

Becoming an educator: Identity, music education, and privilege

by

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B.M.E., Emporia State University, 1999

B.S.E., Emporia State University, 1999

M.M.E., Wichita State University, 2005

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2018

## **Abstract**

This study is an intertwined critical autoethnography through which my experiences, my stories, are woven together with memories of family, students, and teaching career. Together, the telling of these stories will explore how I negotiated my identity development throughout my middle and high school experiences at a time when I could have been labeled as an at-risk student. The development into my professional career and personal life all influenced strongly by my participation in music education. Filtering these stories and memories through the lens of critical whiteness theory, this study interrogates the social assumptions that may be placed on at-risk students, exploring how these assumptions function within the context of access within our current music education structures, and investigates the ways in which social support systems allow opportunities for access of white male students and privilege in music education. An overarching question guiding this research is: How does the interrogation of such white privileges inform how one develops their identity as a music educator, a researcher, an academic, a husband, a father, a human, as well as, the curricular structures in place guiding access within music education?

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Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Frederick Burrack

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## **Dedication**

There is no way I can express the amount of love and gratitude for all the people who shepherded me through this process. This process has changed my life in ways unimaginable. So much work, pain, fear, strife, anger, blended with dedication, persistence, and pride for the debatable value of the addition of a suffix to a name. The value of the outcome of this document will never be measured by anything other than my humble appreciation for my new found discoveries. Discovery of my teaching. My musicality. My humanness.

It begins with all the students, parents, and former teachers who have entered my classroom and my life. You have served as the inspiration for the reflection of my practice. Thank you to all my committee members. Dr. Phillip Payne and Ruth Gurgle for your comforting and clam demeanors soothed my anxieties. Dr. Kakali Bhattacharya for your life changing exposure to art as research and belief in my creativity. You opened a whole new world that I cannot wait to explore. Dr. Frederick Burrack for your unyielding support and guidance allowing me to discover my true purpose and path.

The most important group to thank in this process is my family. My children Max and William for their unquestioning patience. You will never know the strength I gain from your love. No other time in my life have I questioned or doubted my purpose in life. The person who suffered through this process with me was Nikki. The amount of trust, faith, inspiration, and love I have for you is immeasurable. I will forever be in your debt. My love will never be enough. Thank you for being here, and loving this family. You are the ground on which I stand.

## **Chapter 1 - Prologue – Preparing for the journey**

The purpose of this dissertation is two-fold. First, to explore my identity development as a music educator through the reflecting and telling of stories of my personal and musical experiences, and how those stories and experiences may have informed and influenced my identity as a music educator. Second, the investigation of music educator identity development throughout a teaching career, provides a critical lens to examine current music curricular structures to broaden the scope and inclusion within music education. This prologue describes an approach utilizing autoethnography as method to inform and guide my research. Autoethnography allows for a multi-faceted introspection of identity as artist, researcher, and teacher, interrogating the messy and hazy intersections and qualitative research and arts-based research methodology. The research includes critical exploration of a music educator's career journey through monologues, poetry, photography, and mixed media collage providing an artistic experience, multiple points of view, and personalized connections for the reader and/or audience. This rhizomatic approach is informed by the tenets of a varied and diverse methods of artistic representation including, performance based autoethnography, narrative storytelling, ethnodrama, photography, and poetry. Unfortunately, methodology of this type is lacking within current music education research, and may provide an increased introspective and profound inquiry of individuals' stories of becoming an educator. The researcher hopes that by others taking this introspective journey through this study, and others like it. What is experienced can apply to their education practice and curriculum offerings.

At a time in one's career, one looks back and reflects on the impact he/she has made on those with whom professional and personal interactions have occurred. There are many questions that focused this study. How did the experiences of my childhood and involvement

within music education shape and mold who I have become as a music educator and a human? How did the way I view my position in society effect my teaching, hopes, dreams, and wants? What about the groups and roles I identified as being a member: educator, musician, counselor, confidant, father, husband, and many varied others? Did this impact the way I communicated my identity and beliefs through musical experiences for my students? Could the contexts of my former educational experiences have influenced being and becoming a music educator, or as a performing artists and musician?

\*\*\*

*My life has been a series of contradictions. Looking for approval of friends. Of parents. Memories of my parents arguing. Fights between my brother and father. Struggling to pay bills. Not knowing who I really was. Bullying. Quiet. Coward. Strength. Musician. Teacher. Finding my identity. Helping others find their identity. Passion. Love. Security. Equity. Becoming a researcher. A better teacher. A better human being.*

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Figure 1.1 Preparing the Mask



What follows is a personal introspective artistic exploration of my life. An examination of how the events of my life helped guide and shape who I am today, and into whom I will continue to evolve. The story of a student who fell through the cracks, whose appearance and behaviors did not reflect his true story. The story of a student of the 1980's and 1990's who created and wore masks, and erected walls to hide and cover my true identity, to create a sense of security and safety. To hide and fit in. Changing masks at any moment to fit other's expectations of me. Transform. Conform. Hide. Blend in. Music provided me the courage. The opportunity. The ability to peel away the masks, and tear down the walls. Slowly, brick by brick, one mask at a time, revealing my true self. A student. A student of music who felt he had the ability to develop something of substance out of the chaos that was his life. To develop into a music educator. An educator who was confident, and loved his students and career. One who strived to created change. An academic researcher who asked questions, explored and searched for truth, honesty, and equity in his life, teaching career, and within the music education system.

This study is an intertwined critical autoethnography through which my experiences, my stories, are woven together with memories of family, students, and teaching career. Together, the telling of these stories will explore how I negotiated my identity development throughout my middle and high school experiences at a time when I could have been labeled as an at-risk student. The development into my professional career and personal life all influenced strongly by my participation in music education. Filtering these stories and memories through the lens of critical whiteness theory, this study interrogates the social assumptions that may be placed on at-risk students, exploring how these assumptions function within the context of access within our current music education structures, and investigates the ways in which social support systems allow opportunities for access of white male students and privilege in music education. An

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*“I think that’s what we should strive for – to be lovingly honest.” (Laurel Richardson, as stated by Carolyn Ellis in The Ethnographic I) (C. Ellis 1950-, 2004, p. 177)*

*My parents made many bad choices for the family that appeared to be nothing more than selfish indulgences on their part. Drug abuse, alcoholism, fighting, unemployment, mental illness, car accidents all appeared to derail and halt any hope for a bright future. My parents were also supportive, loving, and cared deeply about my success. It was due to their encouragement that began my journey into music. They made sacrifices so that I always had what I needed for music. This was my saving grace. I didn’t know, and possibly still don’t know, how to cope with these contradictions. On one hand, so many parts of our family and my childhood were a disaster. I have always thought I should not have ended up where I am today. A music educator, a musician, a father, a husband, a researcher, an academic, a storyteller. Yet without these contradictions, I would not have taken the journey and reached this destination in my life.*

\*\*\*

Carolyn Ellis (2004) states that, “writing is the way you find out what you are thinking” (p. 180). What was I thinking? I have never thought about my past with teaching and research. This entire process of self-reflection and writing for personal knowledge and understanding has

been a new and terrifying journey. I don't know who I am as a teacher, husband, father, or anyone. Even after years of teaching, the idea that my childhood has had such a dramatic influence on my teaching career is something I try not to think about. These are memories I have spent my entire life forgetting. The fighting. The arguments. The destructive choices I made in my own life. How do we know? How can we know the truth and reality of the memories of our past? Is there really an answer to any of these questions?

Throughout my teaching career, I acknowledge that I have been drawn to a certain type of student. The inspirational Morgan Freeman and Michelle Pfeiffer teacher-movie-type of students, those who may have been classified as troubled, difficult to teach, or those who had to struggle and fight for what they had in life. Connecting this to the realities of my teaching career, and to interrogate the music education system, or making deep and reflective connections of why and how all this came to be was never a priority. My priority was to teach my students, my *kids*. I put my head down and taught. That is what I did, and that is who I was: a teacher.

How did the experiences of my childhood and involvement within music education shape and mold who I have become as a music educator and a human? The way I view my position in society? My views, hopes, dreams, and wants. The groups and roles I identify as being a member: educator, musician, counselor, confidant, father, husband, and many varied others. The way I am able to communicate my identity through my musical experiences, within the contexts of my educational experiences, being and becoming an educator, performing as an artist and musician.

Norman Denzin (2014) discusses various storied events as lives in which we learn and grow as "*epiphanies*". He states:

Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives. In them, personal character is manifested. They are often moments of crisis. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life. Their effects may be positive or negative (p. 52).

It is through these epiphanies that I am able to begin the process of remembering and making connections to create the possibility of discovery and change. Personal discovery that can help shine a light on the role of music education in identity development. The ability to enhance teacher development through a deeper understanding of our own identity, to explore change within the current music education structure.

### **Why pack the story of I...**

Autoethnographic writing gathers together those who believe a better world is possible, because language (story) can make things happen (Pelias, 2004). Through the telling of my personal journey to becoming an educator, I hope to provide a more sensitive and engaging view of who we are as teachers, who we may be and become as humans through the beauty and power of music and music education, to open a dialogue of the possibility of change for all students who have a similar story and to provide the same opportunity of hope and opportunity to all students through the power of music and music education.

Autoethnographic stories are artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experiences (Adams, Jones, Jones, & Ellis, 2014). The telling of our personal stories allows for a rich a depth of reflexive practice from a researcher as insider perspective. Adams (2014) describes autoethnography as the "act a reflexively writing the self into and through the ethnographic text; isolating that space where memory, history, performance, and meaning intersect" (p. 22). The inclusion of our personal



memories and histories allows for a deep examination of this intersection of meaning making and research. Biographical work connects the abstract and the concrete signs, bridging between the abstract and the concrete commonplace (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995). An autoethnographic approach allows the researcher to discover and connect the abstract and deeper representation of the personal story with the concrete constraints of academic research.

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (C. Ellis & Bochner, 2003). The process of autoethnography is a process in writing for discovery of self and culture. Autoethnography shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narratives of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2008). The writing of these stories is a process of discovery and research in its own right. Richardson (1994) states that:

We usually think about writing as a mode of ‘telling’ about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of “knowing” – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable. (p.516)

Writing as a mode of self-inquiry is the primary mode of research in autoethnography.

Autoethnographers use their personal experiences as primary data (Chang, 2008).

Positivism suggests that one can perceive the world without making assumptions about the nature of the phenomena under investigation (Agger, 1991). This suggests that as researchers we are able to have an objective view of the world and come to a generalized outcome in our research findings. Positivism denies objectivity by assuming not only that there is an external world, itself determines absolutely the one and only correct view that can be taken care of it,

independent of the process or circumstances of viewing the world (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Grounding the research in a qualitative approach and using autoethnography as a research method establishes a view of subjective truths and views of the world. This view allows many critics of qualitative and autoethnographic research as not being valid or quality research, to make educational research scientific, and the federal government has taken the lead in the project by mandating scientific method into law (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). Objectivity promotes a scientific, systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation that can be validated more than researchers themselves; on the other hand, the subjectivity position allows researchers to insert their personal and subjective interpretation into the research (Chang, 2008).

The issue of researcher subjectivity and reflexivity is a primary concern among qualitative researchers. Some scholars see the proliferation of reflexivity talk at best self-indulgent, narcissistic, and tiresome and at worst, undermining the conditions necessary for emancipatory research (Kemmis, 1995). Qualitative ethnographic researchers embrace a world-view of multiple truths and realities. In this way of thinking about truth and reality, meaning is constructed based on people's own understanding of their worlds, experiences, interaction with events and circumstances in their lives. These kinds of truths, realities, and meanings are relative, situated, and context-driven (Bhattacharya, in press). The goal of being reflexive has to do with improving the quality and validity of the research and recognizing the limitations of the knowledge that is produced, thus leading to more rigorous research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

Becoming aware of one's own position within their research is critical to understanding and becoming aware of the limitations, pitfalls and possibilities of the research. This focus [what I know, and, how I know it] requires the researcher to be critically conscious through personal

accounting of how the researcher's self-location (across for example, gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality) position, and interests influence all stages of the research process (Pillow, 2003). Developing an understanding of how our personal identities and experiences influence our world-views and their influence on our research.

Denzin (2014) defines performance autoethnography as “the merger of critical pedagogy, performance ethnography, and cultural politics; the creation of texts that move from epiphanies to the sting of memory, the personal to the political, the autobiographical to the cultural, the local to the historical” (p. 25). Performance autoethnography allows for a critical examination of social and political assumptions and structures by the researcher from a uniquely personal perspective. Spry (2001), states that:

performing autoethnography has allowed me to position myself as active agent with narrative authority over many hegemonizing dominant cultural myths that restricted my social freedom and personal development, also causing me to realize how my Whiteness and class membership can restrict the social freedom and personal development of others. (p. 711).

Establishing my own research within this performative structure will allow me to investigate the social assumptions of at-risk students and identity development through the framework of Whiteness theory and present the research in an engaging and personal manner.

The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experiences the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teacher and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories (Connelly &

Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry provides the depth of data to uncover the lived experiences of educators and students within music education. The use of narrative story telling on the impact of music education in the lived experiences and development of the student's sense self and being will provide richness to the data, allowing for a deeper and more personal telling and interpretation of my personal narratives.

The use of narrative inquiry will justify the importance of the research, as it requires the researcher to attend to three kinds of justification: the personal, the practical, and the social (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). We also need to justify the research practically, that is, how will it be insightful to changing or thinking differently about the researcher's own and other's practices. Stories are social artifacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or group (Riessman, 2008). The use of narrative inquiry will create a linkage to the critical perspectives of identity, whiteness and privilege, by providing a critical lens to investigate the development of identity, social assumptions of at-risk students, and the music education system.

Through the artistic exploration and representation of stories within identity development through various stages of my life including, as an at-risk youth, developing educator, and academic researcher, I wish to explore how I, a veteran educator influenced strongly by my participation in music education, negotiated my identity development throughout my middle and high school experiences. Through the telling of these stories I hope to uncover some details or answers to why I was able to make it through the education system and become a relatively successful adult, father, and educator.

\*\*\*

*Much of my teaching career has been situated within a large urban school district. Poverty, violence, gangs, broken homes were the norm for many of my students. While my stories and childhood do not always compare to the tragic stories and circumstances of many of the students I was teaching, I felt a connection to my students because of my ability to empathically connect with their stories. I could feel for and understand their circumstances knowing that there is nothing but possibilities ahead for them, provided their access to positive and engaging musical and educational opportunities. My focus was consistently on something or anything that could provide that spark of light and hope in their hearts and minds. I wanted each student to know that there was more in life available to them than their circumstances may be presenting at that current moment.*

*In the teaching 'trenches', I had my head down and just taught my students. If there was something they needed, I did my best to provide. I never connected the dots with stories of my childhood with the stories of my students. I was just trying the best I could to provide my students with the most positive educational experience and access to opportunities to broaden the outlook on an often dark and dreary life forecast. As an educator, what role was I able to play in the providing of these opportunities? What role could I play in creating and developing that spark in their hearts and minds? Did I have any ability to do such a thing? I was a middle class white guy. To many of my students, I had no idea what they were going through. Many of the students viewed teachers as people of power and privilege. The teachers had all the power and the students had none.*

\*\*\*

As a researcher, I have begun to explore how my stories and the stories of my students may have intersected more than I ever envisioned influencing my approach to teaching in the classroom. This reflective and introspective examination of my life and teaching has led to the formation of this research study.

### **Tangled paths of inquiry (A/R/Tography as method)**

My journey begins at the intersections of my identity as artist, researcher, and teacher. Exploring the many possibilities of journey, thought, and reflection that guide this story, it quickly became clear that there is no one way that is correct in the representation, interpretation, or description of this story. As an artist researcher, inspiration and analysis of data is approached and takes the form of many identities, mirroring my varied personal identities. The ever-evolving telling, writing, and exploration of this journey will allow for a more in-depth investigation into the intersection of identity and realities. Unbound by defined boundaries of expectations and realities, this journey explores the multitude of possibilities within identity.

A/R/Tography resides in the in-between where meaning resides in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space, and time (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). The in-between spaces of our various identities, and multitudes of ways in which we present our identities to the world, and how we perceive the identities in our own world. The blurred space of research and representation of data, using written language, visual representation, and various interpretations, leading to an array of artistic mediums used to investigate and explore the data and its meanings. Irwin (2006) describes a/r/tography in that:

the name itself exemplifies these features by setting art and graphy, and the identities of arts, researcher, and teacher (a/r/t), in contiguous relations. It is a form of practice-based research steeped in the arts and education. Alongside other arts-based, arts-informed, and

aesthetically defined methodologies, a/r/tography is one of many emerging forms of inquiry that refer to the arts as a way of re-searching the world to enhance understanding”, aligning itself within a grounded sense of constructivism (p. 70).

Being grounded in a constructivist epistemology, this type of research is primarily an enterprise of knowledge construction. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) describe constructivism as, “the researcher (and core searchers), with his or her participants, is engaged in producing knowledge. This is an active process that requires scrutiny, reflection, and interrogation of the data, the researcher, the participants, and the context that they inhabit” (p. 274). Crotty (1998) defines constructivism as the view that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within and essentially social context” (p. 42). Within the realm of research Guba and Lincoln (1994) help clarify this position of researcher as constructivist stating, “the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (p. 111). Continuously blurring the lines between the world of the research process and representation of reality, the ways in which we see and represent our identities, and the way we present those identities and our understandings of the research process, is grounded in our investigative processes, as well as, our journey to fulfillment and understanding of our past.

Irwin and Springgay (2008) continue describing A/R/Tography as a research methodology that entangles and performs what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) refer to a rhizome. A rhizome is a dynamic system with no point of origin; parts that are in seeming contradiction are rather in complex relation to one another. Thus, “in a continuous movement of differentiation, the linearity of beginnings and endings is disrupted, and the importance of the

middle is stressed” (Weibe, 2007, p. 265). The journey that is embarked upon through my research process reflects and informs our interpretations, representations, and presentations of our findings and outcomes. Irwin (2006) suggests that situations are related to pedagogies of place through a commitment to disrupting binaries, by complicating understandings as relational, singular, and rhizomatic. Moreover, relational aesthetics works to erode marginalization as the role of artist is shifted to become a facilitator, mediator and/or creative contributor within a community. The exploration of my identities, my access to music education, my evolution as a teacher, the adaptation of music curriculum, and the possible outcomes of such an investigation are broadened and developed from this rhizomatic approach. The dichotomous approach within positivist based and generalized research, is shattered by acknowledging the multitude of communities involved within this type of research. Communities of social justice, identity, arts-based research, curricular evolution, can all be explored and investigated from multiple points of view, angles, and starting points, bringing a sense of legitimacy to the community of research, and art-based research practices more specifically.

### **The search for multiple truths**

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (N. K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A qualitative approach will allow me as the researcher to become a bricoleur in the construction of the stories. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe bricolage in an interpretive manner as a, “pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (p. 5). As researchers draw together diverse forms of research, they gain the unique insight of multiple perspectives. Thus, a complex understanding of research and knowledge production prepares bricoleurs to address the complexities of the social, cultural, psychological, and educational domains (Kincheloe, 2001).



The weaving of stories created on the prior experiences of the researcher will develop a new construction and presentation of a counter-narrative to the basic social assumption of at-risk students, such as being students of color, low socio-economic status, or from broken homes. It will also allow for a deeper investigation into the social structures of identity development of music educators. And lastly, qualitative research can allow for a rich discussion into the possible social barriers, and the issues of privilege within music education through the perspective of critical whiteness theory.

Qualitative research is not intended to reproduce one reality that can be applied to all situations. In qualitative research the process of transferability or generalization are performed by the audience. Statistical generalizations require random representational samples using data that is isolated from any particular context or situation (Tracy, 2010). Tracy goes on to say, the research achieves resonance across various populations and contexts, even if it is based on data from a unique population during a specified moment in time (Tracy, 2010). How am I going to develop new ideas or significant contributions to the research field without having a comparison of the data from my *stories* to making new claims on music education? Through the process of naturalistic generalizations, readers make choices based on their own intuitive understanding of the scene, rather than feeling as though the research report is instructing them what to do.

### **Personal connections to becoming**

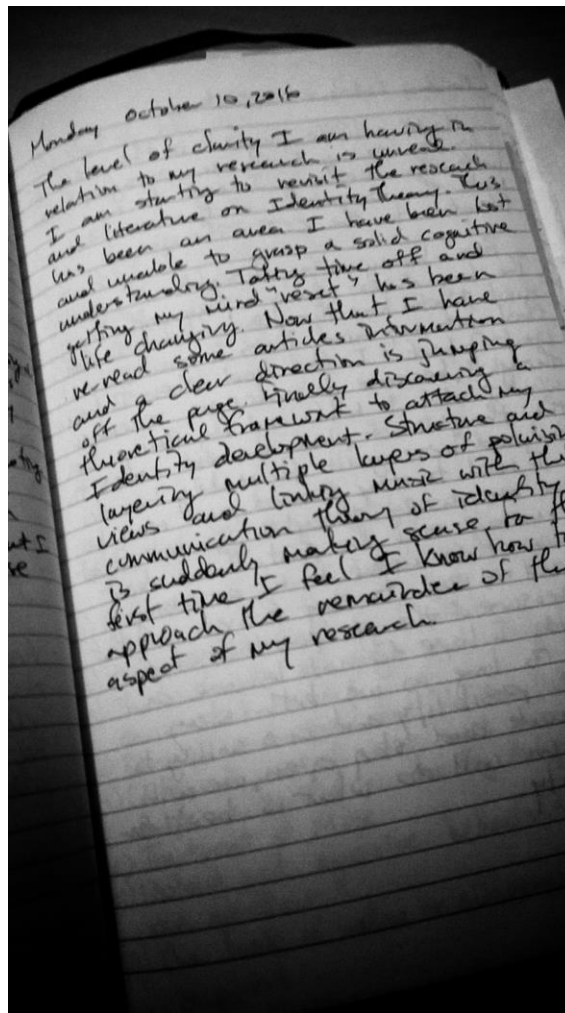
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*I have been on a personal journey to discover my identity as an educator through an examination of my subjectivities and positionality to my research. The writing of my autobiographical journey to research was the starting point of self-discovery and brought forward many personal observations. Observations such as the discovery of why I teach*

*the way I do. How was I able to provide opportunities for students to discover their sense of self-expression and the discovery of their identity? Reflecting back on my childhood, there were issues with family struggles, bullying and laying the foundation of who I would eventually become. These issues or experiences helped shape my perceptions of both personal and academic success, as well as, my desire to help provide safe environments of self-discovery in my classrooms. Through these reflections I am beginning to discover that the one unifying factor of this foundation is my involvement with music. The telling of my personal struggles and discovery of the powerful role music played in my life, I noticed my goals, as an educator was to provide opportunities to my students through the power of music the same way I was provided those opportunities.*

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Figure 1.2 Journal Entry #1



The ability to become aware of one's own views and perception they bring to research is the process of subjectivity in research. Peshkin (1988) states "researchers should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research" (p. 17). This discovery of my own journey to research helped me realize I wanted to now tell my story. To tell the stories of the influence of music education has had in my life, and the role it plays in the development of my sense of personal and teacher identity, academic values, self-expression, and how music education can be our life support through difficult personal struggles.

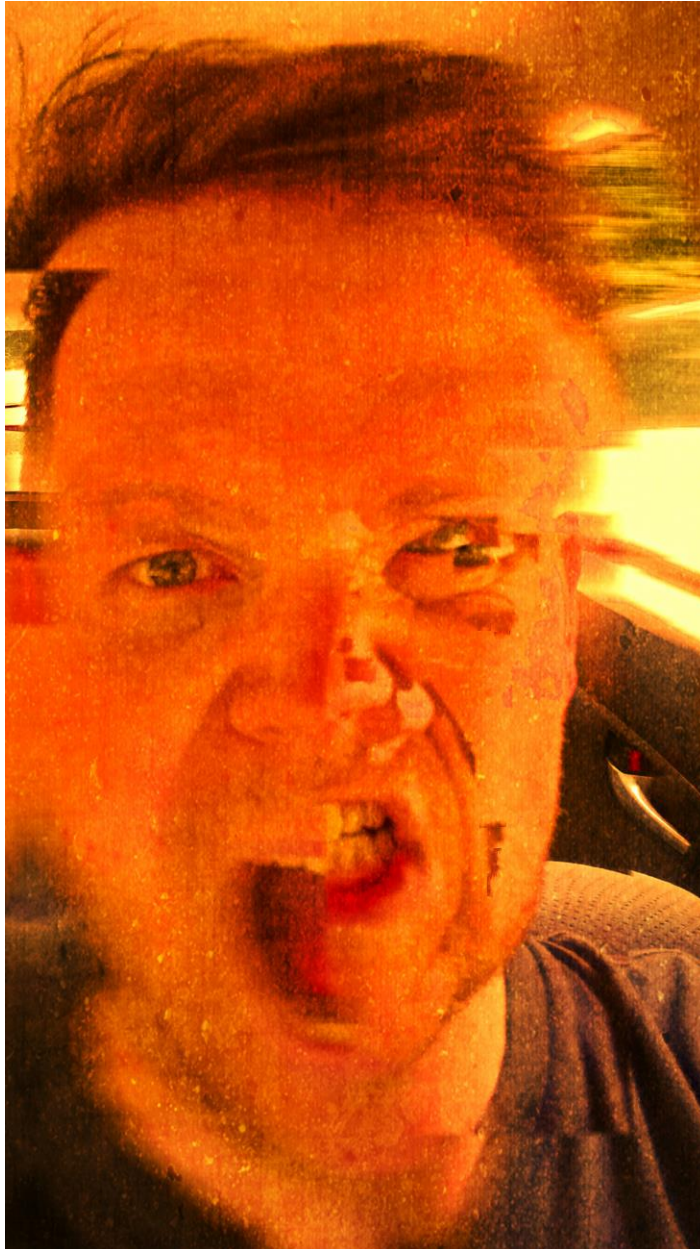
These stories also allow for the critical investigation of the current music education system and structure. Structures such as the level of access of music education to all students, and the possible barriers of the current traditional curriculum to certain students of color and various cultural groups. My assumed identity as a middle class white male student with a stable home life and my ability to create masks and walls to hide reality, allows me to provide a counter-narrative to social assumptions we make as educators of the students in our classes. As a veteran white male teacher, who taught most of his career in lower socio-economic schools made of primarily students of color, the examination of these social assumptions through the lens of whiteness theory will allow me to question what barriers, if any, exist within the music education structure that prevents students of various identities and social backgrounds access and success in music education. Through the process of self-examination, the highly subjective and reflexive requirement of this research contributes to possible limitations to the study.

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*Upon reflection, I have not always been proud of my teaching. There were days when I was great. I was 'Dead Poets Society', 'Stand and Deliver', and 'Dangerous Minds' all wrapped into one. I was motivating. I was caring. I was inspiring. Then there were days when the contradictions that have been following me all my life would catch up. I was demeaning. I was angry. I was condescending. I made students cry. I made students quit. I made students hate music. These are the biggest regrets I have in teaching. I was either loved or hated. There was not much in between. Why? What was motivating me to be such a bi-polar educator? Peering back into my teaching career and comparing the reflections with my current research practice, I have noticed how I have viewed, or better yet, ignored my own privilege and power.*

*I was turning a blind eye to very privilege that allowed me to become a music educator. I noticed the type of student I would do anything to help succeed, was also the student who would frustrate and drive me to a lack of patience that would boil over into rage.*

Figure 1.3 Broken Anger



*“Get out!”*

*“You aren’t worth my time!”*

*“What is wrong with you?”*

*Why would I make such hateful and insensitive statement to young children? Some children I was able to connect and empathize, while others I would almost immediately dismiss. I was making the very assumptions that my teachers did not make when I was a child. What was the difference? I was poor. I was not a good player. I was in trouble outside of school. I was quiet and compliant in class. The only factor that separates me from the majority of the students I was teaching: skin color. I went through very similar life circumstances as many of my students. Some of them I made that connection. Others I was unable or unwilling. What was the difference causing my poor and inadequate teaching?*

*The students were acting out, but also in many cases, not acting out. They may have very well been doing the best they could each day. They did not have access to the purchasing of instruments. The music we were studying and performing was not from their familial or cultural backgrounds. There were a multitude of outside variances and factors influencing their lives, basic needs such as food, security, and shelter; that my class was the last thing on their minds. These student hit road blocks at every turn in their lives. Interactions with police. Lack of employment for their families. Lack of basic and adequate housing. Not knowing where their next meal was coming. Institutionalized and cultural factors of privilege that were inherently running against their success. Success not just in my class, but in life. How could I have been more open to see their circumstances? What could I have done to be more compassionate? What*

*could we have done within the music education field to help provide better and easier access for these students into a music education experience that would be of value? That would provide a refuge for these struggling students. Curricular adaptation? Musical Styles? Ensembles?*

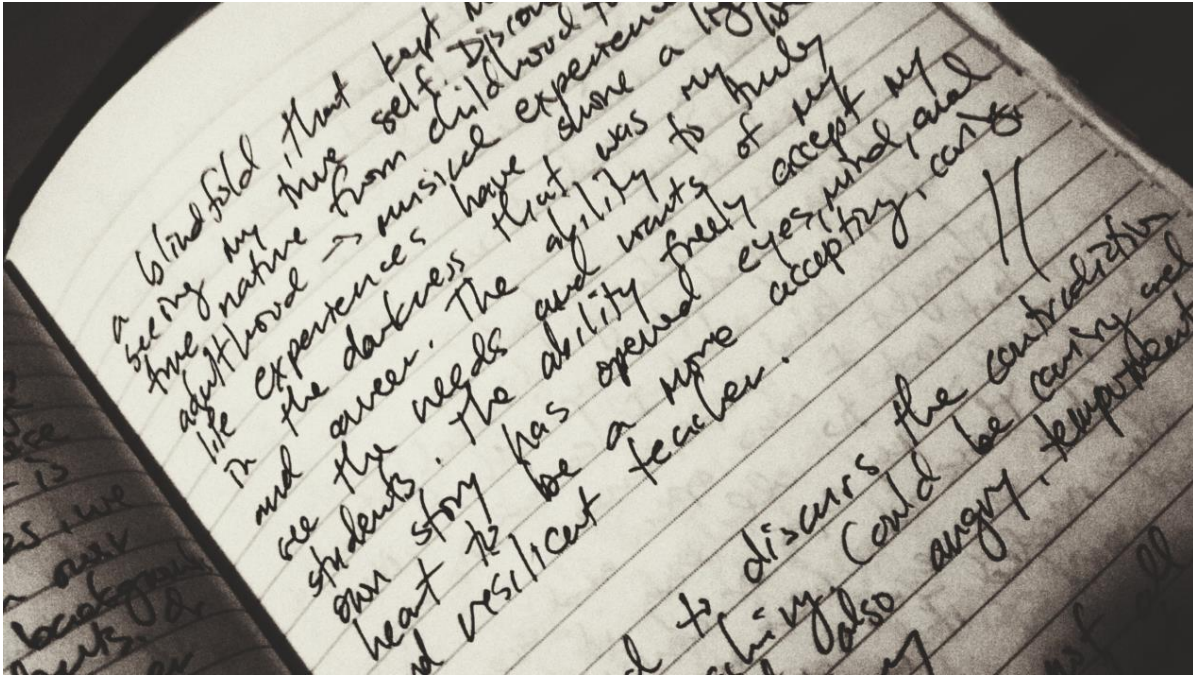
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The primary limitation will be the level and frequency of the reflexive processes of the researcher in relation to their subjectivities. Through this process of reflexivity, the inquirer begins to examine their subjectivities and their personal relationships to that of their participants (Conle, 2000; Mosselson, 2010; Pillow, 2003).

Self-reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's role(s) in the construction of the research problem, the research setting, and the research findings, and highlights the importance of researchers becoming consciously aware of these factors and thinking through the implications of these factors for her/his research (Pillow, 2003 p. 179).

Using reflexivity to understand why I want to explore this type of research allows the researcher to realize and come to terms with their personal subjectivities of teaching, education and personal research agendas.

Figure 1.4 Journal Entry #2



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*Can I explore my teaching career and see that many of my students (who were students of color) may have not been provided many of the same opportunities as I, even though we came from similar situations and circumstances? What were the differences? Their culture? Their personal or familial value of education? Home life expectations? The possible burdensome and limited access provided by our current music education structure? What role do music education experiences play in the development of identity as an educator, and/or on a deeper level, a human being? I situate this study within the lens of critical whiteness theory to interrogate the social assumptions we as educators make of at-risk students. Explore how these assumptions function within the context of access or success, and the ways in which social support systems allow opportunities for access and success of white male students in music education, and the ways in which*



*interrogating such white privileges can inform how one develops their identity as a music educator, after years in the education profession.*

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## **Engaging the intersection of art and research**

Our life stories, or narratives, are a series of events, memories, and recollections established in a context of our personal subjectivities. Our perceptions of the truth and realities of our past are created within our own reflexive practices and interpretations. We own our memories and interpretations of our past. The impact on our past, on who we become, can only be described and re-told through our personal experiences. The interrogations we decide to launch result in the establishment of our individual perspectives. The way we advance the interrogation, the way we analyze the resulting data, and the mode we choose to display or present such analysis all result in a highly personal, introspective, and revealing personal narrative. Lieblich (Lieblich, 2013) expresses that “in constructing autobiographical narratives, writing them, sharing them, and getting responded to them, this effect is amplified many times for the benefit of all involved” (p. 52), providing an opportunity to unearth pure and profound details about our identity.

My story lies at the intersection of identity and practice. My research searches for the coming together of identity, music education, and becoming an educator. Leggo (2008) asserts, “autobiographical (*autoethnographic*) writing is always both personal and public and that we need to write autobiographically in order to connect with others” (p. 4). Connection with others allows for the broader distribution of research to more diverse audiences, allowing for the possibility of wider influence on social change, and the development of an extensive community of practice working towards identity development, educational evolution, and social justice.

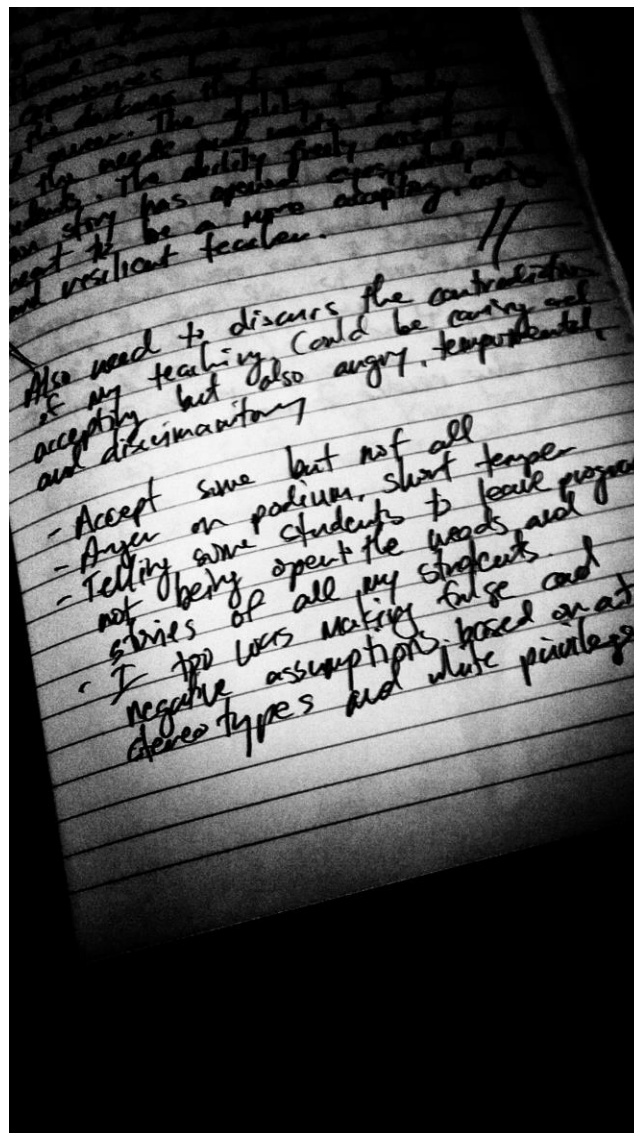
Irwin (2006) describes communities of practice within the a/r/tography research community as flexible and interdisciplinary, “crossing over several disciplinary units (for instance, artists, musicians, actors, dancers and educators who reside in different academic units and work together as a/r/tographers” (p. 73). Interrogating my place within the communities of musicians, educators, artists, whiteness, and researchers will allow me to develop a variety of data representations to fully represent and tell my story.

The telling of my personal stories and memories utilizing a/r/tography as the over-arching methodology allows for a variety of methodological approaches. A/r/tography is a living inquiry, used to open a wide variety of inquiries into the world of artist/teacher/researcher. The terms of artist and educator are broadly described within a/r/tography to allow for the commitment to learning, act of creation, transformation, and resistance, and being committed to artistic engagement through ongoing living inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). The continuous engagement with living inquiry, along with the broad descriptions of artists and educators, allows for a variety of methods grounded within the areas of arts-based practices, autoethnography, ethnodrama, and narrative inquiry facilitating the production of a richness and depth to the research required for such a multi-focal research approach. The use of dramatic monologues, poetry, photography, painting, and collage come together to establish a unique and immersive artistic exploration of identity and music education.

Data gathered from personal journal writing over the course of the entire dissertation process serves as the primary source of creative and interpretive material. Entries dating back to over a two-year span chronicle my personal reflections, and impact of this intrapersonal interrogations of the research process and the discoveries made throughout the research process. Thoughts, fears, hopes, and realizations have all come together to help create and shape this

narrative. The method in which individual reflections manifest into artistic representation vary depending on the moment in the research process, topic, and personal artistic inspiration. The artistic inspiration that comes to mind is never grounded in a singularity. Much time has been spent processing the possibilities. The possibilities of art. The impact of said possibilities on the research. The possible reaction or interpretation of possibilities by outsiders, as well as those within academia. The possibility of production and method of dissemination of my research.

Figure 1.5 Journal Entry #3



Barone and Eisner (2012) state “arts-based research emphasizes the generation of forms of feeling that have something to do with understanding some person, place, or situation...it is the conscious pursuit of expressive form in the service of understanding” (p. 7). The search for meaning and understanding of a specific social construct (*in my case identity, whiteness, and music education*) and the presentation of those findings in an expressive, affective and performative manner is the core essence of arts-based research. Barone and Eisner (2012) continue stating the need to provide methodological permission for people to innovate with the methods has never been more important; that our “ambition is to broaden the conceptions not only of tools that can be used to represent the world but even more to redefine and especially to enlarge the conceptual umbrella that defines the meaning of research itself” (p. 2).

### **Cross-roads of art/academia/method**

I had so many thoughts swirling in my head, most of which made no sense. I could not articulate the stories in my mind. How do I get them on paper? How would all of this make sense? The balance of artistic and academic writing was proving to be a monumental barrier. I needed to discover a method (or multiple methods) that would allow me to academically and artistic express the story of my identity.

Denzin (2003) declares a call to performance in research, stating “today we need a model of social sciences which is performative” (p. 191). Research based in the arts answers this call to performance by Denzin. Writing and data representation that includes dramatic monologues and poetry. Writing that is intended to be spoken aloud in performance creating a multi-sensory and interpretive response from the audience and reader. “As I study the stories of lived experiences of students, the telling and presenting of these experiences may provide possible performance opportunities; performances and their representations reside in the center of live-experiences”

(N. K. Denzin, 2003, p. 191). Within the fields of qualitative research there has been a sustained and growing defiance of rules and conventions regarding the crossings of what were once closely patrolled borders between the realms of the sciences and the arts/humanities (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Combining the performative aspects called upon by Denzin with traditional qualitative methods like ethnography and narrative inquiry may help develop rich and impactful research.

### **My world is almost a stage...**

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*What was I watching? It came to me light a bolt of lightning. This was it. The answer to all my questions. How to move forward. Finding my calling to pursue this function that has been engrained in me my entire adult life. Create. Express. Question. Move. Act. The answer was always right in front of me. Tangible and yet far out of reach. If this was the answer the possibilities were endless. This would be another moment that would change my life path forever. It felt like home. Finally, a way to express all the thoughts, concerns, and questions locked inside the vault of my mind.*

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This sparkling moment of clarity came to me while watching the documentary *The Ground on Which I Stand*, about the great American playwright August Wilson. The documentary discussed the life and works of the prize winning African American playwright, and examined his struggle to write a cycle of plays on the African American experience. On the surface this appears to have nothing to do with my research topic or interests. However, there was a portion of one his speeches that inspired me to move forward into the world of ethnodrama and arts-based representations of research. Wilson's work revolved around telling the stories and experiences of a specific culture and through the medium of theater to provide an inside view

and critical commentary on social structures. In a speech Wilson gave at the 11<sup>th</sup> biennial conference of the Theater Communications Group, he describes the transforming power theater can have on society:

I believe in the American theater. I believe in its power to inform about the human condition. I believe in its power to heal. To hold the mirror as it were up to nature. To the truths we uncover to the truths we wrestle from uncertain and sometimes unyielding realities. All of art is a search for ways of being, of living life more fully. We who are capable of those noble pursuits should challenge the melancholy and barbaric, to bring the light of angelic grace, peace, prosperity, and the unencumbered pursuit of happiness to the ground on which we stand. (Wilson, 1998)

Realizing that the power of theater (and all the arts) can allow us to peer inside social and cultural issues of humanity. A performative artistic approach that can be used as an entire method, “serving as a means of data generation and analysis as well as a (re)presentational form, offering a new way of thinking about and conducting social research” (Leavy, 2015, p. 174). This was my opportunity to discover the voice that was being bound and gagged from a life of hiding and pretending. Masking the possibility of discovering self. The tool to tear down the walls constructed from memories, false truths, and fears. Break free from the sterile traditions of academic research. It was time to embrace the very artistic principles that have provided me, and my students, with many wonderful and liberating opportunities. Taking extremely personal stories and linking them to the power of the arts diverts the road block of the traditionally sterile academic voice. Why not embrace the artistic training I have studied the majority of my life, and bring a new voice to the realm of music research?

With my artistic inspiration emanating from the theatrical world, I was naturally attracted to the method of ethnodrama. Saldana (2003) describes ethnotheatre as “employing traditional craft and artistic techniques of formal theatre production to mount a live performance event or research participants’ experiences and/or researchers’ interpretations of data for an audience” (p.218). The act of transforming data into a script brings the narratives to life. This transformation of data into performance allows the audience (performance audience or even reading research) to come to an experience-based understanding of the findings of ethnographic research. “The audience can find a way to perhaps ‘walk-in-the-shoes’ of research participants” (Stokrocki, 2010, p. 70).

As this research process began moving into the discovery of identity, desire for self-expression, and the dealing with life situations, ethnodrama as a method became more desirable. Stokrocki (2010) describes identity, “as a person’s set of characteristics that s/he recognizes as unique to her/his personality” (p.73). My reflexive path was providing descriptive data of healthy and un-healthy ways of dealing with the quest of identity and outlets of self-expression. The use of dramatic monologue to describe this quest provided context to the data was an ideal method to help in the storytelling. Cannon (2012) discusses “when researchers converge upon the idea that ethnodrama, when done well, can facilitate engagement, more nuanced representation, reflexivity, and even action from the researcher, participant, and audience” (p. 583).

I utilized the analysis method of Fedder’s Four to generate theatrical form and structure from some of the data produced. With ethnographic performance comes the responsibility to create an entertainingly informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative (Saldana, 2003). The theatrical organization

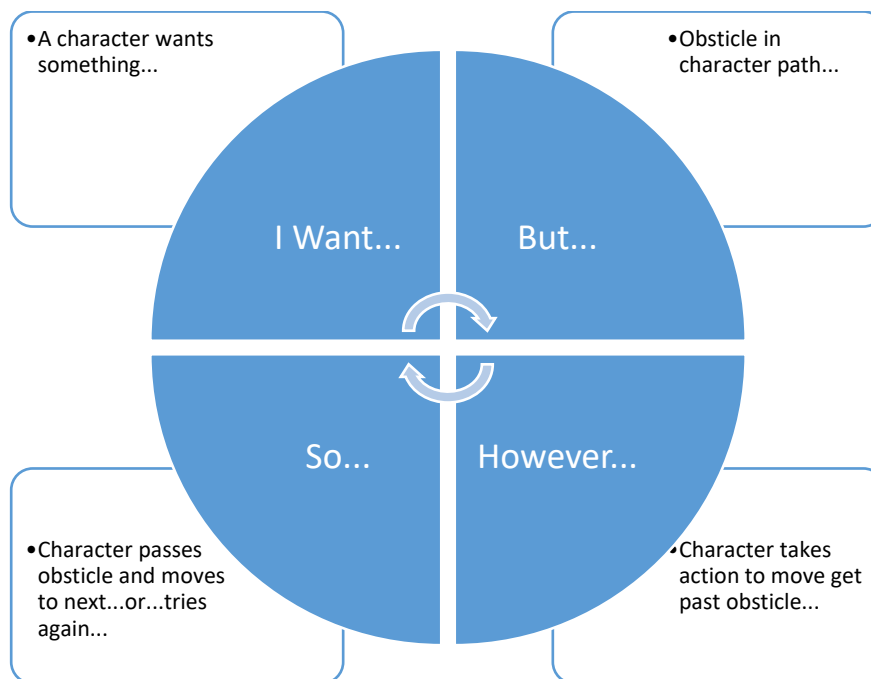
method of Fedder's Four allowed me to discover the structure and storyline developing within the data. There are many models for building a play, but they all can be boiled down to a simple formula, identified by drama therapist Norman Fedder during his years of writing plays and teaching playwriting at Kansas State University (Personal communication, 2000). He calls this formula Fedder's Four: (Bailey, 2009).

I Want – But – However – So ...

Within any dramatic unit – be it play, act, scene or beat – action follows the dramatic structure of:

- a. A character WANTS something
- b. BUT there is an obstacle of some kind in the way
- c. HOWEVER, the character takes action in attempt to get past the obstacle
- d. SO he gets past the obstacle and the play ends or he moves on to the next obstacle in the play or he doesn't get past the obstacle and must try again

Figure 1.6 Fedder's Four





By following the Fedder's Four model, "any narrative can be molded and shaped into a dramatically satisfying play that has a beginning, middle, climax and end" (Bailey, 2009, p. 383). The categories discovered through this analysis and writing process will result in a more emergent process of discovering themes to explore. As well as, the possibility of some pre-conceived themes that are part of my personal subjectivities, may confirm or deny these possible themes. As a data analysis tool, it allows me to see what story the participant is trying to tell that is meaningful and valuable to my research purpose.

The ability to have an aesthetic or emotional connection to my research will be an important and impactful portion of my research. With ethnographic performance, then, comes the responsibility to create an entertainingly informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative (Saldana, 2003). Presenting this story and data in a dramatic performance and setting will allow the audience to identify and develop their own personal understanding and interpretation of the data presented, based on their own realities and experiences.

### **The pot of inspiration boils over...**

The introduction to ethnodramatic method opened the flood gates of creativity. To develop a more diverse and complete view of the research methods including poetry, photography, painting, and collage all rushed into my mind as methods of describing and discussing data. There was no one 'correct' method to provide the truth and clarity of what the data was saying. These allowed for a more diversified arts-based approach to blend with the a/r/tography approach and arts-based research practice. Moving the data representations into a more artistic and personal reflection of the data and the narratives generated.

Each of the various methods are grounded autoethnographic aspects. Spry (2001) describes, “the value of autoethnography in research in that it expresses more fully the interactional textures occurring between self, other, and contexts in ethnographic research” (p. 708). The value of personal reflection discusses of the “power of personal reflections embedded in scholarly discourse and how the autoethnographic tales create meanings that cannot be found in other forms of scholarship” (Lockford, 2014, p. 286). I was discovering new and diverse creative outlets to help present and represent the data I was unearthing.

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*Heading into unknown territories. I have unlocked areas within in my mind and soul that were non-existent or have been locked in hibernation. It has been a creative awakening. I have initiated an exploration of my life in ways once thought impossible. I have always been hesitant in experimenting within art. This is a completely contradictory statement based on my life study of music and education. Although, most of my life has been in hiding and avoiding creative extension, and personal realization. I have believed most of my life, that I am a subpar musician, teacher, father, husband, and artist. Never fully engaging in personal exploration or expression within the arts. I have made it far in the arts as a self-proclaimed fraud and fake. The research process has gouged a hole in the dam of creativity that has been held within me. Tapping into areas of self-expression I have been frightened to engage. I was afraid of my lack of ability and talent, as well as, what personal memories, pain, or realities may come forth in opening the flood gates. Playwriting, poetry, painting, photography, and collage have all come to the fore in a creative and artistic renaissance. Now in my 40's I feel I have been artistically, and personally, reborn. Confidence, talent, and belief have energized my ability to analyze,*

*represent, present, discuss, engage, and display my true self to a world in which I have been hiding.*

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As I continue with this new-found pursuit within the arts and research, other areas of art-based research practice became focal points. There were some areas of my story that naturally gravitated to genres. As I would sit, waiting for inspiration, the dialogue and plot of playwriting began presenting itself as poetry, photographs, or paintings. I am not sure if I have a complete explanation for which artistic method I would use in the analysis, discussion, or display of various research themes. As a critical researcher within music education, my goal is to interrogate and provide a sense of clarity and hope to the adaption and expansion of access within music education. As Barone (2008) discusses:

I am wondering about the potential of a research approach that, boldly but not rudely, humbly and not arrogantly, intervenes in the current state of educational affairs, one that expands the reach of our scholarship because of (and not despite) the fact that it is profoundly aesthetic, one that both finds its inspiration in the arts and leads to progressive forms of social awareness, I am thinking of an approach to research on educational phenomenon that alters the world by raising questions, one that makes history by providing a catalyst for the changing of minds. And among the candidates whose minds might be changed are the members of the general public currently under the sway of the political spectacle. (p. 35)

How can we most effectively influence those in power to become more aware and empathetic? How can we most effectively bring the data to life reaching a wider audience? Thus, bringing the possibility of change. These questions guided my exploration and use of

other arts-based techniques and approaches. I was again forcing areas of analysis into playwriting and ethnotheatre that were not natural. I still utilized the concepts of plot creation and narrative: the need to tell a story, provide an arc to propel the reader and action, and creatively engage the reader and audience.

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*Eyes that can analyze beyond variance, ears that can hear what others say, palms that know the sweat of joining another and of opening the fist. These things are important not because a high-sounding argument can be put around them but because they are useful: they evoke what seemed impossible to evoke, that say what seemed unsayable...if you demand on the one hand, the raw data of life in all its rawness and that which is on the other hand genuine, then you are interested in performative writing. (Pelias, 2005, p. 416)*

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I was searching and becoming open to any way possible to “allow myself to experience the emotionally wrenching ways in which we attain knowledge of others and ourselves” (Behar, 2008, p. 63). Poetry was the next artistic inspiration to help tell my story. I helped me discover a voice for myself and others, providing another method that played in the areas of playwriting and music, poems use words, rhythm, and space to create sensory scenes where meaning emerges from the careful construction of both language and silences (Leavy, 2015). Poetry is a beautiful synchrony of personal exploration and artistic representation in the vein of the power of musical rhythm and pace, with that of the performative writing and critical voice I have been exploring throughout the research process. Poetry offers a blend of art and academia, providing

a bridge in which there is “no separation between the work of scholars and scientists and the poet or storyteller” (Lyons, 2008).

The blurring of the artist/researcher/teacher, and the representation, analysis, and presentation of the data delve into the “blurred multiple genres of writing where the messiness of qualitative research was *[is]* represented” (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 84). The complexity of the multiple points-of-view held within my research coalesced with the ‘messiness’ of my research topic. The investigation of identity development from a multitude of perspectives, within a critical whiteness perspective, the mind and vision of an artist, and the investigation of institutional equality inspire the creation of a tangled, intertwined, and subjective research approach.

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*Screens, words, pixels*

*Blur and blind vision and mind.*

*Analogue and digital,*

*Some old and some new,*

*Styles that work for each.*

*Unknown stories,*

*We all hold,*

*We all hide.*

*Blankly we approach each day.*

*Our best intentions,*

*To persist,*

*To endure,*

*Show the world, show ourselves,*  
*What is real,*  
*What is fake.*  
*We burry our minds,*  
*Distracting, delaying, defusing reality.*  
*Mundane repetition of basic functions,*  
*Presenting the now,*  
*No knowledge or understanding of truth or reality.*  
*Minds crafted in analogue,*  
*Digital renderings of reality.*  
*Buried in life,*  
*Searching, striving for continued*  
*Strength and perseverance.*  
*Each day, moment in time,*  
*We tell,*  
*Craft new stories.*

\*\*\*

The tangled path that was before me was only to become more intertwined. As the journals entries and reflections of my past became more complex, additional artistic approaches began to leak from the dam. Photography. Painting. Collage. Artistic methods that all began to become ways in which I was able to explore performance autoethnography as a vehicle for enacting a performative cultural politics of hope (N. K. Denzin, 2003), connecting reflexive autoethnography with critical whiteness and identity. The politics of hope serves as inspiration

for the process of change in context of those officially in control of the content and who determines what is learned (Mienczakowski, 1995). Providing the opportunity to possibly balance the scales of power of those within education, ranging from administration and teachers to students, parents, and other community stake holders.

Visual methodologies provide a created perspective, as well as, opening up multiple meanings determined not only by the artist but also the viewer and the context of the viewing (Leavy, 2015). This plays in to the subjective and reflexive practices of qualitative research. The context in which the visual product is constructed and interpreted plays a vital role in the analysis and response given to each work. Each photograph and collage are influenced by the choices made by the creator/researcher such as post-production filters and editing software, to the composition and make up of images, items, and materials included in the lens of the photograph. There are conscious and poignant decisions used in the selection of the materials utilized in the creation of the collages, such as color, texture, shape, line, space, and text. Each decision is constructed from the subjectivities of the researcher and the influences they bring to the creation and analysis of the data.

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Figure 1.7 Bag Project

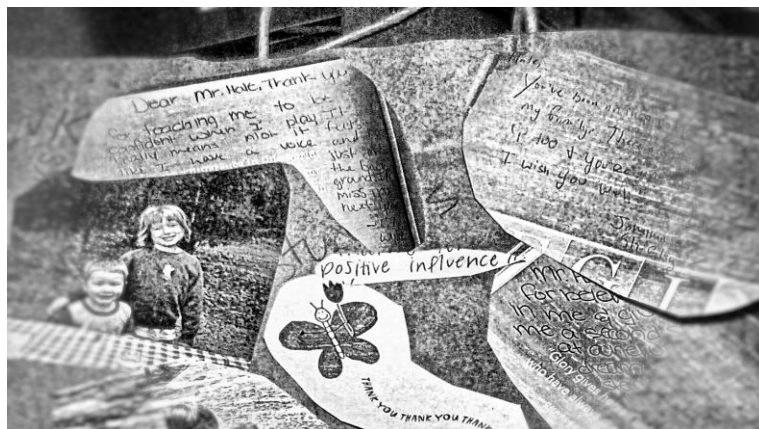


Figure 1.8 Tears of Youth





If these various arts are the way I make meaning of my world, then “such arts-based ways of knowing and being ought to influence how I design my research” (Bhattacharya, 2013, p. 612). In an attempt to broaden the audience of my research I hope to provide a method of artistic representation that may speak to individuals on whatever level of interpretation and subjectivity they hold coming to my research. The methods should allow for a robust and diverse response from the population who may interact with my research. School district administrators, principals, superintendents, curriculum specialists, music educators all of whom have a voice and stake in the development of a just and equitable music education system. This arts-based approach may bring a more visceral and engaging response in contrast to the possible sterile and sanitized positivistic approach of traditional quantitative research.

## **Chapter 2 - Becoming an educator: Identity, music education, and privilege**

### ***Explanation of performance:***

*The following is a critical exploration of personal identity development through music education, working in the teaching profession, developing as a researcher, and the role privilege plays within access to music education. The performance work that follows utilizes a mix of artistic mediums to interrogate and explore these areas of research. You will experience ethnodramatic monologues, poetry, photographs, and hand-crafted artwork that represents the research process, the finding of the research process, as well as, the analysis of the research process, all of which leading to a multi-sensory approach, and diversified interpretation to the data in an effort to broaden the audience exposed to the research, and to vary the conversation of possibilities and calls to action within the music education community.*

### ***Character descriptions:***

*All “characters” are to be performed by one actor. The stories are told from multiple perspectives or points of view. Each form of artistic representation is modeled from point of view of one of the following characters. Characters include:*

*The researcher self: an older experienced educator reflecting back on life, identity, and teaching.*

*The teacher self: a working dedicated teacher living and learning day-to-day about their students and education.*

*The child self: a teenager growing up as an at-risk troubled youth.*

*Students: The voices (stories) of the students will also be told from the perspective of one of the above selves.*

***Stage setting:***

*Scenery consists of acting areas utilizing multiple levels. Up stage left is set with writing desk, lamp, chair and various writing material to create a cluttered desk and unsettled atmosphere. The other areas of the stage will be used to represent home, classroom, and locations needed to tell the various scenes/stories. Flexible acting areas will be set with cubes, chairs, stools, and various properties to establish each individual scenes/stories.*

*Screens with projections of research terminology and terms of self-doubt: epistemology, identity, impostor, insecurity, why, etc., as well as, pictures from my youth in music and with family will be used to create a sense of confusion, and questions. The screens will hang at various levels across the back of the stage. Pre-show, the stage is pre-set dark other than the projections.*

**The loss of friends and making a choice**

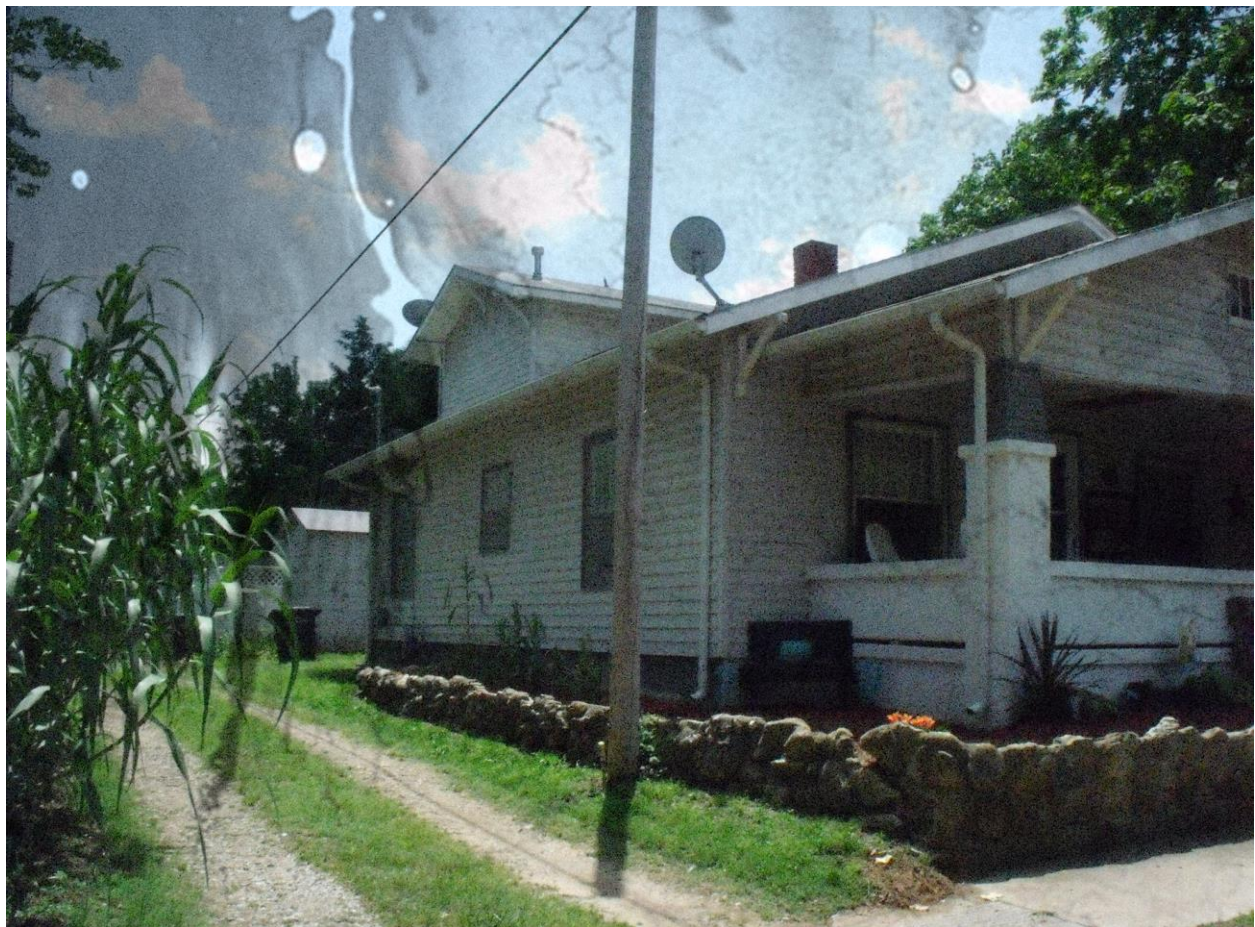
*(Screen projections stop with photographs of trampoline, liquor bottles, various prescription bottles, vandalized homes, and the words Loss and Choice. Lights rise on stage creating the image of the sun slowly rising over the horizon. The actor is lying on their back in an apparent unconscious state, DSR. Empty bottles of alcohol lie next to the actor. Slowly the actor begins to move in apparent pain and discomfort. The actor slowly sits upright holding their head and is disheveled and not completely aware of how they have come to this place.)*

TRAVIS (*Child Self*)

Where am I? (*pause*) What happened last night? (*slowly come to knees, notices bottles*) I am so cold. My head hurts so bad. (*holds head, and almost starts to vomit*) Why am I on a trampoline? Did I sleep here last night? (*slowly looks around and regains his bearings*) Whose backyard am I in right now? Where am I? I better get out of here. (*actor comes to feet*)

Something has to change. I can't believe I did this last night. What was I thinking? This can't be who I really am. *(pause, in shock)* I was so drunk I passed out in someone's backyard on this trampoline! How much did I have to drink? What else did I do last night? *(pause)* Drinking again all weekend. Smoking pot. Prescription drugs. Vandalizing. Breaking and entering. *(pause, frustrated, in a fake tough guy voice)* I am getting tired, but I have to show 'em I can hang with 'em. I can do this. I can hang with these guys. I am not going to let them get to me. *(begin to show nerves and frailty)* I can't let them see me scared. I can't let them know how I really feel. I am barely their friend anyway. I have to show them I can do this too.

Figure 2.1 Escape House



TRAVIS (*Researcher Self*)

What do you think we would do when we ran out of stuff to drink? We would toilet paper houses. Threw rocks at cars. The vandalizing was mindless. (*pause*) One night in a drunken stupor, I even urinated in a cup and poured into an open sunroof of a complete stranger's car on a dare. To prove I could hang with them. As for this night, I broke into the house of a friend just to get the liquor from his parent's liquor cabinet. I can't believe I did that! I was 13 years old! What was I doing?!?!?

TRAVIS (*Child Self*)

(*talking to self, cross stage as following a group of people*) Where are we going? Why are we at Cam's house? They are out of town. We partied here last weekend. It was a lot of fun. I guess. His parents had a huge liquor cabinet. Why are we going in the backyard? We can't really be doing this.

TRAVIS (*Researcher Self*)

(*break as an aside and direct to audience,*)

It was a small town; no one locked their doors, especially the back one. We walked right in. We were at this house often and knew exactly where everything was. We helped ourselves. Vodka, tequila, whiskey, you name it we tried it. And lots of it. We also experimented with marijuana and prescription drugs. Don't know what they all were or did, but it made for a great night.



Figure 2.2 Crime Scene



TRAVIS (*Child Self*)

*(in total disbelief)* I can't believe I just broke into a friend's house just to steal his parent's liquor! I just committed a crime! What was I thinking? A night of drugs, extreme amounts of alcohol and I committed a crime. *(pause)* This had to stop.

TRAVIS (*Researcher Self*)

*(reflective and directly to audience)* I was only in middle school when I began to experiment with drugs and alcohol heavily. I had done more by ninth grade than most do by college. Many of the friends from this time are now in jail or have spent time in both jail and rehab. I was heading down the wrong path quickly. I didn't know any different, and I was surrounding myself with bad influences, and I couldn't continue making these choices.

Something bad was going to happen. I was going to throw away any possibility of any future I may have. I didn't think I had a future. Or even deserved a future.

This story was one night I had in ninth grade. These friends were growing in their intensity of destructive decisions and something had to change. I started to realize the perilous path I was going down, and I began to distance myself from the group. With my distance, their teasing and bullying of me grew in intensity. *(pause)* Nights of them pouring mustard and pickle juice on my face and hair while I fell asleep first. Calling me names everyday because I didn't wrestle. Wrestling was everything in my hometown. I didn't wrestle. I was a pussy. I was a momma's boy. I was a band geek.

I had joined band in sixth grade, but wasn't really into it. And it wasn't cool with the kids I was hanging out with. They would yell at me. "Go play band with the other queers!" or "Go play your skin flute, fag!" This night was my last attempt to prove to them I could be tough and that I wasn't a pussy. That night spiraled out of control.

I slowly and painfully walked home, and went to sleep. That was the last time I did anything with that group of "friends." From that point on music became my outlet. The choice I made was to focus on music. Music became my attempt to change my course and become something better. I had no idea what I would become. No idea of the places music would take me and my life.

*(lights fade)*

## Beaver and the summer from hell

Figure 2.3 Distortion of Third Street



TRAVIS (*child self*)

*Nick at Night* was brand new, and I spent all summer watching *Leave it to Beaver* and the *Patty Duke Show* along with any other over simplified slice of easy life show that was on. It was an escape from reality. Staying up until 3 am because I couldn't go to sleep. No one knew what I was going through. It was another wall I built to protect myself. To hide the pain and fear. My parents didn't say much, never really asked any questions. They let me just stay at home. Not sure what they could have really done. I didn't tell them I was being chased, cussed at, and



beat up when I did go outside. It was like they were stocking me like a lion hunts its prey. I would walk outside, and they would all be right there waiting. I couldn't go anywhere without them finding me. So, I stayed home. All summer. At this point I had no friends. There was nowhere I could go. I was a prisoner in my own home.

Figure 2.4 Third in Clarity



Phil Stop. That was the gas station with all the video games. I used to live there. I would get a handful of quarters and be gone for hours. I used to go everyday on my way home from school. This summer, the few attempts I made at giving myself a reprieve, were met with confrontations at Phil Stop. My mission would begin with the decent down the driveway as quickly as possible in hopes that no one would see me leaving the solitude and safety of the house. I was exposed. Like an antelope cautiously making its way to a watering hole, I knew I was

moving ever closer to my inevitable demise. At every street corner, alley way entrance, and row of bushes I cringed at the possibility of them being there. I was just waiting. When I finally made it to the gas station, I would carefully case the joint. Slowly peeking into the windows to see who may be in there. Checking behind the garbage dumpster to see if anyone else was hiding their bikes. Waiting behind parked cars to see if anyone was going to come out. Once I thought the situation was safe, I went in. It was never safe. It was like they were watching me and waiting for me. A few minutes after I entered and started a game, they would walk in. I immediately froze with fear. Sweat beading up on my brow. Muscles tensing up and clinching, leaving me paralyzed. Stomach turning inside out and bubbling over with acid. They would surround me, call me names.

“Pussy.”

“Fag.”

“Momma’s boy.”

Figure 2.5 Behind the Stop



Then came the pushing. The smacks in the back of the head. Unplugging the game, or just taking over the game completely. It would eventually lead to outside behind the station. They would continue to smack me, kick my bike, and call me names. After a few minutes they would become bored and move along; they were gone in the wind just as fast as they blew in. In tears, I would gather myself and my bike and make my way back home. Still in fear the entire way.



Figure 2.6 View from the Alley



I would wait in our alley until I was able to get my composure back, and then go back into my solitary confinement. My safety. My hell.

I didn't understand why they were doing this. I was just tired of being bad. Staying out until all hours of the morning. Drinking. Drugs. Vandalism. I was done. I just wanted to move on. They were not letting me. I needed new friends, but had no way to find them. I sat silently

each day. Staying up all night. Listening for anything to tell me they were out there. The only thing I was looking forward too. The only thing I knew that was going to get me out of the house. The only thing that gave me any hope at all to make new friends, and start over...Marching Band Camp. It was decision that would alter the course of my life forever...

*(fade out)*

### **The question that changed my life**

*(USL, actor sits at writing desk. The stage is dark other than the limited light on the actor and to establish the scene of writing in a small cramped space.)*

TRAVIS *(Researcher Self)*

*(Direct/Reflective on the dissertation process)*

*(Projections of masks and walls from various times and cultures.)*

Truth

Lies

Love

Hate

Success

Failure

Kindness

Hurtful

Provide

Take away

Contradictions. My life has been nothing but contradictions. I am one person at home. Another in public. Even another at school. Creating masks to hide who I really was. Building walls to isolate myself from reality. I was able to be someone and something I was not. It was like having a split personality. *(projections of pictures to represent the various personalities discussed)* There was the school me. There was the home me. And there was the out with my friends me. I don't know if I knew at the time who the real me was. I was like a chameleon. I could change and adapt my personality like colors. And there was a broad spectrum of personalities. *(pause, stand and cross)* There was the blue me that was at home. Calm and muted. Blended in, went with the flow, just wanted to be calm. Wished everything could just be calm. My color at school would have been tan. I was boring, and went unnoticed. I didn't bring much attention to myself. I did what was expected and kept quiet. *(pause)* Now the out with my friends me, that was different. My colors reflected all the various colors of the bright reds, oranges, and yellows. I still was somewhat calm compared to some of my friends. But I did things. I did bad things. Things that middle school kids were not supposed to be doing. I am not sure where that personality or color came from. It must have been a release of some sort. *(pause)* Anyway, we will come back to that in a little bit.

I guess I better talk about how I came to where I am now. *(takes a second, reflects)* How the hell did I end up here? *(light chuckle to self)* Still can't believe it. Still don't always believe I belong here. This isn't where I was supposed to end up. Nobody in my family ended up here. *(projections with photographs of me in school) (with a sense of wonder and amazement)* Academia! I was supposed to lay carpet and hang drywall. That's what we did in my family. This world of academia is so unfamiliar. *(beat)* It still is after all this time. Two bachelor

degrees, a masters degree, and three years of working on a PhD later, it is still unfamiliar.

*(slowly and reflective)* It all still seems like a blur. It all happened so fast. *(beat)*

*(projections of the words Research, Why, Life Changing)* *(to audience)* So. Why am I doing this? Why? *(pause)* This question. Why am I doing my research? This question changed my life. I had never thought of this before. Such a simple question turns into a prolonged life-changing journey. A journey of self-discovery. Self-doubt. Memories of the past. Memories of family. Thoughts I never wanted to come back. Thoughts I never connected to having a direct influence on everything that has modeled and shaped my life and career. *(pause)* I had always tried to pretend that these memories didn't exist anymore. This was the part of my life I wanted to forget. Some of these thoughts and stories I haven't even told my wife or best friend. And now, I am telling relatively complete strangers my life story.

*(beat, as asked by a professor, change of focus)* Why are you doing your research? *(back to researcher self)* Again, this question has changed the path of my future and has started a journey that is changing, or has, changed my life. I feel like my research journey has taken many paths along the way. And it is still shifting and turning every day.

When I first decided to set forth on this journey into the world of research, I thought I knew exactly what was going to happen. I was just going to be a really long version of a research paper, right? *(pause)* What did I know? I knew it was going to be a difficult and long process. Dissertations are like 300 pages right? When I arrived on campus I had a research topic in mind. It was obvious to me what I was going to research. *(with confidence)* It was: *(pause, projections of the words Informal, Learning, Practice)* Informal Music Learning. Sounds good, right? *(pause)* My work in this area had after all, opened the doors for me to take on this opportunity to pursue my PhD. I had multiple professors and educators talk to me about the

innovative teaching methods I was doing in my class. The democratic, impactful and effective curricular decisions I was establishing in my school. (*build pacing*) I was pushing the envelope on what teaching could look like in the music classroom. In my mind I had crafted this story, that I was a good teacher, and I was going to write about that. How I implemented this class, how it impacted the lives of my students, and why we should be adapting this new music education curriculum. (*beat*)

(*calm and in a new focal point*) The first time I heard this life-changing question was when I enrolled in my introduction to qualitative research class. That question. That simple unassuming question. “Why are you doing your research?” (*pause, with excitement and frustration*) I thought I knew! I had a plan and it was set. (*pause*) Then that question. That simple, little, deeply philosophical and mind-altering question. (*pause*) Why are you doing your research? (*pause*) I quickly realized that I really didn’t know! Deep down I didn’t know what was drawing me to research. What was it about my life that had put me on this path? Why was I really doing research? Did it really have anything to do with what or how I was teaching? Or was it something more?

I just wanted to keep researching informal music as my dissertation topic? In my mind all the answers were in place, I just had to take some classes, learn the terminology and research process, and then put it all together. It was simple. So, I thought. The level of difficulty was more than I had ever imagined. The philosophy component of the PhD is real. Real difficult, and life changing. The depth of personal introspection was immense. Overwhelming at times. Made me feel sad about my childhood. Made me lose focus on my original dissertation topic. Made me ashamed of some of my teaching career. Made me re-evaluate relationships with my parents, immediate family, past students. Made me re-evaluate my teaching career. How did I



teach? Why did some students participate in my classes? Why did some students choose to not participate? Did I intentionally or unintentionally keep kids from my class? It made re-evaluate the music education system. Why do so many students not participate in public school music? What was keeping them out of our classrooms? Did something need to change?

*(with uneasiness and reflection)* I was not prepared for the level of philosophical and personal self-reflection, crippling self-doubt, shifts in identity...the complete reprogramming of your mind that is needed to discover your true research passion and to answer this damn question, "Why are you doing your research?"

*(more direct and focused)* Early in the qualitative process we learn the terms: Epistemological and Ontological. Big fancy words. Some of the first academic jargon to make sure we can fill up space in our articles, and demonstrate to other scholars that we know the vocabulary too, and can be part of the club. What they really mean is: How do we view the world and the way we learn about ourselves within this world? *(pause)* This was deep. I really was never an outwardly philosophical kind of guy. I had always just done what needed to be done, or seemed right at the time. If it was something my students needed, then I did it.

*(storyteller in fashion)* You see I used to teach group piano in a closet. *(pause)* That's right, the closet where we stored the choir robes and music. It was so cramped and uninviting. Extension cords hanging from the ceiling to bring power to the cheap, plastic, \$50 keyboards I had to use to teach piano. Claustrophobic conditions prevailed, surrounded by floor to ceiling closets and black hanging choir robes. Boxes full of other odds and ends, props, and decorations for variety shows, posters, and anything else you collect in a music program over time. Small 1950's metal frame windows with torn and dangling black paper curtains hung precariously from

their mounts, as we just hoped they made it one day without crashing down into our precious learning space.

I taught this class to seniors with no music background or interest in music at all for that matter. It was an...I need a credit to graduate kind of class. Many of the students actually thought it was about computers because it was called keyboarding in the enrollment guide. Needless to say, this was not the most productive class for the students. Mostly African American, Latino, and Southeast Asian students sitting quietly and comatose with \$5 radio shack headphones on their heads. You know the kind with the earpieces hanging loosely like a poor man's version of the secret service. Wires and earpieces either allowed the kids to hear, or it shocked them because they were falling apart. We played, and I use that term very loosely, scales and old songs that were completely foreign to them. Mostly old nursery rhymes and folk tunes. I was unmotivated to teach, and the students were not motivated to learn.

I never broke my teaching down into philosophical constructs, and investigated the influences and social impacts my choices may have had on the social and identity development processes of my students or me as a teacher and human. After teaching this group piano class for two years I decided we needed a change. *(with amazement and fulfillment)* The hallways of our school were full of music.

Rappers

Poets

Guitars

Kids writing in journals, with headphones listening to music

Random students playing the piano in my classroom

There was so much musical talent being wasted. Why weren't we teaching these students?

I quickly designed and implemented a class I called commercial music. (*beat*) We can learn about the music industry! Take these students and have them learn about what they are actually interested in.

Hip-Hop

Acoustic singer songwriters

Dj'ing

Music business

Audio production

(*with energy and passion*) Practical music based on the needs and interests of the student population in my school. My teaching in commercial music, about the music business, was more productive and valuable to the learning needs of my students than a group piano class that had to be held in the choir robe storage closet. It was what was best for my students and the school. I didn't need a PhD to figure this out.

(*reflective*) But why was I really drawn to teach in the schools I taught? Why was I drawn to the type of students that I taught? What was it about how I see the world? My views on student learning. (*pause*) What was it about my childhood and my life experiences that really helped guide and direct my life and professional choices? I was going to have to face and address all those memories I had worked so hard to suppress. All the most uncomfortable, embarrassing, personal stories and experiences that shaped and developed my views on the world. These memories would lead me to re-examine my entire life and restructure the way I think about:

Teaching

Education

Society

Students

Family

Identity

Equity

Acceptance

Who I am

*(beat)*

My investigation into these personal stories would open a whole new world of views and beliefs on the assumptions we as educators and society may place on students considered at-risk. Investigations into how white privileges can inform the development of teacher identity. Possible barriers placed within the music education system to inhibit access and/or success for white male students. The explorations of these questions provide a wide array of possibilities for the future of music education. This was the answer to that question. I now had a direction and a deeply personal and meaningful dissertation. The journey was about to begin. *(lights fade)*

### **The fight**

*(DSC, actor stands in solitary spotlight. Projections of photos of living room in disorder, shadows of people fighting, shadows of people in hiding)*

TRAVIS *(Child Self)*

Grab

Punch

Throw

Crash

On the ground

Wrestling

Struggling to breath

Hands on neck

Kicking

Screaming

Chairs across the room

Table knocked over

This one is real

This one is worse

Why did he come home

Why didn't he just stay out

He didn't have to come home

This didn't have to happen

This one is real

Real bad

They may hurt each other

Brother

Dad

Mom

She's just yelling

She can't stop it

The resentment

The anger

The hatred

All coming out

The adoption

Not my son

Reminders of the past

Why don't you love me

Why did you adopt me

I need to stop this

I can't

Too little

Too young

Scream

Run

Close eyes

Push

Fall over

Tears

Red

Purple

Scrape

Scratch

Feelings

Never the same  
Can this be fixed  
What's next  
Go to bed  
Ignore  
Under the rug  
Didn't happen  
We are good  
We are normal  
We are family  
*(lights fade)*

### **Crash of reality**

*(DSL, light rise) (The start of this scene is performed from the various characters of MOTHER, TRAVIS, and DOCTOR by the single actor. It then moves to the perspective of Researcher Self. X-rays and other medical pictures are projected, along with auto accidents and icy, wintery weather photos, photos of country roads, farm lands, oil pumps, and hedge rows)*

TRAVIS *(researcher self, reflective)*

To this day, I get chills. Every time. Every single time I drive by. I must have driven by hundreds of times, and I still get chills. Flashes. Flashes of that day. What it may have looked like. How scary it had to have been. Did it look like something from the movies? This spot, on a small rural country road. A road with a three to four foot drop off on each side of the road leading directly into a drainage ditch. One side, the always plowed and often flooded field of the

poor determined farmer who never gives up growing crops here. The other side screened with gnarled and twisted, dense rows of hedge. Blocking the view of the tiny home and farm, both left a mystery. It happened right before the railroad tracks. The tracks everyone in the county knows. The tracks you change lanes in and slow down, because the bump will launch your car into orbit. And the tracks right before the red barn. The famous red barn with the white polka dots. Such a quaint and peaceful little barn, always reminding you of a time past. Wondering what stories may have come from that barn. What did it know? The smells of the road always filled with sour and sulfur. All bubbling up from the miniature oil tank and pump, our determined farmer used to possibly supplement their decaying crops. This spot in the road. The road everyone knew. This spot still flashes in my mind. The crunching sound of bending and twisting metal, the shattering of broken glass. The screech and piercing squeal of the tires. The slow-motion silence of the impact. Watching with fear, as your life changes in an instant.

MOTHER (*fearful and in obvious emergency*)

Oh my god! Hurry your father and brother were in an accident. It's bad.

TRAVIS (*researcher self, played straight*)

This phone call. This event. This accident. It changed our family forever.

DOCTOR (*with calm and directness*)

Your son and his friend are going to be ok. They were not in the direct path of the other car. Your husband on the other hand.

MOTHER

What? Is it bad? How bad is it?

DOCTOR



First, he is going to be fine in the long run. He is banged up pretty bad. He has a broken pelvis, and some other contusions to his back and side. He is going to be in the hospital for a few days. We need to observe him and make sure everything is going to be ok. There may be some nerve and deep tissue damage that is going to cause him severe chronic pain. (*lights change and actor crosses DCS*)

TRAVIS (*perspective of researcher self*)

My dad was tough. I had watched him go to work with broken hands, feet, ankles. You name it; if it could be broken my dad had broken it. Surely this couldn't be as bad as the doctor said. He was tough; he would be back on his feet, he always did.

He spent a week in the hospital, before they released him to come home. Home would never be the same. There was something different about this injury. He never fully recovered. He tried to act like he did. And he may have recovered as fully as possible from the physical injuries, but he never fully recovered from the mental damage of this accident.

I didn't know what was different about this at the time. We had always struggled for money. Moving from California to Kansas was a difficult decision for my parents. I don't think they ever moved from California in their minds and memories. California was a time and place that represented a better time for us. For one thing, my parents had jobs. My dad was a construction worker. But in the 80's that was a good job. A union job. That guaranteed decent money and work. I don't remember him struggling for work there.

For my mother California was everything. It was her identity. She was a different person there. She was a strong career woman. She had a good job in sales. She sold candy and cigarettes! What else could a kid want? There were piles of candy and cigarettes in the trunk of the car. It was like opening a treasure chest full of sweet treats and tantalizing forbidden fruits.

My brother and I would sneak candy and tobacco products all the time. Smoke strange flavored cigarettes. Eat large amounts of chocolate covered whatever was there. Brains swirling, and mouths going numb from the nicotine, stomachs turning from the mass quantities of candy devoured in a mad rush to not get caught. I never realized until later that the candy and tobacco was in the car because it was too old and outdated to be sold in stores. That should have told us something about the way we felt. But we didn't care. We were being kids. What kid wouldn't partake in all that temptation?

For my mom this job meant everything. She was independent. She was in control of her life. She was able to make decisions and contribute to the company, her family, and feel like she had something to contribute to society. Moving to Kansas destroyed my mother. She lost all of that control. She was no longer ever able to really contribute. Not in a way that ever really satisfied her. She lost a major part who and what defined her. Some hope they don't lose a box of clothes or dishes. She had lost her identity in the move. My mother lost the very essence of who she was as a person. She became something that made her desolate and adrift.

She had always struggled with bouts of depression and waves of manic joy. Even in California. There were times when mom went to the hospital to get some rest. I never fully understood what any of this meant as a child. Why did she have to go the hospital to rest? Was it something I did? Was it the family? Was it the fighting between her and dad? The fighting with my brother? The large quantities of wine she drank on a regular basis? I was a kid who did not asked questions. I was quiet, and just went with the flow. I tried hard to not be seen. So, I never asked my questions. My memories of my mother's time of rest were me, my brother, and my dad climbing into the hide-a-bed couch and sleeping. This is a memory that will forever be etched in my mind. Laying in the dark with my dad's arm around me. Telling me she is going

to be fine. She just needs some time and rest. It wouldn't be until I was in my thirties that I realized the extent of my mother's mental illness.

It something we as a family had been in denial for quite some time. My mother was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. This helped explain all those moments of extreme up and downs my brother and I experienced as children. The fighting between my parents. The drinking and the drug usage just masked the realities. I had always thought that all the dysfunction was due to the drinking and drug use. Now I know it was due to use of the wrong type of drug use. To constant denial and excuses. To shifting blame to family members. To blaming finances. To blaming Kansas.

Once we moved to Kansas my mom was never able to hold a steady job. She moved from small office jobs, to retail stores, to a funeral home, to a grocery clerk, to unemployed. At the time of my father's accident my mother was not working. My mother has not been able to hold a job for over 20 years. This inability to hold a job and help provide for her family devastated her. She was no longer able to provide. To contribute. She was there for us to make sure we had what my brother and I needed, and to get us where we needed to go. But she was not able to provide in the way she wanted. This put a huge strain on my parents.

My dad was the only source of money. This accident prevented him from being able to fully provide for the family. We had no insurance, or very little. If we had any, it was not enough to really make a difference. He suffered permanent and severe back pains from this accident. The car had hit directly on his door. My brother and dad worked together. My brother was in the car, and his best friend was driving. My dad was in the back seat. It was in the winter, so the roads were slick with ice. They were all driving to work and lost control. Going to too fast according to dad. It was my brother and his friend's fault. They never pay attention,

and drive too fast. The small car slid out of control and directly into the path of an oncoming rural postal worker and his jeep. The jeep hit directly into the door my dad was sitting next too. The accuracy in which it hit my father's seat was like a heat seeking missile. A direct hit. Out of control the car slid into a ditch and my father was pinned in the seat. The emergency crews were able to remove my dad from the car and transported him to the hospital.

Once he came home things were never the same. There was something different. I could never put my finger on the exact problem, but it was different. Things never got better. There was constant pain for my dad. There were constant worries about doctor visits and paying doctor bills. Being angry about the lack of disability coverage from the state. But more than the concrete realities of a devastating accident and injury has on the day to day financial ability to take of your family, there was something different in my father. He was angry. He was depressed. I think my parents did their best to not let it affect the family, but it did. They tried their best to move on like nothing was wrong, and that we would make it through just fine. But it never got better. The money issues were worse. The fighting was worse.

By this time I was in high school. I was able to make a few more connections on what was really going on. I was seeing the drug use was becoming more of a distraction for me. My parents had been frequent and substantial drug users for as long as I could remember. They were California hippies from the 60's, what else should I have expected. Smoking pot was normal. At any moment you could find a stash in a little round tin under the couch. The same kind of tin you would use to give your new neighbors cookies at Christmas. Our tin never held cookies. I would even get it for them, when it was time to roll. It was normal. I never thought it was different. I didn't notice any of my friends parents smoking pot. But it never occurred to me that they were really doing something illegal. It didn't really bother me when I was little.

After the accident however, it was different. Now that I was older, I began to see that the drug use was becoming an issue. We struggled every month to pay rent. To keep the lights on. Keep the heat and electricity on. We always only had one car. One car that actually ran. But there was always money for pot. I couldn't understand their priorities. Why would they take what little money we had and spend it on that? I was positive there was a better way to spend the money. But the weird thing was, we still had food. We still had clothes for school. And I had an instrument. Of all the things, they bought me a saxophone. They always made that payment. They always made sure I went to music camps, leadership camps, etc. Of all the financial struggles my family had we always had money for pot and music.

The fighting between my parents and my parents and my brother only intensified after the accident. My dad always blamed my brother for the accident. The constant stress just divided my parent even more. The constant stress and battles only drove me more away from my family and more into music. Music provided me with an escape from the chaos. Music was how I could deal with the stress. When playing music, I was able to go to another place in my mind. It allowed me to forget. To look forward. To make my own path. A path to a new future. A future different from the past of my parents. To a new possibility of something different. I didn't know what would or could be different, but I knew there was a possibility. The possibility to be happy. To be in control of my own happiness and future. To not fall down the road of my parents. Music instilled in me a drive to create my own journey. A journey in where I had no idea where I would end up, but a journey that would take me away. I wanted to break the cycle, and not end up like my parents. *(lights fade)*

## **My first love's name was Percy**

*(UCS. Low light on actor. Music of Horkstowe Grange begins to play. Video screens show pictures of Percy Grainger and the English Countryside.)*

*(a state of bliss takes over entire mind and body, slowly as if almost out of reality)* It hovers over the room and gently envelopes my soul. Gently and with great care it wraps around me like a loving mother swaddling her newborn child. The warmth of emotions spread throughout my body like the drinking of warm tea on a cold winter's day. Everything disappears and I am alone. I tingle. Every hair on my body is standing at attention. The chills dance across my neck. The security. The warmth. The soothing calm. The tingle of energy and anticipation of what's to come and what can be. It grounds me.

What power

What impact

It brings clarity

It brings focus

I can escape

I can see future

I can see hope

I can see comfort

*(holding self like water taking over your body)* Let it flow over me like a gentle flowing stream. I drink it in with every bit of energy to fill my body, spirit, and soul. Like a traveler through the dessert searching to quench an unyielding thirst, I have found my oasis. It absorbs into my body. I feel reborn. As it passes through me, I become whole and complete. My never-ending stream.

This is possibility

This is my future

This is my calling

This is the light that guides me home

Gives me the promise of what I can become

*(music fades, and lights rise on stage)*

*(cross DCS, to audience, back to reality. Projections display Hope, Promise, Escape)*

This was the experience I had the first time I had an emotional connection to music. The first time I truly realized the power music can have on your life. This was all so new. I didn't know what these feelings and emotions were. There had always been so much turmoil in my life. My poor choices with friends. My parents and home life. I didn't think this feeling of comfort was possible.

The music was Horkstowe Grange, the second movement to Percy Grainger's Lincolnshire Posy. I had never heard anything like that before. Such sweet, tender music. It was gut wrenchingly emotional. The music just took over my entire body. How could music make me feel this way?

Until this point music was just another thing to do. I thought I kind of liked it. I never practiced. But I did enjoy the music. There was always something that kept me playing. My parent's encouragement. The looks and smiles that came across their face when they saw me play or march down the street in a parade. *(pause)* But mostly, it was the music. Performing Grainger was the moment it became clear. *(beat)* I was in tears and my skin was covered in chills. How could something that says nothing. That has nothing to see. Nothing to touch. Make me feel this much. *(beat)* This flood of emotions was taking over my body. Everything

that I have been holding back for so long was starting to come out. The bullying. The fighting. The arguing. The drinking. The drugs. The lack of stability. This was the first time I was able to feel who I really was. How I really felt. Who I could be.

Figure 2.7 If I Were Real...





*(beat)* Music allowed me to explore emotions that I didn't think I was allowed to show or feel. It allowed me to become the person and individual I wanted to be. Caring, emotional, and passionate. The feeling and ability to connect with these emotions was a valuable aspect of my identity. I always thought I had to be tough or be involved in unsafe behaviors because that's what was expected. My friends made me think I had to be tough. I had to drink. Music and emotion was for pussies. *(pause)* The lifestyle of my parents, and my home life, only fueled my desire to act out. This moment of clarity was the establishment of stability. *(music fades in)* It unlocked the door and opened up a whole new future. Music gave me guidance. Gave me a sense of purpose. All of the behaviors with my friends. The troubles at home. They didn't matter here. None of it mattered. This was an escape. I was in control. In control of my emotions. In control of my behavior. And I realized if I wanted to break this cycle of destructive choices, music was my way out. *(lights fade, and music fades out)*

### **Musical brightness**

TRAVIS *(Teacher Self)*

*(DSL. Intense single spot focuses on actor. Projections of words ... Music of traditional band, choir, and orchestra music begins playing with intermittent snippets of Hip Hop, Gospel, La Banda, Mariachi, and Rock to interrupt the flow of the traditional)*

*I want to be in music*

*Music is a part of MY life*

*A valued aspect in MY home*

*Records*

*Beatles*

*Stones*

*Windows shaking*

*Always on*

*Isn't this normal*

*Valued in OTHER communities*

*Why don't THEY play*

*Social classes*

*Racial communities*

*What is keeping them out*

Figure 2.8 In the Moment



*Why is MY class so bright*

*My parents don't have money*

*My mom can't hold a job*

*We live pay check to pay check*

*Why do I still have an instrument?*

*What is the difference?*

*Barriers in OUR way, WE still gain access*

*No one from the outside telling US no*

*YOU don't have access*

*YOU don't belong in OUR group*

*There is no history of US being told WE are DIFFERENT*

*I never struggled for basic social acceptance*

*I never struggled for basic social equity*

*White, brown, black, red, yellow*

*We all have struggled for money, love, peace*

*At home*

*With one's self*

*But WE don't struggle for*

*Equity*

*Acceptance*

*Peace*

*At the bank, work, grocery store*

*My brightness refers to MY POTENTIAL*

*My brightness refers to MY INTELLECT*

*My brightness refers to MY PERSONALITY*

*NOT MY SKIN COLOR*

*My barriers may be similar, but they are very different*

*My barriers keep OTHERS out*

*WE open our gates for visits*

*But THEY are not allowed to stay too long*

*WE don't want THEM to feel too comfortable*

*WE want THEM to visit*

*Give US a sample of who THEY are*

*But then WE ask THEM to leave*

*WE feel good about our acceptance and equity*

*WE have done what is right*

*Why don't the OTHERS understand?*

*Don't WE do enough?*

*WE just had THEM over*

*WE celebrated THEIR culture*

*WE were equitable*

*WE were caring*

*WE now understand*

*WE empathized*

*WE celebrated*

*Sometimes the celebrations last a month*

*WE have the entire year to take for granted*

*To blindly BUILD BARRIERS*

*To unknowingly BUILD BARRIERS*

*I want to be in music*

*I want to learn about the music I HEAR AT HOME*

*I want to celebrate the music I GREW UP WITH*

*I want to play the music I LISTEN TO*

*WHAT IS THIS?*

*Flute*

*Clarinet*

*Trombone*

*Tuba*

*Timpani*

*Concert band*

*Mixed chorus*

*Marching band*

*Music appreciation*

*Dead white guys*

*What are the funny wigs?*

*How does this RELATE?*

*This is all so DIFFERENT*

*WHERE IS*

*Hip-hop*

*Salsa*

*Turntables*

*Guitaron*

*Clave*

*Congas*

*Gospel*

*La Banda*

*Rock*

Figure 2.9 Rock Shop



*We have that*

*For a week*

*In an arrangement*

*We watch a video*

*When we have enough interest*

*After we play the traditional standard music*

*The music we HAVE TO KNOW*

*The music that is QUALITY*

*The music that is ACCEPTED*

*The music that will PREPARE YOU for a future*

*The music we are TRAINED TO TEACH*

*After we learn to READ NOTES*

*After we learn FINGERINGS*

*After we learn ARIAS*

*After we learn MOTETS*

*After we learn MARCHES*

*We already have JAZZ BAND*

*After school you can join*

*gospel club*

*step club*

*mariachi club*

*spoken word club*

*You don't have to*

*Drive your siblings home*  
*Work to help pay rent*  
*Ride the city bus home*  
*Worry about your next meal*  
*Finding a safe place to sleep*

*WE give YOU the chance to*  
*Celebrate in SILENCE*  
*Behind CLOSED DOORS*  
*OUTSIDE the school day*  
*On your OWN TIME*  
*WE have a month to do it in class*  
*With OUR arrangements*  
*WE will let YOU play with US*  
*Then YOU have to GO BACK HOME*  
*(lights fade)*

### **Takin' it to church**

TRAVIS *(Teacher Self)*

*(USL. Single spot on actor. Projections with Churches, Gospel Choirs, Children wanting access to education and schools. Music of gospel piano music fills the space.)*



Figure 2.10 Takin' it to Church



Takin' it to church Mr. Hale

It was amazing

What skill

What musicality

What technique

So much talent

Never seen

Talent

You

No idea

I do

In church

I can't

Don't know how to play

That kind of music

Don't know how to read your

Notes

Rhythms

Don't sound right

I play by ear

What I hear or feel

My family

My roots

Who are you

You don't play

You don't play

With me

In my class

Too many conversations

Too often

Too many talented

Students

Souls

Spirits

Lost

Forgotten

Falling through cracks

Left out

Disconnected

Hidden barriers

Access

Success

Structure

Curriculum

What could I provide for him?

Shouldn't I want to teach all the students at my school?

What could I offer these students?

Meet their

Needs

Desires

Interests

Emotions

Nothing

A club

A class

A safe space

To explore

To celebrate

To share

Their love

Their talents

Their passion

Of music

Take them to church

Open my eyes

My ears

My heart

Walk the hallways

Guitars

Rap

Acoustic

Authors

So much talent

Not part of our group

They don't fit the mold

They don't belong

Why the barriers in place

Access

Success

Structure

Curriculum

Who makes the rules?

White

Male

Society

Institutions

My system doesn't provide

Access

Equity

Heritage

Celebrate

Reflect

Their culture

My students

My school

Take down the barriers

Access

Success

Structure

Curriculum

Whose rules

No rules

Break rules

Create a community

Of acceptance

Of equity

Of interest

Of inclusion

Create access to

Hip-hop

Mash ups

Country

Folk

Latin

Alternative

Metal

Create access to

New possibilities

New templates

New models

For the future

For music

For education

For the others

For everyone

Not just us

Not just me

For all

*(lights fade)*

## **Sticks and stones and SRS**

TRAVIS *(Teacher Self)*

*(UCS. Band camp is starting the classroom is busy with students.)*

(to students as they enter the room. Atmosphere is lively and upbeat) Welcome back. How was your summer? Hey, Hey, glad to see you. High five! Hey, I said high five! That's right. Come on don't act like you are above this. (change in mood as teacher notices for the first time) Oh my God! (with specific focus, and to assistant) Do you see that? What the hell happened? So many of them. They have to hurt. (directly to assistant) Go get the paperwork out of my desk. I am going to figure out how to talk to her. (back to self, examines and stares intently) It's like they are in some kind of pattern. How did that happen? So many. Red. Blue. Purple. Round. The skin is raised. Why would she wear that shirt? They show. She's not even trying to hide it.

I hate making this phone call. I hate this part. This is the most difficult conversation. Will she trust me? Causes so many problems. Will it be worse? What happens when they get home? It's my job. I have to report. I can't believe she still came.

(talking discretely to girl in classroom) Why don't you step into my office real quick? I just need to talk to you before we start rehearsal. Just a couple of questions. (now alone in office with student) How are you? Ok? Good. Everything good? Yeah? Good. Excited to be back? Good? (beat) Why did I ask to talk to you? Well, I need to start by letting you know that I am here if you need to talk. And, I need to let you know that whatever you say in here, I really have to listen. If you say something I feel is important or serious, (beat) I have to report it. (student reacts, concerned and confused) It's my job. I am legally obligated to report what I hear. If you tell me something and I don't report it, I could lose my job. This is serious. This is never easy. So, I am just going to ask. (awkward pause) Are you ok? (beat) I know you answered that already. But is everything ok? Are you hurting? Does it hurt? I mean. Do they hurt? (pause) The marks. On your back. All the marks on your back. All the bruises. Where did they come from? (pause) Who hit you? (long pause, student is confused)

What do I mean? Who hit you? The marks. Your back. It's covered. Your back is covered in bruises. Who hit you? They couldn't have popped up from nowhere. You know you can talk to me. You can tell me what happened. (pause) I am worried. That's a lot of bruises. (pause) It's fine? What do you mean? Who did this? (pause) It's normal? This isn't normal. No kid should be coming to class covered in bruises. And then just say its normal. (pause) Don't worry about it? I have to? You're covered in bruises. I have to worry about it. You're my student. This is first hour. If I let this go, and another teacher sees it, they would wonder how you made out of your last class. Who did this to you? I am going to have call SRS and



make a report. They make it as easy of a process as possible. I hope it doesn't make it worse at home. Do I need to call someone for you? (pause) Who did this? You still haven't said. (long pause) (shock) Your mom? Why? Why did she hit you so much? (pause) She didn't? You don't have to lie. I can see the bruises. We can get help. (pause) She didn't hit you? What caused all the bruises? (long pause and look of confusion on face appears) It's normal. It's part of your culture? Don't they hurt? This is something your family does? On a regular basis? Heats the rocks on the stove, and lays them on your back, and then covers them with a glass? That is supposed to make you feel better? (pause) I had no idea. I have never heard of anything like that before. I am so sorry for making such a big deal out of this. I hope I didn't embarrass you. I am embarrassed. I hope you understand. I had to ask. I have seen to many other students, I couldn't ignore it. I had to ask.

She was just a student. She wasn't Asian. The possibility of those bruises being a cultural aspect never came across my mind. She was a student who needed my attention and help. What does this moment say about me as a teacher? Was I culturally insensitive? Should I have known better? Should I have considered her racial and cultural background before proceeding with the awkward interrogation? Being colorblind tells us that we see all of our students as equals. We don't see them for their race, gender, or any other background they may bring with them each day. We don't attempt to provide any one race more benefits or provide special treatment over another. Is this good or bad? Should we automatically assume a student of color is going to have more difficulties at home? That they are going to be some pre-conceived model of what we (white people in charge) project onto their race. These are two ends of a continuum. We can completely ignore any of the uniqueness that all students bring with

them because of their cultural and social backgrounds or we can provide special treatment and spotlight each individual student because of the same cultural and social backgrounds.

As a middle class white male, how was I to know what those marks meant to that girl? I could not have been aware of the cultural significance of hot stones in the Asian culture. That they believe the hot stones help draw out toxins from the body and spirit. I could have ignored the situation because she was Asian. I could have not wanted to put her on the spot and possibly draw attention to an uncomfortable situation, because I may upset her. How do we find an acceptable place on the continuum of colorblindness?

### **Jekyll and Hale**

*(DSL, lights come up. Photographs of self-portraits and teaching to illustrate my personality contrasts)*

*(Researcher Self)*

*(with sarcastic excitement)* I was number six!

*(more direct and contemplative)* Part of me was proud. Part of me was embarrassed. I wasn't quite sure how to take it. I had made the high school graduation bucket list. Things to do before graduating. The only thing was... (beat) The thing to do... (beat) Get yelled at by Hale.

It's time to be completely honest about my teaching. To tell the complete and true story. The good and the bad. Students had cried. Students had quit. Student were belittled. They either loved me, or hated me.

I had been quoted that "I will eat your souls!" in the school newspaper.

"If you don't like what I'm doing, then quit!"

The principal had many issues with the way I ran my classroom. He told me I was not a good teacher. He told called me a racist. Parents and students had issues with me too.

Reflecting back, (beat) I can see truth in all of these statements, accusations, and actions. There were times, (pause) I was a poor teacher. I was blind to the needs of some of my students. I was unable to control my anger. My frustration with the circumstances in which I was teaching. All the petty, and unfortunately, human aspects of being a music teacher played a role in my extreme ups and downs in my teaching personality. Lack of talent. Lack of administrative support. Lack of money. Lack of equipment. (beat)

In my heart, I knew I was a good teacher. I was caring. I was thoughtful. I was dedicated to the success and well-being of my students.

Figure 2.11 Hale Ya!



Just not all of them, and not all the time. I didn't know why or what triggered my apparent split personalities. There were some students I would go to the ends of the earth to ensure they were safe. There were others that I would instantly snap and have zero patience.

(pause) Why wasn't I able to be empathic or sympathetic to all my students. It had nothing to do with their playing ability. The color of their skin. Their home or economic status. I was an equal opportunity angry teacher.

Figure 2.12 Jekyll



In the midst of my teaching, there were some students who I felt just didn't deserve my time. (beat)

“Don't breathe my air.”

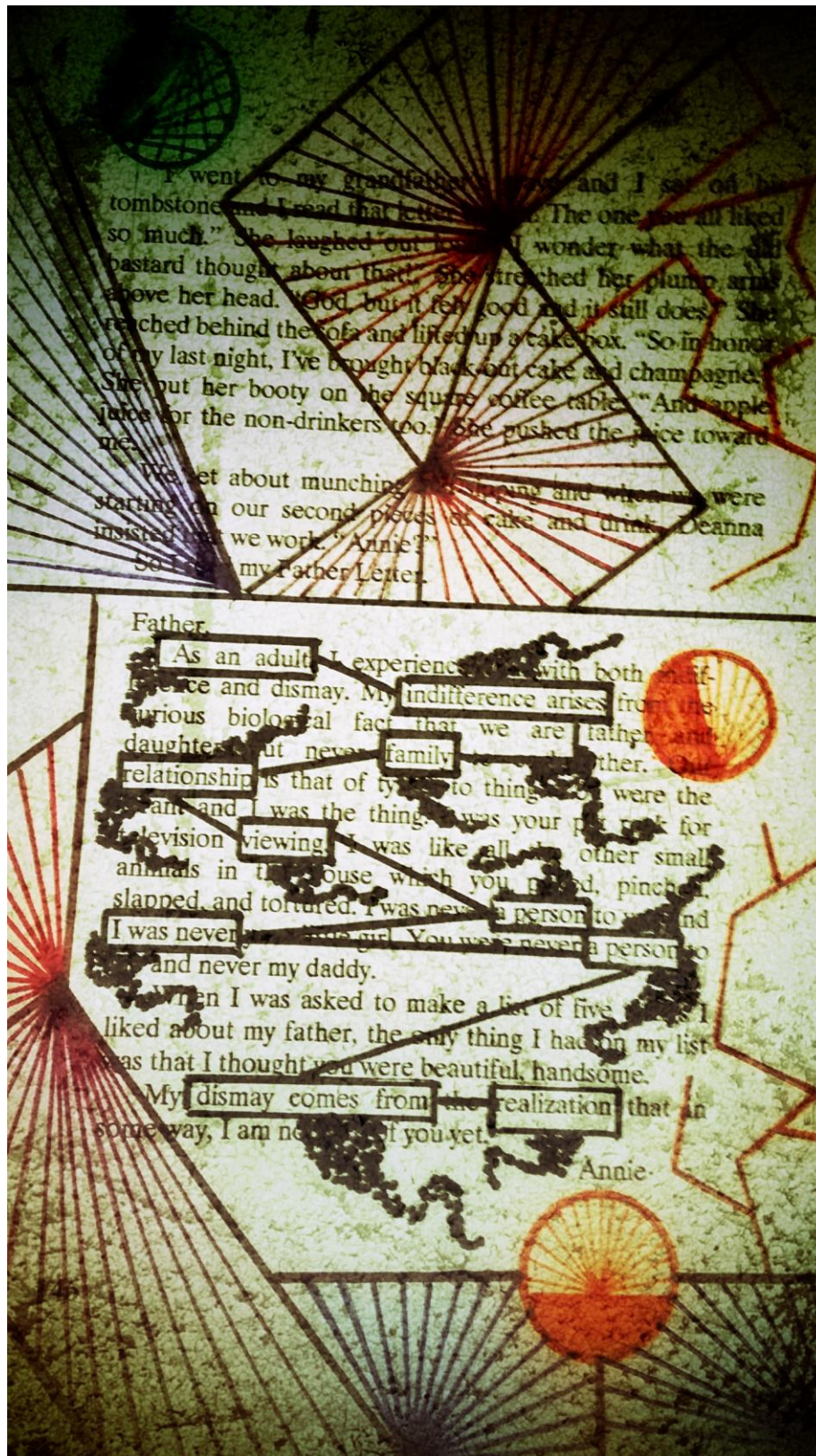
“Don't waste my time.”

I can't believe I said this to students. What was I thinking? Nobody deserves to be spoken to that way. These are some of my lowest and most disgusted moments as an educator. Who was I? I hated this version of me. This heartless, rude, and vile human being. I didn't, and still don't recognize this person. They say you teach as you were taught. Did I learn this behavior from my own experiences? Maybe. My high school teacher was also a very passionate teacher. I remember times of anger on the podium. Statements made to friends and classmates, I felt were over the top. But, this couldn't be the only place this has seeped into my consciousness as a teacher. Through this research process I may have come across another answer. My own childhood. The very reasons and experiences I had gone through were also partly responsible for my Jekyll and Hyde identity as a teacher.

I had spent my entire life pretending to be something and someone I was not. Creating these masks that hid my true identity. Was I playing into this perception of the loveable, grumpy teacher? Was it something I was just used to doing? It was expected of me to be the teacher who yelled, got mad, but also saw potential where others wouldn't look, but also the teacher that inspired many of his students to become teachers themselves. Again, a part of my life defined by contradiction.



Figure 2.13 Realization



## Chapter 3 - Epilogue – Unpacking the journey

The search for answers begins. Discovery of what was learned from the journey taken through narrative needs unpacked. What do I bring home from the journey? Research. Writing. Storytelling. Narrative. Poetry. Art. Reflections. Introspection. Doubt. Fear. Discovery. Communication. Music. Education. Teaching. Identity. The journey creates more questions than answers. Is it possible to ever find the truth of our reality? Or who we have become?

Where do I go next?

Who cares?

Are we able to learn anything from the stories told?

What did I learn from this experience?

Who cares about any of this?

What can any of this add to the future of music education?

What will this journey tell me?

The research. The writing processes. The artistic exploration of identity. The personal experience of writing my story. Telling my most troubling moments as an adolescent, the reflections of my childhood, the connections to my professional career as an educator, and my development into an academic scholar; these are the moments when autoethnography and arts-based research become more than an autobiographical collection of stories with craft projects. Now is the time to unearth the underlying human and academic relationships of these stories, examine with a critical whiteness perspective, the manner in which the reflective analysis enhances the current scholarly research in the field of music education. Guided by the overarching interrogation on how one develops their identity as a music educator, academic researcher, human, as well as, the examination of the curricular structures guiding access within

music education. The exploration of my overall identity development, my teaching career, my scholarly research development, and their possible influences within one another. What do the stories tell us about privilege in education? The development of music education curriculums, by primarily privileged white upper-middle class and educated males. What are these impacts and influences on the access of music education for all students: red, white, yellow, black or brown? As well as, the impact and role our musical communications and music education experiences play in the development of who we become as music educators, the social and familial support systems inherently embedded within our cultures and education systems.

The following will serve as the exploration into the discovery of any potential answers to these questions. The areas of which I will focus my analysis will include identity development along with white privilege and access in music education. Probing the possibilities in which we may be able to broaden the access of music education to more students; provide a more adaptive and evolving music curriculum, supporting broader access for all students, while enhancing our individual teaching in the classroom supporting higher-quality instruction for our students. This the beginning of the “philosophical quest” (Conle, 2000) of discovery in the exploration and interrogation of the narratives, to understand the origins and the explorations of context and social interactions. The discovery of what may be learned and what conclusions may be drawn from this personal interrogation.

\*\*\*

*Decoding,*

*Deciphering,*

*Words and phrases,*

*Quips and quotes,*



*Commas and semi-colons,  
Content and context.  
Listening to the calls of the sirens of the past,  
Hoping for clues to the future.  
Memories, visions, recollections,  
Clouded and obscured by,  
Pain, fear, shame, regret.  
Moving forward,  
The soft glow of future's hope,  
Shines through.  
Probing and sifting,  
Clues are unearthed,  
Exposing the truth and reality.  
Our behaviors, decisions, attitudes, and beliefs,  
Molded into the shape of now.*

\*\*\*

Interpretations. Conclusions. Analysis. Clarification. Construction of meaning from my past experiences. Meanings that are supposed to inform my present and future. Messy and fuzzy. Complex and dense, the unpacking begins. Interpretations should mirror the complexity of the journey rather than suggest we are able to infer real and concrete meaning (Wolcott, 2001). The possibility of answers to the above questions are now to be deliberated and discussed. Will the data serve as the mirror to reflect meaning? This is the point in the research process of the merging of the “scholar-self with the artist-self” (Leavy, 2015, p. 3). This process

of writing and discovery is long and arduous. Varying levels of writing, reflecting, processing, questioning, listening, and crafting all create a contradicting world of confusion and harmony.

Chaos between artist, researcher, human, and reality.

Figure 3.1 Process



As I sift through the years, weeks, days, and hours of chaos, I begin to gaze upon a new reality and identity. A new comprehension of past realities and identities. Through my personal narratives, poems, photographs, art work, and theatrical explorations, my new identity begins to take shape. Personal narratives can identify discourses, voices, and interrogate particular words locating gaps within the past to inform the future (Riessman, 2008). Gaps in my identity. Gaps in my teaching practice. Gaps within the music education community. Through the open flirtation with the data, I have been able to develop and shape the hope for possibility and change.

Utilizing basic qualitative coding methods, the “essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story,” I have extracted common threads that are able to “organize and group” the data (Saldana, 2013). The “analysis of the narrative data” served as the primary grounding of my analysis, “one in which concepts are inductively derived from the data...developing concepts from the data rather than imposing previous theoretically derived concepts” (Polkinghorn, 1995, p. 13). This analysis process allowed for an open mind and heart to allow the narrative to speak freely.

As the data represents multi-faceted and multi-media approaches to art-based research, other varieties of analysis were employed to provide the most complete picture possible. Methods for poetic inquiry and visual arts-based participatory methods (Leavy, 2015), and dramaturgical coding (Saldana, 2013) allowing for the art to serve as both data and representation of the data. Creating analysis that questions the status quo. Rejecting the sterilization of generalizable research. Calling to action, the voice of the participant and the researcher to explore the accepted human condition and social constructs that informs our place within the social fabric. Analysis that becomes a living and breathing document able to adapt

with time. “Creating a unique look into the human condition, thereby expanding our understanding of the human condition” (Leavy, 2015). Interpreting, inferring, and translating narrative, monologue, poetry, photographs, and artistic data creates a varied spectrum within the analysis process. Leading to a personal subjective relationship with the data. As we experience the data it shifts and moves, creating a mosaic of personal experiences and interpretations. Reflections within the analysis that reflect directly back to the data.

### **Communicating identity**

*Identity...*

*I have known the paralyzing fear of identity,*

*Fear of what may be and what once was,*

*Snapshots of memories set in decrepit and decaying frames of the past,*

*Childhood of implied happiness masked behind scornful anger,*

*Adolescence searching for truth, suppressing realities,*

*Adulthood blindly moving through the darkness of avoidance,*

*Truths and falsehoods cling to our bodies with the weight of expectation and failure.*

*All we have known, shattered and left in desolate, tattered ruins,*

*Transforming, transitioning, transmuting through reconstruction,*

*Masons of new truths, altered realities,*

*Architects of a clearer, coherent blue print, perception of new self,*

*Design our ever-evolving, ever-developing, ever-changing stories,*

*I have known the crippling pain, soothing comfort, liberation of identity.*

\*\*\*

*Where do I fit in? How do I see myself? How do others see me? How and which type of experiences; personal, familial, musical, have shaped and developed my views?*

*Steering my choices and behaviors as an educator, husband, and father. Questions that have haunted me my entire life and continue to ruminate in my mind today, guiding my current investigations into identity and the role music has played in its development.*

*Now I peel back the layers of narrative to begin the discovery of my identity. I am more than a teacher. I am more than a musician. I am a combination of all my experiences.*

*Musician. Teacher. Son. Confidant. Brother. Counselor. Victim. Survivor. Identities that shape and mold an ever-evolving sculpture of me. Shifting clay through my fingers.*

*Smoothing the edges. Crafting. Building. Constructing. Manipulating the corners, shapes, images, perceptions of what, of who, of how we want the public, our students, our family to see who we are.*

\*\*\*

The concept of identity and the concept of self are multidimensional. Questions of doubt, belonging, and acceptance within our cultures and social structures are difficult to navigate. What can my story tell me about the teacher I have become? As educators, how can understanding our own story help us become the educators we are today and who we will continue to develop and evolve? How did the experience of my childhood and involvement within music education shape and mold who I have become as a music educator? How did the way I viewed my position in society effect my teaching? How did the groups and roles I identified as being a member impact the way I communicated my identity and beliefs through music experiences for my students? Could the contexts of my former educational experiences influence my being and becoming a music educator, artist, and musician? How can

understanding our own story help us become more effective and inclusive, or bring the possibility of change and evolution to music education?

I have taken a multi-layered exploration of my music education experiences and their influence on who I have become as an educator, situating my explorations within the concepts of communication theory of identity. Much of the research in music education within identity development derives from a social identity context. Stets and Burke (2000) state within social identity theory and identity theory, the self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications. Through the process of self-categorization or identification, an identity is formed. Much of the music researcher within the subject of identity focus with a narrow lens into such dichotomous choices as educator or musician, talent and ability (or loss thereof), ignoring the creation of identity from the personal relationships and enacted relationships with our musical experiences in relation to our familial, cultural, and social narratives.

Many music researchers within the subject of identity focus with a narrow lens into such dichotomous choices as educator or musician, talent and ability (or loss thereof). A 2004 special issue in *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* titled, *The Song is you: Symposium on musical identity*, revolved around the review of *Musical Identities*, edited by Raymond MacDonald, David Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell, which focused on the links among identity, music, and the process of musical education. Much of the current research within these articles, focuses on music's role in identifying with our roles with musicianship, as musicians, identity shift from musician to educator, or non-musicians also having musical identities (Frierson-Campbell, 2004; Hourigan, 2009; Lee, 2004; Parker, 2014; Roberts, 2004). Bowman (2004) calls for a deliberate and sustained effort to theorize identity in a broader and more nuanced

manner. It is my intention to further explore music's role in identity in more nuanced contexts.

Bowman (2004) goes on to state,

Musical identities are not only about the ways music-makers come to identify as musicians. Nor are they just about the ways that music influences and modifies pre-existent, non-musical identities. Musical identities are always also about who, through musical doings of all sorts (listening included) we are, and about whom we are in the process of becoming. The ways that studying, making, listening, and using music in particular, shape or alter both who and how we are – as evolving social and moral beings – are vitally important to the processes of musical education. (p. 5)

The exploration of identity in broader contexts, as well as, the role of music and music educational experiences in identity development requires a multi-layered approach and view. Lee (2004) To move research of music and identity beyond the views of a dichotomous option of individuals as music teacher or music performer, there is a need to explore both the roles of social and group contexts, the factors of how we as individuals see our own self, and the roles we play or are placed within social and group contexts. The ability to synthesize multiple points of views and factors to help explore identity development through a more focused lens may help discover a deeper level of human understanding, as Bowman calls, “evolving social and moral beings, calling for an alternate view of music and identity development” (Bowman, 2004, p.5).

A theoretical model of identity development must be utilized to help establish a foundation and reference, to investigate this broader concept of the implications of

musical education and musical experiences on the social and moral development of our identity, leading to our identity construction within various circumstances and moments of our lives. A solid and consistent theoretical model may help answer the various multitude of existential questions such as, who am I? What have I become? How did I become the person I am today? Who will I be in the future? How have we used our musical experiences to help shape and mold our identity of self as parents, husbands, teachers, humans? As musicians, we communicate our identity in any moment in time, based on how we perceive our place in groups and individuals, within the array of contexts of the narratives and memories of our past. As we evolve over time, we begin to reflect on how these various communications have allowed us to develop into our adulthood. Our professions. Our family structures. Our personal communication to others in our world of who we are as humans. Our current communication of our identity to the world.

Jung and Hecht (2004) state “identity not only defines an individual but also reflects social roles and relations through communication, social behavior is a function of identity through communication” (p. 266). People’s identities are asserted, defined, and/or changed in mutual communication activities. An individual’s identity is created through internalization and negotiation of ascribed identities by others (Jung & Hecht, 2004). The use of this communication theory of identity allows for the complex exploration of diverse and multi-faceted approaches to identity development and music. Hecht (1993b) states the study of identity “involves psychological, sociological, and anthropological perspectives, stressing the individual, role, social, and communal elements of identity” (p. 78), opening the door



for questioning how have the ways we used music as a form of communication in the expression and development of our identities. Mokros (2003) mentions identity is constituted by self-reflection of discourse and interaction, allowing for the use of personal narrative, subjectivity, and reflexivity to explore and discover the possible connections of music, communication, and identity.

Communication theory of identity embraces both the individual and social relations as loci of identity. In view of the close association between identity and communication, communication theory of identity posits several loci of identity integrating the individual (self), communication, relationships, and society (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Through the investigation of identity theories (role and social), along with communication concepts and theories of identity, Hecht (1993a) identified eight basic assumptions of identity and communication (p. 79). The assumptions are:

1. Identities have individual, social, and communal properties;
2. Identities are both enduring and changing;
3. Identities are affective, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual;
4. Identities have both content and relationship levels of interpretation;
5. Identities involve both subjective and ascribed meanings;
6. Identities are codes that are expressed in conversations and define membership in communities;
7. Identities have semantic properties that are expressed in core symbols, meanings, and labels;
8. Identities prescribe modes of appropriate and effective communication.

## **Musical communication of identity**

Identifying the ways in which our musical experiences interact and reflect the various frames is an integral aspect of this research. There is a need to examine music and identities as a form of communication. For many music educators the way we identify who we are, is heavily influenced by our musical experiences. Discovering a deeper understanding of this development may allow for a more introspective and in-depth view of our teaching practice, and educational decisions made at the curricular and policy levels. As a music educator and researcher, I have explored the personal, relational, and enactment frames as a concept of identity development in how musical experiences are utilized to help define how and who, we and others, attribute these characteristics and assumptions in our group experiences. The familial and social group in school music is usually an ensemble, attributing meaning to identity in which we create from our interaction with others, including our interactions with peer groups, within music ensembles, and within our familial structures. In a more concise and distinct view of these aspects of music and identity, I will examine and contextualize the frames of identity in the following ways in relation to the analysis of my narratives of music, education, family, and teaching.

The personal and relationship frames include the sources of expectations and motivations (looking into the childhood, stories that have guided us within our musical experiences) that establish the hierarchically ordered meanings attributed to the self as an object in a social situation, as well as, the exploration of the musical ensemble or simply the inclusion of musical activity in our lives and the lives of our students. Thus, allowing for the exploration of how we place ourselves within the social contexts of our lives, the values and meanings we place on our personal situations from an aspect of race and privilege, musical experiences, as well as, personal meanings ascribed to one's self by others within our social world.

The communal and enactment frames merge into a collaborative process of defining and locating identity within specified groups, such as whiteness and privilege. The enactment frame discusses how identities are emergent and ever-evolving and developing, or identities that are enacted within social behavior, symbols, and actions, such the power imbalance of teacher and student, institutionalized white privilege in the suppression or supplying of access within music education curriculums. These frames of identity are defined by both individual and societal views and lenses, the identities are hierarchically ordered social roles based on privilege and access within music education.

Through data analysis a connection has emerged within the journey through these specific frames of identity. It is through musical experiences that we develop our self-concept, personal image, and definition of the source of our personal motivations and expectations which develop our initial sense of identity. The development of these initial identities is based on our experience with music education. Through investigation of the data, the discussion moves into the relationship frame in which identity is mutually constructed with our relationship to self and others. Our relationships with family, friends, peers, as well as, the student teacher relationship that is developed through our personal experiences and our ability to co-construct our evolving identity as teacher with our students. This relationship can help lead us into the interrogation of music ensembles as social entities, and the power struggle between teacher and student, as well as, curriculum access. The combined frames of enactment and communal allows to view our identity as part of the messages or communication we interact with each day. The social behaviors and understanding of our past and its influence on the decision made by those in power (teachers and administrators) that allow true access to music education for all students.

\*\*\*

*Where do I fit in? How do I see myself? How do others see me? How and which type of experiences; personal, familial, musical, have shaped and developed my views? Steering my choices and behaviors as an educator, husband, and father. Questions that have haunted me my entire life and continue to ruminate in my mind today, guiding my current investigations into identity and the role music has played in its development. Now I peel back the layers of narrative to begin the discovery of my identity. I am more than a teacher. I am more than a musician. I am a combination of all my experiences. Musician. Teacher. Son. Confidant. Brother. Counselor. Victim. Survivor. Identities that shape and mold an ever-evolving sculpture of me. Shifting clay through my fingers. Smoothing the edges. Crafting. Building. Constructing. Manipulating the corners, shapes, images, perceptions of what, of who, of how we want the public, our students, our family to see who we are.*

\*\*\*

### **Framing the personal**

The understanding of our personal challenges, struggles, fears, and experiences of our past helps define and create who and how we currently see ourselves in society as well as the classroom. As teachers there is a drive to move forward; to connect our past identity with the search for current identity. We may look to our experiences with music and music education specifically for this discovery and connection with our personal past and our musical past so that we may better inform and/or influence our practices and behaviors as ever-growing educators. While also shifting the views of our own teaching practice and philosophy. The realization of practical and effective teaching methods and pedagogies to better educate our students in addition to the discovery of a deeper sense of empathy for a broader spectrum of our students in

our classroom. Fostering deeper, more meaningful, and impactful relationships and educational experiences for our students.

\*\*\*

*My journey through my past to attempt to discovery of my true self led me down many twisted and tangled paths.*

*Paths of regret.*

*Paths of shame.*

*Paths of fear.*

*Paths of doubt.*

*Paths of Bullying.*

\*\*\*

Figure 3.2 Path on 3<sup>rd</sup>



The path of bully was prominent and pronounced within my writing. Reflecting on my past experiences as a child led me to the realization of my bullied past. A past that was temporarily forgotten or ignored. As a defense mechanism to survive the fear and struggle of my adolescence as well as the fears and struggles of my family. As a defense mechanism to create alter egos (masks) to cover the shame and embarrassment of being bullied. To create the persona of someone who was more than his fragile reality.

*“Something has to change.”*

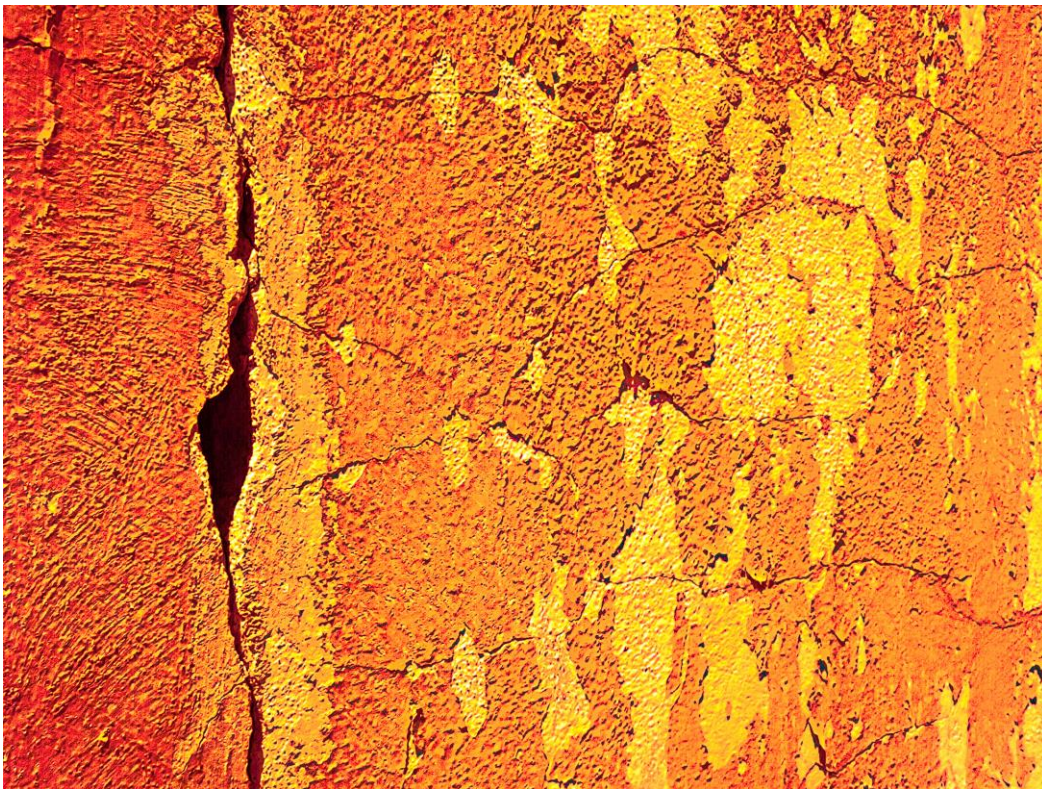
*“This can’t be who I really am.”*

*“Not going to let them get to me.”*

*“Can’t let them see me scared.”*

*“Can’t let them know how I really feel.”*

Figure 3.3 Façade





I was hiding. Building a façade of strength and defiance. Hiding the fear, the shame, and sadness within. Wishing and waiting for someone or something to release me from my circumstances. The role or identity as bullied carved my path to who I am today. Living through my evolution from troubled youth to being completely enveloped in music tells the true path of my identity. My behaviors and pattern of at-risk behaviors, vandalism, drug and alcohol use all relate back to my ability to compartmentalize my various identities and realities. I yearned for comfort and stability. The opportunity to just be myself. Although, I did not know who I wanted to be. What I wanted to be. How I wanted to be. I instinctually felt that my path must change. Something was not right. This couldn't be my path.

Figure 3.4 Eluding the Fear, Journal Entry #4



*“Escape from reality.”*

*“To hide pain and fear.”*

*“Prisoner in my home.”*

*“I was never safe.”*

My involvement in music was accidental. I was, and still am, the only person in my family to be seriously involved in their school music program. My mother was in choir and marched in parade bands holding a banner in the 60's. I think it may have been an important aspect of her childhood. She talked about it when I began my journey into music, but it was not something she pursued. I sometimes feel the non-pursuit of music was a regret in her life, and maybe she projected that desire onto me and my involvement in music. As I became more involved in music I discovered a deeper sense of who I may become. Music was the first entity that allowed my mind, body, and spirit to grow and evolve. Unearthing the solace and comfort I had been pursuing.

*"I began to distance myself."*

*"My attempt to change my course."*

*"My attempt to become better."*

*"Music became my outlet."*

This was the beginning of my self-image that would provide the understanding of how I, and others, define our identities applying the assumptions of the personal frame laid out by Hecht (Hecht, 1993a), which include our meaning of self as ascribed by others, our personal meanings attributed to self, and the discovery of these assumptions all serve as a source of motivation and expectation of our personal understanding of identity. Our communication of self through the exploration and interrogation of our personal assumptions, views, and perceptions allow for the discovery of our perceived reality. Developing a deeper understanding of this perceived reality is vital to the importance of how we communicate and what we communicate our self- concept to the world. By revisiting my past to unearth hidden or



suppressed realities has allowed for a more profound and nuanced connection to music, identity, and my development as a music educator.

We all have paths we travel that mold and shape who become. Whether based in fear and reality or our need to become someone we are not or someone we wish we could be, understanding and gaining control of this perspective is vital to navigating the power structure of the teacher student relationship, and to better impact student knowing of self, and music education experiences. There is a blurring of the lines of identity, merging the relational and enacted frames which shift focus from individualized identity to questions of power, privilege, and access within music education.

### **At-risk or access – Is this the question?**

\*\*\*

*At-risk...*

*I have known the invisibility of at-risk,*

*Transparent to those who stare through your soul,*

*Unknown, unseen, gliding through as spectral flashes,*

*Haunting those who catch a glimpse of our presence,*

*Isolated in the midst of boundless exceptionality,*

*Obscured in their indomitable shadows,*

*Daily routines of counterfeit smiles,*

*Disguise the truth of a false reality.*

*And I have seen the personal pain, intentional and unintentional,*

*Acquired and delivered, searing and seething wounds,*

*Blindly viewing, unknowingly inflicting,*

*Pain, regret, resentment, loathing, desire*

*To see, to be seen, to appear out of the shadows.*

*I have known the realities of unassuming at-risk.*

\*\*\*

Is there a standard picture of a student who is at-risk? Is there a standard set of criteria that we can definitively check off to determine a student be labeled at-risk? Robinson (2004a) asserts that “At-risk students are students who do not meet the goals and objectives of the educational system” (Robinson, 2004b, p. 2). I met the goals and objectives of my educational system. The contradiction of my hidden reality and the reality I portrayed to school muddied the view of what and how we can perceive students at-risk. This is a very simplistic and narrow view of the many circumstances that may cause distress and dysfunction in the lives of students. Robinson (2004b) goes on to state “there is no commonly supported definition of what at-risk means, of which students’ should be classified by this label” (p. 2). If there is no common acceptance of a definition of an at-risk student, why is it such a commonly used term to regulate school policy and impact so many school children’s lives? How can we explore this term through a different lens? There is no clear picture of what an at-risk student should look like. They can be any of our students. Black, brown, yellow, red, or white. Poor, rich, hungry, homeless. Live in a suburban dream home. Come from single parent, divorced, or broken homes. Or come from stable, two parent homes, with a white picket fence.

Many students are a combination of all of these scenarios and cannot fit neatly into a preconceived box. I was white, appeared to be clean, had clean clothes, appeared happy in school, and appeared to come from a somewhat stable home life. My teachers were completely unaware of the struggles I was going through at home and in my personal life. Would I even be

considered at-risk according to the above definition by Robinson? I met the goals of the educational system I attended. I graduated in the top third of my class. I received straight A's my senior year. Even in middle school and early high school years, when the majority of the combination of home life, alcohol and drug use, and the bullying was at its highest, I was a good student. There was something about school where I was still able to excel. It provided me with an escape to focus on a way out.

Our family dynamic was not unique. I encountered many students with similar or more severe circumstances than mine. The role my family relationship played in the development of my identity was crucial, as it is for all. It defined my at-risk behaviors. Drug use. Alcohol. Vandalism.

*"Drug use was an issue."*

*"Struggled to pay rent."*

*"Always had money for pot."*

It also helped guide me to a more focused and successful path to a future. Music. Perseverance. Determination.

*"We still had food."*

*"We had clean clothes."*

*"I had an instrument."*

I learned the good and the bad from my parents. I was at some cross-roads that many adolescences must make a choice. A fork in the road that would determine the destiny of my future. Follow in the paths of my parents and friends in a life of destructive choices, or blaze a new trail of success and promise? How was our situation different from many of the students in my classroom? I was white, with a fake appearance of middle class that allowed me to pass

under the radar. My parents we always able to find a job of some sort when they absolutely had to for the family. They were able to secure a minor sense of financial help from institutions such as banks and other lenders. We did not have to worry about basic safety from our neighborhood or those in power. We did not have to answer questions and judgements about the choices we made in life. We were not limited by basic assumptions of inadequacy by those in power. We were provided with assumptions and the benefit of success from those in power. I benefited from a school music curriculum that was focused toward my cultural heritage and background.

Music that was supported, expected, and valued in my household.

\*\*\*

*WE don't struggle for:*

*Equity,*

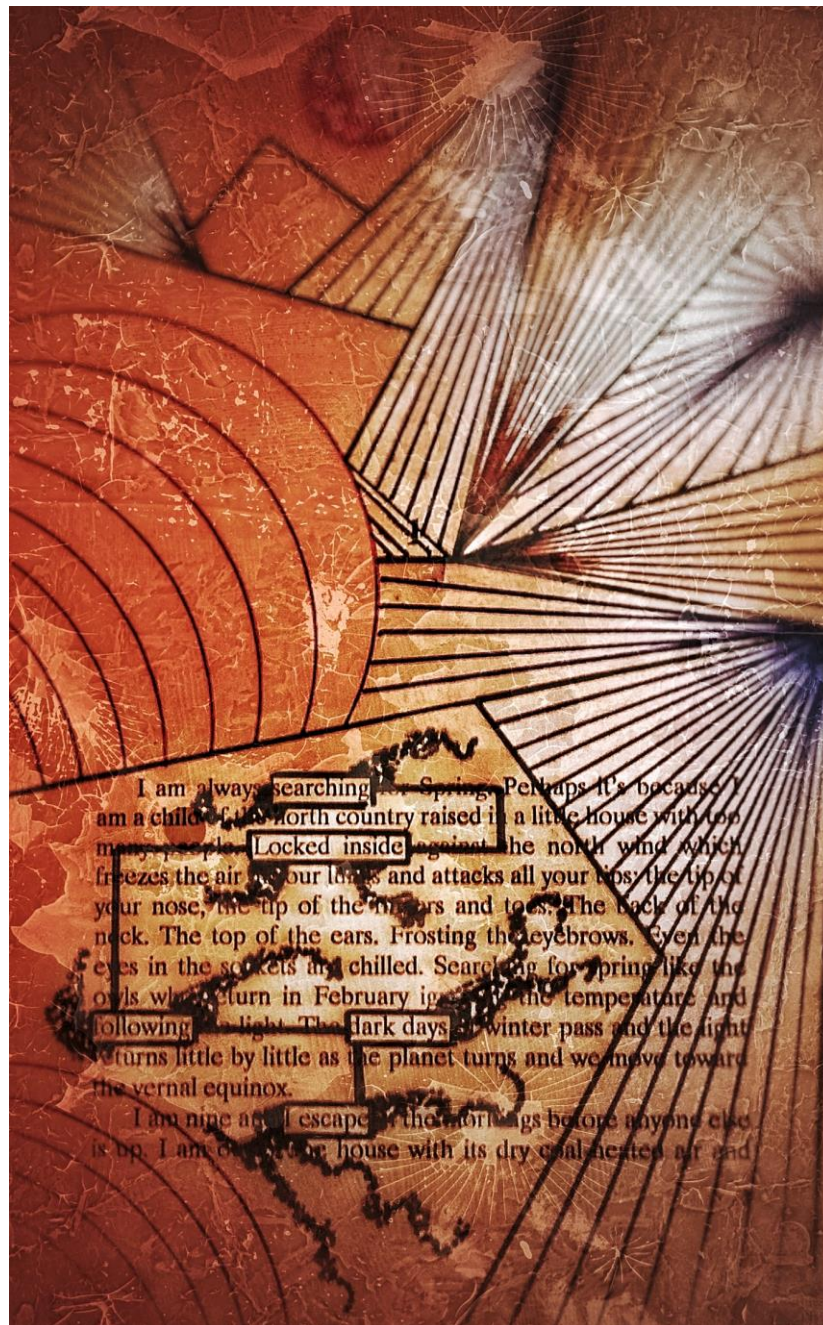
*Acceptance,*

*Peace,*

*At the bank, work, grocery store.*

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Figure 3.5 Locked Inside



Does it matter? Does it matter that none of my teachers knew my circumstances? To them I was a good student from a decent family. I got good grades, I was involved in school activities, and I was college bound. It sounds like they did their job. Was I really an at-risk

student? A deeper look into how the term at-risk can be examined is required to gain a more complete understanding of my story. At-risk definitions are usually examined in three broad contexts: academic achievement, student motivations, and predicting risk. Breaking these contexts down to gain a better understanding they are whether the students are succeeding academically in school, the amount of effort a student invests into the learning process, and educators who use *at-risk* to predict the future of a student's academic success or failure. (Robinson, 2004b, p. 5). In my case I was academically successful and presented myself in a way that masked my troubles at home. This gave no indication to teachers that had the possibility of academic success or failure in the future. The aspect of student motivation in this sense is that students who come from supposed at-risk situations are more highly motivated to be successful in academic settings. Reglin (1993) and Swanson (1991) suggest that students are more motivated to attend and perform well in school when they do not perceive the relevance of learning activities and can connect the importance of the learning activity to their personal, family, and community lives outside of school. For me this relevance was music. It inspired and motivated me to move beyond the turmoil of the family life I was hiding. I was able to use the at-risk circumstance I was placed in as a motivating factor for academic success.

Many students are able to “fake” their way through school. Present a happy and stable façade. They use this motivation to do something better with their lives and prove to themselves and others that they are more than some may see. This inability and sometimes apparent obsession with the current education system to label everything, leads to the perpetuation of students being labeled incorrectly or going unnoticed completely and falling through the education cracks. Our identity and story drive our decisions as teachers. We must be present and open to the discovery and recognition of the influence these narratives have on teaching and

policy. Interrogating our past to better understand our future is vital to the creation of more fair and balanced curriculum choices within music education.

Educational policy and curricular decision are greatly influenced by the labeling and pursuit of *fixing* at-risk students. How can we close the achievement gap created by these troubled students? We all have paths we travel that mold and shape who become. Whether based in fear and reality or our need to become someone we are not or someone we wish we could be, understanding and gaining control of this perspective is vital to navigating the power structure of the teacher student relationship, and to better impact student knowing of self, and their music education experiences. The question of at-risk students blurs into the larger question of access to meaningful and personal educational experiences for all students, and the privilege in those that create such policy. Through the exploration of our relational and enacted identities with music education we are able to question the power of music in our development as teachers and the mutually constructed identities centered as teacher/researcher and the possible influence these identities have on teacher practice and curriculum policy.

### **Enacting relationships – Connecting identity with power and privilege**

How did I teach? Why did students participate or not participate in my music program? What was keeping these students out of my classroom? How do we make the connection of our past with our current teaching practices? Can our past provide insight into the inner-workings of our classroom? The exploration of our past and its influence on our current self may help provide clear and obvious connections to why we teach in certain school systems. Why we teach a specific curriculum structure. How we treat and perceive students in our classrooms. The jointly negotiated identities of our relationship with music and our past familial and social constructs provide a clearer vision of who we have become and continue to become as educators.

Can we explore our teaching careers to see that many of our students may have not been provided the same opportunities as their peers or ourselves received even though many may originate from similar familial and social contexts?

*“Get out!”*

*“What is wrong with you?”*

*“You are not worthy of my time!”*

I did not know this teacher. Degrading. Mean. Arrogant. Where did he come from? Upon deep and meaning contemplation throughout this research process, this alter ego, or shameful excuse for a teacher was in fact me. I was not always a good teacher. There were moments when I was a pitiful excuse for a teacher. Deserving no right to be in the classroom or in front of students. This being another contradiction that has shadowed me my entire life. The influence of our past can easily be suppressed into a darkness of a false reality. As one truly explores the creation of their identity, they are able to answer for their falsely created truths. In my case, I could never explain my contradiction in behavior as an educator.

How was I able to be so dismissive and insensitive to students who reflected my very own personal narrative? There appeared to be no rhyme or reason to those students I would empathize and those I would hastily reject. Our identities are emergent through time and jointly negotiated and constructed by our own views and the relationships we have maintained and developed over said time (Hecht, 1993a). The need to discover the source of our identity is vital to understanding and developing our true self as teachers.

*“I will eat your souls.”*

*“If you don’t like what I’m doing, then quit.”*



Figure 3.6 Bully



The uncovering of my forgotten bullied past shines a light on the truth of who I became as a teacher. I made students cry. I made students quit. I made students hate music. My fear and withholding of my bullied past allowed me to become the very bully I wanted to forget.

I had forgotten my own story. I began to lose sight of the very purpose and reason I became a music educator. With my determination, enthusiasm, and passion, I was determined that all students should have the same experiences and relationship to music as me. I became blind to the needs and stories of all my students. I could not understand why all students did not fully immerse themselves into the world of music. I could not understand why all students did not fight for creating a path out of their difficult circumstances. I did not understand that some students fight quietly (as I did). I did not understand that some students had other outlets. I did not understand why or how I could be so open and compassionate in certain classes, and so destructive in others. I did not understand the student's stories. I did not understand my own story.

The seclusion from my past, the projection of my wants and desires, and the naïve misunderstanding of my student's needs allowed me to lose control of my perspective as an educator. It created a power struggle of me as the teacher with the knowledge, over-caring and understanding of the true desires of my students. I knew what was best for all. I could see or hear the truth, leading to the creation of an often hostile and destructive learning environment. The very students I vowed to help and save, I forced out. Allowing my privilege as a now middle-class, well educated, white male to make educational decisions that were based on this privilege and position of power.

My ensemble was the right place to unearth the student's true passion and connection to music. I was destined to re-create my story in my students. Although, I was ignoring the fact that despite our similarities, our differences were greater. Their basic needs, desires, and struggles told a different story. One of the navigation of institutionalized and systemic privilege that denies basic access to common social needs and hopes. Their story was one of basic

survival. Their story included familial and cultural values different from mine. Their story with music was different than mine. I was imposing my will and passion for a music they did not know, understand, appreciate, or value. My new-found, unidentified, and foreign privilege was guiding my teaching practice in ways that were not a benefit to my students.

Our personal backgrounds, in relation to the social devices within the community and educational structure we teach, influence our teaching practice. My personal views of struggle and the power of music on the lives of troubled youth, clouded my vision and decision making in the instructional strategies and curriculum offerings made for the students and community of the school environment in which I taught. My identity as a teacher was being molded by the enacted relationships with music, my unidentified privilege, and my projected misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the varying social constructs of the students which reflected my past. I was turning a blind eye to the very privilege that allowed me to become a music educator.

It was my inability or unwillingness to adapt my current teaching practice or curriculum to meet the needs of the students in my classroom. Our inability or unwillingness to adapt current music education practices to better adapt or accommodate the changing landscape of our students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a significant hindrance to the viability and future of music education. Methodologies, pedagogies, and curriculum must evolve to break the mold of the privilege based Western Art Music conservatory model in which the music education system has been built. Allowing for the perpetuation of and the denial of a broader, more inclusive, and purposeful access to music education for students of color, lower socio-economic status, or rural communities. The cultivation and exploration of a deeper understanding our past relationships with music and privilege as music educators can allow for less misinterpretations of ourselves and the acceptance of the students who remind us of ourselves. Providing for a curricular

structure that may embrace and foster access for all students, fitting around social, cultural, and familial structures of the communities in which we teach.

### **Privilege and access – Unseen, unknown, unclear**

\*\*\*

*Privilege...*

*I have known the unrealized gains of privilege,  
Unknown possibilities provided through misguided circumstance,  
Allowances of color, values, finances, perceived societal conventions,  
White as ghosts, false riches, speculations of familial normalcy,  
Access to hidden gems out of sight and out of reach to others,  
Beacons of light guiding a select few through the maelstrom,  
Others left adrift in the dark swells of living,  
Clutching for salvation, hands relinquish, hope drifts listlessly through the void.  
Unable to see color, power; unable to grasp color, power,  
Unable to identify equality, confirmation of existence,  
Uniqueness we all possess, not allowed to identify, to explore, to express,  
Hidden in the shadows of a select few, unknowingly casting your shadow,  
Forever hiding others from their potential, not wanting too, fighting for balance, recognition,  
social change.  
I have known the tangled web of privilege.*

\*\*\*

This contradiction of teaching and personality occurred primarily within my traditional large ensemble. I approached this class with a mixed approach of welcome and unwelcome. My

patience lacked, and my empathy was minimal. Students of color. Living at or below the poverty line. Broken homes. Combined families. First generation immigrants. Families colored with the stories of prison, gangs, and violence. Percy Grainger was not going to reach these students. I was being unfair to the very student that I was. Would I have discovered success and passion for music in my own classroom?

\*\*\*

*“The music we HAVE TO KNOW.”*

*“The music that is QUALITY.”*

*“The music that is ACCEPTED.”*

*“The music that will PREPARE you for a FUTURE.”*

*“The music we are TRAINED TO TEACH.”*

\*\*\*

Despite the chaos that enveloped much of my childhood, my growth and development was grounded in a lower middle-class, white, mid-western community. Hearing my story some may say I was not privileged in the general sense of the term. I lacked a stable familial structure. I was on the low end of the socioeconomic spectrum. I was involved in dangerous and destructive personal behaviors. In the moment, I was not aware of any privilege. My personal recognition of any type of privilege was never brought to light, and/or was delayed in an institutional system that as McIntosh (1998) describes, “as a white person, I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage but had been taught not to recognize a corollary aspect, which puts me at an advantage” (p. 28). It was through personal experience as an educator and growth as an academic researcher that I was able to more fully broaden my personal world views and begin to observe my privilege for the first time. As an educator, and

with the new mind-opening experience of academic research, I have been able to begin making the connections of my privilege versus that of my students. My students, who were primarily students of color, living at or below the poverty line, with little or no vision of a successful future, outside of their own personal determination, provided a distorted mirror into which I was able to reflect on my own upbringing and make connections to my classroom. Providing me with the ability to adapt my instruction to better fit the needs of my students, offering a more appropriate and comprehensive music education experience.

Steyn and Conway (2010) describe whiteness studies as “interrogating the center of power and privilege from which racialization emanates but which operates more or less invisibly as it constructs itself as both the norm and ideal of what it means to be human” (p. 284). This sense of invisibility is an important aspect of this field of research. Nakayama and Krizek (1995) state:

White is a relatively uncharted territory that has remained invisible as it continues to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain. It affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, and extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours. It wields power yet endures as a largely unarticulated position. (p. 290)

This brings to question, how the idea of white privilege, being invisible, is able to cast such a dark shadow over those being suppressed? White educators and academic scholars need to help shine a light from the inside out, to interrogate the disruption of power and the withholding of access to those on the other side of privilege. The idea of looking at the structural, institutional, and organizational patterns or phenomena from the center out to truly identify the defects and cracks in the foundation, is key to the investigation of white privilege, and its impact on music education.

The idea of questioning or investigating what it means to be white was never a part of my thought process. I was white, and it was not an issue. I was a teacher. I taught white students, and I taught students of color. I taught students from various backgrounds of economic status, family issues, and other various social and cultural differences. Through this exploration for my identity as an educator and how my prior experiences with music education have helped influence and shape who I have become, I was in a sense colorblind, the idea that I did not see color in my students. “The concept of *color-invisibility* is the refusal by white people to see how race impacts their own belief systems, experiences, and behaviors” (Mullings, 2015, p. 119). What was I missing through this blindness? I was unaware of the privilege I had as a child, and the benefits and growth I was able to achieve because of that privilege. Colorblindness can lead to a white washing of identity, cultural practices, education structures, and apply unintended oppression to those without the power.

The term white privilege denotes a “host of material advantages white people enjoy as a result of being socially and rhetorically located as a white person” (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 225). This concept of white privilege needs to be examined at length in the discussion of the *other* in music. Who is this other in music? How would we describe the *other*? Observing through the lens of whiteness theory, Steyn (2010) describes the “redirection of the scholarly gaze from the margins to the center” (p.284). Further stating that “interrogating the center of power and privilege from which racialization emanates but which operates more or less invisibly as it constructs itself as both the norm and ideal of what means to be human (p. 284).” In order to fully understand the power and structure of privilege within the current music education system, we must examine the structural foundations that the current system has been built. The core of the foundation of music education is based on the conservatory model of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and

has not received any significant changes or adaptations in decades. This model consists primarily of large performance ensembles; the performance of Western European art music; the need for expensive classical based instruments; teacher directed learning; and rigid and authoritative curricular structures. A model that was formed and developed mainly within the white male power structure of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time when those in the margins were still fighting for basic human rights. Students, communities, and ethnic populations consisting mainly of people and cultures of color did not always fit this traditional mold of education thus establishing a sense of *otherness* for those who are different or lack the means to participate.

Figure 3.7 Power Struggle





As a middle class, well-educated, white male it is difficult for me to discuss the issue of race. I could be considered the poster child for white privilege. What gives me the right to discuss the issue of struggle and privilege when I am part of the primary and dominant social system? Using constructs of whiteness allows a discussion where no one is a racist and permits an exploration of ways in which some people happily if unwittingly benefit from and informally reproduce patterns established by racism (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999, p. 14).

An aspect of this research is to examine the possible hidden barriers within the current music education structure that make successful access to music education difficult. Including the investigation into racial barriers that may deny successful access and participation for student of color in music education. These barriers may include areas of social and cultural acceptance of music and income inequalities. To examine the lack of enrollment by students of color in music education programs. To explore ways in which we can adapt the current music education structure to allow more access of all students' successful access into music education. As a white male educator with a past that does not meet the norm, I am looking to clarify some of the ways white has exerted its force on everybody else...I want to "disrupt the power that resides in white's discursive space" (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 292).

\*\*\*

*We are an ultimate construction of our past. Brick by brick. Layer by layer. We morph into the identity of every situation we have lived. We are all chameleons who are able to change colors and adapt to every part of our environments. Each of us have unique and individual markings that identify who we have become and who we may continue to evolve.*

\*\*\*

I didn't know any better as a young teacher, or even as a veteran teacher. I was teaching my students what and how I was taught to teach. Musical experiences grounded in my white male dominated western art music, conservatory style training, was leading to the questioning of my traditional power centered authoritarian teaching practices, creating an imbalance of positions of power, between teacher and student, thus leading to a limited access and understanding of the social and cultural backgrounds of my students. Pulido (2009) states the questioning of mainstream beliefs about the natural order of things exposes the multifaceted layers of racism as it works through institutions, culture, and daily life. My students and the community in which I was teaching, exposed a disconnect between me and my students. Unknowingly, I was ignoring my troubled past and not connecting the dots of my unidentified privilege.

My barriers may have been similar, but they were also very different than those of my students. I never struggled for basic social acceptance. I never struggled for basic social equity. I never struggled for safety. As a white male I have been taught to not recognize my privilege (McIntosh, 1998). Would I have become the teacher I am today, had it not been for the assumptions my teachers made, and the social acceptance my family benefited because of our race? My teachers assumed I was fine at home. My teachers assumed my family life was free from struggle. The education system was set up to provide me with an educational and musical experience that resembled the values and social norms and expectation of my cultural background. The system was unknowingly set up to allow me to succeed. As an educator I was unaware, unable, or unwilling to make the connection to my own life. I fell back into a default position of privilege and power, creating or perpetuating a system that runs against access for all students. Butler, Lind, and McKoy (2007) posit:

The more teachers understand about how their own cultural backgrounds and ethnic identities influence their attitudes about other cultural groups, the more open they may be to recognizing the significance of culture and ethnicity as factors critical to teaching and learning. (p. 245)

\*\*\*

*“My barriers keep OTHERS out.”*

*“WE open our gates for visits.”*

*“But THEY are not allowed to stay too long.”*

*“WE don’t want THEM to feel too comfortable.”*

*“WE want THEM to visit.”*

*“Give us a sample of who THEY are.”*

*“But then WE ask THEM to leave.”*

*“WE feel good about our acceptance and equity.”*

\*\*\*

*Power*

*In charge*

*Normal*

*Blind*

*Not my worries*

*Looks*

*Strangers*

*Equality*

*Safety*

*Their worries*

\*\*\*

We as educators need to better understand our story and background to have a chance at relating to the stories of our students. Whether they come from affluence and privilege, or from challenge and struggle. Each teacher has a story that can better mentor and reach out to students. Create and implement innovative new pedagogies and curricular decisions in the classroom. Through the constant desire to learn about ways and reason why our students have struggles, and how can we better relate to each individual student, we can examine structures in music education that allow certain students the ability to thrive while others are held back.

There have been multiple movements throughout the history of music education that have called for action and change, including the Tanglewood Symposium in 1967 and the Vision 2020: Housewright Symposium in 1999. Both were a gathering of lawmakers, educators, philosophers, businessmen, social scientists, theologians, labor leaders, and others to examine the continued role and purpose of music education in a changing society. The Tanglewood Symposium: Music in American Society asserted in their declaration on music education that education must have, as major goals the art of living, the building of personal identity, and nurturing creativity. The declaration continues that:

Educators must accept the responsibility for developing opportunities which meet man's individual needs and the needs of a society plagued by the consequences of changing values, alienation, hostility between generations, racial and international tensions, and the challenges of a new leisure. (Choate, Fowler, Brown, & Wersen, 1967a, p. 51)

Calls for addressing the changing social norms, racial tensions, and a new leisure rising within the lives of the students, continuing to be areas of concern today. New leisure's today such as social media, smart phones, and broadening advances in technology influencing student's lives daily. As a result of Tanglewood music educator's came to an agreement on the purpose and values of music education including such affirmations as (Choate, Fowler, Brown, & Wersen, 1967b, p. 51):

“The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety...”

“Greater emphasis should be placed on helping the individual student to fulfill his needs, goals, and potentials.”

“The music education profession must contribute its skills, proficiencies, and insights toward assisting in the solution of urgent social problems as in the inner city or other areas with culturally deprived individuals.”

Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education (1999) declared thirty-two years after Tanglewood some similar concerns (Madsen, 2018):

“Changing demographics and increased technological advancements are inexorable and will have profound influences on the ways that music is experienced for both students and teachers.”

“Societal and technological changes will have an enormous impact for the future of music education.”

“Music educators must join with others in providing opportunities for meaningful music instruction for all people beginning at the earliest possible age and continuing throughout life.”

“Music educators must identify the barriers that impede the full actualization of any of the above [roles and purposes of music education and music educators] and work to overcome them.”

Exploring these declarations and setting them in the context of today’s social values, they appear to be both accurate and descriptive of the educational needs of our students today, as well as, still holding to the social and racial contexts of the time they were written. There have been multiple movements over the past sixty years with music education to call for its inclusion in public education and promote the value and importance within the lives of all students. Such projects as: The National Anthem Project (2005), Comprehensive Musicianship (1965), The Manhattanville Music Curriculum Program (1970), and The Hawaii Music Curriculum Project (1968) all attempted to broaden the scope and depth of music education in the United States (Mark & Gary, 2007).

While there has been some forward progress in the perceived values of music education within the political and policy making officials within education, such as the inclusion of music within the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in 2015 labeling it as a core curricular course, the method in which we as music educators provide music instruction is by and large following curricular structures established in the 1950’s. Williams (2011) describes the elephant in the room as the large performance ensemble setting the standard for music instruction in schools and has remained relatively unchanged for a century. The vast majority of music curriculums across the United States are comprised of classes utilizing large ensembles as the primary source of instruction. The music performed with these ensembles is a reflection of primarily Western European art music, composed by middle-aged white males to predominately white middle-class students who have the support financially, socially, culturally, and institutionally to participate in

such an endeavor. Concert band. Large vocal ensembles. Marching Bands. If the students are lucky they may include groups such as orchestra, jazz ensemble, and small chamber ensembles. Nonperforming courses are primarily focused on the study and preservation of traditional classical music and the theory behind its construction. Music appreciation. AP music theory. Class piano, just to name a few. Williams (2011) continues that the large ensemble has become synonymous with music education making it difficult for current music educators and pre-service educators to challenge the status quo. The standard curriculum of dead white guys and music without words, being taught to students who were members of gangs, whose parents were in jail, who had no personal or social connection to the musical contexts I was presenting to them; these were not meaningful music education experiences. It was not music education for all the students in my school and community. Something had to change. I had to change.

Still unaware of the connection of my past musical experiences and that of my students, I was able to still see the need for change to the curriculum I was following. I knew there was a gap in the process. There were students who could not and did not want to take part in the music program. Our system was still being guided by allowing our privilege and assumptions to misguide our teaching. Despite the many calls to action and various projects to broaden music education, we as educators have not been able to gain the proper perspective of our own identity, backgrounds, and experiences to better reach, teach, empathize, and provide more impactful music education for all. Change is a worthy goal and we must continue venturing into new and unknown territories, opening ourselves as teachers to opportunity to help us improve the situation we find ourselves, our students, and the communities in which we teach (Williams, 2011).

Figure 3.8 Viewing Change





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*Why did some students participate in my classes? Why did some students choose to not participate? Did I intentionally or unintentionally keep kids from my class? It made re-evaluate the music education system. Why do so many students not participate in public school music? What was keeping them out of our classrooms?*

*I used to teach group piano in a closet. That's right, the closet where we stored the choir robes and music. It was so cramped and uninviting. Extension cords hanging from the ceiling to bring power to the cheap, plastic, \$50 keyboards I had to use to teach piano. Claustrophobic conditions prevailed, surrounded by floor to ceiling closets and black hanging choir robes. Boxes full of other odds and ends, props, and decorations for variety shows, posters, and anything else you collect in a music program over time. Small 1950's metal frame windows with torn and dangling black paper curtains hung precariously from their mounts, as we just hoped they made it one day without crashing down into our precious learning space. I taught this class to seniors with no music background or interest in music at all...*

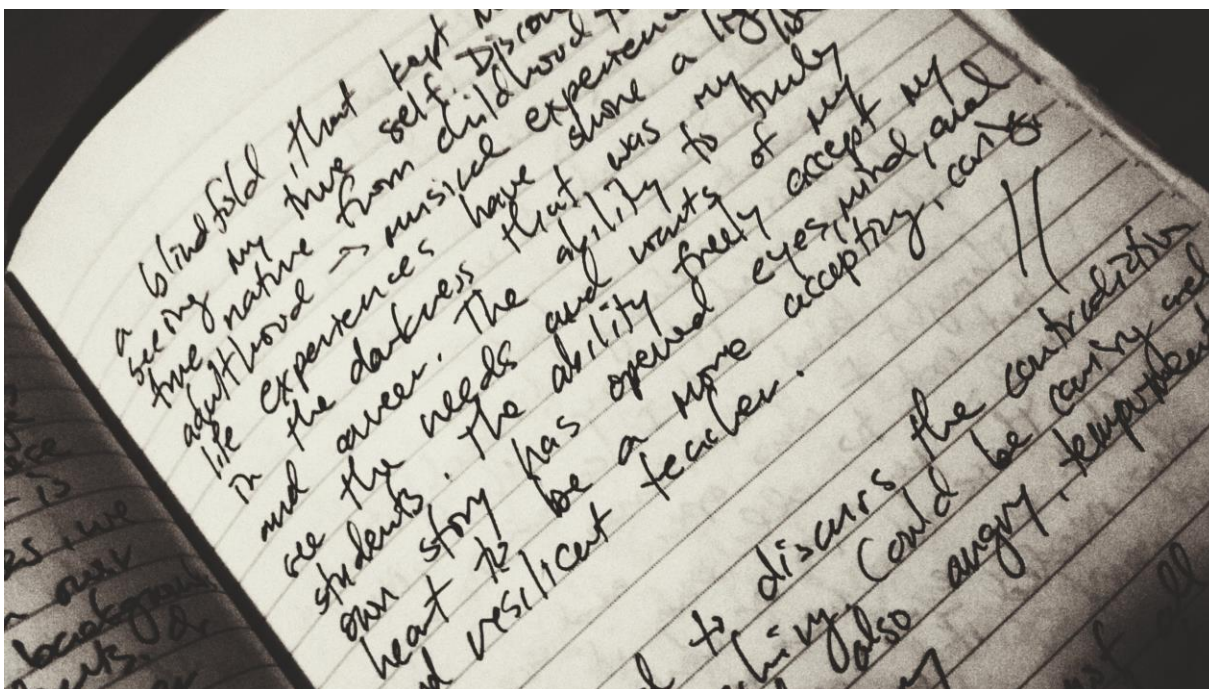
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### **The road less taken – Inaccessible access**

We continually convene as educators to form symposiums, conferences, colloquiums; anything that will or may provide the appearance of helping to guide and shape the future of music education. Both the Tanglewood and Housewright symposiums made great strides in the increased valuation of music education within communities and education, as well as, set forth declarations to help ensure music education evolves overtime and makes the appropriate

adjustments to reach the adapting student, technology, social and cultural movements in our world. But have we answered the call? Have we provided the best opportunities for all students to receive and participate in a music education system that reflects their families and cultures? Have we only continued to redefine the same privilege based and limiting large ensemble model, thus creating minimal change? How can we connect the personal introspection of our identity with the creation of a more comprehensive and open music education curricular structure?

Figure 3.9 Journal Entry #5



The retention and broadening of access in music education will need to come from the heart of the majority of school music programs such as the band, chorus, and orchestras; retaining what works and broadening access through diversity in course offerings (Miksza, 2013). Thus creating a new model of what and how the large ensemble may work in more diverse and disadvantaged communities, while also creating access to a variety of other classes and ensembles that are more culturally and socially relevant to the student and community populations. “If students are not able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge and to

use the already acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing” (Freire, 1993, p. 19). Allowing for the expansion of the music education curriculum may allow students who see themselves as having no future or outlet from their current life circumstances, a more accessible outlet providing the ability to transform their future.

\*\*\*

*WE give YOU the chance to*

*Celebrate in SILENCE*

*Behind CLOSED DOORS*

*OUTSIDE the school day*

*On your OWN TIME*

*WE have a month to do it in class*

*With OUR arrangements*

*WE will let YOU play with US*

*Then YOU have to GO BACK HOME*

\*\*\*

The student population of my ensembles reflected my school community. Black, brown, yellow, white. Poor, rich, broken and single family homes. Students and families who had to struggle to participate. Music was a financial and cultural burden on many of my students. Each year there was an incoming purge of new freshmen band members. Quitting music due to the financial burdens of obtaining an instrument needed to participate. The heavy time commitments of being involved in a school music program, outside rehearsals, concerts, marching band, community events and performances. Many students felt an undue pressure to participate in a

program that was fun, but did not reflect their culture, and placed an undue pressure on their families to find the resources required for participation. Why was my situation different? My family struggled every day to ensure my ability to be in the music program. What could I learn from the introspection of my past experiences? Were there specific social constructs and opportunities within society and school that allowed me as a white male, presenting a masked identity to society, to succeed? Were these construct also available to my white socially acceptable and color blind small mid-western community?

Figure 3.10 Barriers





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*Barriers in OUR way*

*WE still gain access*

*No one from the outside telling US no*

*YOU don't have access*

*YOU don't belong in OUR group*

*There is no history of US being told*

*WE are DIFFERENT*

\*\*\*

Cultural barriers, we as the dominant white power, are less likely to experience than our apparently equal Black, Asian, Native, Latino, or Hispanic members of the community. Barriers such as:

- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- When I am told about our national heritage or civilization, I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- The color of my skin does not work against the appearance of financial stability.
- I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who may not like them.
- I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people in my racial group.
- I can do well in a challenging situation with being called a credit to my race.

(McIntosh, 1998, p. 99)

Barriers such as these, are what provided me with a more accessible path to success and the possibility of a future despite the circumstances of my childhood. Many cultural and institutional barriers that hold certain members of our society to an unfair disadvantage. The broadening of understanding our own identity may allow us to better interrogate the various barriers within the access of music education. As we explore our own musical stories and their influence on our teaching we need to bring focus more specific variables. Butler et al. (2007) continues in that we need to understand how variables, such as learning style preference and racial identity, might interact with race and culture to affect music learning. Making deeper and relevant connections based on the true identity and needs of the students and the school community.

Butler et al. (2007) have created a conceptual model to allow for the deeper interrogation of the various cultural barriers within music education.

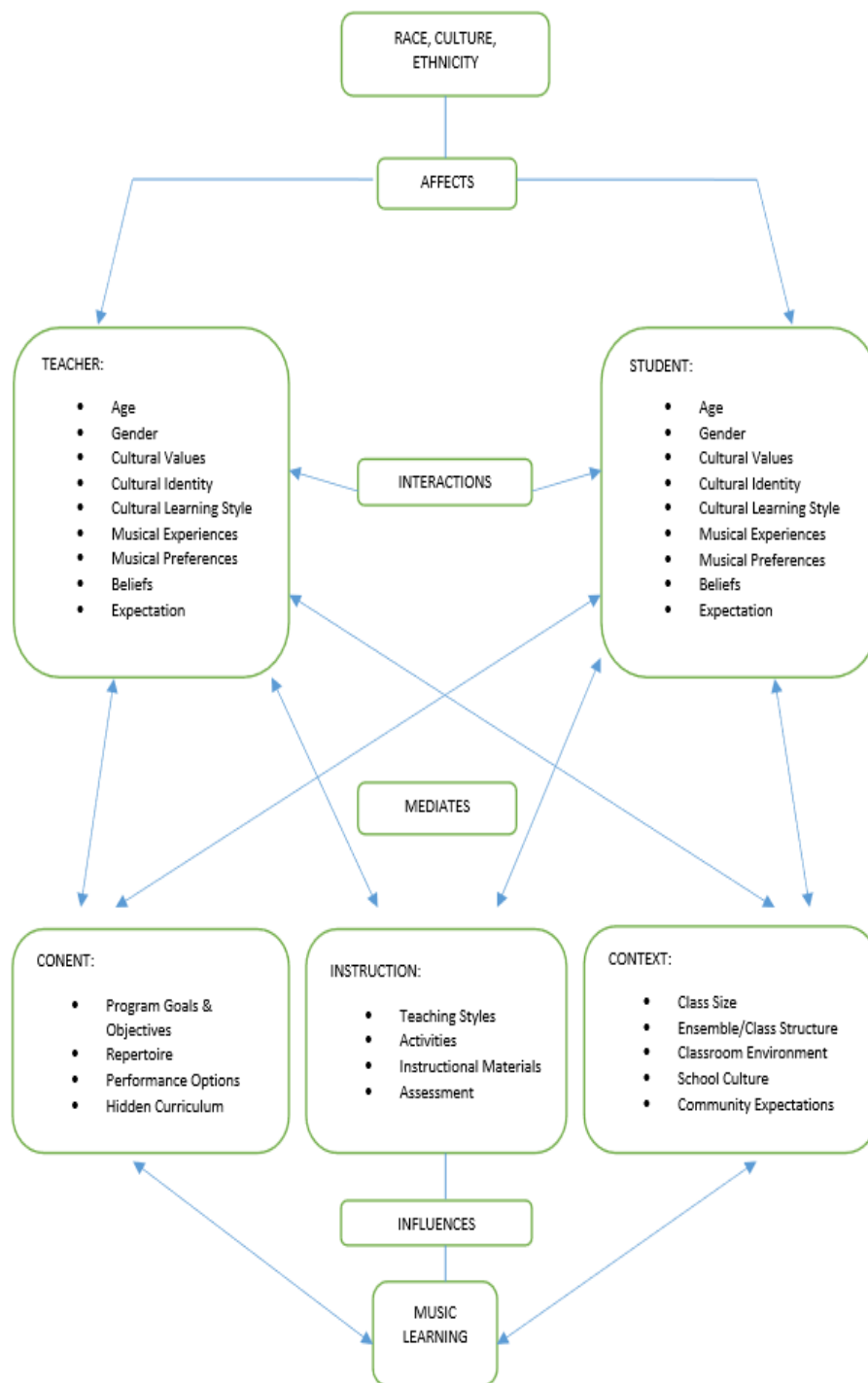
A conceptual model has the capacity to serve as a tool for researchers to use in reconsidering findings, and refining and reshaping theory based upon new information. Thus, the true value of a conceptual model is determined not by its capacity to remain static and unyielding to change, but by its capacity to generate research that will ensure it continued evolution; continuing that the model is comprised of constructs, that by virtue of being impacted or affected by culture, may serve as barriers to or supports music learning among diverse student populations. (Butler et al., 2007, p. 243).

The model can serve as a starting point for the further interrogation of norms that may broaden access within music education and teaching practices, providing a critical inquiry into knowledge and society, thus accessing a counter-narrative to dominant cultural transmissions supporting the status quo (Shor, 1992). Teaching practices and curricular access decision informed by this

model may help provide a framework in which we as music educators can provide a more broad and democratic model of learning.

As a youth, my culture and privilege was valued and enhanced when applied through the framework. My race and culture was similar to that of my teacher. We came from similar cultural backgrounds, value systems, social and cultural beliefs, musical experiences, and musical preferences. The material being taught and the methods in which the materials was being transmitted benefitted my social and cultural expectations; the traditional large ensemble setting, in which the director was the authoritarian holder of the knowledge. I dutifully and passively absorbed knowledge through the experiencing of white classical musical traditions.

Figure 3.11 Conceptual Model of Cultural Barriers





\*\*\*

*It unlocked the door and opened up a whole new future.*

*Music gave me guidance.*

*Gave me a sense of purpose.*

*Music was an escape.*

*I was in control.*

*For me it was Percy Grainger.*

*For many students, they are never afforded this opportunity to discover their voice and path to freedom.*

\*\*\*

My interactions with my teachers were one of acceptance. Acceptance in my potential to succeed. Acceptance of my ability to fit in the mold of a traditional student without question. Acceptance of my constructed masks and façades built to conceal my true identity. Acceptance of my conformity to an education system that allowed me to succeed with help of my privilege.

These may be the assumptions that best fit the needs and standards of the mid-western small town in which I was maturing, but they are also the assumptions that maintain and perpetuate the reluctance to the challenging of the status quo; the assumptions that continue to impede the inclusive progress of music education. Our traditional authoritarian teaching styles have fostered a culture of power imbalance between teacher and student, and not allowing the student to develop a voice that truly represents their identity as well as the path, potential, and value of their voice within their education. Creating a paradox in which school insist on uniformity and control as a means of creating conditions in which every student can learn, undermining the frequently professed goal of student empowerment (Hinchey, 2010).

\*\*\*

*I can't*

*Don't know how to play that kind of music*

*Don't know how to read your*

*Notes*

*Rhythms*

*Don't sound right*

*I play by ear*

*What I hear or feel*

*My family my roots*

\*\*\*

*I want to be in music*

*I want to learn about the music*

*I HEAR AT HOME*

*I want to celebrate the music*

*I GREW UP WITH*

*I want to play the music*

*I LISTEN TO...*

*WHAT IS THIS?*

\*\*\*

Figure 3.12 What I Feel



Assumptions I made as a teacher that silenced voices. Assumptions of the desires of the students I was teaching also directed my teaching within the large ensemble and early teaching career. The disconnect of my identity and its influence on the perceptions of what my students *should* be doing, allowed for the development and cultivation of my privilege in my teaching decisions. Impacting the content, instruction, and context of my curricular decisions. The objectives and goals of my program in many ways inhibited the growth and access of students. The context of my instruction influenced by a lack of knowledge of the school culture and the community expectations.

\*\*\*

*After school you can join*

*Gospel club*

*Step club*

*Mariachi club*

*Spoken word club*

*You don't have to*

*Drive your siblings home*

*Work to pay rent*

*Ride the city bus home*

*Worry about your next meal*

*Finding a safe place to sleep*

\*\*\*

### **Charting a new course...**

Calls for action within the music education profession have been and will continue to be never-ending. Decades of advocacy and advancement of music education for all have been the driving force behind the inclusion of music education within American public schools. Since the Tanglewood Symposium in 1969, specified goals and objectives have been outlined as the guiding factors of music education. Paul Lehman drafted the proposed initial goals for MENC (Music Educators National Conference, precursor to the current National Association for Music Education or NAFME) in 1970 the MENC executive board adopted the following goals for music education:

The goals of MENC shall be to conduct programs and activities to build (Mark, 2018):

A vital music culture

An enlightened musical public

The goals of the profession are:

Comprehensive music programs in all schools

Involvement of people of all ages in learning music

Quality preparation of teachers

Use of the most effective techniques and resources in music instruction

Compare these with the current mission and goals of NAFME:

Mission Statement:

To advance music education by promoting the understanding and of music by all

Vision Statement:

Leading the world in music education, empowering generations to create, perform, and respond to music

If you examine the NAFME strategic plan further you discover aspects within their value statements on comprehensiveness, inclusion and equity, and innovation. They state (National Association for Music Education, 2017):

Comprehensiveness:

Uplifting the human spirit and providing opportunities for all students to create, perform, respond, and connect to all styles of music

Inclusion and equity:

Building strength and promoting diversity in a profession representing the wide spectrum of people and cultures, abilities, economic backgrounds, and gender identities

Innovation:

Enhancing music teaching and association program management through combining effective and dynamic new practices with proven strategies in the context of our changing global community.

In comparison the goals from the Tanglewood symposium and those of the current strategic plan for music educators, there has not been much change. Wording has evolved, but the intent has remained similar. The inclusion of comprehensive school music programs. Involvement of all people in music regardless of age, sex, race, gender identification, or economic status. And the creation and implementation of meaningful music making for the students. These goals and missions are left void of specifics, and the decisions of how to meet these goals are left to that of the individual educator, administrators, and communities.

What can or does this look like today? Has much changed or evolved? The majority of school music programs still consist of large ensembles (band, choir, and orchestra). Inclusion in these ensembles is based on the monetary factors related to the procuring or purchase of an instrument. The curriculum studied (the music performed) is comprised mainly of white Anglo male composers. More programs are including alternatives to the large ensemble curriculum structure. Instituting course that cover areas in guitar, music appreciation, and music technology. However, the approach to teaching these course does not differ much from that of the authoritarian model of the music conductor. The teacher is still the primary holder of knowledge dispensing the curriculum into the open and, not always present, minds of the student. The students blindly accept the information with no question.

The question of access and privilege within music education becomes that of who holds the power and how is that power disseminated? We as educators will be the holders of the primary knowledge. Our duty then becomes, how can we bring the students along in the journey of discovery of said knowledge? The structure of the class is only as open as the means in which the learning occurs. If the teacher does not have a deep understanding of their path to teaching,

they will be limited in their ability to bring the students to the same discovery. It is the method of transmission of knowledge that outweighs the course in which the information is transmitted.

As music educators we need to rethink the way in which we prepare future music educators. Are they prepared to break the cycle of the past sixty years? Are we meeting our own current values and mission as an organization of educators? Teacher education programs consistently teach as we were taught. A lack of innovation in teacher preparation programs has hindered the progress of reaching the goals of music for all. By developing new music educators that are able to ground their music making experiences within the discourse of their identities, we can recognize and celebrate the multiplicity of way our students, and future students, understand who they are, what they do, and their individual processes of becoming a music teacher. We need to listen and validate the personal, individual meanings that people bring to their experiences with music, and provide multiple opportunities for pre-service music educators to ground their studies in the essential experiences of music making (Bernard, 2005).

Figure 3.13 Experiencing



Exploration in areas of pedagogy and methods such as critical pedagogy, communities of practice, democratic learning environments, culturally relevant pedagogy, and informal music learning are just examples to allow pre-service educators to interrogate their own identities and teaching practices, as well as, learn techniques of incorporating them into their future curriculums, providing the opportunity for them as teacher, and their students, the discovery of their identities and voice. Approaching alternative music programs in a manner in which the students and the teacher learn together. The democratic or critical educator is able to provide the avenue and tools for the student's journey to self-discovery within their music education. It is a redistribution of privilege and power among the teacher and the students.

Froehlich (2006) states clearly that:



Trust in our students' own knowledge base and ability of musical meaning-making may be one of the most essential building blocks toward a culture in music education in which there is a balance between (a) the concerns of the gatekeepers, and (b) the needs of those who seek entry into the academy. (p. 18)

Our students have powerful and meaningful music experiences that accompany them into music education programs. It is our imperative that we are able to tap into those experiences and make connections to allow those pre-service teachers the pedagogies and methods to bring them to their future classrooms. It is through the discovery and embracing of these experiences that we as educators have the “opportunity to connect with the perceived values and inherent purposes of music to the design of curriculum, and pedagogical approaches (Stefanakis, 2005, p. 20),” into all aspects of a modern music curriculum. A curriculum that reflects the students. Reflects the community. Reflects the teachers.

A fresh new take on the possibility of music curriculums can allow students and teachers to navigate self and relationship to others through interrelated musical processes (Stefanakis, 2005). Developing the possibility of a culture of change. A culture of acceptance and inclusion. The exploration and interrogation of the culture the students are living with each day. Allowing the students to discover their place within this complex and quickly evolving modern culture. Discovering ways in which students are able to navigate through the complications of their lives. Lives that may be set in similar contexts as our own, but also reflect the generational, cultural, and social gaps between teachers and students.

With a fresh and clear gaze, I have been able to contemplate the impact of my teaching on my students. Question the impact the current music education curriculum structure is having on the students in our modern classroom, and interrogate my own unrecognized privilege on the

development of my identity and the decisions made in my classroom. It has allowed me to shine a light on the inherent limitations of music education on students of color, low socio-economic status, rural and urban communities, or the lack of evolution of music curriculum and instructional methods, to that of the evolution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century student and society. How did these interrogations inform my new outlook on my teaching? Did I uphold my obligations as an educator to provide meaningful music education for all students? Did I practice democratic or critical approaches to education to allow my students to discover their voices?

Figure 3.14 Teacher Mask



Connecting the development of our identity with our current practice may provide a new found clarity for us to explore our pasts, and might become a portal into which this exploration of identity, privilege, and access within music education may begin. How can we become more

open to the circumstances of our students? More compassionate to the needs and wants of our students and their community. What can we do within music education to help provide better and more comprehensive access to music education for all students? Creating a music education experiences that can be valued and attainable to a broader student population. Unpacking the many levels and layers of our personal narratives to enrich our teaching, to discover new paths of access for all students who have a desire for music education as a means of self-discovery and release. A release of fear. A release of struggle. A discovery of voice. A discovery of freedom. A discovery of equality. A discovery of potential and promise. A discovery of a future.

Many of the inherent privileges that are placed against the potential success of students are beyond immediate control. Centuries of instilled institutionalized privilege and power of one deemed dominate culture over others will not cease to exist in the writing of this document. Privilege will continue to be a part of the complex social constructs that guide those in power. Those who are charged with crafting policy. Those who are employed with the teaching and guidance of youth. Our next step in the process is to become cognizant of such privilege and the impact it has on those we interact with in the classroom. This awareness has become apparent as I reflect on the inclusion of the alternative programs into the music curriculum in the schools I taught.

\*\*\*

*The hallways of our school were full of music.*

*Rappers*

*Poets*

*Guitars*

*Kids writing in journals, with headphones listening to music*

*Random students playing the piano in my classroom*

*There was so much musical talent being wasted. Why weren't we teaching these students?*

\*\*\*

It became clear that there was potential for change. In the moment, the discovery was not profound. It has been through this research process that I have been able to acknowledge the power and importance of such curricular changes on students. These changes produced a wave of change and access to our music program. Students were discovering voices that had never been allowed to speak.

\*\*\*

*Take these students and have them learn about what they are actually interested in.*

*Hip-Hop*

*Acoustic singer songwriters*

*Dj'ing*

*Music business*

*Audio production*

*Practical music based on the needs and interests of the student population in my school.*

\*\*\*

The music they studied and performed in class began to sound like the music they heard at home. The music they listened to in the hallways. The students were experiencing aspects of their culture on a daily basis that had been suppressed in the traditional curriculum. The students were interacting with music in a meaningful and practical manner. The students were discovering their truth. The truth in their voice. The truth in the expression of their identity. The truth in self-empowerment. The power of questioning their place in society and that of those in power.

\*\*\*

*“Killing in the name of”*

*Some of those that wear forces,*

*Are the same that burn crosses...*

*And now they do what they told ya,*

*And now they do what they told ya...*

*Those who died, are justified,*

*For wearing the badge, they're the chosen whites,*

*You justify, those that died...*

*Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me.*

*Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me.*

*(Rage Against the Machine, 1991)*

*Performed each day, and at every performance as a means to express the student frustration with school and administration policy and unfair practices, assumptions, and discriminations the students faced each day. It became the anthem for the class, providing voice and empowerment to the students. Taking charge of their education.*

\*\*\*

Hinchey (2010) asserts that,

To become change agents students need to learn how to question their daily experience.

To effectively mentor student through this learning process, teacher themselves must

develop the habit a subjecting their own habits and assumptions to the same sort of

questioning. All education ought to be grounded in daily experience so that students can

come to recognize what they've accepted by default because they are blinded by assumptions. (p. 123)

Figure 3.15 Killing



My own teachers were blinded by assumptions of my childhood. I was blinded by the learned behaviors from those experiences. Those assumptions informed my daily teaching and curricular decisions. I was doing what I had blindly accepted as truth in my youth and in my education. For my students, they had always blindly followed the instruction of the teacher. The one in power. They have never been allowed to have a voice in their own education. They were now developing a voice within a classroom environment that fostered independence and interrogation of classroom norms. The students made critical and valuable curricular choices that guided and shaped the learning that occurred. The content, and the context of the learning was a democratic practice involving the students and teacher as equals.



This freedom was not only for the students, but me as the teacher. I had discovered the power of releasing control. Control of privilege. Control of power. Control of content. Control of context. It opened up channels that allowed me to connect more directly with my students. Discover insights into their culture; insights into their true identity. The students were provided a space where they were able to experiment and develop their identities. Release fears. Release frustrations. Release anxieties. Release sadness and pain. Creating space for the exploration of their developing identities.

I am in the process of discovery in the truth of my own identity. Identity as a teacher. Identity as a human, and in the way I view my purpose and role in society. Breaking the mold of privilege from the inside out, has allowed me to become aware of my role in the discussion of power and access in music education. I have been a member of the dominant group my entire life. The privilege as a child went unnoticed, but it was very apparent in the development of my early teaching career. The exclusion of students from my program. The unreal expectations of students to fight in the same manner as I had growing up. The frustration that bled into the creation of a corrosive and divisive classroom environment. All creating the dichotomy of contradiction as a teacher, the demanding unaccepting authoritarian with the empathetic and devoted mentor.

Our process of self-discovery is never-ending. My new role as researcher will continue to call into question my place and value within society. Within education. I must be open and aware of the potential for change in student voices. The potential for creating evolution with music education. Redefining what a *traditional* music curriculum looks like. Instead of allowing decades of biased tradition to define normalcy, we can interrogate our narratives, and

be open to listening and identifying the needs of the students and community that comprise the structure of the school music program.

Figure 3.16 Researcher Mask



Identity as a teacher is ever-evolving. It is our responsibility as educators to unearth our own stories to becoming an educator. What is it that draws us to education? To the students and communities in which we teach? To the subjects we teach? How does our past influence our current teaching practices and behaviors? How does our past motivate our desire to provide the most meaningful and empowering education to our students? Each story is unique. Each identity is unique. Each interpretation of our past is unique. There will be unique interpretations as we grow older and gain more experience. This process of discovering and decoding our identity and stories will continue to adapt and evolve over time. It is our calling as educators to



explore and to question. To connect our past to our present. To listen to the voices of our students. To empathize with the voices of our students. To disrupt the traditional power structure to best provide the best education possible for our students. There will never be a final answer. The questioning. The discovery. The passion can never end. That is becoming an educator.

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