obligation and social opportunity than as a place to learn with her colleagues. Her experience is reminiscent of Craig's (2009) distinction between professional learning communities as something imposed from the administration versus what Craig calls a "Knowledge Community" consisting of "the people with whom [teachers] freely make sense of their experiences" (p. 599). Deborah felt that the contrived nature of the group did not facilitate the organic interactions and connections with other teachers that were key to her own professional learning and which she was adept at forming on her own. She was insistent about this, bringing it up several times and suggesting that I mention it in my dissertation. I suspect that part of the reason Deborah felt so strongly about permitting teachers to collaborate on their own terms is that, unlike many of her colleagues in the group, Deborah was experiencing what it was like to be engaged in meaningful collaborative learning with another music teacher. This collaboration had arisen out of Deborah's engagement with the community around her, and Deborah keenly felt the difference between this learning experience and her PLC. I will now examine Deborah's collaborative learning relationship and project.

Collaborative learning: "Finding someone to run with." As noted earlier, all of Deborah's collaborations came about because of her openness and involvement in the communities in which she was situated, and these relationships were sites for professional learning for Deborah and for her collaborators. Deborah's most significant and recent

collaboration was with her friend and colleague Jennifer who had invited her to work on an assessment plan for teaching elementary music. As we talked about their work together, I came to appreciate how unique and special their relationship was. As I thought about Deborah and Jennifer, a comment I made talking with Deborah about the difficulty in “finding someone to run with” (Drop-in 4) often came to mind. In order to train with someone else, runners have to have similar distance goals and run at a similar pace, and Deborah caused me to reflect that this is also true of professional learning. Deborah had found a good ‘running partner’ in Jennifer, and their collaboration was highly productive and meaningful for both of them.

Deborah first met Jennifer when they briefly worked at the same school. They were also both involved with the local Orff chapter. However, it wasn’t until the last five years when they were teaching music in nearby schools that their connection developed. As they got to know each other, they found that their approaches to teaching and their school populations were quite similar, and, even though they were not in the same catchment or PLC, they discovered that they worked well together. The congruence between their approaches was also obvious to others. Other teachers in the district who had worked with them both sometimes pointed out the similarity: “Actually there’s a teacher who works at [Jennifer’s] school that I used to work with who says to her all the time, ‘You are just like [Deborah]!’ [laughs] So it’s apparent to other people too” (Drop-in 4). Because of their close proximity and shared values, engaging in collaborative learning was both convenient and rewarding.

A deepening understanding of the curriculum. The assessment for learning project that Deborah was working on with Jennifer resulted in significant professional learning for Deborah. Even though Deborah was a more experienced teacher and had been working on assessment for learning for many years, from Deborah’s perspective, her relationship with Jennifer was an equal

and reciprocal one. She noted “I’m learning as much if not more from her” (Drop-in 2). Their collaboration came about organically; Jennifer approached Deborah because her school was working on assessment plans for each grade and subject, and as the music teacher, Jennifer didn’t have a colleague in her school. Deborah asked her principal if she could have a half day of release time to meet with Jennifer once each reporting period, and her principal agreed to pay a substitute teacher for three half days per year. Deborah was keenly interested in the project:

Assessment has been something that I have been working on for quite a while... I’ve been thinking lots about it and trying out different ways of organizing my assessment to align it with report cards, you know, reporting and stuff like that. So, when she said that, I said, “Yes, absolutely.” (Drop-in 1)

Deborah and Jennifer set out to make an assessment plan for each grade based on the elementary music curriculum. Using a worksheet called “Four Quadrants of Assessment” to which Deborah had been introduced at a workshop with Sandra Herbst and Anne Davies,¹⁰⁴ Deborah and Jennifer met to discuss which learning outcomes to focus on for each term and how to assess them starting with grade one:

So what we did was decided to go through the curriculum and choose, you know, what we’re going to assess basically, because you can’t assess everything that’s in there. So what’s critical to assess...what are we doing already in our classroom and how does that line up with the curriculum. [laughs] Sometimes it didn’t line up very well. (Drop-in 1)

While the focus of the project was developing an assessment plan, working on the plan deepened Deborah’s understanding of what the curriculum meant. Deborah’s understanding of teaching

¹⁰⁴ Assessment has been an area of focus for Deborah’s school district, and Sandra Herbst and Anne Davies have done extensive work on assessment in the district. Deborah has been to several of their workshops and Jennifer has just recently attended one as well. In all three of my participants’ schools, I saw assessment materials by these authors.

music shifted from a focus on small and specific learning outcomes to a bigger picture of what it meant to learn music in an elementary school in Alberta:

So I've learned lots of things [through working with Jennifer on this project] but I think what I learned was that we chunk the music curriculum into these nice little outcomes and we think we're teaching music, but this has really forced me to look at the bigger picture. So why are we teaching them about melody and why are we teaching them about rhythm? What is...the bigger learning goal involved? It's caused me to kind of think on a broader scale of...what we're learning and what we're doing. I'm still assessing really specific things...but then how do I apply those specific outcomes to something that's a little bit more general in my thinking about what music is? (Drop-in 3)

The opportunity to inquire into assessment practices with Jennifer with specific ends in mind (i.e. making an assessment plan) resulted in significant and meaningful professional learning for Deborah about what the curriculum meant. The process they engaged in together allowed Deborah to develop a bigger picture about the aims and purposes of music education.

As with many of her other professional learning experiences, the quality of Deborah's learning was first and foremost instrumental in nature. Working on a specific project—developing an assessment plan—provided the vehicle for learning. While working something through provided the impetus for this learning, it was the nature of the collaboration with Jennifer and how they worked together that made this professional learning experience especially fruitful for Deborah.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Although I did not have ethical clearance to speak to Jennifer about her professional learning, I think it is safe to assume that the project resulted in tremendous learning for both Deborah and Jennifer.

The nature of Deborah and Jennifer's collaborative learning. Deborah and Jennifer's collaboration worked well in part because they had similar beliefs about teaching and learning including a shared understanding of teaching music. Deborah commented, "I think it works because our philosophy is the same— our underlying philosophy and our approach to music education is very similar" (Drop-in 3). They also had a shared goal, i.e. creating a viable assessment plan. While their shared understanding and goal allowed them to work well together, it was their differences that resulted in growth for them both (Dewey, 1916/2008).¹⁰⁶ Deborah was very aware that she and Jennifer had different understandings of assessment:

I could sense that difference between us and it was good. I would take the big ideas and work with them and she would work with the nitpicky things. "Okay, we're going to assess this and this and this and this," and I would say, "We're assessing it because." You know? "We're looking at it because you know these are the ideas about kids that we want to communicate to parents." So it was a good combination. (Drop-in 1)

Deborah and Jennifer used the four quadrant worksheet mentioned above as a model to develop an assessment plan. Together, they talked through what was most important in the elementary music curriculum, starting with grade one, and wrestled through what each of the four quadrants of the worksheet meant. Deborah explained their process:

So we have this sort of this one-page plan using the four quadrants of assessment that Sandra Herbst and Anne Davies use. Um, learning destination is the first quadrant— what you want them to learn...the second quadrant is...how you're going to assess that...the

¹⁰⁶ Diversity is a key notion in a Deweyan understanding of democracy which also applies to learning. Dewey (1916) wrote, "diversity of stimulation means novelty, and novelty means challenge to thought" (p. 85) and that challenge led to "a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt" (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 9) which was the pre-condition for growth. See Stark (2014) for a further discussion of diversity as related to Dewey's conception of social democracy and change.

third quadrant is how do you build quality into that assessment, so what kinds of things are you going to do to make sure they know criteria, to make sure [students] understand how the assessment's working. And then the last quadrant is called evaluation... that's the one we struggled with because we didn't really know what it meant. But what we've done with that last quadrant is sort of summarized what an 'excellent,' what a 'needs support,' what 'needs lots of support' would look like. Almost like a report card comment...so we've tried to do that for each term, and it's just been a work in progress...[assessment is] becoming more manageable because we've had to peel down what we're actually doing. (Drop-in 1)

Together, Deborah and Jennifer created an understanding of what assessment meant by working through each quadrant of the worksheet while thinking about the curriculum and their students.

Co-constructing a shared understanding: “Two heads are better than one.” MacDonald & Isaacs (2001) found that when music teachers engage in reflection on problems of practice together, their interactions result in professional growth. Working on this project with Jennifer deepened Deborah's understanding of assessment, learning, and the music curriculum, and led to changes in her practice. Deborah shared an example of the kinds of discussions she and Jennifer had as they made their assessment plan: “What if we put the instruments in a circle and we have everybody rotate through playing this particular pattern. Would it be a more authentic assessment of that skill than just watching them in a group?” (Drop-in 1). Perhaps because of Deborah's interest in and comfort with technology, the two colleagues also explored using a variety of technologies in order to assess musical understanding in performance situations. They experimented with using the iPad application mentioned earlier, video recording performances using an iPhone microphone and an iPad, and having students record their recorder performances

independently using iPad memos. Once Deborah and Jennifer decided what and how they were going to assess, each of them set to work in their classroom working through how to best enact the plan and gathering student work.

As they worked through assessing the samples of student work that they had collected, Deborah and Jennifer also began compiling exemplars of what an ‘A,’ ‘B,’ or ‘C’ looked or sounded like. As they did this work, they were in regular communication, sharing files and thoughts back and forth often daily or several times a day. This interactive process helped Deborah to make further sense of the final quadrant of the assessment worksheet they were using as the basis of their assessment plan:

Finally I’ve kind of figured out what...this section was about– the evaluation section, because before I didn’t know what that meant. I could do this learning destination and I could figure out well how I was going to assess it. This was more difficult. This...is going to be so much easier because now I have exemplars. (Drop-in 3)

The final piece of discussing exemplars helped Deborah to understand what it meant to evaluate student work. She was learning what the curriculum, student learning, and evaluation meant in practice.

When I asked Deborah what she had learned about collaborating with someone through her experience with Jennifer, she laughed, “Two heads are better than one usually” (Drop-in 3). Although Deborah potentially would have learned much making an assessment plan on her own, she valued the collaborative work with Jennifer and felt that she learned more from working alongside someone else, but not just anyone else. This collaboration ‘worked’ for Deborah because of the many things she and Jennifer had in common. Although Deborah enjoyed the

other teachers in her PLC and valued the group, she did not experience the same quality of learning as she did working with Jennifer.

Part of the reason Deborah and Jennifer's work seemed to be so fruitful is that they frequently checked in with each other as they were learning. They were regularly in communication via cell phone, e-mail, or text message, and they met regularly for coffee. They constantly used each other as sounding boards and 'someone to think with'¹⁰⁷ when they were evaluating performance examples, often sharing videos or recordings and discussing how they would evaluate a given performance:

So we've been e-mailing back and forth. She sent me an audio clip of a kid singing and said, "How would you mark this?" And I'm going to send her my audio clip of my recorder player and say, "How would you mark this?" So, you know, just curious. And what it's doing is forcing us to look at the criteria and what's really important when we're evaluating. (Drop-in 3)

One of the reasons that Deborah's collaboration with Jennifer resulted in significant professional learning was that, as Deborah engaged in inquiry in her own practice, she had someone to turn to with whom she could make sense of her experience and wonderings almost as quickly as they arose. The immediacy of her relationship with Jennifer allowed Deborah to move her thinking forward on a continual basis and helped her stay in a state of inquiry. Deborah commented, "I think it's collaboration at its highest. I really do" (Drop-in 3). She found the back and forth nature and immediacy of their relationship to be both stimulating and fulfilling, and these qualities of their relationship seemed to result in significant professional learning for Deborah:

¹⁰⁷ I am thinking here of Papert's (1980) idea of computers as objects to think with.

So it's been just such a ...really good experience to have that person– I just text her. I'm in the middle of report cards but I just text her– what do you think of this comment? Does this say what we're supposed to say?...What do you think about this? We don't teach the same kids but it's been really interesting. (Drop-in 4)

Deborah and Jennifer were thinking and learning *together*. They served as mediators for one others' learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2007), building shared structures for thinking about assessment which they then helped each other to learn to use.¹⁰⁸ While Deborah had many colleagues with whom she collaborated, none of these relationships resulted in the same kind of learning as her arrangement with Jennifer. Their shared philosophy and approach, the fact that they both taught music and were working on a common project, and the immediacy of their relationship all made for a fruitful collaborative learning experience for Deborah. But it was more than this: Deborah and Jennifer were co-constructing their understanding about teaching, music learning, the curriculum, and assessment.

Concluding Thoughts: Professional Learning Takes Time

While Deborah's collaboration with Jennifer resulted in significant professional learning for Deborah, assessment for learning had long been of interest to her. In fact, she first began inquiring into assessment 20 years earlier. Deborah had been attempting to make sense of the four quadrant worksheet for three years and, as she shared above, it was only in the year of the study that she had finally "figured out what...this section was about– the evaluation section" (Drop-in 3) through her work with Jennifer. Deborah helped me to understand that professional learning takes a significant amount of time. After 20 years of inquiring into assessment through

¹⁰⁸ Another way of saying this is that Deborah and Jennifer provided scaffolding for each other's learning and thinking (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).

working on an assessment resource with her school board, attending assessment conferences and seminars, reading, experimenting in her classroom, and working on an assessment plan with Jennifer, Deborah felt that she was finally successful in integrating her understanding of assessment into practice.

In conclusion, Deborah was a fascinating case. In addition to being incredibly learning-oriented, her identity as a teacher had allowed her to move back and forth between teaching homeroom and elementary music over her career and her growth orientation had enabled her to become an expert music teacher even though she had not initially planned to teach music. Deborah's many connections and interactions with others and her stance of openness provided her with amazing opportunities for learning. Deborah was truly inspiring as an educator and a professional learner, and I am so grateful for the chance to learn from her.

Chapter Eight: A Discussion Arising from Cross-Case Analysis

This chapter represents a further layer of analysis across cases where the three cases served as parts for hermeneutic part/whole analysis. Essentially, I compared and contrasted the data from all three cases against each other, against my theoretical framework, and against the literature to arrive at an interpretive account of the teachers' experience of teaching and of professional learning. I will discuss several themes related to the two research questions that arose through cross-case analysis and will provide grounding for my interpretation with scholarship from a variety of fields including philosophy, education, music education, and adult education.

What Does Teaching Music Mean to Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah?

Several themes related to what teaching music meant to the participants emerged through cross-case analysis. First, each participant's framing of the purpose of their work as music educators was highly personal and individual, although there was a common element of wanting students to enjoy music and see themselves as musical. Secondly, all three participants experienced teaching music relationally and demonstrated care towards students and their work as teachers, and music in general. This care was also expressed through the ways that they managed teaching and learning and in their awareness of the unique management challenges that arose in a music classroom. Finally, Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah provided artistic leadership beyond the four walls of their classroom in the rest of the school and in the community as part of their work teaching music. I will discuss each of these themes in turn.

A Personal Framing of Teaching and Learning

While Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah clearly all wanted their students to value music, beyond this commonality, all three participants framed their purpose as elementary music

educators differently. Each teacher operated out of specific personal *maxims* or beliefs which shaped how they approached their work as elementary music teachers. These maxims were rules that governed practice and which operated “within a framework of personal judgment” (Polanyi, 1962/2005, p. 32). As discussed earlier, the overarching idea that framed Gabriel’s work as a music educator was ‘providing a variety of experiences’ with music. This was Gabriel’s predominant maxim for teaching music, and his reflective practices seemed to consist of making judgments as to whether he had provided a variety of experiences. Holly, in contrast, seemed to see her work as helping students build meaningful relationships with specific pieces that she chose to teach because she loved them or thought the students would. ‘Cultivating an affective relationship with music’ was her predominant maxim for her work. Not only did Holly focus on teaching specific songs, but she spent a significant amount of time and energy in her teaching and work in the school attempting to evoke and model affect. Finally, Deborah seemed to see her goal as having students come to understand the curricular concepts on which she was focusing. As she planned and taught, the learner outcomes and how students would be able to demonstrate their understanding of those outcomes seemed to be foremost in Deborah’s mind. Deborah’s maxim was ‘helping students to understand the concepts in the curriculum.’ Each teacher’s framing of their work teaching elementary music was personal to them and informed by their preoccupations and experiences with music and with teaching.

A personal framing of teaching and learning has a theoretical basis in the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1988) and Clandinin (1985) who see teachers’ actions as “both the expression and origin” of their knowing (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362). With their colleague He, Connelly and Clandinin assert that teachers’ personal knowledge of teaching is foundational to “every aspect of the teaching act” including:

teachers' relationships with students; teachers' interpretations of subject matter and its importance in students' lives; teachers' treatment of ideas whether as fixed textbook givens or as matters of inquiry and reflection; teachers' curriculum planning and evaluation of student progress; and so on. (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997, p. 666)

Connelly and Clandinin call teachers' knowledge of their work *personal practical knowledge* and suggest that present actions and intentions for future actions are shaped by teachers' past experiences. Like my theoretical framework, Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) understanding of teacher knowledge is informed by Dewey's dialectic theory of experience and the concepts of situation, interaction, and continuity.

Looking through the lens of Dewey's theory of experience helps me to theorize that the three teachers in my study had very different personal experiences and consequently had very different conceptions of what it meant to teach music. They were all engaged in developing their personal practical knowledge of teaching music in their specific situation with the conceptual tools and understandings they had gathered through their previous experiences and their current interactions with students, colleagues, ideas, and the curriculum-as-planned.¹⁰⁹ In fact, this was their primary professional learning task.

Interpreting what teaching music meant to Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah through the lens of Dewey's theory of experience also helps me to see that their beliefs about their work as elementary music teachers was inextricably linked with the act of teaching itself. Greenwood and Levin (2007) remind me of Dewey's "steadfast refusal to separate thought from action" and his assertion "that the only real sources of knowledge were to be found in action, not in arm chair

¹⁰⁹ I take this distinction from Aoki (2005) who compares the curriculum-as-planned with the curriculum-as-lived and speaks of the work of teachers as indwelling the tensions between the two.

speculation” (p. 60). Just as Dewey theorized, the participants’ knowing and beliefs were not separate from their actions.

Just as Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah made sense of teaching music differently, their process of thinking about their work was different as well. While Deborah moved back and forth between teaching (thinking-in-action) and talking about the principles behind her teaching (reflecting-on-action), Holly’s thinking about her work was much more intuitive and emergent. Gabriel was thinking hard as he learned the tacit assumptions about teaching music in the communities in which he found himself and yet he obviously operated out of a set of personal beliefs based in his own experience as a novice teacher and as a learner.

Britzman (2003) points to the impact that being a student for an extended period of time has on individuals who become teachers. The experience of being at school “fashions the meanings, realities, and experiences” of teaching and learning for teachers (p. 27). But the experiences that provided the discursive underpinnings for Gabriel’s understanding of teaching and learning music did not come from his time learning in an elementary music classroom. They came, instead, from hundreds of hours learning in private lessons and playing in orchestras. Thus, Gabriel’s most influential experiences as a music learner provided few images and narratives on which he could draw for teaching music in an elementary school. His experiences as a private music student and string player, along with a few “commonsensical images” of what it meant to be a teacher that he formed as a student in school and as a student teacher constituted the discursive tools at Gabriel’s disposal coming into his teacher education program (Britzman, 2003, p. 27). To this, Gabriel added several ideas from the discourse he encountered related to an Orff-Schulwerk approach to teaching music. Together, these were the discursive tools at his disposal to make sense of his work teaching.

While students understand what teachers do because of their presence in classrooms and lessons as students,

issues of pedagogy do not enter into a student's view of the teacher's work. Rather, the teacher's skills are reduced to custodial moments...Hidden is the pedagogy teachers enact: the ways teachers render content and experience as pedagogical, consciously construct and innovate teaching methods, solicit and negotiate student concerns, and attempt to balance the exigencies of curriculum with both the students' and their own visions of what it means to know. (Britzman, 2003, p. 28)

Britzman argues that teachers' understanding of teaching is largely shaped by their biography as learners. However, Gabriel's teacher education experiences, including his experience with Orff-Schulwerk, did not have a strong connection with his biographic resources to help him make meaning of those experiences as a starting place for his own pedagogy (Britzman, 2003). Gabriel therefore had few conceptual tools on which to draw to shape his own pedagogy in an elementary school setting. Perhaps this is why he relied so heavily on the discourse of Orff-Schulwerk.

Holly's pedagogical thinking, in contrast, was almost entirely drawn from her biography. Her personal understanding was largely intuitive and loosely framed. She refused to allow any authoritative discourse place of privilege in her pedagogy including that of the official music curriculum or a particular methodology. Whereas Gabriel received the pedagogical discourse of Orff-Schulwerk without question, Holly's pedagogy honoured her personal knowing. She was a *subjective knower* who trusted her inner expert above all else (Belenky et al., 1997). Belenky et al. (1997) write, "Truth, for subjective knowers, is an intuitive reaction" (p. 69) and this statement captures Holly's understanding of her work teaching music generally and her practices

in planning and teaching specifically. As Eleanor Duckworth (1996) suggests, “what one believes about teaching and learning is complicated, large-scale, hard to define, and close to the soul” (p. 158). Not only were Holly’s actions (i.e. teaching) inseparable from her thinking, but Holly did not allow for dualism between her practice and her sense of self. She refused to take herself out of the center of the equation of teaching, learning, planning, and musical experience.

Teaching Music Relationally: Three Portraits of Caring

In her book *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Nel Noddings (2013) outlines an ethic of care. Her main point is that caring occurs in a reciprocal relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for. Noddings notes, “When we care, we consider the other’s point of view, [their] objective needs, and what [they expect] of us” (p. 24). She calls for teachers to acknowledge that, by the very nature of their work, they are in caring relationships with students. By virtue of their position, teachers are the ‘one-caring’ in their relationships with students.

Caring in Noddings’ sense was important to all three of the participants in my study. As Elliott and Silverman (2015) suggest, “music is made by and for persons” (p. 153). It is a creative and social human endeavor, and as such, it requires being vulnerable to learn and to engage with music. Elliott and Silverman advocate for a philosophy of music education that includes the development and acknowledgement of students’ personhood, arguing that “people’s sense of personal worth and dignity, self-confidence, and belonging are just as important as their musical and creative growth” (p. 154). They see personhood as a dynamic, social process of construction which occurs between the student-subject and others including the teacher and argue for creating a learning environment for teaching music that consists of “a community of mutual respect, shared responsibilities, joyful and meaningful learning, and a context in which

learners feel they are safe, secure, and welcome” (p. 154). Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah all believed that a major condition for musical learning was to build a safe environment.

There is no denying that learning and doing music entail a risk in that both are shared and public endeavors. In order to learn music, students must make sound. Gabriel said it well when he noted that, to learn music, “you are putting yourself out there”(Interview 1).¹¹⁰ As I discussed in Chapter Five, Gabriel understood learning music as taking place in a safe relationship and often communicated to his students that he would not judge their progress and therefore their person. Creating a safe environment was also of major significance to Holly who commented that she worked hard to establish and maintain “that nurturing feeling” and help her students feel comfortable (Drop-in 2). She explained:

I want the kids to be safe that– like, physically safe, you know? That the classroom remains to be a safe place. And also [it matters] to me that my classroom remains emotionally safe. Because...I put a lot of work into making it a place where their self-esteem is nurtured and they feel safe to try. (Interview 1)

Deborah also noted the need for students to feel safe in the music classroom, although this was an understanding that she felt she did not have earlier in her career. Laughing, she shared about her lack of sensitivity to her students’ need for safety when she first started teaching music, commenting that she remembered “having kids play their recorder in front of the whole class– I used to do that [laughs]. Those poor kids. I think about it now. Some kids don’t mind at all but for other kids...” (Drop-in 3). At this point in her career, Deborah was very aware of the need to cultivate a safe environment for students.

¹¹⁰ I agree with Gabriel and suspect this is true of learning in general and learning in the arts in particular.

One of the ways the three participants tried to help students feel safe was by building caring pedagogical and personal relationships with them. All three teachers viewed teaching music relationally, even Gabriel who was “surviving” first year teaching. In addition to the interactions I described in Chapter Five of Gabriel helping a kindergarten student feel safe enough to sing and affirming the actions of a grade two boy who, on his own initiative, went to close the classroom door, I also saw Gabriel interact with an older student who clearly was not engaged and seemed to be actively defying Gabriel in small ways. The student in question wandered away from his assigned spot and was climbing on some equipment. As Gabriel asked the boy to return to his seat, he quietly and respectfully told the student that he cared about him and didn’t want him to get hurt. He dealt with the misbehaving student relationally rather than legalistically enforcing his classroom rules, focusing on trying to build trust with the student rather than on making the boy obey his authority. Gabriel was working to build trust and “to *connect*, to enter into each student’s perspective” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 227). While Gabriel fits with Fuller and Bown’s (1975) description of a first stage teacher in that he was preoccupied with his survival in many ways, Gabriel also exhibited characteristics of Fuller and Bown’s stage three teacher. He was able to be student-centered and expressed tremendous care for his students in his pursuit to understand what was going on for them (Nodding, 2013).

Holly, too, focused on building caring relationships. I saw this especially in the studio lessons I observed. Holly treated her private students with dignity, gave them choices in their learning related to the repertoire they wanted to learn, what to work on to improve the piece, and to what degree they wanted to perfect it. She also attributed positive intent to everything her students did. For example, in one lesson, she told the student, “I am writing down, ‘add the

pedal.' Is there anything else you want me to write?" More than just being respectful and polite, Holly was allowing the student to choose her own learning goals.

Most of all, Holly was *present* with her students. Noddings (2013) calls this disposition "engrossment" and notes that when we are engrossed, we are "listening, looking, feeling" (p. 34) in relation to the other person because we care about them as people. I am certain that Holly's private students and school students alike had the experience of being regarded as "infinitely more important than the subject matter" (Noddings, p. 176) in Holly's presence. Regardless of context, every one on one interaction I saw between Holly and a student was characterized by engrossment.

Holly's engrossment was important not just relationally, but pedagogically. Elliott and Silverman (2015) argue that students construct their *personhood* in the context of caring relationships with an "empathetic other" (p. 156). Thus, treating students who are learning music "with a charitable, open, and welcoming stance" entails "an act of idealization that her aspirations and your aspirations for her are achievable simply because she is a person" (p. 167). Holly idealized her students as capable musicians just as Deborah idealized hers as responsible, competent, and caring learners (see below). In doing so, they were providing emotional scaffolding for students in becoming musical (and caring) people.

Caring always takes place in a reciprocal relationship (Noddings, 2013), and in schools, this relationship consists of teachers caring for their students and the students responding to the teacher's care. Holly nurtured the reciprocity of this relationship in her music classroom by letting herself be engrossed in her students as individuals. She also consistently presented herself as a subject and person in her student-teacher relationships (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). For example, when working to prepare the students for the Canada concert she

had arranged, Holly said to a grade three class, “Did you notice that I’m feeling really excited about songs from Canada lately?” (Field notes, school visit 1). She then announced that the performer whose music they had been enjoying in music class was coming to their school. Many of the students were quite excited, which is what Holly had wanted for them.¹¹¹ While her question was not completely genuine in that she was obfuscating her pedagogy, Holly was nonetheless insisting that the students see her as a person with musical interests and a musical life. She was working to create what Noddings (2013) refers to as “we-ness,” a cooperative space where she and her students were all subjects engaged in caring learning relationships.¹¹²

Perhaps the largest manifestation of Holly’s caring for her students was her unwavering belief that what she was doing was for the good of her students. As I discussed in Chapter Six, her primary aim was for her students to have an affective experience with music, and while doing so was to the good of her students, her reasons for wanting the students to connect affectively with music and singing was also largely personal. Holly loved conducting choirs, especially when the songs they sang involved part-singing, and so she was attempting to get the students to love what she loved, in part so she could have a fulfilling musical experience.

Holly’s project was to create an affective experience of music for her students, which in turn, created an affective experience of music for her. While her motivation was partly personal, this did not mean that Holly was uncaring towards her students. As Noddings (2013) explains, “I need not, however, be a person who cares only for myself in order to behave occasionally as though I care only for myself” (p. 15). Holly was operating out of the problem she had set for her practice: Her students did not yet love singing. This was an instance of, “I project my own reality

¹¹¹ Notice she was attempting to evoke affect.

¹¹² I should perhaps note that Holly was at the beginning of the process of establishing this sense of we-ness because it was her first year in a new school.

onto my student and say, *You will be just fine if only you learn to love [music]*” (Noddings, p. 15).

Holly’s caring in this instance was partly self-care. She had worked hard to find her own voice, and discovered that her expression of being a musician was teaching music. She was setting up the conditions to get what she needed to nurture her musician voice. But Holly’s caring wasn’t only self-care. While she had different, sometimes conflicting objects of her caring, Holly had experienced deep fulfillment and gratification through her relationship with music. She ultimately wanted this for her students. She enacted her project in the spirit of “here is something I find delightful, and I would like to share it with you” (Noddings, 2013, p. 192). Holly wanted her students to care about music just as she did and just as she cared about them.

Deborah also expressed care for her students in her relationships with them in a variety of ways. First, she affirmed her students, reflecting back an “attainable image” of themselves as persons, learners, and as musicians (Noddings, 2013, p. 193). On many occasions I saw Deborah attribute good intentions to her students’ actions. I have already described one instance where a student moved to the Orff instruments while working on a project and Deborah assumed that she was engaged in learning instead of misbehaving. I experienced another when a student came into the music room at lunch time while we were talking to check if there was a handbell rehearsal and Deborah said to me within the student’s hearing, “That’s how good my kids are. They come to ask” (Drop-in 2). Deborah reflected back an image of a responsible, competent, and caring young woman to the student.

Deborah’s caring was evident not only in her interactions with students, but in the level of care she put into her teaching. Deborah wanted to be an excellent teacher and felt tremendous responsibility to her students and to her profession to do her best work and to grow in her

practice. Deborah's professional practice had the moral-ethical dimension of *praxis* in that her work was guided by "an informed and ethical disposition to act rightly" (Elliott & Silverman, 2015, p. 44). She cared about her work teaching and her students' learning, and she cared for her students. Deborah wanted to know what they thought and experienced as learners and as people, and she worked to support the learning of each individual student. Mayeroff (1971) suggests that, "to care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grown and actualize [themselves]" (p. 1). Deborah was engaging in inquiry to understand her students' experience and understanding of music. Her caring expressed itself in her desire to see each individual student grow.

While Temmerman (1997) identifies 'caring for students' to be a crucial characteristic of successful music teachers, there is no question that caring and relational teaching are important aspects of teachers' work regardless of context or subject area. However, the three participants in my study seemed to feel that it might be the case that a relational, safe classroom was especially important for teaching music.

"Classroom management" as caring.

One day, I asked Holly what would be the most important criteria in choosing a long-term substitute teacher to cover her classes. Without hesitation, she replied "classroom management" (Interview 1). Holly saw classroom management as being critical to being able to create a safe place for music learning. Yet, all three of the teachers commented on how difficult classroom management was for music teachers. The challenging nature of this aspect of music teaching is a common theme in the literature (Fredrickson & Neill, 2004; Kreuger, 2001), particularly for beginning music teachers (Barnes, 2010; Haack, 2003). Deborah, who had taught both in the music room and in a homeroom, explained why she felt managing a music class was so much more difficult:

you're not building the same kind of bond with— like when you're in a classroom, and I know this from being in a classroom, you have every day, all day to build those relationships with kids, so, they know your expectations, you're in a structured environment— fairly structured routine that your day follows, and then you take them to the music room where that teacher doesn't have the same knowledge of that child and you're in an unstructured environment, you have half an hour with that class, and if you're going to spend 20 minutes disciplining, you're not going to get anything taught. So you have this pressure of time that I don't think is as strong in the classroom to make sure everything is managed. (Interview 1)

Deborah was suggesting that classroom management is more difficult for music teachers because the structure of the elementary school timetable makes it challenging for music teachers to establish relationships and teach relationally. Simply put, music teachers do not have much time or opportunity to build relationships with their students in a given school year. They must build relationships over several years.

In the quote above, Deborah clearly views classroom management as a relational issue, and the other two participants did too. A relational understanding of classroom management stands in sharp contrast with Woolfolk-Hoy & Weinstein's (2006) finding that teachers often focus on compliance, order, and academics rather than building safe relationships. Each of the three teachers in my study approached classroom management relationally to some degree, and they strove to know and understand their students as persons (Elliott and Silverman, 2015). For example, Gabriel was connecting his own learning experiences in the FNMI session of the first year teacher program to the Aboriginal students and families in his school. He shared a story about overhearing a parent of a new Aboriginal student tell their child to run away from school if

something did not feel right, and wondered aloud if this unconventional attempt at caring demonstrated by the parent was the result of trauma from attending a residential school. Whether he was right or wrong about the father's motives for his speech to his child, Gabriel expressed a great deal of empathy and care for this father and student. He clearly was seeking to understand their experience.

Establishing a caring approach to classroom management was not easy, particularly for Gabriel and Holly who were new in their schools. As Deborah suggested, the main difficulty was that, as music teachers, the three teachers saw their students for so little time. Music teachers are forced to take the long-game, nurturing relationships over several years instead of having intense relationships for several months. This slow process of building relationships means that the first year of teaching or in a new school can be difficult. Gabriel was living this reality and so was Holly. Both of them were having to do the challenging work of establishing routines, credibility, and trust as they built relationships with their new students and colleagues, although Holly had at least done this before at a different school.

Holly's approach to classroom management was relational, although not in the conventional sense. Perhaps not surprisingly, she seemed to feel that, if her students had meaningful encounters with music, they would be engaged and most classroom management issues would take care of themselves. In the meantime, she dealt with issues as they arose and let many things go. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, Holly had also instituted a character development program in her classroom which she had used to great success in her previous school. She noted, "I really believe in character education" (Drop-in 2). The purpose of the program was to facilitate the development of positive relationships and self-care. Holly was taking the long view and trusting that, as her students built meaningful relationships with music,

with her, and with each other, over time, music classes would in turn run smoothly. Gabriel, on the other hand, was relational with his students, but because of the clientele in his school and his inexperience as a school music teacher, he was working hard to deal with classroom management issues in almost every class he taught. In addition to asking students to “stay on task” (visit 2), I saw Gabriel use a variety of management strategies such as a hand signal for students to indicate whether they understand the instructions for an activity, putting a student in time out, discussing one of the desired attributes from the school’s social skills program in relation to the class’ (mis)behavior, having a class come back at recess to finish a lesson he couldn’t get through, clapping a signal to get the class’ attention, and pointing out positive behavior to encourage others to behave accordingly. Gabriel was working hard to get through his day! Gabriel’s compromise for the moment was to express his care for students as he dealt with misbehavior as he gradually developed trusting relationships and gained experience teaching.

Deborah’s students, in contrast, consistently returned her caring. They did this by engaging in her lessons, doing their best to meet her expectations for decorum and learning, and by regarding Deborah as a person. As a consequence of this reciprocal caring relationship that Deborah had established over time and her tremendous care in structuring the environment in her classroom, there were very few instances– if any– of Deborah using instrumental strategies designed to elicit compliance in the lessons I observed.¹¹³ Perhaps Deborah’s relational approach to classroom management, along with her growth orientation, was the secret to her career longevity.¹¹⁴ She noted, “if [music teachers] don’t have a good sense of discipline or

¹¹³ I should note that Deborah taught a very different clientele of student than Gabriel and she had been at her school far longer. Even though the students at Deborah’s school had more material, social, and emotional resources, it was clear that Deborah had established a caring relationship with them over time.

¹¹⁴ I hesitate to even use the term ‘classroom management’ in relation to Deborah’s practice because it does not adequately describe the way Deborah has structured her teaching environment or her relational and caring approach.

management...I think that's what makes lots of teachers go into the classroom as well and not stay in music, because it can be exhausting" (Interview 1). I suspect both Holly and Gabriel would agree with her assessment.

Music Teachers as School Leaders: The Affordances of the Role of Music Teacher

Secondary music educators are often regarded as leaders in that they lead and manage ensembles and advocate for their music program and music in general. In addition to providing musical leadership, the work of a secondary instrumental teacher includes administrative tasks such as repairing instruments, recruiting ensemble members, organizing band trips and concerts, and coordinating with administration and other staff for school events. Like their secondary colleagues, the three music teachers in my study were leaders in this sense in their school communities. However, the kind of leadership I will discuss in this section goes beyond *musical leadership* and is closer to what Poekert (2012) calls *teacher leadership*. I am interested here in exploring elementary music teachers' place and impact in their school communities.

Like their secondary music colleagues, elementary music teachers are important members of their school community. Not only do they teach every student in the school and work with every teacher and staff member, but they play a key role in many of the events that bring the community into the school and the school into the community. The music teacher therefore must work closely with the administrative staff in the building and coordinate with other staff members. In Deborah's words, "the music teacher has a lot of leadership in the school and needs to be... credited and thanked for that, but also supported in that leadership" (Interview 1). All three of the participants in my study seemed to understand that their role in a school extended beyond teaching in some way.

I have already suggested that Holly was a teacher leader in her building. Holly was intentionally transforming the culture in her school and shaping curriculum through her character education program and the concerts and events she organized. She was masterful at engaging in the micropolitics of her school (Conway, Hibbard, & Rawlings, 2015), carefully enrolling her principal and staff into her latest project and involving them in a way whereby they made it their own. She had succeeded in effecting small changes in the culture of the school over time such as the character education she taught everyone to use in her old school and had introduced in her new school.

Deborah, too, inserted herself into the cultural life of the school. She took responsibility for arts events because she wanted to have influence over the experiences her students had with the arts. In Chapter Seven I discussed the way Deborah took on being a cultural leader in her school. To recap, she stated:

we're doing an artist in residency next year, and I kind of have taken that over...I want to influence who's brought into the school for that so I wrote the grant, I researched it all, I, you know, figured out what would be good, I sold it to the parents, you know, that kind of thing. (Interview 1)

Deborah was choosing to act as a broker between the arts community and her school community (Wenger, 1998). Because of her position as the school music teacher, she was permitted to “introduce elements of one practice into another” (Wenger, 1998, p. 105). In fact, her principal, her staff, and the parents in the school community expected her to have social capital in the arts community by virtue of her position as the music teacher. While Deborah saw herself as a music educator rather than a musician, she was happy to play the role of ‘arts expert’ in her school in order to give the students meaningful experiences with the arts.

Gabriel, on the other hand, had *musical capital* which gave him the confidence and credibility to perform the tacit social functions of his position as the music teacher in the school (Wright, 2015). While he had never conducted a choir or put on a concert before other than helping his cooperating teacher in his practicum, he felt comfortable doing both because he saw himself as a musician. As Gabriel often said, “music isn’t the issue for me.”

In all three cases, there seemed to be an element of playing the *role* of ‘music teacher.’ While the role of music teacher constrained and directed the participants’ actions within their school, it also served as a *resource* to give the music teacher a certain unquestioned status in the school (Callero, 1994). Callero (1994) suggests, “roles can be viewed as making action possible” (p. 229). The role of music teacher meant that Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah were *de facto* leaders in their schools. Because of their role, the three participants in the study were afforded social, musical, and pedagogical capital within their school communities (Wright, 2015). For Holly, this meant that she was given creative control of a project (the Christmas concert) that fulfilled her need for voice as a musician. For Deborah, it meant that she could do whatever she felt was needed to improve student learning in her music program including asking for a paid substitute teacher to meet with a colleague as professional learning. For Gabriel, it meant that no one questioned his know-how related to music or to teaching music, affording him the chance to work out how to teach without evaluation or judgment.

As Scheib (2003) points out, music teachers determine the expectations of their positions to a large degree. Thus, playing the role of music teacher provided a vehicle for agency (Callero, 1994). All three teachers had the opportunity to enact projects of their own making with the support of their administrator, staff, and school community. Deborah in particular had used her role to the benefit of her students. Not only did she organize a Christmas concert every year, but

in the year of the study, Deborah took her choir to a zone festival (and also swimming for an end of year wrap up party), took the schools' handbell ensembles to a city-wide handbell festival, had several ensembles perform at a parent tea, wrote grants and decided on an artist in residency the following year, and was also able to take time off from school to work with her colleague Jennifer on their assessment plan. Her administrator paid for the bus and her substitute teacher without question and the school community supported the opportunities she created for the students. Holly, as discussed in Chapter Six, rallied the support of her staff to enact an integrated curriculum project culminating in a concert. While Gabriel maintained the status quo in his school the first year he was there which included a noon hour choir for part of the year, the Christmas concert, and organizing student musicians for a parent tea, when I touched based with him the following school year, he told me about a project he had initiated. Gabriel had used his role as music teacher and his musical capital to set up a joint concert for his students with a local student orchestra, and he also arranged to start a cello club at his low income school (personal communication, October 15, 2015). Gabriel was figuring out how to use the capital he had in his new role to bring opportunities to his students that meshed with his sense of self.

In sum, the three teachers in the study had a personal framing of teaching and learning which informed their practice, and they all saw teaching music as a relational endeavor grounded in caring. Furthermore, all three participants took up being leaders in their schools, using the role of music teacher to shape curriculum, provide cultural and educational experiences to the students, and to create music education opportunities that were congruent with their sense of self. The following section will respond to the second research question across the three cases.

How Do Music Teachers Experience Professional Learning?

In chapter two, I outlined the theoretical framework for my study. There, I discussed my understanding of professional learning as being congruent with the Deweyan notion of growth, and I argued that teachers grow professionally as they interact with their situation based on their prior experiences (Dewey, 1938/1997). While the notion of growth as professional learning was the starting place of my inquiry, each of the cases in this study allowed me to see how growth ‘worked’ in three temporally bounded instances of practice. My interpretation of professional learning as growth has thus developed to include a more nuanced understanding of what it means for teachers to learn professionally. I return to Opfer and Pedder’s (2011) conception of teacher learning as a complex and situated system encompassing teachers’ “prior experiences, their orientation to, and beliefs about, learning, their prior knowledge, and how these are enacted in their classroom practice” (p. 384). From this starting place I add a new understanding of the following aspects of music teacher professional learning:

- the instrumental nature of teacher learning;
- the temporal dimension of learning and a movement from general to specific understanding over time;
- nuances in the differing learning stances of the participants and what this meant for their understanding of professional learning, and;
- the social nature of teacher learning.

I shall discuss each of these themes in turn.

The Instrumental Nature of Teacher Professional Learning

Because teachers learn as they go about their work within their specific context, the second research question of my study, *how do music teachers experience professional learning*, is

intimately connected to the first regarding what teaching music means to elementary music teachers. As mentioned earlier, a significant part of Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah's professional learning related to the on-going development of their personal practical knowledge of teaching music arising from working in their specific situation. Regardless of whether they participated in more formal professional learning such as workshops, collaborative learning with a colleague, or were just trying to work out appropriate consequences for behaviour concerns in their music classes, the overarching mechanism that led to growth in the three teachers' practice was that of continually trying to improve their practice or implement new activities or strategies. In other words, the character of Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah's learning was always *instrumental* in nature even when they were required to attend a professional learning event. Fueled by the immediate needs and concerns of their particular situation, the teachers sought out solutions to specific problems or sought to learn something new related to a goal for their teaching. Gradual changes in practice, which constituted professional growth, came out of the teachers' practical engagement while teaching their specific students in their specific school. Instrumental learning is a key concept in my theoretical framework and one of the main themes that emerged in response to the second research question of my study.¹¹⁵

An instrumental conception of teachers' learning is supported by theoretical perspectives in the adult education literature. For example, Cercone (2008) outlines five assumptions undergirding M. J. Knowles (1973) seminal concept of andragogy: (a) adults are self-directed learners, (b) adult learners use their previous experiences as a resource for learning, (c) adults are goal oriented learners, (d) adult learners need to know the reason for learning something, and (e)

¹¹⁵ See the section on growth in Chapter Two for a further discussion of Dewey's (1938/1997) theoretic understanding of learning

adult learners are intrinsically motivated. All five elements of Knowles' theory suggest an instrumental view of teacher learning. Building on Knowles' early work on adult learning, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) suggest that adult learners are "more problem centered than subject-centered in learning" (p. 272), an assumption which is echoed by Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2011). Furthermore, Hunzicker (2011) argues that adult learners have concrete goals for their professional learning and are "motivated by opportunities to address problems – and create solutions – that relate directly to their lives" (p. 177). This was certainly the case for all three of the teachers in my study.

For example, Gabriel was engaged in working out appropriate classroom management strategies for teaching music to the students in his school. After trying a variety of small changes in his practice, and talking with colleagues including me, Gabriel was now focusing on the pacing of his lessons, "choosing activities that limit time in between or the transitions between different things" (Drop-in 1). Holly, in contrast, had a practical instrumental goal that stemmed from being in a new school. Holly felt compelled to use the ukuleles purchased by the previous music teacher even though she didn't know how to play herself. She talked to other music teachers about what they did and then began to work out how to teach ukuleles in her music classes, initially using a method book that someone had recommended. Holly tried a variety of strategies and activities, adjusting her teaching within each lesson and between lessons as she learned what worked for her and for her students. Deborah's main learning goal stemmed from her fascination with assessment for learning and her on-going inquiry into how to help her students to be aware of and assess their musical learning. With her colleague Jennifer, Deborah was engaged in working out what assessment meant in her teaching. She was actively making sense of what it would look like to evaluate the learning outcomes she and Jennifer had selected

from the curriculum for their assessment plan. In all three instances, the participants' professional learning began with a particular problem or goal which they had set or encountered in their practice, and were trying to solve or achieve.

The Temporal Element in Music Teacher Professional Learning

Dewey (1938/1997) believed that the purpose of education is to create opportunities for students to have educative experiences, i.e. experiences that lead to further growth. Paradoxically, whether or not an experience is educative cannot be determined in the moment of the experience. It is in looking back from a new vantage point from the future (which is now our present) that allows us to see whether or not a specific experience has, in fact, been educative, or was just a simple occurrence in our lives.¹¹⁶ Professional learning, then, always has a temporal element.

In this section I will discuss the temporality of the participants' professional learning and the extended *timeframe* between exposure to a new idea or setting a learning goal or problem, and integration into practice (which I take to be the outcome of professional learning). The temporal nature of professional learning is the second theme from my interpretation related to the second research question of my study, and, theoretically, I see it as being connected to continuity of experience.

It is important to clarify that because I only spent five months working with the three participants in my study, I cannot trace their learning over time in any significant way. This would be a very interesting future study. However, timeframe often came up in my conversations about professional learning with the participants, particularly for Deborah who had the longest career and a concrete long-term professional learning project. Even though Gabriel had not yet

¹¹⁶ Here, I differ with Dewey in that I would argue that *every* experience leads to growth in some way.

had time to completely integrate his learning from his Education degree and his experiences in Orff-Schulwerk level 1 and 2, there was clearly a temporal element in Gabriel's growth. As Gabriel said himself and I have mentioned previously, 'everything was learning' as a first year music teacher. In spite of the short timeframe of the study, I did see evidence of Gabriel's thinking and practice shifting over time as he engaged in an intense process of learning how to *be* a music teacher. However, I will begin with Deborah since it was my conversations with her that helped me to attend to the temporal nature of her learning and the learning of the other two participants. First, a word on the horizon of understanding I brought into the study.

My starting place for understanding.

One of my assumptions about professional learning upon beginning this inquiry was that teacher learning takes time. This assumption was based on my own experience as a professional learner and as a teacher educator,¹¹⁷ and my theoretical understanding of teacher learning as a process of constructing personal knowledge which constitutes ontological change (Garrison, 1994). What I came to understand as I engaged in this research is that professional learning takes a *significant* amount of time. While the importance of sustained and ongoing professional learning is well documented in the literature (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Moore, 2009; Poekert, 2012; Wells, 2013), the reality is that teachers are seldom given substantial amounts of time to engage in learning activities which they find meaningful to their practice. For example, many of the learning opportunities that Holly and Gabriel had were not of their own design and therefore not especially meaningful. Attending the first year teacher program sessions, being a staff representative for a district-wide FNMI initiative, and participating in school-wide professional learning did not provide Holly and Gabriel with much

¹¹⁷ See Chapter One for a discussion of this realization based in my experience of learning about the notion of constructivism and enacting this understanding.

agency in their learning (Bush, 2007).¹¹⁸ These activities provided neither transformational learning nor a long enough timeframe to result in meaningful change in practice.

The professional learning activities that did seem to be meaningful to Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah had an element of continuity built into them. For example, all three teachers had participated in summer music education courses over a period of two summers.¹¹⁹ The interval between levels provided an opportunity to work out their new understanding in practice. Deborah's project with Jennifer was another example of a professional learning activity that afforded an extended period of time to make meaning of the experience. Whereas many common professional learning opportunities for teachers consist of hour-long sessions or day-long workshops, Deborah's principal enabled her to explore assessment for learning with her colleague Jennifer over a period of years as part of Deborah's on-going professional learning. The following section explores the notion of timeframe as it relates to professional learning.

Making experiences educative over time.

In Chapter Seven, I discussed the extended timeframe for Deborah's learning related to assessment for learning and how she progressively made sense of what assessment meant in her practice over time. I outlined an example of how Deborah's understanding of teaching music evolved through three important professional learning experiences: Participating in Orff-Schulwerk Level 1 the summer before her first year of teaching music, taking Orff Level 2 the following year and, a few years later, attending an Orff workshop where she began to see the pedagogical thinking behind the teaching. While all of these events caused Deborah's thinking to

¹¹⁸ Bush actually uses the word "choice" rather than "agency" but I feel that agency is a better word in that it has the added benefit of describing why choice is important to teacher learning.

¹¹⁹ Holly had participated in level 1 and 2 of a Kodály certification program while Deborah and Gabriel had participated in Level 1 and 2 Orff Schulwerk.

change and resulted in professional growth, the timeframe between the second and third event were clearly significant to her learning. When I say that the timeframe was significant, it is not that time passed, but that Deborah actively engaged in learning how to teach music during that time. Deborah was engaged in developing her expertise, or “the professional working knowledge that we use to interact with situations in our practice” (Dolloff, 1994, p. 2). By doing so, Deborah was engaged in a process of Deweyan growth.

While the expression ‘learning from experience’ often seems to be understood as adjusting our understanding after going through events that happen to us, from a Deweyan standpoint, we are not passive when we experience something. As Donald (1987) argues, ‘experience’ is really a process of making sense of what happens to us.¹²⁰ For Deborah, the time between Orff-Schulwerk Level 1, Level 2, and the workshop was not simply ‘time going by.’ Instead, it was ‘time to make her experience meaningful.’ Deborah actively engaged in a process of making sense of those experiences *in her practice* and was therefore agentic in making her participation in Orff Level 1 and 2 *educative* for her.

This was also true for Gabriel. Over the months of the study, Gabriel was working hard to make sense of several concepts that he first encountered in his Orff Schulwerk levels courses and his Education degree. In chapter Five, I attempted to trace Gabriel’s learning related to the notion of ‘quality repertoire’ as well as his emerging understanding of Orff practice. While I will discuss Gabriel’s understanding of ‘quality repertoire’ in more detail later in this chapter, here I will focus on his learning related to Orff practice.

¹²⁰ Regelski (2004) distinguishes between “an experience” and “to experience.” The first results from “intentional action” while the second implies merely being present while something happens and may not result in learning (p. 24).

Gabriel was actively making sense of the principles and practices he had previously encountered related to Orff-Schulwerk. He was clearly not a passive vessel receiving information from his instructors in the course, and his learning did not stop once the courses ended. In fact, it seemed that the majority of Gabriel's professional learning occurred *after the fact*. While he noted that he was "taught the Orff way and...that is in the foundation for me" (Drop-in 2), his learning in the present consisted of three processes. First, Gabriel was adding to and modifying this framework for thinking about teaching. Secondly, he was attempting to teach the way he was taught and working out modifications for his setting, and finally, Gabriel was engaged in sorting out what a holistic approach to music education meant in his own practice. He characterized this learning as "it's a bit of me finding out where [students] are, where they need to go, and how we are going to get there" (Drop-in 3). Gabriel's Education and Orff-Schulwerk courses provided him with orienting principles, ideas, and strategies, but it was once he was teaching that most of Gabriel's professional learning occurred.

In sum, what I am arguing is that: (a) any experience has the potential to be educative given time (and inclination and/or ability) for the learner to actively make sense of it; (b) the learner is both the agent in and the location of their learning, and that learning is situated; (c) learning has a longer timeframe than attendance. Workshops have been criticized in the literature as being ineffective in creating meaningful change in teachers' practice (Garet et al., 2001), however, Deborah and Gabriel's learning seems to suggest that the impact of workshops and summer courses on teachers' practice can be marked, but that it is important to look for their impact *over time*. Rather than studying the efficacy of particular learning events, I am arguing for an examination of how teachers learn as subjects having experiences in the world.

Dependence and plasticity.

While I am suggesting that any professional learning experience has the potential to be educative, clearly not everyone takes away the same ‘lessons’ from a specific event, nor, if one defines learning as growth, do they necessarily learn to the same degree, if at all. From a Deweyan standpoint, whether someone learns and what they learn depends on their prior experiences (*continuity*) and their level of *dependence* and *plasticity*.

Deborah demonstrated a high level of *dependence* as a new teacher (Dewey, 1916/2008) and beyond, although as she became more experienced, she became more discerning about on who and what she was dependent. She took up the opportunity to learn from others, approaching her lack of experience and background as an opportunity to grow. I have already discussed several examples of Deborah’s dependence, but I will briefly mention two here. First, Deborah arranged to job share with another teacher early in her career and viewed this as a valuable learning experience. She depended on her colleague to learn how to organize a successful concert. Secondly, Deborah entered into a mutually dependent relationship with Jennifer to deepen her understanding of assessment and nurtured their interdependence on each other as learners. Deborah also retained an attitude of *plasticity* which Dewey (1916/2008) describes as the ability to learn from one’s experiences. Consistent with Steffy et al. (2000)’s conception of teachers as dynamic and agentic learners who grow through a process of reflection and renewal, Deborah was open, inquisitive, and highly motivated to improve her practice.

Gabriel also demonstrated dependence. As we talked and interacted, Gabriel used our interview conversations as a sounding board to work out his understanding of teaching music. He also did this with the workshops he attended, in his conversations with colleagues, and while working with the commercial curriculum that served as a framework for his planning. Gabriel was open to learning from his interactions with me, with his colleagues at school, and from other

music teachers. He was dependent in Dewey's (1916/2008) sense of the word, in that he was willing to learn from his experience.

Holly was also dependent when she went back to university to earn her music education diploma, but less so the longer she taught. While her experience of being a university student was one of "soaking up" whatever she could from her professors, as she became a more experienced music educator, she increasingly relied on her own intuition and questioned what 'experts' (including me) said about teaching music.¹²¹ As discussed in Chapter Six, Holly had fought hard to discover her voice as a person, a teacher, and a musician, and showed signs of 'a subjective knower,' i.e. someone who relies on their own intuitive authority and questions the authority of experts (Belenky et al., 1997). For example, Holly seemed to feel that none of the music methodologies she had included in her diagram of the field of music education or their adherents had the 'truth' about music and teaching music. While she attended events organized by the Orff-Schulwerk and Kodály communities and adopted certain strategies and repertoire that she encountered at these events, Holly did not adopt the discourse of these communities.¹²² Her quest for voice tempered her dependence. Even so, Holly demonstrated a fair degree of plasticity in her learning. For example, as she worked out how to teach ukuleles, she initially tuned the instruments in D based on the ukulele method that had been recommended to her. Part way through the year, Holly decided she was going to change her approach and began tuning in C. This change came out of her conversations with other teachers, and the realization that many pop songs that she wanted to do with her students were in C Major.

¹²¹ Prior to my study, Holly had participated in graduate courses in Kodaly-inspired pedagogy where I had been her instructor. She therefore had a very good idea of my beliefs and approach to teaching music.

¹²² In other words, Holly did not allow the discourse of the community to become an internally persuasive discourse (Bahktin, 1981). See the section below on the social nature of professional learning for further discussion of this concept.

Settling issues of practice over time.

As mentioned above, Deborah was actively engaged in developing her expertise in teaching music over time. Deborah's stance as a learner was a reflective one. Her approach to professional learning was to be in a state of inquiry akin to Dewey's (1910/1997) description of thinking where "doubtful or unsettled situations become settled" (Thayer, 1981, p. 171). One by one, Deborah settled small issues of her practice and then brought that new understanding to another issue that she, in turn, worked to settle. For example, as mentioned in Chapter Six, when Deborah showed me the iPad application she was learning how to use to support her assessment practices, she began with using the class list feature. Being able to use this feature was her initial goal. Once she felt comfortable using the application for this function, her plan was to focus on another feature. As she experimented with what the application could do, she thought through how to apply each function in her assessment practices and how they related to assessment. Deborah was not only learning to use this new tool in her practice, but learning to use the tool was impacting her thinking about and understanding of assessment.¹²³

As Deborah worked on settling each small issue of practice or worked towards a learning goal, each time her understanding moved from general to specific.¹²⁴ For example, when she and Jennifer first started working with the quadrant worksheet for assessment that they had chosen as the framework for their assessment plan, they had only a very general idea about what 'evaluation' meant for their project. After two years of working on the project and wrestling with what evaluation might look like, Deborah shared, "finally I've kind of figured out what...this

¹²³ Papert (1980) argues that technology can be a "tool to think with"

¹²⁴ Moving from general to specific understanding over time was also a feature of Gabriel's professional learning. See Chapter Five.

section was about– the evaluation section, because before I didn’t know what that meant” (Drop-in 3). While Deborah might have initially been unclear as to what evaluation would look like in practice, she clearly understood what the word meant in a general sense. Over time, she added more and more nuances to her concept map for the concept of assessment until she finally felt that she understood what assessment was in relation to her practice. This was also true in her attempts to integrate technology into her classroom. While she initially had a big idea, ‘use technology to facilitate data collection to make judgments for assessment,’ over time as she experimented with assessment in her practice, she began to have a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the how of achieving her learning goal, as well as the why.

This process of settling one aspect of practice at a time, i.e. moving from a general to a more nuanced understanding and then moving onto the next issue, was integral to Deborah’s professional learning, and the process took time as discussed above. In fact, the temporal dimension of Deborah’s professional learning was critical in allowing Deborah to develop a more complex understanding of whatever she was learning in practice. Deborah’s process of professional learning intersects with scholarship on the development of expertise. For example, Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Römer (1993) note that experts in any field develop their expertise through experience and practice, and Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) found that expert teachers ‘habituate’ certain routines which allows them to pay attention to the nuances of classroom life. In sum, Deborah was engaged in habituating elements of her practice in a process of continual professional growth.

“Day-to-dayness.”

In contrast to Deborah, Gabriel had, not surprisingly, habituated very little in his practice given that he was in his first year of teaching. However, he had adopted certain ‘teacherisms’ for classroom management such as directing students to sit on the floor with their legs crossed by

saying, “Criss cross applesauce.” Like Fuller and Bown’s (1975) early career teachers, Gabriel’s first concern was survival. He experienced teaching music as being almost entirely in the present moment and had a limited ability to connect past experiences and think ahead. Holly aptly described this aspect of being a beginning teacher as “day-to-dayness” (Drop-in 1). She explained:

When you first started teaching, all I could think about is the next day [laughs]... And that is how it was at first, right? And then I remember getting to a place where I could kind of plan, sort of, almost for a week, and then I remember getting to the place where I could get a whole month’s worth of science ready [laughs].¹²⁵ You know what I mean? Or whatever, right? And so, actually, that’s a big thing, going from that day-to-dayness being able to think months in advance or years in advance. (Drop-in 1)

Gabriel described his experience of teaching as being completely taken up with the present, sharing that when he was teaching, “I can’t look at it all. I can’t see it all” (Drop-in 5). Because Gabriel experienced teaching music as being only in the present, his learning seemed to be mainly limited to engaging in trial and error in the moment rather than being able to reflect back on similar experiences or his course work, or to think forward to future goals. The one exception was when two classes of the same grade were taught back to back. Having the chance to teach the same lesson twice allowed Gabriel to refine his teaching during the second class.

Near the end of our time working together I asked Gabriel about his goals for his practice for the following year. For the first time, he began to talk about the future:

¹²⁵ A reminder that Holly started out teaching grade one homeroom where she would have taught all subjects including science to her class.

Routine I think will be higher [on my list of priorities]...coming to the music room, leaving the music room, how to sit in the music room, where to be when you first come in and all those kind of things to really maximize time and behavior management I guess.

(Drop-in 4)

Gabriel was beginning to be able to think ahead beyond the day-to-dayness of his first year teaching experience.

Like Deborah, Holly had also habituated certain elements of her practice. For example, she generally taught songs using the call and response rote process. Because her goal for her music program was different than Deborah's, Holly's practice did not have the same directionality towards prechosen outcomes that Deborah's did. Holly more or less approached each lesson in the same way with every grade, although she varied the activities. Holly managed one instructional goal at a time, often across multiple grade levels (such as preparing for the concert), and the main instructional goal framing all of her work was evoking an affective response to specific songs in her students. Thus, her teaching strategies didn't change, just the songs she taught. Holly confirmed this when she noted that her thinking centered on "repertoire" rather than "teaching method" (Interview 1). Holly approached learning music as learning repertoire and once she knew how to teach a song, there was little reason to adjust her practice. Just like Deborah, Holly had habituated this aspect of her practice.

A Variety of Learning Strategies and a Variety of Understandings of Professional Learning

Holly's main strategy for professional learning was attending workshops. While she attended workshops as a way to learn about teaching music, she certainly did not take what others did and blindly apply their "recipe" to her own practice. She was always running her experience through the framework of her beliefs. As mentioned in Chapter Six, Holly was mostly looking for

repertoire and activities when she went to these events, but she also attended to the pedagogy and principles of the workshop leader as she engaged in ‘soaking it in.’ In fact, all three of the participants had specific strategies that they employed to learn about teaching music whether they were learning from courses, workshops, or in more informal settings. As mentioned in Chapter Five, Gabriel spoke specifically about learning to teach by “experiencing it like a student” in his Orff-Schulwerk courses. In addition to “soaking it in,” Holly also talked about her practice of “gleaning,” while Deborah felt that her best formal professional learning happened when she had a chance to experience something like a student (“experiencing a living philosophy”), but then step back and look at the pedagogical thinking behind the activities. Deborah was also adept at adapting models of practice to her specific classroom setting and was an accomplished collaborative learner. Each teachers’ learning strategies spoke to a certain level of agency experienced by the teacher.

Agency.

The learning strategies that each participant valued provide a window into their epistemological understanding of what it means to learn professionally. First and foremost, the learning strategies discussed by each participant speak to the level of agency they experienced as professional learners. Deborah clearly saw herself as the agent of her learning, creating opportunities for her own growth, arranging her surroundings to support her learning (getting release days from her principal, finding others with whom to collaborate, carefully picking and choosing formal professional learning opportunities, organizing a professional learning community), and generating knowledge with Jennifer. She seemed to see learning as being located inside herself and in the social interactions she had with Jennifer and other colleagues, and also occurring in interaction with her practice. Her view of learning was largely dialogic. Although Holly was clearly active in her learning, she took a less agentic approach. In addition

to the instrumental day-to-day learning she experienced in her practice, Holly's structure for professional learning often consisted of attending pre-existing events in the community.¹²⁶

While she did not design these professional learning structures for herself, her view of professional learning was far from passive. Holly saw professional learning as being located in the interplay between what clinicians taught and did, and her own beliefs and experience. She was active in constructing her understanding by measuring what she gleaned against her own beliefs about teaching. Not surprisingly given he was a first year teacher, Gabriel perhaps had the least agentic stance in his professional learning. In addition to being new to teaching, Gabriel was also very busy and preoccupied with his survival and the enormity of the present as previously discussed.¹²⁷ Like his experience of first year teaching, Gabriel seemed to experience the formal professional learning opportunities he did attend as "going through the motions," partly because he was overwhelmed, and partly because he had little choice as to what events he could attend because of the district's highly structured induction program for new teachers. In spite of his receptive stance and situation, there is no question that Gabriel was highly engaged in learning from his practice. As I have mentioned, everything was learning for Gabriel.

Learning stances.

All three teachers in my study had different epistemological understandings of what it meant to learn professionally as well as different ways of being in the world as professional learners. The combination of the participants' epistemological understanding of learning and their way of being constitutes what I mean by the term 'learning stance.'

¹²⁶ I am referring, of course, to the professional learning in which Holly engaged in by choice rather than the mandated school board sessions she was required to attend. I should also note that, when Holly had a choice, she was discerning in choosing what she attended.

¹²⁷ A reminder that Gabriel was teaching studio lessons in addition to his position teaching elementary music, and that his position became full-time part way through the year. He was very busy indeed.

Gabriel's learning stance was impacted by his situation as a first year teacher. While he was confident in his abilities as a learner and teacher in an instrumental context, when it came to teaching elementary music, Gabriel was understandably less sure of himself. There were times in our drop-in interviews that he did not have much to say in response to the questions I asked. While I acknowledge that part of the issue may have been my inexperience in interviewing participants, I would also suggest that Gabriel did not have much to say because he did not yet have confidence in his own voice as an elementary music teacher. He was reticent to share his Professional Growth Plan, lesson plans, and his opinions, and was very open to hearing others' perspectives. In spite of the fact that one of Gabriel's primary means of professional learning was interacting with more experienced music teachers, he did not have a great deal of access to others in his situation besides the writers of the curriculum resource that he had purchased for his school.

Holly, in contrast, valued her own voice over the voices of others. She took whatever anyone else said 'with a grain of salt' and was extremely selective as to whose voice she allowed into her thinking. As mentioned in Chapter Six, when Holly respected someone, she followed their work closely and 'soaked in' whatever she could from their thinking about teaching and learning. Her position as a learner tended to be mostly that of a passionate 'constructed knower' (Belenky et al., 1997) where she was engaged in integrating what she felt was "personally important" through her intuition with what she had learned from others (p. 124). Holly respected specific 'experts' but their experience had to resonate with hers (Belenky, et al., 1997). Once she chose to let someone's voice into her thinking, she did not judge, but rather, sought to understand. She spoke often of "loving" particular clinicians and performers, and this too, is a characteristic of a someone whose stance to learning is a constructed knower. Belenky et al.

(1997) note that “constructivists establish a communion with what they are trying to understand. They use the language of intimacy to describe the relationship between the knower and the known” (p. 143). This was certainly the case of Holly who spoke often of loving pieces of music, clinicians, conductors, artists, and stories with passion and affect.

Deborah’s stance as a learner was that of a constructor. One of the vehicles that propelled her professional learning forward was that of asking questions of her situation. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, the most frequent comment Deborah made in our conversations was some version of “it’s really interesting” which she said as she contemplated a student’s work, a situation, or an element of her practice. She demonstrated significant strengths in what Baxter Magolda (1992) calls *contextual knowing*. Deborah clearly was “thinking through problems and integrating and applying knowledge in a context” (p. 68) as she inquired into the learning of her students and worked out what assessment for learning meant in practice. While Holly saw herself as the final authority regarding her learning and practice, Deborah saw learning as taking place between herself and someone else. She valued what Belenky et al. (1997) call “real talk”: a space where “together you are creating the optimum setting so that half-baked or emergent ideas can grow” (p. 144). She attended to creating this space both in her relationship with Jennifer and in working with her students. Deborah demonstrated a strong ethic of care towards her students and her profession that was key to her stance as a professional learner. She was listening carefully to her students, to her situation, and to her learning collaborators and that listening informed her practice and fueled her professional learning.

The Social Nature of Professional Learning

Britzman (2003) argues for a discursive view of teacher education and problematizes the traditional conception of learning to teach as an “individual dilemma” (p. 31). She contends that

while learning to teach is “individually experienced” it is, in fact, “socially negotiated” (p. 31). The social nature of the professional learning of the three participants in my study was evident and constitutes a significant part of my interpretation in answering the question “How do music teachers experience professional learning?” In this section, I will examine how Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah learned from and with others, starting with an exploration of a community of practice with which they each intersected.

Communities of practice.

While Dewey’s theory of experience has helped me to theorize about how the three music teachers in my study learned as individuals interacting within their environments, in this section, I will examine how the participants learned from and with others, and how their learning was impacted by the communities of practice in which they were embedded. Here, I turn to Lave and Wenger’s (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) sociocultural theory of learning as a means to interpret how the participants’ learning was impacted by the broader contexts in which they were located as learners and as practitioners.

In spite of the fact that the participants had few opportunities for music-specific PD, were the only music educator in their buildings, and had to make a concerted effort to connect with colleagues, the practice, and therefore the professional learning, of all three participants was governed to some degree by one or several communities of practice. For Gabriel, it was primarily his school community and the discourse of the Orff-Schulwerk community which shaped his practice, while for Deborah, it was Jennifer, the specialists whose assessment for learning approach she was working to understand in practice, and the Orff community who were among her primary influences. In spite of intentionally positioning herself outside of the predominant music education communities of practice in the greater community, Holly’s practice and learning was also impacted by several communities of practice around her. She adapted what

she did in her music program to the expectations of the new community in which she found herself, and, even though Holly worked hard to retain her own voice, she was well aware of what constituted acceptable practice to both the Kodály and Orff communities.

Communities of practice as learning organizations. In their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Jean Lave and her collaborator Etienne Wenger (1991) define a *community of practice* as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). Because they consist of a web of relationality, communities of practice are fluid and dynamic entities that change over time as their membership changes. Membership, and therefore the community’s practice, is always in flux.

For Lave and Wenger, “learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind” (Hanks in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 15). Communities of practice are not just groups of people who happen to be in relation or share a larger purpose. They are first and foremost learning structures. The three participants of my study were members of multiple communities of practice within which they interacted and learned. First, each was a member of a school staff and a teacher within a specific school board. Secondly, Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah were, to varying degrees, members of the Orff-Schulwerk community in their region, and Holly was also a member of the Kodály community, although she chose to position herself on the edge of both of these communities. Gabriel was a member of a string quartet and had been a member of a community of string teachers even though he had given up a lot of his work as a conductor and string teacher as he transitioned into teaching elementary music, and Deborah was involved in a professional learning community of other music teachers in her

school division and the local handbell community, and had also been a part of an assessment consortium. All of these organizations were learning organizations.

Authoritative discourses: The school board as a community of practice. As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, both Gabriel and Holly were required to participate in a first-year teacher induction program. Earlier I argued that neither of them found these sessions particularly relevant or helpful to their own practice. Gabriel was already conversant with many of the topics covered which he had encountered in his Bachelor of Education courses and practicum. The brief treatment of these same topics in the first year teacher program seemed to do little to deepen his understanding in practice. This was also true for Holly. As a mid-career teacher, she already had many tools and strategies for classroom management, planning, and working as a teacher in an elementary school. While it might seem that the purpose of these events was providing skills and understanding to the new teachers in the district, in actuality the program served a larger purpose beyond helping the participants to grow in their practice. I come back to Holly's statement that:

What I get out of it is being able to converse in the correct lingo...And the other part that that does for me is it allows me a bit of insight into what's important to [my new school board]...and to sort of function within their value system. (Drop-in 3B)

Holly and Gabriel were participating in a process of legitimate peripheral participation whereby they were "absorbing and being absorbed [into] the culture of practice" of the school board and learning the "target practice" of the community (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95). This was the primary function of the first year teacher sessions, hidden perhaps even to the organizers who likely thought of learning to teach as the acquisition of a certain set of skills and behaviors rather than a socially-situated process of negotiation (Britzman, 2003).

It seems obvious to say that one of the ways the values and ‘target practice’ of the school board was conveyed was through the use of language. And yet, Holly and Gabriel both remarked that they attended to the ‘lingo’ used to help them learn about the values espoused by the organization in which they now had membership. Like Holly, Gabriel noted the specific terms and uses of language meant to sensitize him to the values of the community of practice: “it’s just like I was in university when I went to a lot of PDs with the same language that’s coming out...” (Drop-in 5). The first year teacher sessions reinforced what Gabriel had already learned about the community through his course work and practicum experiences, and the discourse used to talk about teaching and learning at the first year teaching sessions reinforced the ideas and orientations the leadership of the community valued.

Language is a conceptual tool of, and vehicle for, culture (Vygotsky, 1981). It both shapes culture and can be shaped to “bring our cultural worlds into existence” (Hall, Vitanova, & Marcenkova, 2005, p. 3). But thinking discursively, language is also much more than a tool for learning and for transmitting culture. It is a vehicle for the authoritative discourses that govern not only practices in any social context, but the very construction of identities. Bakhtin (1981) argues that as human beings in the world, we are continually “assimilating the words of others” (p. 341). He writes:

The tendency to assimilate others’ discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual’s ideological becoming... Another’s discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth—but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as authoritative discourse and an internally persuasive discourse. (p. 342)

Borrowing the words of others becomes “retelling in one’s own words” (p. 341). As Holly and Gabriel took up the language of the first year teacher sessions, they were also *becoming* members of the community of teachers in their school district. The language of the organization thus shaped their understanding not only of their work, but of their identities as teachers. It is in this way that the authoritative discourses of the community become the internally persuasive discourse of the individual (Bahktin, 1981).

While the transmission of authoritative discourses was fairly obvious from Holly and Gabriel’s stories of the teacher induction program and the materials they received through their participation, as members of other communities of practice, they were also subjected to the discourses of those communities. As noted earlier, all three of the participants in my study positioned themselves as members of the Orff-Schulwerk community in the city where they worked, albeit to different degrees. I will now turn to an examination of the ways in which this community of practice governed notions of practice for Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah.

Being an Orff teacher: An example of a community of practice. Of the three teachers in my study, Gabriel is the one who seemed to identify most closely with Orff-Schulwerk as a practice. Not only was it the primary discourse he had encountered related to school music teaching, but Gabriel had several influential people in his life that counted themselves as Orff teachers. Gabriel often framed his work as “teaching Orff” in our conversations. As noted earlier, Gabriel stated, “I was taught the Orff way and through my Orff experiences, and I guess that is in the foundation for me” (Drop-in 2). As discussed in Chapter Five, the discourse of Orff-Schulwerk provided some rudimentary tools for Gabriel to think about his work teaching music in an elementary school which he had found enormously helpful.

Orff-Schulwerk had also been an important influence for Deborah as a young music teacher and continued to be an integral part of her thinking and practice. Like Gabriel, the principles of Orff-Schulwerk formed the basis of Deborah's practice, but unlike Gabriel, Deborah did not see herself as teaching Orff, but as teaching the music curriculum. Nonetheless, one of Deborah's main discourse communities was that of the local Orff-Schulwerk chapter. She had many close friends from her association with the Orff chapter, and had even served on its board. In fact, the Orff chapter was one of the contexts from which Deborah knew her colleague and collaborator Jennifer.

Holly, on the other hand, was reticent to associate herself closely with either the local Orff chapter or the provincial Kodály chapter even though she had participated in courses related to both pedagogies, had been a member of both organizations at one time or another, regularly attended events or workshops organized by both associations, and was friends with people who were involved in both communities. While she could have easily been more integrated in either or both communities had she chosen to be, Holly was very aware and cautious of the discursive elements that these communities espoused and propagated. As you may recall, she noted that she saw teaching methods as a useful construct but not necessarily true. Holly was careful about not defining her experience of music (or the experience of her students) by someone else's framing.

Three positions in a community of practice. As the name suggests, communities of practice are characterized by practice, or the mutual engagement of its members in a joint enterprise of some kind (Wenger, 1998). For the members of the local Carl Orff Canada chapter, that practice was learning about and promoting Orff-inspired pedagogy. Most of the members of the community of practice participated by showing up to the chapter's workshops and enacting Orff-Schulwerk practice in their own teaching. Another group of people served on or had served

on the executive committee, and still others were the venerated teachers of the group who taught in the levels courses, were well-known clinicians, and had developed resources that other teachers used. The levels teachers and executive members had the highest level of full participation in the community and had the most impact on maintaining and protecting the values and practices of the group through their work and modelling.

Each of the three participants in my study took up different positions and levels of participation within this community. As a new member of the Orff community, Gabriel was on the periphery of the group. His membership was based on the completion of the Orff-Schulwerk levels courses in which he had participated and was reinforced if and when he attended one of the chapter's workshops. In spite of his infrequent attendance at chapter events during his first year of teaching, he saw himself as a member of the community, although he experienced his membership as being on the edges. Gabriel explained:

I haven't really made a lot of personal connections yet, being new in here. I'm in the beginning stage of just seeing people. It's more like a ... "hey, how's it going" just brief talk. Nothing close. I don't have close relationships yet with people, but that will come with time. (Drop-in 4)

While Gabriel did not experience his membership in the community as integration, he seemed to be suggesting that he wanted to, and intended to be more involved over time.

Deborah might seem to be what Lave and Wenger (1991) call 'an oldtimer,' or someone who had moved to full participation in the group. She had been a part of the community of the Orff chapter in some way ever since she did her levels courses almost 30 years ago, regularly attending workshops and the national Orff conference. Initially, she sought out membership in the group because she needed help, but that was no longer the case. In spite of being a well-

respected member of the community, however, Deborah did not see herself as an ‘oldtimer’ in that she had never felt comfortable being the one giving the workshop. Because of the value placed on creativity in Orff practice, those who were fully integrated in the community wrote their own materials, but Deborah did not. She explained, “You know what holds me back from [doing workshops]? Is that the music that I use is not my own... So because it’s not original materials, I always feel a little bit hesitant” (Drop-in 3). Deborah was good at taking other people’s materials and adapting them for her context but because she did not write her own Orff arrangements, she felt she was disqualified from being a clinician. Full participation to Deborah seemed to mean being someone who could teach the members of the group in accordance with the values of Orff-Schulwerk pedagogy, and she discounted herself because, in her mind, she could not.

As mentioned above, Holly intentionally positioned herself of the edges of both the Orff and the Kodály communities. Her position was more akin to what Wenger (1998) calls a broker, an individual who remains on the periphery of membership in more than one community of practice and introduces ideas from one community into another, resulting in learning for the community. While Holly did remain on the periphery like a broker, she was a quiet participant in the Kodály and Orff-Schulwerk communities rather than someone who carried ideas back and forth. Consistent with her learning practices of ‘gleaning’ and ‘soaking things in,’ Holly’s position was more akin to that of a wallflower who stayed at the edges and carefully took in what happened around her. She interacted and participated in the events she attended, but she did not choose to offer her voice to the community.

Just as all three participants took up membership in the community in different ways, their membership in the community impacted their practice and learning differently and to

different degrees. All three of the participants chose their position in the community to some degree. They were in no way passive regarding their position, and whatever elements of discourse they took up, they chose to do so. Another way of saying this, perhaps, is that each participant was agentic to some degree in determining their position in the group.

While the local Orff chapter clearly functioned as a community of practice, I did not have the opportunity to study the organization as a learning community. This would be a fascinating follow up study. What I can speak to, however, is the *nature* of the participants' learning as they engaged with others.

Portraits of the social nature of professional learning.

When professional learning (i.e. what and how teachers learn) is conflated with professional development (events teachers attend), the social nature of teacher learning is obscured. Implicit in a professional development framing of teacher learning is that learning is located with the individual teacher who responds to a stimulus (the event), and the efficacy of the event can be measured based on a demonstrable change in the teacher's practice. While it is true that the site of professional learning is ultimately the teacher in that learning entails changes in an individual teacher's understanding and practice, how teachers arrive at that understanding is far from a solitary endeavor. First, as Lave and Wenger (1991) argue, "there is no activity that is not situated" (p. 33). What there is for music teachers to know about teaching music and how they learn it is socially determined by someone, or, more accurately, a group of someones. Secondly, professional learning is a dialogic and "generative social practice" (p. 34) in which teachers are actors interacting in and with the world. Regardless of whether or not the teacher-learner is in a social situation, reading a book or blog, or physically alone as they engage in learning, they are engaged in a continually unfolding dialogue with ideas, other people, and authoritative

discourses (Bakhtin, 1981). In this section, I will discuss three portraits of how this dialogic process played out in Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah's professional learning.

Portrait 1: What is quality repertoire? Alignment within a community of practice. As a first year teacher, Gabriel was actively engaged in learning what it meant to teach music. Earlier, I outlined how Gabriel framed his work primarily as “providing a variety of experiences” to students, a maxim he seemed to have constructed mostly out of his experiences participating in the Orff-Schulwerk levels courses and by juxtapositioning these experiences with his experiences of learning music privately. Throughout his life as a musician and instrumental teacher and in interacting with the Orff teachers in his family and members of and ideas from the Orff-Schulwerk community, Gabriel had become aware of several orienting ideas about good teaching practice. For example, Gabriel asserted that quality teaching practice included some singing in every lesson, an idea he attributed to his pedagogy teacher in his Level 2 Orff-Schulwerk course.

I previously explored Gabriel's preoccupation with the idea of “quality repertoire” while discussing Gabriel's experience of learning on the job. As you may recall, Gabriel noted that:

Quality repertoire would probably be something that offers multiple, kind of, areas of music that you can incorporate into [students'] learning and teaching— rhythm, emphasis form, kind of all those concepts I think...and I'm still learning what quality is too.”

(Drop-in 4)

Later in the same conversation, Gabriel took the opportunity to further clarify his thinking. He added:

I think well established pieces have sustained through time because of being higher quality. And I think the higher quality comes out and, especially if I've been new to this

business, but there are people who have been in this business for years, and you keep seeing— talking with them, seeing their particular pieces that...they have that they've shared with me— ...that I say, “Okay. Yeah, I know that piece. I have it with me in my Game Plan or I have it in Musicplay”¹²⁸ and I keep seeing things pop up in my searching of music and repertoire and different things. (Drop-in 4)

To recap, Gabriel was essentially saying that how he knew a piece was “quality repertoire” is that: (a) someone more experienced at teaching music and tried it with their students and recommended it; and (b) the piece could also be found in a published resource. Gabriel was looking to the community of teachers around him to learn the discourse and skills that counted in that community.

Wenger (2000) argues that knowing— in this case knowing how to teach music— “is a matter of displaying competences defined in social communities” (p. 226), and Gabriel was actively learning the competencies deemed important by the community of music educators around him. Gabriel was a novice in the Orff-Schulwerk and music education community, and as such, he was engaged in learning what the community valued as knowledge.¹²⁹ Because music is taught through specific pieces of music selected by the teacher, Gabriel was actively working out which pieces were valued by the community, in part because this was important knowledge for belonging to the community. Essentially, he was seeking to gain access to the “shared repertoire of communal resources” of the local and wider Orff-Schulwerk community because “to be

¹²⁸ These are two music curriculum resources for teaching elementary music, both of which Gabriel had in his music room.

¹²⁹ He makes no distinction between these communities, and so, for the moment, I do not either.

competent is to have access to this repertoire and to be able to use it appropriately” (Wenger, 2000, p. 229).¹³⁰ Gabriel was attempting to align his practice with the practice of the community.

Wenger (2000) argues that alignment is an important *mode of belonging* in a community of practice. It is one of the ways that members participate in the community, and it is also one of the ways that community members develop their identities in relation to the community. Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that “identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another” (p. 53). Gabriel was not just learning to be an elementary music teacher. He was learning to be a music teacher who was competent at specific practices valued within a community of practice, and his success at these practices constituted his identity as a music teacher.

Portrait 2: Workshops as affirmation of practice: dialogue with the practice of others.

In Chapter Six, I discussed some of the learning practices in which Holly engaged as she attended workshops and courses such as ‘gleaning what you can’ and ‘soaking it up like a sponge,’ and also commented on Holly’s practice of collecting repertoire. While Gabriel was interested in knowing which pieces other teachers used for teaching, Holly was primarily interested in finding pieces that evoked affect for her and had the potential to evoke an affective response from her students. She was aware of the authoritative discourse of “quality music” but this was not her primary preoccupation in finding and choosing music.

In fact, Holly was very aware of the discursive nature of learning to teach. As noted earlier, she was very cautious in how she engaged in learning within the various communities of practice whose workshops and events she attended. Holly was not beholden to any community of practice and was not seeking membership, and unlike Gabriel, whose professional learning

¹³⁰ Note that repertoire here does not mean pieces of music, but the collection of knowledge and know-how developed and used within a specific community.

project was to learn the accepted practice of a given community, Holly kept herself at arm's length, trusting her own voice above all others.

Even though Holly intentionally chose not to seek full membership in the communities of practice around her, she still availed herself of those communities to engage in professional learning. Holly's professional learning was still social in nature. While seeing the same workshop session or speaker many times helped Holly to engage in the learning practice she called 'soaking it in,' this practice also served another purpose for Holly. In addition to looking for new insights, Holly was looking for affirmation of her practice. As a reminder, here is Holly's explanation once again:

The more times I see it, the more I soak in...sometimes it's okay to hear things over and over and the sometimes if you leave that session with a feeling of affirmation like I'm doing a good job, that's also important. Because not always to feel like, "Oh, there's always so much more to do and I'll never get there." Sometimes it's okay to feel like, "Hey, I'm doing okay." (Drop-in 3)

Earlier in her journey Holly had been trying to learn *how* to teach and thus experienced many "unlocking moments," which is what she called instances of new understanding (Drop-in 2). At this point in her career, Holly's engagement with formal professional learning had a different, evaluative quality. In addition to looking for repertoire she could use, Holly was constantly comparing the clinician's ideas and how they taught with what she did in her own practice. She seemed to be looking for small tweaks and clarifications and was seeking "affirmation" of the principles and practices she had embraced in her own teaching. Seeking "affirmation of practice" was a significant way that Holly engaged in professional learning. For example, in sharing what she learned from attending the report card session mentioned in Chapter Six, Holly commented,

“So it was helpful to find out what other people do and what’s sort of reasonable, you know?” (Drop-in 2). Holly was comparing what she did against the practice of others and making small tweaks to her own practice. Holly also found affirmation of her practice in the Orff workshop she mentioned where she noticed the clinicians’ “group management strategies” and realized that she attended to their subtle approach because she uses the same strategy in her own teaching.

Affirming her practice is one of the ways in which Holly used the community around her to learn. She measured the competencies valued and embraced by a given community of practice (as represented by the clinician and the organization sponsoring the session) against her personal experience “in the context of a given community and beyond” (Wenger, 2000, p. 227). Holly’s professional learning was dialectical in nature. It consisted of the interplay between “social competence and personal experience” (Wenger, 2000, p. 227), and was therefore located in the space between what others valued and Holly’s experience and values. It was in this space that Holly tried on the authoritative discourses of the community in question and either rejected them or made them her own. Holly’s process of testing the discourse of the community against her experience is an excellent picture of Deweyan interaction (1938/1997).

Portrait 3: Confirmatory learning in a peer learning partnership. In Chapter Seven, I explored Deborah’s experience of professional learning, examining the various ways she engaged in learning including her collaboration with her colleague Jennifer. In this section, I will discuss the social nature of Deborah’s learning within the context of that collaboration. Deborah and Jennifer were engaged in a dialogic learning relationship in which they mutually constructed their understanding of assessment, teaching, and learning. Their relationship consisted of a *Peer Learning Partnership*, a mutually enriching dyadic relationship characterized by a shared

purpose, synergy, trust and respect, equality, and voluntary participation and resulting in “reciprocal learning” (Eisen, 1999, p. 28).

As mentioned in Chapter Seven, the official structure of Deborah and Jennifer’s collaboration was to meet for half a day once per term throughout the school year, which they had done for two years. The purpose of those meetings was to work out what and how they were going to assess students’ learning for each grade in the upcoming reporting period. Once they had decided on a plan for assessment, Deborah and Jennifer returned to their respective schools and began to implement their plan. While the meeting was a learning opportunity in that it provided a chance to work through what each learning objective meant, the dialogic quality of Deborah’s professional learning became much more intense once she and Jennifer began to implement the plan. As Deborah began to enact the plan in her practice, many questions, wonderings, and exciting moments arose. Because of technology, Deborah was able to share her thinking, questions, and experience with Jennifer almost in real time as she taught and assessed. As previously discussed, the two of them texted, e-mailed, phoned, and had coffee frequently as they worked to make sense of assessment for learning. Just as Holly used workshops as an affirmation of her practice, Deborah was able to measure her unfolding understanding about assessment against Jennifer’s. Deborah described, for example, her experience working on report cards after a particularly synergistic meeting with Jennifer:

So then I went back and I’m doing report cards and then I’m starting to think about things like how many As do I actually give in grade 1? How many Bs, how many Cs do I give? And then I—... I’ve never done that before— I totaled it up and I sent it to her and is this kind of— like we have similar programs, we have similar goals, are you giving similar As

and Bs that I am, you know? So then she started totaling the same thing. It was a really interesting conversation... (Drop-in 4)

As Deborah's anecdote shows, many of Deborah and Jennifer's interactions served a confirmatory purpose. Checking her practice against Jennifer's was one of the main ways Deborah used their peer learning partnership as a vehicle for learning. The almost synchronous timeframe of their on-going interactions seemed to be a powerful structure for Deborah's professional learning. Because she was able to get confirmation and clarification and adjust her thinking immediately, Deborah was able to stay within a space of inquiry. More than just providing motivation, their on-going and immediate interactions kept Deborah highly engaged in the project of learning about assessment for learning.

In a sense, Deborah and Jennifer provided scaffolding for each other's learning. While the metaphor of scaffolding is most often used to refer to what an expert does to help someone less expert learn (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), it fits here in the sense that Deborah could not have learned what she had about assessment for learning without first interacting with Jennifer. The nature of Deborah's learning with Jennifer was twofold: First, she worked out her understanding with Jennifer on a social level and then she worked it out for herself (Vygotsky, 1978). Deborah's interactions with Jennifer enabled her to do more than she could alone and helped her develop a higher level of competence (Mercer & Fisher, 1993). I am mindful of Aoki's (2005) phenomenological exploration of the word "competence," which he suggests means "to be able to seek together or to be able to venture forth together" (p. 130). This was precisely the nature of Deborah and Jennifer's collaborative learning.

Variations on a Theme

The metaphor “variations on a theme” comes to mind in thinking about these three elementary music teachers’ understanding of their work as music educators and their professional learning. First, the three participants each had a unique and personal framing of their work which included a relational and caring framing of teaching music, and an understanding that their musical and cultural leadership as music teachers extended beyond the music classroom into their school community. Secondly, their professional learning was highly instrumental in nature, required an extended timeframe, and was situated in, and depended on, specific communities of practice. At the same time, because the participants’ understanding of teaching music was informed by their personal experiences and proclivities, each participant saw the goal of their work differently. They also understood and experienced professional learning in different ways. The final chapter comes back to my own understanding of elementary music teachers’ work and professional learning, and how my understanding has shifted over the course of this study.

Chapter Nine: Reflections and Implications: A New Horizon of Understanding

The starting place for this inquiry was my wish to understand and support elementary music teachers in the important and often solitary work they do in elementary schools. Frequently, this work is unseen, misunderstood, or undervalued in school communities and in the community at large. As Deborah noted, and those who teach school music may have experienced, music class is sometimes viewed as a ‘frill’ or a place for students to have fun instead of being seen as an integral part of an education for becoming a well-rounded person. This is the larger discursive context within which the three participants in my study operated.

Teaching elementary music, as it turns out, is a deeply personal endeavor where the teacher must navigate through multiple discursive claims on their work. Most obvious of these claims is that of the curriculum-as-planned. This document which provides a framework that gives meaning to the work of music teachers comes from the realm of the imaginary. It is written for a generic teacher working with generic students and consequently cannot address the unique context in which teachers find themselves (Aoki, 2005). But there is also the claim of the teacher’s own framing of their purpose as a music educator, which is deeply biographical. For especially Holly, this personal practical knowledge of teaching and her own voice as a musical person trumped not only the curriculum but the discourse of the communities around her. For Gabriel, these communities were key to his emerging understanding of teaching music and to his professional learning. It was the sometimes competing discourses of the Orff-Schulwerk community and of classical music education that provided the most persuasive claims on Gabriel’s understanding of his work. Deborah used the community around her to make the curriculum her own. She consciously chose to adopt and make sense of the discourse of assessment for learning and to engage with the people around her as a way to grow

professionally. All three participants found their way to a personal pedagogy, although for Gabriel especially, this journey was, and is still, very much in progress.

Just as the participants' understanding of teaching music was personal, so, too, was their understanding and experience of professional learning. Each of the three teachers in the study had their own approaches to learning to teach based on their epistemological understandings of what it meant to learn and their prior experiences. While my goal in engaging in this inquiry was never to be able to generalize about elementary music teachers' professional learning, there are several patterns and ideas that have emerged for me in interpreting the data for this study which I have outlined in the preceding chapters. I wish to note that, like the participants' understanding of teaching music and professional learning, my interpretation is informed by my previous experience and understanding and is therefore personal in nature.

In this final chapter, I will discuss several ways in which my personal horizon of understanding has shifted in the process of engaging in this interpretive inquiry. These shifts towards a more nuanced understanding of elementary music teachers' experience and professional learning constitute my hermeneutic 'uncoverings' related to the two research questions of my inquiry. I will also discuss potential implications and directions for future inquiry related to each of my new understandings.

I have organized the discussion of my current horizon of understanding into five sections:

- A shift from focusing on learning as constructing understanding to teacher agency,
- A new understanding of professional learning as enculturation and of the tensions between enculturation of teachers and the development of voice,

- A new awareness of the diversity of ways elementary music teachers learn and the importance of one's personal stance towards learning in engendering growth,
- A new understanding of professional learning as a socially determined practice rather than as an individual endeavor,
- A new appreciation for the value of workshops for affirmation and confirmation of practice which constitute a kind of professional learning.

After discussing each of these points in turn, I will then address implications for teacher education and professional learning and share some concluding thoughts.

From Constructing Understanding to Being Agentic

Much of the literature on music teacher professional development points to the need for teachers to have choice in their professional development activities (Ex. Bush, 2007; Conway et al., 2005a). However, the concept of 'choice' really only allows for a surface-level understanding of how teachers grow in their practice. It obscures the discursive structures around teachers that impact their very choice and whether or not they have certain choices. What teachers need is not simply the power to *choose*, but the power to *act*. This power to act is what is meant by the term *agency*. Pickering (1995) describes agency as a situated dialectic process reminiscent of Dewey's (1916/2008) conception of growth. Pickering sees agency as a "dance" between an agent who acts in the world and their constructions (p. 21). This dance consists of three inter-related stages where the agent creates something, assumes a passive stance to assess and monitor the performance of their construction, and then once again become active in revising their creation.¹³¹ While Pickering's example is of a scientist and something they have literally built, I think the

¹³¹ I have adapted Pickering's idea slightly in that Pickering sees the second stage as being characterized by material agency while the first and second are moments of human agency.

example is an apt metaphor for teacher learning. Pickering's dialectic conception of agency is analogous to Dewey's description of reflection *which is the very mechanism that allows teachers to grow from their experiences*. Rather than being offered the choice of which session to attend, elementary music teachers need professional learning structures that afford them opportunities to act and reflect upon their actions. Secondly, as Pickering makes clear, agency varies over time. While engaged in professional learning, teachers will have moments when they are highly agentic and others when they appear to be more passive. Professional learning structures and those that oversee teacher professional learning must allow for and expect such variances.

Implications

A technical rational and commodified framing of education casts teachers in the role of curriculum implementers. Because teachers' work is seen as delivering the curriculum (Pinar, 2004), a technical rational conception of professional learning therefore consists in learning certain discrete skills and concepts in order to develop expertise. This view of teacher learning is what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) refer to as "outside-in," and it is how I now understand the common usage of the term 'professional development.' The underlying assumption here is that knowledge is generated by experts and then learned by teachers to use in their practice.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle point out that an outside-in conception of teacher learning "suggests unproblematic transmission of knowledge from a source to a destination" and leaves out teachers as knowers (p. xi). It also leaves out the "complex and distinctly nonlinear relationships of knowledge and teaching" which are located in specific contexts and power structures that shape the work of teachers (p. xi). While a technical rational view of music teacher professional development might allow for teachers as constructors of personal understanding, it does not allow for a conception of teachers as agentic learners.

Deborah is an example of a music teacher who is highly agentic, and the agency she has in her school and in her community has enabled powerful collaborations to arise, resulting in significant professional learning. She herself commented on the difference between collaborations that arose through her agency and those that were imposed. Deborah intrigues me because I have a strong sense that she has negotiated her agency in various situations and career stage. I am curious to know how she knew to do this.

The shift in my understanding of teacher learning from constructing knowledge to agency leaves me with many unanswered questions as a teacher educator, clinician, and scholar:

- How do elementary music teachers develop agency? Why are some music teachers agentic while others do not develop agency?
- How do current professional learning and institutional structures support and impede the development of agency for elementary music teachers?
- What would music teacher education that supported the development of agency look like?
- How does a teacher's level of agency relate to their career stage (if at all)?
- How is agency related to the development of voice?
- How could I work to support elementary music teachers in developing agency as a clinician and leader in the music education community?

These are potential areas for future scholarly inquiry and the seeds of a reconception of my role as music teacher educator.

Music Teacher Learning: Enculturation and the Development of Voice

My new understanding related to school board sanctioned professional learning events such as early career teacher induction programs is that their primary function is not so much professional

learning in support of quality teaching, but enculturation into the values and beliefs of the school board as a learning organization. Looked at discursively, the school board sanctioned professional learning of the participants consisted mostly of the transmission of authoritative discourses to which the teacher is expected to conform (Bahktin, 1981; Britzman, 2003). Because of this, teacher induction programs create tensions for teachers between the authoritative discourses of the community and the emerging *voice* of the teacher. Embedded in the metaphor of voice is teachers' developing sense of self as educators along with a sense of personal power. When music teachers develop their voice as teachers and learners, they become empowered to teach from their biography and their personal understanding of music and teaching rather than being passive receivers of someone else's knowing or mere implementers of a program of studies. Providing music-specific professional learning events, as Gabriel suggested, might be one small step in the direction of helping music teachers develop voice in that at least the discourse music teachers encountered would be that of their field.

Implications

The tension between enculturation and voice is a feature of music education methods courses inspired by a particular pedagogy such as Comprehensive Musicianship, Dalcroze, Kodály, Orff-Schulwerk, or Suzuki programs. While these programs provide valuable conceptual tools for music teachers to think about their practice, they also limit and define teaching and learning music in specific ways.

Britzman's (2003) conception of teaching as "a struggle for voice and discursive practices amid a cacophony of past and present voices, lived experiences, and available practices" (p. 31) is helpful in thinking about what music teacher professional learning programs

that facilitate and nurture the development of the teacher's voice might look like. Possible questions for inquiry related to the development of voice for elementary music teachers include:

- How could music teachers' voices be nurtured and used as a starting place for personal pedagogy?
- In what ways can music teachers be helped to see the discursive elements of specific music methods and educational practice?
- How do music teachers develop voice within the discourse of a music education method and to what degree?
- What role could biographical work play in music teacher professional learning and music teacher education?

Differing Stances as Learners

When I was preparing to undertake this study, I had the chance to spend time with a very bright friend who I visited in Ottawa. As I explained my Deweyan understanding of professional growth to her, my friend quipped, "but not everyone's like us. Not everyone is interested in learning and growing." Of course, my very wise friend is right. Dewey (1916/2008) points to the dispositions necessary for growth, which he calls 'plasticity' and 'dependence,' and makes it clear that these qualities vary in learners.

Schön suggests that professionals are intellectual actors who engage continually in setting and exploring problems within their own practice. When music teachers are given agency to take up being professionals in Schön's (1983) sense of the word, not everyone does. It is possible that the reader knows of a teacher in music or in other subject areas that, in spite of being past the first years of survival in their career, does not enter into inquiry about their work in meaningful

ways that lead to significant growth in practice. I see no way around this fact. Teachers have different stances as learners.

In addition to the varying degrees to which experienced teachers take up the invitation to grow as professional learners, there is also the matter of beginning teachers. Turning to Dewey (1916/2008) once again, we see that he frames immaturity in practice not as a deficit but as an opportunity for growth. And yet, beginning teachers sometimes seem to feel that there is an expectation in their community that they should be able to do what more experienced teachers can do. Gabriel was well aware of his inexperience and was working hard to cover what he could not yet do.

It strikes me that teaching is conceived of as a solitary activity in the dominant educational discourse, and that this makes it possible and somewhat acceptable for teachers to hide behind their classroom doors. Professional learning, as I have and will argue, depends on interaction within a community in some way, but the structure of schools makes it difficult for music teachers— especially beginning music teachers— to interact and grow. Not only are these teachers alone in their work, but their attention is taken up by the immediacy of teaching and preparing to teach.

That teachers will not grow seems to be a worry in the predominant discourse of education in Alberta and beyond. Measures such as standardized testing, requirements to complete annual professional growth plans, and obligatory attendance at teachers' conventions are all expressions of this concern in some way. While there have been many such surface attempts to ensure teachers 'improve' their practice such as the ones listed above, there seems to be a lack of political will to provide teachers with opportunities to engage in the kinds of reflection and interaction over time that is conducive to meaningful professional growth. Of

course, the public is not nearly as concerned about the ‘performance’ of elementary music teachers as that of teachers of mathematics and science, but elementary music teachers who must attend school wide and district wide professional learning events that may have little to do with teaching music have a particularly difficult task in making sense of these kinds of experiences. Perhaps this is why elementary music teachers often seem to seek out professional learning opportunities outside of their schools.¹³²

Implications

While requiring teachers to complete annual Professional Growth Plans could potentially be a potent mechanism for professional growth, all three of the teachers in my study experienced this exercise as tokenism. Perhaps the issue was, at least in part, that their principals either did not have the time or did not know how to support teacher learning/music teacher learning through this structure. In the present structure, principals are the only check and balance for teacher growth plans. In fact, there is little accountability for teachers in Alberta to grow once they have a permanent professional teaching certificate and a permanent contract. However, a discourse of accountability and measures creates the antithesis to an environment that fosters agency and helps teacher develop voice. This raises several questions for me including:

- How, then, does one nurture a growth orientation among teachers in general and elementary music teachers in specific?
- Does this orientation depend on teachers’ beliefs about what it means to learn and what there is to learn?

¹³² I take, for example, the University of Alberta’s Master in Education program where there have been more students in music education than in any other discipline.

- How could pre-service music education programs nurture the development of a growth orientation?
- How does this orientation develop over teachers' careers?
- What are the epistemological and ontological understandings of teachers who are growth oriented versus those that are not?

The Importance of Learning Communities

My new understanding of music teacher professional learning is that, rather than being located uniquely within an individual who constructs their own understanding while interacting in the world, agentic individuals engage in this personal construction within the context of a community. While community music organizations such as the local Orff-Schulwerk, Kodály, choral or band association transmit authoritative discourses valued by the community to their members and ultimately serve as agents of conservation, they also have the potential to be sites of change and innovation. Not only does their discursive structure allow for growth of individual members as they learn the practices valued by the community, but depending on how the community negotiates its place within the “various constellations” (Wenger, 1999, p. 127) in which they are located, these organizations can also serve as mechanisms to transmit new ideas and practices quickly and effectively to the practitioners of the community.

Implications

Given their potential as sites of innovation and change, community music associations have a greater responsibility beyond conserving and transmitting a specific teaching method.

Governments responsible for developing curriculum and public institutions such as universities charged with educating future teachers would do well to ensure that leaders of community

associations are among the voices that are heard in setting direction for music curriculum, music teacher education, and in teacher education programs as well as being invited to professional learning events related to curriculum implementation. Furthermore, music education students and teachers should be encouraged to be members in multiple communities of practice as opposed to one discourse community. Possible questions for future inquiry include:

- What is the experience of music teachers who actively engage as members in a specific music community association?
- How do specific community music associations function as learning communities? How do they conserve and transmit their values?
- What are the values that are transmitted by specific community music associations?
- In what ways do community music associations allow for innovation and the development of music teachers' voices?

Workshops as Confirmation of Practice

Many scholars have criticized workshops and argued they are ineffective in “increasing teacher’s knowledge and fostering meaningful changes in their classroom practice” (Garet et al., 2001, p. 920). Indeed, the short time frame and inside-outside epistemology of most workshops are not particularly conducive to facilitating changes in teachers’ practice. However, one of my most interesting hermeneutic uncoverings, at least to me personally, is that inciting changes in teachers’ practice may not be what workshops are ‘for.’ Perhaps we are asking the wrong question. As discussed in the previous chapter, all three of the participants in my study used workshops as sites to affirm and confirm their practice. Although Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah sometimes learned a song or activity that they would use when they attended workshops, the

deeper learning they experienced was being able to measure their practice against that of the community and clinician. I now have a new appreciation for the importance of workshops in music teacher professional learning. Workshops provide an important context for teachers to engage in the professional learning practice of affirmation and confirmation of practice.

Implications

Given that professional learning is social in nature, workshops perform an important function in helping music teachers learn to teach in that they give teachers an opportunity to check in on their own practice and measure it against that of a community of practitioners. The implication is that it is vital that music teachers have access to music-specific professional learning so that they can engage in this important confirmatory professional learning practice. Induction programs, school-wide professional learning days, and teachers' conventions and conferences must provide opportunities for music teachers to 'check in' with their specific community of practice. Having said this, it is also important for music teachers to be exposed to new ideas from other discourse communities. As Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest, being exposed to the ideas and practices of different communities of practice is an important mechanism for growth in the practice of a community, and, I would argue, for individual teachers. Perhaps the kind of input that is needed depends on the career stage of the music teacher. Gabriel was definitely looking for music-specific direction while Deborah had gone outside the music education discourse community to explore assessment for learning. Or perhaps a balance of both kinds of learning opportunities would be helpful and the balance needed shifts depending on the individual. Community associations and school boards should strive for balance in the workshops they offer between clinicians and topics that conserve the values of the community and those that stretch them.

This new understanding of the importance and function of workshops leaves me with several questions for inquiry:

- If workshops are not primarily 'for' inciting change in practice, what other structures, mechanisms, and learning practices do so?
- Do early career teachers need confirmatory professional learning opportunities more than late career teachers? Is this a developmental issue?
- Are there ways of incorporating workshops into larger professional learning structures that facilitate change in practice?

Implications Specifically for Music Teacher Educators and Those Involved in Music Teacher Professional Learning

As I have suggested throughout my earlier reflections in this chapter, I see several important implications for music teacher educators and those that oversee teacher professional learning in school structures as well as those individuals involved in music teacher professional learning. Before I offer some concluding remarks, I will discuss several potential implications of this study for music teacher educators, and for school district and school administrators, clinicians, and community music associations.

Implications for Music Teacher Educators

Chitpin (2011) suggests that in order for teachers to better understand teaching, they must first understand themselves and the goal of their work. Teacher candidates must begin to explore who they are and where they are in their personal development as educators. Rather than simply teaching students to apply specific techniques and strategies in their teaching, the primary goal of

music teacher education must be to engender the development of each teacher candidate's personal pedagogy and voice as professional music educators.

As a starting place, music teacher educators would do well to help future teachers access and explore their biographies. The literature presents several promising approaches to do so. First, students could be given the opportunity to examine their metaphors for and images of music teaching and learning. Abramo and Austin (2004) provide an example of the first in the context of a narrative inquiry, while Dolloff (1999) presents a possible approach for the second. Other approaches might include self-study (C. E. Robbins, 2012), narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), including having students rewrite and retell narratives of identity, teaching, and learning (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994), analyzing life histories (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1994), creating self-portraits (Richards, 1998), and/or engaging in reflective inquiry (Labosky, 2004).

While reflection is a powerful means to professional growth, the kind of reflection in which teacher candidates are invited to engage is critical. Dewey's (1910/1997) conception of reflection may be helpful to music teacher educators in constructing opportunities for students to reflect on their developing practice. Deweyan reflection consists of a process of settling what is unsettled, and so, developing a personal pedagogy might begin with discovering and articulating what is unsettled for each teacher candidate about teaching music. Rather than simply engaging students in thinking about what has happened and why, building students' capacity for reflection in a Deweyan sense on some level would entail helping them develop the habit of being curious about their practice and their students. To this end, teacher educators could model their own professional curiosity and inquiry stance about teaching, share their thinking with students as they problem set related to various concrete scenarios that have arisen in their work and students'

school experience placements, and incite music teacher candidates to regularly examine their beliefs and the beliefs of others against the situations they encounter. It may also be helpful for teacher educators to model how their beliefs about teaching and learning have changed over time.

Finally, given the social nature of learning to teach, teacher educators would do well to provide opportunities for student teachers to interact in meaningful ways with members of the music education community and with each other. In order for these novice teachers to avoid unconsciously accepting authoritative discourses about teaching music and adopting the voices of others, it may be helpful to address the differing discourse of several music education approaches and to examine together what each of the methodologies are “good for”¹³³ and how they relate to children’s musical development. Teacher educators could also encourage students to be members of multiple discourse communities in order to have access to a broader array of conceptual tools to think about teaching and learning, which, in turn, may be useful to students in developing their own personal pedagogy. The end result of such a teacher education may go a long way to helping novice teachers develop their voice, which consists of a strong sense of self-knowledge infused with a sense of personal power. Having a sense of voice is foundational for professional growth throughout one’s career.

Implications for Those Involved in Music Teacher Professional Learning

For principals and school district leaders.

One of my new insights about music teacher learning resulting from this study is that music teachers not only need choice related to their professional learning, but the power to act,

¹³³ I take this notion from Regelski (2004) who discusses the need for middle-years music students to know what music is “good for.”

which I have called teacher agency. Top down district-wide professional learning may be important for enculturating professional staff into the values of the organization, but this model is not sufficient to result in meaningful career-long music teacher professional learning. Providing music teachers with freedom and support to design professional learning structures that respond to their specific needs and interests in addition to school- and district-wide inservicing is essential for music teachers to be able to grow professionally.

While teachers need opportunities to be agentic in their professional learning, it is also important for school district consultants and school administrators to know that teacher agency will vary over time and from person to person. Each music teacher will need different levels of support in developing and enacting a structure for their professional growth, and the kinds of structures which they need and in which they choose to engage will vary over time.

Because music teachers are part of their school community of practice, administrators potentially have significant influence on teachers' dispositions towards career-long professional learning and their work as professional educators. Administrators who model and facilitate a growth mindset in their schools, provide opportunities for peer interaction for music teachers to interact with colleagues within and beyond their school community, and ensure novice music teachers have a suitable music mentor to serve as a resource and model of music teacher professional learning will do much to ensure that the music teacher or teachers in their school continues to grow professionally over time. Finally, it is worth saying that music teachers need funding and release time to attend music-specific professional learning events. Music education workshops and courses provide valuable opportunities to be with music colleagues, to engage in confirmatory teacher learning practices, and to check in with the communities of practice that

govern music teaching practice. Music teachers must have opportunities to learn with and from other music educators.

For clinicians.

While workshops are often approached as 'how to' sessions for music teachers, in order to facilitate professional learning that consists of the ongoing refinement of a personal pedagogy, clinicians have an ethical responsibility to not only provide tips, techniques, and models of practice to music teachers in attendance at these events, but to share conceptual tools along with the pedagogical and philosophical thinking behind their actions. This includes making any operational assumptions based on a specific approach to music education explicit and acknowledging the discursive nature of these assumptions rather than communicating teaching principles as universal truths. Because clinicians also teach out of their biography, it would be potentially useful for individuals who offer workshop sessions to music teachers to explore their own narratives and experiences of teaching and learning and to examine the 'why' behind their pedagogy as reflective practitioners engaged in Deweyan reflection. Finally, it goes without saying that clinicians should also be intentionally engaged in ongoing professional learning and would do well to make a point of interacting with, and learning from, others who are members of different communities of practice in order to give them a broader repertoire of conceptual tools for their own work teaching teachers and access to a variety of ways of thinking about teaching and learning music.

For community music associations.

I have argued that community music associations provide a dynamic and important place for music teachers to experience community and engage in professional learning. Not only do the workshops these groups organize provide opportunities for music teachers to confirm/affirm

their practice against that of the clinician and the values of the community of practice, these events also provide an ideal forum for teachers to engage in informal peer learning with their music colleagues. Workshop organizers could tap into the social nature of teacher professional learning by facilitating icebreaker activities and providing adequate time during lunch or at other breaks where participants would have the chance to converse with each other. While Conway (2008) found that experienced music teachers felt that informal interactions with other music teachers constituted a powerful source of professional learning, informal interactions with music colleagues have the potential to provide an important place of learning for expert, mid-career, and novice music teachers alike.

Workshop organizers could also tap into the social nature of professional learning by structuring workshop days so that the participants could experience models of practice presented by the clinician, and then participate in a discussion of the pedagogical thinking implicit in those practices in small groups, thereby having the chance to make meaning of their experience with others. As I have argued earlier, music teachers would benefit from the combination of modelling and attending to pedagogical thinking behind the activities demonstrated.

It is also important for members of the community to be exposed to ideas and practices from other communities of practice. Earlier in this chapter and section, I suggested that pre- and in-service teachers would benefit from being members of multiple music associations. However, those individuals who are involved in organizing professional learning opportunities for a specific community of practice such as the local choral, Orff-Schulwerk, or Kodály association could also facilitate professional learning for their members by inviting clinicians from other

communities to share at local workshops and events.¹³⁴ Wenger (1998) points to the importance of having individuals on the edge of multiple communities who can carry ideas back and forth, resulting in growth for the communities involved. Music associations could tap into this powerful source of innovation and change by occasionally programming workshops and events featuring individuals who are members of other communities of practice.

Finally, it is important for those organizing community professional learning events to remember that a broader conception of professional learning for music teachers must include music making. As Pellegrino (2011) asserts, music making is critical for the development of music teachers' sense of self and well-being. Furthermore, if the starting place for music teachers' pedagogy is to be their biography, music-making provides an important opportunity for the development of a musician and teacher voice, as well as the chance to return to the source of why one has chosen to teach music in the first place.

Concluding Thoughts

As I shared in the introduction of this dissertation, my reasons for wanting to understand the experiences of three elementary music teachers as educators and as professional learners are many. Here, I will briefly highlight two. First, as a musical person, it is my fervent desire that every child has the opportunity to have meaningful experiences with music and to find personal enrichment, identity, joy, and fulfillment in music in their own way. Elementary music teachers have a tremendous opportunity to facilitate such experiences with music in that they generally teach every child enrolled in their school. However, as discussed earlier, they may not have had any or much opportunity to explore music pedagogy for the elementary general classroom in

¹³⁴ I am told that this has long occurred to some degree at the American national Orff-Schulwerk and Kodály conferences, which is excellent.

their pre-service teacher education. Consequently, their professional learning opportunities and abilities to grow in their practice matter a great deal for the students in their music programs.

A second reason for wanting a deeper understanding of music teacher professional learning stems from my work as a teacher educator and clinician. It was and is my hope to better be able to support music teachers' learning in meaningful ways that result in professional growth while preserving and enhancing music teachers' dignity as professionals.

This interpretive inquiry has been a transformational experience for me. In many ways, this document represents my journey as a learner. Having had the opportunity to enter the worlds of the three participants in my study and then to reflect about what their experiences meant about professional learning and their understanding of teaching music has resulted in a new place to stand as I teach new students at a new institution. I am mindful of Deborah Britzman's (2003) words that "experience can take on meaning only after it is lived" (p. 215), and I have a strong sense that I will continue to learn from Gabriel, Deborah, and Holly as I journey forward.

As I reflect on what I have learned, I return to Ellis' (2006) statement which has guided me in my work as an interpretive inquirer: "The object of [interpretive] research is to develop insight or new learning that transforms the researcher's understanding such that he or she can think more richly and act more usefully in relation to the problem or question studied" (Ellis, p. 114). My understanding is indeed transformed, but this new understanding leaves me in a difficult spot. I cannot teach and act in the world as I did before. It is clear that, like Gabriel, Holly, and Deborah, I must now engage in my own learning practices to make sense of this new understanding in my work as a music teacher educator, community leader, and scholar. Like Deborah "playing around" with her iPad assessment tool, Holly working out through trial and error how best to teach ukuleles, or Gabriel learning what it means to teach music in his school, I

am engaged in the messy business of learning to teach, to research, and to be in the world. The words of one of novelist Ursula Le Guin's characters bring me comfort and hope: "It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters." May the learning never end.

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Appendix A: Sample Data Collection Questions

Interview 1 (All Participants)

Some of these questions were asked of each participant. The questions chosen depended on if the topic was addressed when the participant shared their PIA artifacts at the beginning of the interview, and the time.

Getting to Know You

- Can you please describe your journey to becoming a music teacher?
- Please could you tell me about a music teaching experience that was particularly satisfying for you?
- How did you learn music growing up? What role did music play in your family?
- What role does music play in your life now?

Teaching Music and Learning

- Can you please tell me about a lesson or activity that worked really well in your teaching?
- Please tell me about your winter concert or a performance that your students did this year. Where did the idea for the concert come from?
- In your early experiences in learning to teach music, what were some of the things that you recall as being challenging?
- Is there anything you wish you would have had the opportunity to learn before beginning to teach music?
- What have been some of your favorite professional learning experiences?
- Over your career, have some parts of teaching music become easier? What parts of music teaching become more interesting to think about?
- If a former student were to talk to me about their experiences in your music class, what would you hope they would say?
- If you could plan an event for music teachers in your catchment to support their learning and practice, what would you plan?

- Think of someone you admire as a teacher. What qualities about them do you admire?
- If you had to be away for a month, what would be most important to you in choosing someone to cover your classes?
- What have been some of your favorite professional learning experiences?
- Can you please tell me about your professional growth plan for this year? How do you decide what to focus on for your annual professional growth plan?
- What advice would you offer a new administrator about how to support his or her music teachers' professional growth?

Deborah: Drop-in #2

Guiding questions: How does Deborah experience professional learning? How does she understand her practice?

1. What did the students get out of attending the festival and the parent tea where they performed? Why do you do it? What do you get out of it?
2. Please can you show me your assessment plan that you are working on with Jennifer?
3. How has your teaching changed since you started working with Jennifer on the assessment plan?

Appendix B: Sample Field Notes from a School Observation

Field Notes Holly Visit #2 at School May 4, 2015

I watched a grade 1 class and a grade 4 class. The grade ones were difficult although pleasant. Lots of cross talk, chatting and off-task behaviour. Also, the room is not conducive to teaching music in some ways. She can't really play singing games and the kids in the back row are too far away when she is playing the piano.

LOTS of going to the bathroom and filling water bottles. It is right after lunch. Someone spilled their water bottle even and was looking for Kleenex, or something to wipe it up in the middle of everything. Poor Holly! She just rolled with it.

During this class, they practice choir songs for most of the class. She lets them do a movement activity with scarves but the rest is all business: learning words to the songs, practicing how to stand...

She also takes the long view. She is very systematically attempting to change the culture of the school.

LOTS of Canada art work-next time I need to take some pictures of them. **My thought: Music teacher as school curriculum maker.**

Each class has one little boy (I wondered if they were brothers. Both of African descent) who are off task in the back row. I wondered why she brought the instruments down to the floor instead of having them play behind the class. I wonder what she is thinking. I will have to ask her.

Scarf activity-she gives them something to listen for and 4 or 5 students get it right way. She directs their attention to the scale in the song while they listen and then almost everyone gets it. It's a good listening activity and they like it. Most students are engaged. Someone asks if they can play freeze dance after so maybe she does a movement activity every class. She did the last time I came too and the students enjoyed it.

The grade 4s like the sing along (especially the girls). There are at least 5 boys who are not really participating. I had the thought that she is recreating her childhood musical class from Div. 1.

She seems to view gr. 1 as enculturation or a step on the road to being able to participate in the kind of music program she wants. She doesn't seem bothered by the behaviour. She is firm. She deals with kids when needed but takes the long view. She has a kid in for recess from gr. 4. If she didn't have an FM system, the lesson would be very difficult because of the configuration of the room.

She provides good scaffolding. The G chord for ukuleles and also the gr. 1s with the scarves.

Grade 4 rondo-they are really motivated about this. They are obviously excited about doing their creation for the grade 6 farewell.

How did she teach the rondo? Did they make it up together? Did she teach it to her?

She told me that it doesn't matter what the music is and yet, she told me that she altered Michael Mitchell's sheet so it's all folksongs I think (or at least songs she likes).

Why did the gr. 4 teacher come in and listen to individual kids sing? I need to ask Holly about him.

She doesn't address singing technique in her lessons. For now, her goal is for them to love singing *these songs*.

The girls: point of pride not to need the sheets.

Inclusion-literature: also, integration with other subjects. She thinks broadly and big.

Appendix C: Pre-interview Activity (PIA) Prompts

If you would like, choose 2 or more of the following quick activities to complete and bring to our interview. Don't feel that you need to spend more than 10 minutes on each one if you choose to do some (unless you would like to).

- Make a time line that shows key events or experiences that changed the ways that you have experienced working with music.
- Make a list of all the places in your life in which you make music. Then divide the list into two or three groups.
- Bring a favorite piece of music to share in some way (recording, sing it, play it, etc). Write about why it speaks to you (or you can tell me in person). What is your history with this piece?
- Make two drawings (can be just stick figures): One showing a really great professional learning activity you attended or participated in and another showing a "not so great" one.
- Make a schedule of a typical school day, week or year. Use colours to indicate how your time is spent and make a legend to explain the colours.
- Make a list of different kinds of professional learning experiences you sometimes participate in. Then divide the list into two groups and copy out the two new lists.