A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE WIND BAND EXPERIENCE:

STORIES OF BAND

by

Jason Noble

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Randall Allsup, Sponsor
Professor Harold Abeles

Approved by the Committee on the Degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

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This study is a phenomenological study about band. Stories of band are told through three people of different ages and generations who chose to continue playing an instrument after graduating from high school. A review of the literature and a lack of research from the perspective of the individual led this study to two broad research questions. First, is there such a thing as a "band identity?" I wanted to know how band shaped the lives of three individuals who have spent their lives playing, experiencing, and performing band music. I wanted to discover if there was some sort of essence to band and to understand more about how the concept of self is shaped through participation in band. Second, I wanted to be open to the idea that the telling of stories of band might intersect with my own. The final chapter of the study reflects on my journey as a teacher. On the surface, band may look like any other group activity. But the powerful combination of mastering an instrument, learning how one's instrument fits into a larger ensemble, and navigating the social and family-like drama as one's life story unfolds makes the band experience unique. The three study participants were interviewed over

nine months using a theoretical "mix tape" approach blending phenomenological inquiry with elements of case study, narrative, short written responses, reflections, and the collecting of artifacts. The participants showed that the band experience is inextricably woven into the identity of individuals who continue to devote time and energy to instrumental music. The band identity is wrapped around and melded with concepts of the power of the group dynamic, the magic and memories formed from devoting time to the activity of music making, the power of music on memory, and the relationships that are built through the activity. This thesis shows that band directors should pay much closer attention to and nurture the value of the individual by listening to the individual soundtracks of their students and working to understand the stories and life experiences that the individual brings to the traditional large ensemble band setting.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of Janet Brown Noble (1944 – 2017), devoted mother, wife, teacher, professor, and "Mama to all." She dreamed of proudly watching her first-born son become "Doctor Noble," but she did not get to see this happen in this life. Janet was often the first person that people sought for help with their problems, especially if they fell outside of dogmatic societal norms. She was far ahead of the progressive social curve throughout her career, and she proudly notified everyone she could that she was one of a handful of people in deeply conservative Haralson County, Georgia, who voted against the unconstitutional and discriminatory marriage equality ban in her state. Raised as a compassionate and caring Christian, she personified the type of grace and love for all that is often sorely missing in today's polarized and troubled world. She supported and encouraged countless young women to be strong leaders and embrace traditionally male-dominated fields like engineering, mathematics, and physics. She soundly rejected archaic and exclusionary thinking. And during her 50 years of teaching, her classroom served as a consistent safe space for students of color, LGBTQ students, teen mothers, members of non-normative religions, people who wore "strange clothes," tattooed people, boys who wore long hair, girls who wore short hair, people who liked to dance, and other "outcasts" who may have not fit into whatever was defined as mainstream at the time. For many years, she held an "Orphans' Christmas" at her home in Tallapoosa on the evening of December 25th after hearing how many of her sons' friends had no place to go for the holidays due to the "deeply held religious beliefs" of

their families, or because they lived far away from family or were otherwise estranged. Any person who felt that they did not have a place to go, felt unwelcome by their biological families, wanted to cry on a welcoming shoulder, or just wanted some real southern hospitality found an open door at the Noble house. Janet Noble was love. She believed firmly that there is no fear in love, and that perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). Janet approached every situation through a lens of real, genuine, and unabashed love for her fellow human. Her unbridled love for life and love for all the world's children burns eternally. I will feel that I have moved mountains and changed the world if I can ever be 1/100th the teacher and mentor that my mother was. This dissertation is for you, mama.

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To my best friend Frank, thank you for being my rock of support for 12 years. Thank you for believing in me when no one else did, and thank you for being a friend.

To my two-year-old daughter Ava, Dada loves you, and I hope you will forgive me for the many times I had to cut playtime short to write. You are the love and light of my life, and I can't wait to read your dissertation in the future.

J. N.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Band Experience

This study is about band. The "experience" of band personifies multiple meanings, crossing over from pedagogy and practice into community and family. Being a "member of the band" involves more than simple memorization of rhythms, pitches, and articulations. A sense of belonging, the value of community, and so-called "life lessons" make up the extra-musical elements of the "band experience." I know individuals who met their future husbands, wives, or partners in band. My closest friends in high school all served in the band, and it became indelibly embedded into our identities. Those who have experienced and lived band know that this is something unique. However, I claim that the value of band as a social and cultural phenomenon, one that is larger than the sum of its parts, is under-researched. The study begins with the view that band, like all musical practices, can be an experience of liberation. Some musicians may find their "voice" through participation in band. However, these claims are not inconsistent with the fact that others may remember band as an experience of conformity, where the goal of a perfect group performance, as dictated by the conductor, usurped any feelings of individuality or self-worth.

The dissonance between the possible virtues of band (Allsup, 2012) and the hidden curriculum that masks oppressive relationships (Apple, 2004) makes band worth studying. In my 20-year career as a band educator, supervisor of student teachers,

clinical field placement coordinator, and teacher of future teachers, I have frequently observed, with great curiosity, how band operates as a type of underground, secret society. That society features plenty of rules and regulations, a hierarchical structure of competition and ratings, and a sometimes implicitly militaristic nature (VanderCook, 1926). I think of the oft-repeated notion that a soldier is deliberately "beaten down" when he joins a branch of the US armed forces (Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011) just so that he can be "built back up" in the image of the perfect soldier (Foucault, Stastny, & Sengel, 1995). This vision of band undoubtedly prepares great musical soldiers to replicate (Bourdieu, 1990) and propagate its prevailing culture. A phenomenon with implications affecting so many arenas (the self, one's place, the aesthetic) is certainly worth studying. I wanted to better understand what discourses constitute this "experience of band," an open concept that I sought to explicate in this study. I wanted to uncover those aspects, potentially hidden or obvious, that defined the experience for its members. This study sought to describe and reflect on the rich and complicated stories of persons who have lived the band experience. Because I am an insider who has lived my own band experience and who continues living my own band experience through my teaching, I recognized the challenge that this research posed when undertaking the study. What makes up that unspoken element that "we just know is there" in the band experience? After reflecting on the related literature and existing studies, this study began to turn in the direction of examining the lives of people who continue to do band many years after high school graduation. How does band figure into the continuity of one's life? Why is it still present? Why and how do we hold on to the ideals, culture, and mores of band throughout our lives?

Myths and Realities

Many of the historical accounts of "success" in the wind band idiom revolve around a body of published literature written by revered band conductors within the band community who lionize and congratulate each other mostly on the "quality" of the bands they have produced (Battisti, 2002; Fennell, 1954; Garofalo, 1983; R. F. Goldman, 1962). Missing in nearly all historical band texts is what constitutes the experience, or what makes up the value of band for the individual. Much of the discussion on the concept of producing "great bands" focuses on excellent technique (Garofalo, 1983), fundamental skills (VanderCook, 1926), and a relentless pursuit of uniformity (Williamson, 1998), all of which are merely approaches to playing and performing the music. The typical preparatory curriculum for an aspiring band educator reveals a body of texts that emphasize exacting, precise, clearly transmitted gestures and pedagogical creeds, so that ensembles under the rule of a conductor will respond as they are told to do (E. Green, 1968; Hunsberger & Ernst, 1992). In the discourses that surround this primarily performance-based paradigm, the conductor's interpretation is always seen as correct. The objects of learning (the students) do not question the authority of the conductor (the subject), and the objects do as they are told (Freire, 1970). The learners, much like assembly-line factory workers (Taylor, 1911), are trained to produce a desired sound and to not color outside the proverbial musical lines and boundaries established by a both omnipotent and omniscient conductor. The conductor functions as a clerk (Greene, 1995), unilaterally disseminating information and instilling knowledge in his subjects. The end result is a perfected musical performance that results in accolades, high ratings

or marks, trophies, or invitations to perform in national festivals at the behest of fellow members of the community.

The traditional band model certainly invites critique in the twenty first century, and it calls upon us to examine the band insider's experience as a potential source of rich, complex, and contradictory information. An adult may revere and glorify their band experience, yet many do not continue to play an instrument after devoting countless hours in high school to band. In my work in teacher preparation programs and designing training for graduate student teachers, I have frequently encountered former band students who become physically uncomfortable at the sound of a metronome, because nearly every class period of their high school band experience began and ended with the constant, relentless, perfect ticking of a metronome. Others have told me that they remember the "disciplinary" aspect of band strongly, and how that structure made them "grow up fast" under the rule of an authoritarian conductor. Others become obsessed with perfect intonation, exacting articulations, and achieving "correct" interpretations of music, while seemingly forgetting the overall aesthetic and emotional value of a musical experience.

Recent renewed focus on critical and creative thinking (Shively, 2004), democracy in the classroom (Allsup, 2003; Jenlink & Jenlink, 2008), and higher-order thinking skills (Pink, 2006) may clash with traditional notions of band. Going all the way back to the philosophies of Kant (1798/1979), as echoed in the mid-20th century by Dewey (1944) and in the 21st century by David Hansen (2006), we can easily see how the band director may (perhaps unwittingly) use his students for the purpose of producing a self-glorifying end, rather than allowing his students to learn *from* each other (Allsup,

2007; D. Hansen, 2006; Dewey, 1944). Is there something shared across band experiences? What can we learn from the good that band does, and how can we make band a better experience for our students? Many more questions arise.

Band has the capability to shape and develop a significant part of society for the better. Allsup (2013) writes that,

> Because the public-school band experience is situated at the intersections of art, community, self-interest, and education, band has the capacity to serve as an exemplar of what moral education could be and what moral education could aim for.

Allsup argues that deeply ethical questions arise from the band experience, and that band can function as a form of moral education under certain circumstances. Allsup wonders what band would look like if the conductors imagined the learners as ends in themselves, as "persons with projects" (D. Hansen, 2006). The conductor would need to be willing to accept variances in musical interpretation and consider allowing student input on repertoire. The large ensemble band class could be occasionally divided into smaller groups of musicians with improvisational or composition exercises. Breaking apart the "band" without destroying the "band" would require that the conductor show a willingness to experiment outside of traditional practice and tread a delicate line between individualism and ensemble techniques.

I believe that there is value in the preparation of music at the highest levels, but my own life experiences in teaching band have led me to examine the way we teach and experience band. As noted in the ubiquitous advertising logo of the national organization Bands of America, band has the potential to be a "positively life changing" experience for the students who participate. But what constitutes a "positively life changing" experience? Few students have the luxury of spending at least four years – sometimes

longer in smaller school districts – with the same teacher or mentor. Band directors watch their students grow and mature – musically, emotionally, and physically – during their years with us. Given the capacity and significance of the band experience, it would be very difficult to argue that we should simply teach music, win competitions, and perform excellent music for the sake of performing excellent music.

Part of the additional promise of band as an experience worth celebrating, reflecting on, and potentially reshaping for the 21st century, lies in the inherently *public* nature of band. School bands initially formed in the United States as a function of public schooling (Battisti, 2002; VanderCook, 1926). Band, as it is known today, is considered to be an *American* phenomenon, despite emerging out of nineteenth-century European military bands and their proliferation through private schools and community bands across the globe during the 21st century (Whitwell, 2010). Band is part of most American public-school curricula and is offered in most US public schools to any student who wishes to learn an instrument.

The industrial age, a historical period during which large classrooms and large schools were designed, provided a perfect environment for this "mass" form of arts education known as band (R.K. Hansen, 2004) to grow and thrive. Most band educators in the early years received formal musical training through the United States Military Bands (Whitwell, 2010). Institutionalization of band, led by the industrial revolution and the "mass education" mentality of the time, produced bands that functioned much like assembly lines, producing what some argue as contrived and predetermined musical output for the public (Budiansky, 2005). Some band scholars boasted about the value of discipline and uniformity that the school band offered to young, patriotic Americans

throughout the McCarthy post-World War II era (E. F. Goldman, 1934; R. F. Goldman, 1962).

One of the questions that emerges in the discussion of the possibilities of band is the notion that band has an only partially recorded history. The literature has shown little about the individual voices of students who make up the living and thriving public school band. If Dewey had spoken directly to band directors, he might challenge the band educator to "reconceptualize" (1959), a critical brainstorming session where new ways of teaching and communicating all that is "band" are explored, all while preserving the inherently *positive* traditional elements of the experience. Maxine Greene challenges us to examine *possibilities*, and to step out of traditional and controlled teacher-led environments (1995) and draw upon our imagination and creativity. Because I have a deep love for the band art form, I hope that my research will help promote reflective discourse and lead to positive changes in the band model. I initially considered that this study could suggest, or perhaps even boldly point toward, a way of protecting and continuing the tradition of *excellence* in band (e.g., musical precision, emotional interpretation, and beauty of sound) while also enlarging its conception.

Why Band is Worth Studying

Today, there is much discussion in the band world about the purpose of band, the band experience as a transformative tool, and the significance of the wind band idiom as a vehicle for an optimal music education (Battisti, 1989; Fennell, 1954; Jachens, 1987; Kratus, 2007; Mark & Gary, 2007; Williams, 2007). Stories, folklore, and traditions exist in the band world, but the manner in which those stories and traditions affect band members has not been critically documented. Several "feel good" inspirational band

texts (Alsobrook, 2002; Lautzenheiser, 1993) laud the reasons that the wind band is conceptually vital to music education, but very few substantial texts critically question band as a cultural phenomenon (R. K. Hansen, 2004, Whitwell, 2010). Even those that discuss the culture of band present a neatly packaged combination of "best case" scenarios (R. K. Hansen, 2004). Kristen Laine, a journalist for National Public Radio, was so moved by her high school band experience that she returned to her hometown of Elkhart, Indiana, to pen *American Band: Music Dreams, and Coming of Age in the Heartland* (2007), a story that chronicles several band members' journeys through the band experience. Laine argues that band has become almost a religion, and that band provides a ceremonial rite of passage and first foray into adult responsibility. Laine describes how students in the Concord band are inducted into the band after successfully demonstrating an acceptance of its common values and beliefs. Laine's description of the religiosity of band shows that, similarly to religious conversion, some students "find" band after being "lost" in high school.

Prior to this study I observed, through the adjudicating of large multi-state marching band competitions, that band is a thriving, underground, alternative universe phenomenon, complete with a near cult-like following. As in but one example, thousands of people attend the Golden River Marching Festival in Tallapoosa, Georgia, my hometown. Tallapoosa boasts a population of approximately 3,000 people, and the marching festival draws bands from multiple states and spectators numbering well into the thousands. Food trucks offer funnel cakes, vendors offer band t-shirts and souvenirs, and parents wear support buttons and drive around equipment trucks on ATV's. Entire local economies are shaped and mobilized by band competitions and band events. Some

nationally competitive band programs have annual operating budgets well into the million-dollar range.

While I love the wind band and chose to become a music educator and to dedicate my life to band and instrumental music education because of my own wind band experience, I began this study with the initial suspicion that much of the band experience is viewed as good because of the deep social interaction and community-building that goes on over an extended period of time within the student body, and not because of the brilliance or omnipotence of the band director or the music he performs. My initial suspicion that band directors are less influential in the process of students developing a love for band than the "essence" of band itself needed a carefully constructed combination of research methods to provide clarity. I further presumed in undertaking this research that band provides a life experience and culture for which its students emerge as much more self-actualized and adjusted individuals. Band students practically live together, sleeping in close quarters at band camps and overnight competition trips. They spend countless hours rehearsing, indoors and out, perfecting their individual musical parts for the good of the collective group and for the common goal of competitive results.

These band competitions, while ostensibly focused on an end product of music making, may actually provide a crucial bridge to adulthood and leadership development in the manner that Laine discusses (2007); much like participation in the military can foster such an outlook. Members of the military often experience a psychological "conversion" or a religious-like experience, when they relinquish their civilian life and accept the harsh realities of war, vowing to continue on the traditions and missions of the

unit (Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). This sort of quasi-religious experience and acceptance can be seen in the band experience through the culture of competition, militarism (R. F. Goldman, 1962), and product-oriented curriculum in the American band (Battisti, 2002).

Self-doubt and Awakenings

As early as fall 2002, only a couple of years into my formal teaching career, I began to question that some elements of the band-as-community paradigm (the culture where I had been reared) deserved further exploration, and that my own view of the purpose and function of "band" deserved much deeper reflection. The day after my high school band won second place in the 2002 Florida Marching Band Coalition (FMBC) Class AA State Tournament, my conscience began to ache. Earlier in my career, I would have feverishly looked up general effect and visual scores in an attempt to analyze why our band lost by 0.04 to a band that I would have likely called lesser than mine. Not this time. A student came up to me in tears shortly after it was announced that we placed second among many bands, and she apologized for letting me down because we did not win first place. Her words led to a painful torrent of thought and inquiry by me. I drove home on the night of my birthday and broke down into tears. Did I put in all this time and effort simply for my *own* aggrandizement? Was it *really* worth months of preparation learning seven minutes of a highly complex and theatrical performance, complete with musical smoke and mirrors? That experience 18 years ago led me to seek the understanding and enlightenment that comes with an inspired graduate school experience, and it provoked me to turn a critical lens on my then young practice.

My thinking process in that moment of existential crisis was not logical, but a query on the very existence of myself (Boelen, 1968; Heidegger, 1962) as a band director. Were my fears unfounded? Had I ruined a student's love of music because of my own overzealous focus on the product? That evening, I began to slowly change my view on the value of competition and question the prevailing culture of band. By the time I had completed my master's degree and begun doctoral studies, I knew that I wanted to dive deeply into a study of the band experience – but I wanted to do so in an intensely *personal*, retrospective, and introspective way. I could not be separated from the research because my own life experience has been colored and punctuated by band for over 30 years. Because of my own life experience and dedication to this art form, I felt that I needed to craft a method of inquiry that would allow for Maxine Greene's endless possibilities (1995) and the potential for unexpected findings.

This study began as much a personal journey and reflection as it was an exploration of the stories and portraits of the "band experience" as experienced by three musicians at different points in their journeys through band. I knew that I wanted to be a high school band director after the first semester of my freshman year in high school in the fall semester of 1992. Band functioned as a community for me – a place where I could be myself and be supported by other members of our band community. My high school band director ignited a passion in me through his innovative and motivational teaching of Gustav Holst's *Suite in E-flat* (1909). That passion has only grown since that first high school concert on December 15, 1992. I quickly received my undergraduate degree in music education and began culturally reproducing the band experience that I received in high school (Bourdieu, 1990). By the time I began graduate schooling in

2004, I had completed four years of successful band teaching. In this case, I define successful as the act of winning multiple competitions, receiving invitations for prestigious national festivals, and having numerous proclamations from politicians and communities bestowed upon my group. I still referred to groups under my direction with a possessive first-person pronoun. I was grounded firmly in techniques-based music instruction. I had all the tools and tips necessary to manage a classroom (Battisti, 2002), make a band sound beautiful (Garofalo, 1983), and keep a band program growing (Labuta, 1997).

Missing from the equation was a personal understanding of *why* we do what we do, and *what* motivates students and band directors to continue a long tradition that began with military bands many years ago (VanderCook, 1926). What makes band so crucial to the building of community and society? Why do we citizens of the band world share a common bond—one that some may argue is stronger than the bonds of athletic teams or other musical groups? This study initially emerged as an attempt to better understand the lived experience and stories of three band musicians, and it grew into a broader attempt to explicate the experience of band and my own role in the experience. The study is inherently and intensely personal, as I have purposely sought musicians who may have had both positive and negative views of band and band directors. The study is a retrospective on not only the lives and lived experiences of its three subjects, but also its researcher. The common thread between all three participants centers around shared beliefs, values, and goals of the band subculture. No rosy or contrived patterns were assumed, nor desired when the study began. An honest, personally vulnerable nature of

inquiry, and my desire for a much deeper, richer understanding guided this research from the first day.

Theoretical Framework: A Mix-Tape Approach

Because this dissertation is a descriptive study relating human accounts, stories, and conceptual phenomena surrounding the band experience, I have developed a theoretical framework I will define as a "theoretical mix tape" approach: a framework combining my affection for phenomenological research with narrative, portraiture, autoethnography, and case study. I use overlapping theories purposefully, and I limit the concept of phenomenology in this study to that which informs the social sciences in qualitative research. Phenomenology and narrative research are conceptually coherent, because phenomenology relies on human accounts, stories, and conceptual phenomenon – in this case the band experience and the story it has to tell. Memories and the accounts of our lives are constructed, and there is a type of beautiful uncertainty in the way we recall significant life events many years later (Miller, 2000).

The conceptual framework for this study begins with phenomenology, a word with Greek roots, meaning "to appear" or to "flare up and reason" (Welton, 1999). The study broadly seeks to describe ineffable human aspects – meaning, being, and essence (Moran, 2000). Though there are a number of themes that characterize phenomenology, it has not developed a rigid set of rules for its implementation as a social science paradigm (Moran, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). In the 20th century, Martin Heidegger's philosophical hermeneutics model (1962) shifted the focus from Gadamer's interpretation-based hermeneutics (1960). Gadamer had previously sought to uncover the "meaning" behind a phenomenon through a historical vantage point, bracketed and

classified as an objective study and rooted in the social sciences. Heidegger's existential understanding paradigm allowed phenomena to be explored more as non-mediated ways of "being" in the world. Heidegger's method of existential analysis asks the subjects (and the researcher) to examine challenges that include: world, life, self, meaning, and future (Frankl, 1984). Unlike Gadamer and earlier phenomenologists, this uncovering is explored through a deep dialogue between the researcher and the subject (p. 131). Of course, phenomenology focuses on "created" or "crafted" reality (Bresler, 1995), those personal domains of private construction and interpretation where behaviors and actions are only a starting point to explore larger experiences and meanings.

Critics have historically criticized phenomenology as an irrational appeal to mystical intuition, as promoting an unregulated rhapsodizing on the nature of lived experience (p. 14), or as seeking to repudiate science and the scientific view of the world (Spiegelberg & Shuhmann, 1994). Thomas Groenewald (2004) further describes how phenomenology is often misunderstood or decried for being an invalid form of research. Against the notions of traditional, provable reason and logic, phenomenology claims to be a radical way of *doing* philosophy (Greene, 1995) as a practice rather than as a system (Moran, 2000, p. 4). It allows for emotional thinking, life world experiences, meaning as perceived by an individual, and subjective situations to be incorporated into analysis. Further, phenomenology tries to get to the truth of matters, by describing phenomena as, it manifests itself to the experiencer (p. 4). Van den Berg, as translated by Van Manen (1997) captures the "essence" of phenomenology in this quote:

> [Phenomena] have something to say to us — this is common knowledge among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born phenomenologists. Or rather, we are all born phenomenologists; the poets and painters among us, however, understand very well their task of sharing, by means of word and image,

> their insights with others — an artfulness that is also laboriously practiced by the professional phenomenologist. (p. 41)

Phenomenologists believe that researchers cannot be detached from their own presuppositions and biases, and that researchers should openly admit this in the context of the research (Hammersley, 2000). In that respect, phenomenology protects and preserves the subjective view of experience for both the researcher and the researched (Moran, 2000). Deeply exploring and describing a phenomenon from multiple angles may lead to new existential questions or problems that do not have clear cut "solutions" (Groenewald, 1994). Greene (1973/1995), Husserl (1931), and Merleau-Ponty (1962), all espouse and revel in the belief that inquiry often produces an entirely new set of "aching" questions that often have no answers (Greene, 1995). I initially surmised that this study might provide an entirely new set of questions and concerns about the band experience as informed by Greene and Husserl's view of the ever-changing tapestry and beautiful uncertainty of the recollection of human experiences. That initial foggy and purposefully nebulous burning question led me to Jon Kabat-Zinn, who believes that "inquiry doesn't mean looking for answers" (in Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 39). According to Bresler (1995), the researchers have directly *experienced* the phenomenon being explored in phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenological researchers are considered insiders and participants in a study, and they have a critical role in shaping the research setting (p. 22), unlike the more passive role of an ethnographer or observer. Because phenomenology remains a malleable form of inquiry (Groenewald, 1994), and because I have lived the band experience, phenomenology found a natural home as the beginning conceptual force that drove this study of the band experience. The study sought no specific answers, but it

did hope to discover a better understanding of the phenomena, folklore, myths, and realities surrounding the band experience as viewed through the lens of three musicians.

I also felt a strong desire to examine the hidden nature of band directing and bands, because societal notions of what constitutes "excellent band directing" have challenged my own moral and ethical compass. I wondered if my teaching style in 1998 may have led to unintended consequences compared to my teaching style in 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, or 2020. My conscience aches from the thought that I may have, at times in my career, let bands under my direction revert to the "traditional Revelli paradigm" (Holsberg, 2009), while simultaneously and hypocritically professing that I believed in democratic and constructivist education. The self-analysis and personal reflection was often painful in this study. I sometimes felt that the subjects I interviewed were describing me on my worst day. Portraits and fleeting essences emerged from the individual depictions of each research participant. The researcher and the researched became a group of co-researchers. I spent so much time with each subject that I felt a kinship and a much deeper understanding. After spending months examining each subject's experience, I felt inspired and justified in my initial assumption that the findings simply required an explication without synthesizing or "proving" any element of the experience. There are strikingly similar moments of cross-explication between the three subjects. In this study, I see "essence" as a scent or feeling that can be grasped, but that quickly disappears and evaporates.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to describe and understand social and psychological/emotional phenomena from the perspectives of people involved in band and to describe intimately the truths (Husserl, 1931) or essences (Heidegger, 1962) of the band experience as colored and constructed through the eyes of band insiders and through myself. The notion of an essence of band provides a way of contemporaneously understanding the phenomenon of band. Truths emerge through the band experience.

The secondary purpose of the study was to provide myself an opportunity for intense reflection and analysis on a career path that I chose at age 15 and continue to pursue with daily renewed enthusiasm after 20 years of teaching. The band paradigm usually involves a very long physical, social, academic, and emotional commitment from middle school through high school with only one or two highly influential teachers. I felt a need to undertake this type of study to enrich my own understanding of why students do the things they do in band, and why the band experience could be all of the following: liberating and oppressive; socially rich and socially devastating; a road to creativity and imagination; or a road to conformity.

I believed that the magical excitement about this type of study centered around the idea that so many questions and new areas for further research and lifelong reflection could evolve from the interviews and research I conducted with the subjects. I hoped to uncover meaning and better describe the human experience through this particular setting, and ultimately to spark dialogue and debate, encourage further research, and implore practicing band directors to intensely reflect on their own motivations and self-interests as band directors.

Research Questions/Aims

The study incorporates two main lines of inquiry, the first beginning with a question and exploration into how band shapes identity. I wanted to know if a band identity existed, and if an essence of the band experience informed that identity. Are lives are shaped through band, and how is a person's identity shaped through the band experience? Does life inside band shape life outside of band? I sought to explore how memories of the band experience shaped present-day experiences through stories of band. The questions ultimately lead to an examination of the concept of self and how band fits into the continuity of one's life. Why does it persist and remain present for some people?

The second question evolved because of my desire to be open to the idea that the shared stories of band would intersect with my own – and that those stories would illuminate and inform my own teaching as a band director of twenty years. I began with a hunch that this study would improve my own teaching and lead me to an area of reflection on pedagogical practices employed in my own classrooms and rehearsal halls. I wanted to know if the intersection of my own band experience with the three subjects could produce new revelations or concerns for practicing teachers and band conductors.

Research Methodology

An effective research methodology starts with the selection of the topic, the problem or area of interest, and the paradigm (Creswell, 1994; Mason, 1996, quoted in Groenewald, 2004) through which the area of interest is viewed. Stanage (1987) traces the word "paradigm" back to its Greek (*paradeigma*) and Latin origins (*paradigma*), meaning "pattern, model, or example." A research paradigm describes the researcher's pattern of thinking. Stanage also defines a paradigm as the action of submitting to a

view. Stanage's belief is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 157) who define a research paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action," dealing with first principles "ultimates" or the researcher's worldviews (quoted in Groenewald, 2004, p. 6). My research paradigm describes the way the body of existing research (method) helps answer the questions in the study. My qualitative research paradigm begins with phenomenology as an umbrella concept, followed and enhanced by elements of case study, autoethnography, and narrative.

Phenomenology

A researcher using phenomenology in the manner that I used in this study focuses primarily on the "lived experiences" of the subjects (Greene, 1997; Groenewald, 2004; Holloway, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996; Maypole & Davies, 2001; Robinson & Reed, 1998). This study, therefore, focused on the lived experience of band, or the phenomenon of the "band experience." Phenomenologists, in contrast to positivists (Groenewald, 2004), believe that a researcher should acknowledge his attachments and presuppositions prominently in the research (Hammersley, 2000). Mouton and Marais (1990) state that individual researchers "hold explicit beliefs" (p. 12). I held beliefs and existing assumptions about the band experience that could not possibly be redacted from this research. I felt that a Mouton and Marais paradigm would allow for the freest form of possible crystallization and explication.

First person reports of life experiences make phenomenological research trustworthy (Hycner, 1999), and "the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice versa) including even the type of participants" (p. 156). This study was grounded and supported by the detailed conversations, interviews, and mutual reflections that I conducted with

three participants (Creswell, 1994; Mason, 1996). A common thread among phenomenologists is the strong belief that their chosen method provides deeper information about the empirical world than the usual empirical methods can provide. Martin Heidegger (1972, p. 78) gave an existentialist explanation for these beliefs, saying that a phenomenological insight comes from the existence (German: Das…*Sein*) common to both the researcher and the researched:

> Understanding is the same as the existential being related to a human being's own being and ability, and it takes place in such a way that this being reflects the meaning of its own existence back to itself. ... "When our understanding develops, we call it interpretation. In interpretation, we do not acquire knowledge on what we understand; instead, interpreting is all about realizing the potentials projected by understanding. (Heidegger 1972, pp. 32, 82)

What Heidegger is trying to communicate is that the researcher and the researched are not acquiring new knowledge — they are asking questions and developing a deeper understanding about a phenomenon. There may be no empirical data to be extracted, synthesized, or analyzed in an existential inquiry. In an existential inquiry, the researcher and researched interpret and realize together the potentials of a phenomenon. The dialogue between researcher and researched ultimately seeks to capture the "essence" of the phenomenon.

Heidegger's view on phenomenological insight worked well for this study, because it takes into equal consideration the interpretation of both the researcher and the researched. The *potentials* projected by understanding, as Heidegger describes, provided multiple avenues for discussion and interpretation of data in this study. Using Heidegger's model helped the study improve the "validity" (a highly subjective term) of the findings by contemplating the object in different contexts. Such imaginative conceptions of the object, the wind band experience, pointed to using phenomenology as

a methodology in this study. At its roots, the intent of phenomenology is "to understand the phenomena in their own terms — to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96) and to allow the essence to emerge (Cameron, Schaffer, & Park, 2001).

Case Study, Auto Ethnography, Portraiture

Creswell (1998) defines a case study as "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case over time" through detailed data collection that includes multiple sources of information rich in context (p. 61). Multiple or comparative case study designs involve two or more cases to be compared. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) also describe a case study as a "detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event" (p. 59). Creswell (1998) illustrates the added value of "purposeful sampling," where individuals are selected for a study because they can "purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (pp. 124-125). Elements of case study were employed in this research because the study existed as one "bounded in experience," and because I purposely sampled representative band musicians who I believed might be able to share a compelling story (p. 60) based on the first questions of our first interview. Using case study as a secondary method in my theoretical mix tape allowed for the different experiences of the three participants and myself to be freely compared or unbound across cases as the findings emerged.

Crossing over from case study to autoethnography allows a researcher to describe and explore multiple layers of consciousness (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) from both his own view and the view of the participants in a study. Autoethnography departs from the

anthropological study of “others” in ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997) to focus inward on the “story” that the researcher has to construct. Autoethnography allows the researcher to connect the personal to the cultural (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000), in this case the experience of band. Autoethnography is almost always written in the first-person voice, and according to Richardson (2000), “[a]utoethnographies are highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experiences, relating the personal to the cultural.” Richardson argues that autoethnographic research allows for the “insider” experience of the researcher to emerge (p. 29). Autoethnographic researchers often use short stories, poetry, and reflective essays as a form of data reporting (Bochner & Ellis, 1996). Reed-Danahay (1997) defines autoethnography as a “form of self-narrative” that places “the self within a social context” (p. 8). Reed-Danahay believes that autoethnography is both a method and a text, similar to traditional ethnography (p. 9). Autoethnographic narrative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2003; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988; Reed-Danahay, 1997) is further described as the process of writing a story in the voice of the author through a rich descriptive personal narrative. My own band experience, and the freedom with which I hope to illustrate it, led me to use autoethnography as a secondary method to provide cohesion in this study. The most painful part of the study emerged through moments where I experienced the “life gets in the way” effect that the human experience often throws us without warning as a result of major life changes. I beat myself up for years, as this study seemed to be a never-ending and insurmountable mountain. I eventually reached a moment of clarity and conviction that motivated me to finish the study. My own painful account of the good and bad of my own band

experience and growth as a teacher ultimately guided me to a set of goals and values that I believe will positively inform the next 20 years of my own teaching practice. The stories of the subjects drew upon my own insecurities and feelings of inadequacy as a teacher. There were powerful moments of clarity and shared introspection that helped to refocus and re-guide the study in moments of uncertainty.

The band experience of the participants further allowed the telling of their own "stories" through narrative portraits. I saw the use of elements of narrative research and portraiture in band as a means of describing the individual "voice" of each subject and my own "voice." I began with the belief that the portraits did not need to necessarily fit together in any neatly packaged manner. Portraits may share commonalities, but each individual voice speaks through a separate portrait. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe the roles and actions of the researcher in terms of "voice." They believe that all research has elements of voice, and the way the researcher examines her lenses and tools for construction must be shared with the reader. The researcher presents the "portrait" with her voice "everywhere — overarching and under-girding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors, and echoing through the central themes" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 85). In portraiture, the multi-dimensional nature of voice must be recognized, evaluated, and integrated within the telling of the data. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis stated that there is no part of the research that goes untouched by some aspect of the researcher's voice (p. 85), and Anderson and Braud (2011) expand this view to include the voice of the researched. The "dialogue between art and science" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) and the gap between theory and practice (Anderson & Braud, 2011) converge in portraiture. I saw a striking similarity between "voice" in

research and the voice of a composer or author. Each of the three subjects brought a distinct and different perspective to the study. But at times, they seemed to be speaking with one collective voice. At other times, our four voices rose up in unity, only to be shattered in other areas.

Portraiture in research is similar to the role of portraitists in visual art, where used to draw their subjects' images while also including their own nuance and interpretation (Anderson & Braud, 2011). A research portraitist is allowed the freedom to craft an aesthetic narrative that includes independent perspectives of her subjects, the context of her work, and her own interpretive voice. Part of the additional appeal of portraiture as a secondary method in this dissertation lies in Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's notion that a researcher should resist "preoccupation with documenting pathology and suggesting remedies" and seek to improve her practice by "focusing on what works" and "underscoring what is healthy and strong" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I was interested in "what works" in the band experience and how a critical examination of the band experience might lead to new questions. Lawrence-Lightfoot allows for the emergence of certain "universal themes" (2005, p. 13) in portraiture, but she simultaneously allows for completely different portraits to coexist and function on their own as a part of a greater case study. The participants in this study were carefully encouraged to use poems, musical excerpts, drawings, and essays to describe their band experiences. This allowing for multiple angles of data collection gave a "voice to a people's experience" (Featherstone, 1989) through whichever means spoke to the researched. Portraiture represents "a long arc of work, reaching back two centuries, that joined art and science", and bridges "a long and rich history of dialogue and collaboration

between novelists and philosophers, artists and scholars" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Much like a musical composition, the portraits of each of the subjects in this dissertation showed a unique voice, theme, and arc of development. The portraits sometimes pointed toward a suite of ideas, and they sometimes functioned as standalone works.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The related literature begins with a personal reflection on the work of Maxine Greene and pivots through the lens of the lived complexities and problems within prevailing pedagogical practices of band. This review of related literature continues by reviewing and contrasting existing doctrine in the world of band with the ideas of phenomenological and philosophical researchers. This review then provides an examination of the dissonance between prevailing band "culture" and the ideals of an imagined band room where more individual, democratic processes are explored. The literature review ultimately seeks to illuminate the gaps in thinking between the prevailing band tradition and current thinking in education.

Teacher as Stranger (Greene, 1973) asks the teacher to take a stranger's point of view of everyday realities. Greene's audience is the modern teacher who finds herself part of an institution and a set of values that are under attack. The book calls into question many of the assumptions on which American education were based in the 20th century. *Teacher as Stranger* shook the very core of my own beliefs about the role of the teacher and the duty that teachers have to question prevailing practices in the school.

Greene asks the teacher to step away from her classroom, and look inquiringly and wonderingly on the world in which one lives: "It is like returning home from a long stay in some other place" (p. 37). Greene suggests that the teacher use philosophical

tools, rooted in the work of Schutz (1967), to make sense of the everyday hopes and fears in the classroom. David Hansen (2006) hypothesizes that the work remains invaluable today, because “it is important for teachers to be able to distinguish teaching from indoctrination, preaching, training, and the like.” Greene implores the teacher to remain in doubt, to view everything in her environment as suspect (p. 269), and to invite intense examinations of the very bases of her intentions. Becoming an “alien” and an “outsider” in the classroom is a willful act of estrangement. Greene says,

> The existential teacher must confront his freedom along with the alien freedoms of his students; and because he is bound to attend to so much more than performance, speech, and observable instances of mastery, he can never be sure of what he or they achieve. (p. 287)

These words illustrate the awesome and dangerous power that teachers have on their students, and they elucidate the idea that band directors who focus blindly on performance and uniformity could miss crucial moments in the development of the individual, or even stifle creativity and expression. Greene postulates that the school will have a very difficult time trying to cure the “plague-like” effect of social disease, because the school is a beholden to society.

Greene implores the teacher to consider the value and role of the individual in shaping a classroom experience. I was instructed throughout undergraduate school, as most band directors were, to focus on the product, the group, the ensemble sound, and the pursuit of ultimate unity. Greene’s discussions on the value of the individual challenged my own beliefs of the meaning of band, and it ultimately led me to the line of inquiry in this dissertation. The idea of the band director as an intentional outsider was a foreign concept to me before examining *Teacher as Stranger.* Stepping away from my assumptions of my own role as a band director and forcing myself to think as an

"outsider" (p. 178) led me to a series of existential questions and inspired me to "take the risk of thinking about what he is doing when he teaches, what it means when he talks of enabling others to learn" (Preface, p. 2). I began to question my presuppositions of band, and I began to self-consciously consider what it means to be a band director and to be a band member. I began to "do philosophy" (p. 203) by posing moral questions in relation to my purpose as a teacher.

Maxine Greene said, in a speech on June 27, 1996 at LSU "I ask myself, what is the meaning of what I have done? What has my work meant?" (quoted in Ayers, 1997, p. 119) Greene constantly asked that question, and through her writings she embraced the notion that she may never understand or "answer" the many questions that life asks. Using Greene's method of "doing philosophy" by stepping away from the ego-driven centralism of the band director role, allows for an honest discussion and assessment of the individual and self to emerge. Greene's introspective and reflective questions provide a band director with the opportunity to critically examine her historical role as an authoritarian creator of culture in the classroom. Greene's idea that the teacher may be the most inconsequential figure in the classroom may be uncomfortable to traditional band directors. The value of the individual band member, as seen through a Greene lens, looks very different from prevailing pedagogical research in band.

Gaps in Band Research

In stark contrast to the Greene view of the teacher as stranger, themes and trends in recent band research (Williamson, 1998) show the continued proliferation of teacher-centered rehearsal models. Teacher-centered rehearsals continue to dominate and exceed student-centered rehearsals. Much of the "band experience" is rooted in traditionalism

and the idea of passing on a legacy or history (E. F. Goldman, 1934). This practice of replication (Bourdieu,1990) begins with the band director, who often begins his career in the mold of his own high school band director. While seeking existing research in support of this study, I found a lack of qualitative research addressing the phenomenology of the wind band experience as the students experience it. Many psychologically-based phenomenology studies discuss and describe elements of the human experience (Heidegger, 1962; Husserl, 1931; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Schutz, 1967), but none do so through the wind band experience.

There is a great deal of published research on wind band techniques and methods written from the lens of the band director (Battisti, 1989, 2002; Garofalo, 1996; E. F. Goldman, 1934; R. F. Goldman, 1962; E. Green, 1968; VanderCook, 1926), but none of those studies examine or describe the experience of the individual in band. As of the time of this writing, one phenomenological study of the band experience through the eyes of the conductor exists (Lamkin, 2003). One book (Laine, 2007) addresses the narratives of several band members through a competitive marching band framework. Drawing upon the existing body of band research, this study highlights important pivotal developments and gaps in the research that has become widely accepted practice in the field.

The Conductor (Band Director) and the Band Member

Bands serve as unique "cultures" within a school (Morrison, 2001), but those cultures are shaped almost entirely by the deliberate actions of the conductor, or band director (Williamson, 1998). Because the most common term used in the field is "band director," I will henceforth refer to conductors as band directors, rather than band teacher

or band educator. The American band director identity came into existence following World War I, when large numbers of ex-military servicemen who played instruments, (E. F. Goldman, 1924; Whitwell, 2010) but had no teaching experience, became school band directors (Mark & Gary, 2007). The rise of the industrial age and "mass assembly line" thinking (Greene, 1995) permeated all of education during this time period. Band provided an opportunity for schools to educate large numbers of students and provide positive public relations tools for schools (Fitts, 1991; Whitwell, 2010). VanderCook (1926) wrote the first "treatise" on high school band directing, heavily emphasizing the omnisciently elevated position of the band director as ultimate musical mentor.

E. F. Goldman (1934) expands on VanderCook's notions of band director supremacy by boldly asserting "When judging interpretation, balance, precision, expression, phrasing and tempo, who is being judged? The conductor— by all means— for he is solely responsible for all of these items" (p. 104). E. F. Goldman and Morrison demonstrate the belief in the band director as the sole, omniscient "force" (E. F. Goldman, 1934) that develops and sustains "correct" traditions (Morrison, 2001, p. 23). The band director develops leadership qualities in his students (p. 24) and enforces strict rules that allow for playing instruments or talking only when prompted (E. F. Goldman, 1934). The traditional band model is completely reliant on the band director for all program guidance and vision (Battisti, 1989). Most school bands today function very similarly to the bands of the post-World War I age and the industrial age (Whitwell, 2010). An outside observer might attend a typical band class in 2020 and witness a rehearsal structure, hierarchy, and pacing of musical elements that is strikingly similar to a band rehearsal in 1941. Much of the replication and passing on of tradition is rooted in

the historical role of the conductor as a military-like enforcer of beliefs and values (VanderCook, 1926), an entirely teacher-centered approach.

As early as 1941, some scholars began to question and examine the role of the band director as authoritarian (Normann, 1941). Normann was the first published band scholar to advocate for some form of student contribution towards the running of a band rehearsal, albeit in the interests of “forming committees to focus on discipline” (p. 230). Normann also advocates, as the first in the field, that band directors should carefully consider the “mental attitude of the individual members” (p. 214). Normann does not allow for student voice to shape curricular concerns or the programming and the mission of a “band program” (p. 219). Normann relies heavily and unapologetically on “rote teaching and imitative drill” (p. 151). Despite gently wading into the value of the individual, Normann’s thesis returns to the “primary importance of maintaining efficient class work” (pp. 150-152). Student reflection and individualism is stifled by the orders to follow the band director’s wishes. Normann does warn against the idea of creating “automatons” in his assertion that the band director should focus (secondarily) on the “revealing of the individual’s powers to himself” (p. 223). After Normann’s work, little scholarly deviation in the status quo role of the conductor can be found throughout the 20th century.

By 1962, Richard Franko Goldman (son of band pioneer Edwin Franko Goldman), expands on his father’s *Band Betterment* by replicating and restating most of the strong disciplinarian and military undertones of the elder Goldman’s prescriptions nearly 30 years earlier. In stark contrast to Dewey, who at the time advocated for democracy in the classroom (1944, 1959), R. F. Goldman repeats the assertion that band

is not and cannot be a democratic art (pp. 258-261). R. F. Goldman reinforces earlier band dogma by proclaiming, "Conducting (and by extension rehearsing), is not a democratic art. The conductor is right, even when he is wrong" (p. 260). He makes most explicit who is in charge and what one would expect to see in his rehearsals. In all musical matters to be determined, "they are exactly what the conductor determines they are" (p. 260). Scholars continue to cite E. F. Goldman, R. F. Goldman, and VanderCook as time tested and "verified" exemplars of excellence in band (Miles, 2007).

Moving beyond writing in support of the band director as decider, John Lamkin (2003) sought to examine the phenomenon of the band experience through the band director's lens. The study begins with an explanation of Lamkin's fascination with phenomenology as a research methodology, a recollection of his life world experiences as a high school band director, and an exploration of the phenomenon of "band director-ing" (p. 18) through the etymology of the term "band director," the idiomatic phrases associated with the term "band director," and the lived experiences of a retired band director. Phenomenology, and how it is used as the philosophical and methodological framework of this study, is explored through an explication of the theories of Edmond Husserl (1931), Martin Heidegger (1962), and Hans-George Gadamer (1960). In the Lamkin study, the words "curriculum" and "process" refer to the notion that the band director experiences the band curriculum as a lived process. Like Lamkin, other scholars have sought to describe the feelings and perceptions surrounding the life and experience of a teacher (Ayers, 1997; Palmer, 1998). Lamkin provides a "human" portraiture of several band directors, some of whom feel regret for imposing very strict behavioral models (p. 311). The stories of the individual students are ostensibly less important in

Lamkin's dissertation because he chose to focus on the phenomena surrounding the band director. Lamkin's work helps us to conceptualize and theorize that looking at the band experience through the eyes of the band members could yield provocative revelations and questions. The players make up the organism that is band, yet their individual stories are often overlooked for the greater good of the whole.

Constructing a Narrative of Band

Departing from studies of the experience of the band director, Richard K. Hansen sought to write a cultural history of the existence of the wind band in *The American wind band: A cultural history* (2004). Hansen relates some historical anecdotes about the proliferation of school bands, including the role of the instrument manufacturers in creating band competitions (pp. 13, 16-25) and the development and significance of Frederick Fennell's "wind ensemble movement" of the 1950s (pp. 131-36). Hansen discusses the Fennell movement as a pivoting moment of "seriousness" (p. 133), where the band began to be viewed as capable of producing the same type of aesthetically and emotionally-driven orchestral performances that professional orchestras were regularly performing at the time. Hansen does not describe or explore the culture of the wind band experience as seen through the narrative or the lens of the individual at any point in the book. The book compares significant moments in band history to American and world history, and it provides a strong foundation to understanding how band is a particularly "American" art form, in Hansen's view. Hansen's work does reflect on the meaning of "beauty" through band music, and how band directors may help (or hinder) the exploration of beauty through our teaching. The Hansen book, and some of its tacit assumptions, led me to question some of my own "militaristic" teaching of the past. I

had always held the Fennell standard as the ultimate goal for high school bands. The goal in synthesizing this body of research has centered around how the traditional band method has affected the emotional and aesthetic perception of the subjects in this study.

Shortly after Hansen's work, Kristen Laine (2007), an American journalist who reports for NPR radio in Vermont, penned the first book to examine certain phenomenological aspects of the band experience. *American band: Music, dreams, and coming of age in the heartland* (2007) follows the story of the Concord High School (Indiana) Marching Minutemen. Laine frames the entire "story" of band through competitive marching band (p. 3). Of the marching activity, Laine says,

> Every fall, high school marching bands take to the field. For millions of teenagers, the experience is more than a show. It's a rite of passage—a first foray into leadership and adult responsibility, and a chance to learn what it means to be part of a community. (p. 6)

Laine certainly picked a pivotal year to follow the Concord High School band, as it was the final year for a long serving and revered band director. Laine describes the lives of several students as experienced throughout the competitive marching season. The season begins with promise, but there are "questions of greatness" that cause some members of the band to question the value of the competitive experience (pp. 135-39). The marching band begins to lose competitions midway through their season, but in almost story-like fashion, the "team" regroups and emerges victorious. Laine takes great pains to describe as vividly as possible the elements of the experience. Of the time leading up to the most "important" competition of the year, Laine says:

> They knew they had the power of a community behind them. They would form their lines on a brightly painted cubist tarp in the shape of a guitar, the neck of which led to a stylized scroll through a series of ramps and platforms. The set had been built and painted over hundreds of hours by band dads now standing on the sidelines in matching green jackets. The dads had run onto the field to assemble

> the set before the Minutemen went on, and they'd swarm out afterward to take it down. Band moms who all season had tended to blisters, sunburn, thirst, tears; sewed uniforms and served food; dispensed hundreds, thousands of hugs, now stood in a block and shouted, "Give me a C! Give me an O! . . .". (p. 213)

While some may criticize Laine's work as overly romantic, or perhaps full of hyperbole, she does capture certain elements of the band experience that are infrequently documented in the academic literature. The book shows, via multiple stories, the way a traditional band community looks, the "patriotism" of volunteering as a band mom or band dad, and the sense of territorial pride among band members and band supporters. Part of the most interesting aspect of Laine's book for me involved the "other stories" (p. 75) depicting the life experiences, teenage "drama," and non-musical elements that began to affect the Concord band. These sections of Laine's work represent some of the first published research on the value of the individual band member's experience and how s/he experiences band. I used Laine's narrative method of seeking "other" narrative-based stories to inform the initial set of questions that began this study. Those looking for a less "rosy" account of a phenomenon may find the rhetorical flourishes describing the band experience in Laine's work as too akin to a Hollywood feel good movie. Although admirably inclusive of the individual student's voice, Laine may have missed some broader opportunities to honestly portray multiple perspectives of the band experience. Both Laine and R. K. Hansen's works allude to a prevailing "philosophy of band" through discussions of band director virtues, the moral reasons for band, and the value of band. Without explicitly advocating for a particular philosophy of band, both authors implore us to ask questions about what makes band special. They encourage practicing teachers to explore concepts and essences that this study seeks to illuminate.

Philosophical Framework and Literature

Looking beyond band research, Maxine Greene (1973, 1995, 1997), Edmund Husserl (1931), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1963), and Anton Schutz (1967) provide philosophical approaches and multiple perspectives that help make sense of phenomena. Going back to Epicurus, the reader finds the opinion that when one senses “beauty” a feeling of pleasure (Greek *hedone*) is involved. Greene (1973, 1995) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) both describe the human condition in eloquent terms by expanding upon those historical philosophers in their own personal ways. I became interested in how this classical hedonistic theory may apply to the “shivers up the spine” feeling a musician gets when performing a musical work of art. Does that feeling color, or personify, the band experience? Do we seek out those moments of reverie through band music? How is the perspective of a nervous freshman clarinet player sitting last chair, barely keeping up, different from that of the more experienced players in the band? What kind of dissonance occurs in the band director’s recollection of the experience versus his students? Vitruvius, who developed the aesthetics of practical constructing, used the theories of Plato and Epicurus and combined them into his own theory of beauty equaling grace. He argued that a sensation of grace is likely to be produced if the artifact has the right proportions (an idea borrowed from Plato). Vitruvius wrote practical instructions of design using those arguments to enable artists to attain beauty in art.

More recently, Richard Ilyas Khuri (1986) examined things that are fundamental to a person’s view of the world because of their bearing, directly or indirectly, on how a person thinks about the world (p. 5). Khuri’s thesis explores time, space, thought itself, and meaning as philosophical considerations in the life worlds of artists and performers.

Khuri develops a complex philosophical groundwork for the study of philosophers-as-artists that is valuable to a researcher studying experience in the arts. *The artist-philosopher's struggle to save appearances* rhetorically plays on the term "saving appearances" through the notion of "giving experiences their due" (p. 7) and seeking beauty in all performances. Khuri provides examines the idea of "will-lessness," the old habit among philosophers of viewing the world in a routine way that may severely restrict our knowledge and appreciation of it (p. 10). Khuri says of his work,

> There are three ways in which my account takes us closer to reality: first, it helps generate the broadest possible basic concepts that form the framework through which we regard the world, thus allowing more of the world to come through than would a framework replete with narrow concepts; second, my account regards works of nature and art themselves with the intention of doing them the greatest possible justice; and third, my account tries, in how it is organized, to achieve the following cumulative effect: not only does it allow more of the world to come through, but a deeper level of its meaning as well, such that the final illustrations become not only works of art regarded for their own sake while doing them justice, nor yet works used to show how much broader some of our basic concepts are than we often seem to assume, but works in which the deeper level of meaning of the world – the distillation and portrayal of which is my ultimate aim – is exemplified and embodied. Such works of art are particulars and yet, in what they embody, attain universality. (p. 62)

Khuri's discussion of "universality" in his dissertation provides support for the framework by which I examined the band experience in this study. Drawing on Khuri's work led me to the assumption that there are broader essences, and deeper meanings, in the band experience. There are elements of band that deserve to be elucidated. Band is an art form that deserves a "will-ful" analysis by suspending all preconceived notions of band. Band is transcendent (non-material), and it embodies nonmusical elements of society that deserve to be studied. I used Khuri's philosophical groundwork to help provide an explication of the band experience.

Khuri's discussion of the spirit that embodies art, time, and space can be traced to the German philosophical notion of *Geist*. Geist is defined both literally as "ghost" and by phenomenological scholars as "spirit/mind" (Hegel, 1979). The term functions as a flexible term, suggesting the totality of the extra-biological. Geist, to German idealists (e.g., Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) was defined as the sum of human consciousness, related to the Anglo notion of "culture" (Derrida, 1989). The notion of *Geist* forms a central meaning in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Hegel (1979) discusses three different forms of *Geist*:

1. Subjective Spirit/Mind - deals primarily with anthropological and psychological concerns.

2. Objective Spirit/Mind - explores the philosophical questions of law and justice morals/morality, and political history.

3. Absolute Spirit/Mind - considers fine arts/music, religion, and the mind itself as the "Science of the General."

Hegel's work with the concept of *Geist* allows for the possible interpretation of the wind band as a living, unique *spirit* with characteristics worth examining. The folklore, stories, and myths surrounding the band experience can be described as a certain *Geist* that only insiders may understand.

A researcher can draw additionally on the writings of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle because all those philosophers pointed toward some sort of concept of a world spirit (Pate, 2011). Many perpetuators of the prevailing culture of band continue to lionize and codify long-standing traditions of uniformity, absolutism, and a musical idealism rooted deeply in the military band. Hegel's work via the concept of *Geist*, as rooted in the ancient philosophers, serves as a potential philosophical starting point to explain the propagation and dissemination of a prevailing band culture. Is there a "soul"

or a “spirit” that embodies band? What makes band so special? Does the group have a spirit in which the individual can rightly, and autonomously partake? Hegel, Merleau-Ponty, Greene, and other existential philosophers all point toward an essence or spirit that embodies the human experience. Allowing the vague (Greene, 1995) questions of philosophy to penetrate this study helped to explicate the value of the individual’s experience in band. The stories shared in chapters four, five, and six examine in great detail the role of the individual as a critical and overlooked core of the heart of the band experience.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Overview of Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to describe and understand social and psychological/emotional phenomena from the perspectives of people involved in band and to describe intimately the band experience as colored and constructed through the stories of band insiders and through self-reflection. The secondary purpose of the study provided opportunities for intense reflection and analysis on a career path that I chose at age 15 and continue to pursue with energy and commitment. The study explores the motivation, inspiration, and the stories of people immersed in the band experience. The methodological framework that follows will show how I arrived at the choice to use phenomenology as a primary research methodology for this study, and why I chose to employ a theoretical "mix tape" concept –a combination of considered commitment to the advantages of the phenomenological approach along with elements of narrative research, portraiture, autoethnography, and case study. The methodology draws on these paradigms so as to make explication and analysis of the raw data efficient and substantial. Through my chosen methodology and theoretical framework, apparent contradictions and ambiguities are managed and meaningful content is extracted.

Research Questions and Aims

Two broad research questions emerged after a review of the literature and a refining of the goals of this study. First, is there such a thing as a "band identity?" I wanted to know how band shaped the lives of three individuals who have spent their lives playing, experiencing, and performing band music. I wanted to know if there was some sort of essence to band. I wanted to understand more about how their concept of self was and is determined and shaped through participation in band. Life in band shapes life outside of band. For that reason, I elected to spend a great deal of time hearing the stories of each of the subjects.

Second, I wanted to be open to the idea that these stories of band would intersect with my own and that I would learn something about myself and my own band identity from conducting this research and asking these questions. As a band director, I constantly seek ways to update and refine my own educational credo and teaching vocabulary. I had an initial working hypothesis that undertaking this study would make me a better teacher.

Brief Overview of Plan

Three participants were selected after approval by the Institutional Review Board based on an initial screening process that sought to find musicians who meet the following criteria:

1. The three subjects were to be musicians who never chose to teach music as a career but who continue to play an instrument after high school.
2. I specifically sought three musicians at various stages of life in an effort to compare the band experience for someone in her 30s, 50s, and 80s.

3. Although the participants continue to play an instrument in a band setting, none consider themselves "professional musicians."

I initially planned to interview musicians who may have worked with me as a conductor at some point in their careers. After much thought and reflection, I abandoned that idea in an effort to provide a safe space for the research subjects to be candid about their stories of band without fear that they might have to censor, redact, or paint a "rosier" picture (Miller, 1992) of any previous encounter with me. This led to a long process of seeking stories. I chose to follow up with my own experience of band in a self-study in an effort to better understand my own teaching and understanding of the band paradigm. One of the explicit goals of the study was to foster a dialogue concerned with the improvement of teaching and learning in band.

I spent an extended period of time with each participant discussing band, watching videos, listening to performances, and recounting stories of band. These interactions occurred over time, with written reflection (journals) conducted between meetings. It was critical to establish a comfortable, non-intrusive, and welcoming method of collecting the stories. The most crucial part of developing an honest narrative revolved around the amount of time spent with each participant, combined with the rapport and joint sense of discovery that emerged through our multiple encounters. I began this study with three participants, and by the end of the study I felt that I had gained three family members. A supportive environment was established to allow for open and honest discussion. Each participant's identity (name, state, instrument, and name of current organization) was modified to protect anonymity and to encourage an authentic, unvarnished, and honest reflection.

Research Plan and Design

Site and Logistical Concerns

The interviews, viewings of band videos, and listening to audio recordings were conducted at the homes and offices of the participants, at my office, and on the school grounds where the participants were once taught. Because I enjoy travel and immersion in unfamiliar cultures, I spent several days in each location observing and experiencing how the subjects interacted with their fellow band musicians. Each participant was given a chance and a good deal of time to visualize, memorialize, or imagine her band experience while reflecting on our frequent discussions. Conducting the interviews both from the homes or offices of the participants and my office allowed for multiple expressive environments and provided a safe, assuring space for all participants to share information. The pursuit of multiple interview environments helped me to find out more about the "setting of the person" (Bailey, 1996, p. 72) in a reciprocal dialogue. I took great care to foster an environment that would allow the data to "emerge" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) rather than to be forced or contrived. The broader research questions were deliberately designed as starting points for the conversations that ensued. The number of questions and discussions varied from subject to subject as the stories began to unfold and develop.

Participants: An Overview

I selected a sample based on personal judgment (Babbie, 1995), the purpose of the research (Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997), and the assumption that the research subjects have had experiences relating to the phenomenon of band (Kruger, 1998) worthy of sharing. After an initial screening of 10 currently practicing musicians, three

participants were identified as interested in and supportive of the long-term investment required of this study, willing to continue with the study, and able to devote the time to think critically and reflectively on the discussions that we planned.

All of the participants continue to play an instrument in a band setting, but none considers themselves a "professional musician." I selected three research subjects as a manageable and sufficient number to reach saturation (Boyd, 2001), and to provide enough variance in perspective for the study. Boyd recommends two to 10 participants as ideal for a phenomenological study, while Creswell (1998, pp. 65, 113) recommends "long interviews with one to 10 people" for a phenomenological study. I chose three participants to allow enough time and space for a rich, thorough narrative to emerge for each individual.

Participant 1 is an 83-year-old retired actuary who has played the bassoon for over 60 years while battling severe performance anxiety. Band became a way for her to overcome a lifelong battle with anxiety. Participant Two is a 52-year-old Generation X data scientist/engineer trombonist who married his high school sweetheart whom he met in marching band. His wife became a band director, and his two sons are in middle school band now. Participant Three is a 35-year-old gay woman who grew up in a conservative town in a southern state who continues to play the clarinet in a community band while raising a son she conceived with her partner via anonymous sperm donation.

Interview Protocol: The Emergence of Narrative

According to Bailey (1996), the "informal interview is a conscious attempt by the researcher to find out more information about the setting of the person" (p. 72). The interview is reciprocal: both researcher and research subject are engaged in the dialogue.

Kvale (1996) further explains data capturing during the qualitative interview by saying that an interview "is literally an *inter-view*, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest," where the researcher attempts to "understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold meaning of peoples' experiences" (pp. 1-2). Miller (2000) believes that taking a narrative approach in research emphasizes the construction of "life stories" (p. 11) through a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee where the past and future are seen through the lens of the present (pp. 10-13). I found Miller's paradigm particularly liberating as I sought a way to blend a more traditional "sit down" interview with something that would allow for authentic possibilities (Greene, 1996). Miller's paradigm allows for the possibility that the interviewer can affect the course and direction of the interview (p. 101). Rosenthal (cited in Miller 2000, p. 129) agrees that every interview is a "product of the mutual interaction between speaker and listener." Miller (2000) goes on to liberate the phenomenological researcher from the shackles of triangulation with this method of constructing a narrative biography through life story:

> Originally, life *story* referred to the account given by an individual about his or her life. When this personal account was backed up by additional external sources . . . the validated life story was called a *life history*. This concern with triangulation – the validation of narrated life stories through information from additional, preferably quantified, sources has not remained central to most current biographical practice. Nowadays, "life history" refers to a series of substantive events arranged in chronological order. "Life story" still refers to the account given by an individual, only with emphasis upon the ordering into themes or topics that the individual chooses to adopt or omit as s/he tells the story. (p. 19)

Great care was taken to not produce a contrived or intimidating interview environment as each life story began to emerge. Each "*inter-view*" functioned as a long period of discussion, reflection, and analysis about elements of the band experience.

Capturing “rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings” (Kensit, 2000, p. 104), required taking great care to allow for time spent with each participant. Like Kensit or Miller, I did not underestimate tangential themes or elements that might emerge. In fact, I hoped that tangential discussion would lead to further questions. No participant disappointed in this regard. I structured each interview, activity, and experience around the notion that both the researcher and the participant would be equally engaged and supportive of each other.

McAdams (1996) further informed my choice of incorporating elements of narrative study by pointing out that the way in which we construct life stories is a way that adults can create identity. I found a particular helpfulness in McAdams’s structure of the construction of life stories: narrative tone, imagery, themes, ideological setting, nuclear episodes, images and endings (pp. 308-309). While I did not attempt to create a “keyword” quantitative analysis of thematic material, I did find the McAdams model useful in organizing salient thematic material as each participant recreated and constructed her/his identity in band. I agree with Miller (2000) that older methods of seeking triangulation are no longer useful in this type of research.

Interview Design

The three main interviews were conducted with open questions as follows, through Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board approved study, protocol number 17-301:

Interview I: Focused Life History

1. Tell me about how you decided to study a wind band instrument. Describe as vividly as you can remember the process you went through, and how you arrived at your choice.

2. Thinking back to your first few years as a band student, tell me about:
    a. How it felt to walk into the band room for rehearsal. Describe the room, the setting, your classmates, and your teacher on a typical day in beginning band class, middle school band, and high school band.
    b. A time that you felt negative emotions or frustration in band.
    c. How you felt when you played the musical works. Describe a moment of success and a moment where you felt that you didn't perform to the best of your ability.
    d. How you felt after your first concert.
    e. How you felt after your final concert in high school band.
    f. How you felt as you continued being a member of the band throughout high school. How was your experience different by the time you graduated?

3. Thinking back to your transition from a high school band member to an adult or community music member, I'd like to have you focus on how music played a role in your life from college student or young adult into the workforce and "the real world."
    a. Did you remain friends with any band members after you graduated from high school? If so, tell me about a few of your most important relationships.
    b. Do you still speak and have a friendship with anyone from your elementary, middle, or high school band? If so, tell me more about your relationships as they stand today.

4. Thinking back to the non-musical moments you experienced as a member of the band, tell me some of your most important memories that are connected to your life as a band student. What non-musical events do you remember most (either fondly or negatively) about your band experience?

5. You are part of this study because you are still playing an instrument now. Was there ever a time that you stopped playing? If so, tell me why you stopped playing your instrument and what decisions may have led to taking a break.

6. Before the next interview, I would like to ask you brainstorm and write down a journal of any memories that may come to mind between now and our next meeting. I would like you to gather any recordings or videos you may have of band performances in your past, as well as photos and pieces of music. In the next interview, we will watch or listen to a few of the performances you selected, and we will look at the music and photos you selected. Think about the details regarding the items you select for deeper inquiry. If you feel like drawing or writing a poem, please feel free to do so. I would like for you to be as descriptive as possible in the next meeting.

II. The Details of Experience, Presentation and Discussion of Artifacts

The second set of interview questions were developed to provide a transition from a discussion of the materials selected for deeper review by the subject. Purposely collected representative artifacts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) were examined to help describe and illuminate the interviewee's band experiences. Broadly guided and open-ended questions on the artifacts began with the following outline:

1. Tell me what this artifact is.
2. Describe how you fit into this performance, picture, or event.
3. Who was the intended consumer or user of the artifact?
4. What do you think this artifact describes about this moment in time?
5. What is missing from this artifact? Think of the "back story" like in the Broadway show "Wicked." Is there any underlying experience you felt that might not be evident in the public presentation?
6. What was happening in society or history at the time of this event?
7. What was happening in your life at the time of this event?
8. What kind of meaning did this have for you at the time you experienced it? What about today? Is the meaning different today than it was when the event occurred?

Interview III. Reflection on Meaning

The final interview focused on what the participant's experience in band means to him/her. The purpose of the reflection on meaning interview was to "gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9).

1. This final interview focuses on what all of this means to you. The structure is even more open ended than our last interview. We've spent a great deal of time talking about, describing, and thinking about your experiences as a member of a band. I want to have you tell me, in your own reflections today, what band means to you. I would like for you to try to reconstruct the experience and summarize a few of the most important facets of your band experience that have shaped your life, as you exist today.

2. Did anything emerge for you in this long interview process that proved to be a new revelation? Did you realize something about yourself? Have you been able to find meaning and explanation for why you continue to play in bands?

3. If you had a chance to redesign your band experience, what would you do? How would it be different or similar to what you experienced? Do you have any regrets?

4. Thinking through your own lens and experiences, how do you think the band experience may differ for a young person in 10, 20, 30, or 100 years from now?

5. Can you imagine your life without band? How might it have been different, for better or worse?

6. Do you plan on continuing playing a band instrument for the rest of your life? Tell me about your future plans and aspirations. Is there a piece of music or a specific musical experience you wish to experience?

Collection of Data and Artifacts

The first vehicle of data collection was the long, detailed, and open-ended interview. Bailey states (1996), that the "informal interview is a conscious attempt by the researcher to find out more information about the setting of the person" (p. 72). In this setting, I planned for reciprocal interviewing where the participant and I were both engaged in dialogue. Because of the reciprocal and open nature of the line of questioning, subtopics were allowed emerge during the course of each meeting. Because the verbal interviews were lengthy, a professional transcription service (Rev.com) was employed to insure a completely accurate, verbatim account. I also noted what I saw, heard, experienced, and thought throughout the process of collecting and reflecting on each interview. I paid great and careful attention to not get too absorbed in the data collection process and fail to reflect on what is happening (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Digital audio recordings of many of the "sit down" interviews and detailed, complete transcriptions helped me to identify key themes and words that began to permeate each

participant's interviews. I used the transcriptions of the interviews to identify key words, phrases and statements in order to allow the voices of research participants/informants to "speak" (Groenewald, 2004). Follow-up questions were "directed to the participant's experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme in question" (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 196). But the study would not have been complete through interviewing alone.

The second data source that I used for collecting data began with "memoing" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 69) and coalesced with the taking of field notes (Bailey, 1996). "Memoing" is important to the qualitative researcher, because it calls for detailed written records of all themes discussed and the reporting of the most salient and stimulating trends. "Memoing" is further defined as the process of recording what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting. Miles and Huberman (1984) further remind the researcher that the goal of "memoing" should be to strike a balance between descriptive notes (e.g., John's blue and black uniform served as a reminder to him of the intense, four-year commitment he had given to his band.), and reflective notes (e.g., I have a hunch that John's identity and behavior as a band member changed when he put on his band uniform.). Reflective notes take the form of hunches, feelings, and impressions. My own "memoing" data is dated and preserved (Huberman, 1984) so that I can correlate it with the primary data (recorded conversations, journals, etc).

I further expanded upon Miles and Huberman's definition of "memoing" through the lens of the more traditional field note. In qualitative research, field notes are commonly used to help retain the data gathered (Lofland & Lofland, 1999) and "make

sense" of the large volumes of written, aural, and verbal descriptions provided by the research subjects. I combined "memoing" with traditional field note collection methods as illustrated by Bailey (1996) to make four different types of notes:

1. Observational notes (ON) – defined as the "what" of the interview. What happened? The use of all the senses will be incorporated in the description of the observational notes. Miles and Huberman (1984) describe this type of note as "descriptive" and without interpretation.

2. Theoretical notes (TN) – defined as an attempt to "derive meaning" (Bailey, 1996) as I am reflecting or thinking on the experiences described in the interview. Miles and Huberman (1984) define TN as "reflective notes."

3. Methodological notes (MN) – defined as "reminders, instructions, or critique" to myself on the entire interview process (Bailey, 1996)

4. Analytical memos (AM) – defined as daily summary and periodical progress reviews.

Morgan (1997, pp. 57-58) remarks that because field notes involve interpretation, they are "part of the analysis rather than the data collection." However, the researcher should be careful at this point in the data collection process not to prematurely categorize or "push" the data into his preconceived or desired outcome.

Third, I used the *epoché* method to establish and support a continual rapport and connection with the interview subjects (Moustakas, 1994). *Epoché* [ποχή, epokhē, "suspension"] is defined as those things that cannot be felt to be known in advance or felt to be known "without internal reflection and meaning" (p. 182). Edmund Husserl called *epoché* the "freedom from suppositions – to stay away from or abstain (quoted in Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). To conduct research with *epoché* is to completely set aside one's prejudgments and open the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence, realizing that only a person's own perception can point to "truth" (small "t"). According to Moustakas, *epoché* is reciprocal and reflective. Older philosophies of

phenomenology would point to bracketing (Caelli, 2001; King, 1994) as a means of validating and completing *epoché*. In my study, I made use of narrative (Miller, 2000), or the presentation of portraits, as a means of organizing and understanding the research.

Explication of the Data

At this point, I avoid the use of the term "data analysis" because, according to Hycner (1999), "analysis" has different connotations for a phenomenological study (p. 159). The "term usually means a 'breaking into parts' and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon ... [but the term explication implies an] ... investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole" (p. 161). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe explication as the procedures a researcher uses to identify the "essential features and relationships" of data (p. 9). The data in this study is explicated and unraveled with the goal of facilitating the development of individual textural and structural descriptions of the "band experience." Because the band experience is something that should be approached from a multi-dimensional form of analysis, Moustakas (p. 21) would argue that heuristics and hermeneutics (discussed earlier in conceptual ecology) both help to form a more "valid" type of research by doing the following, which I detail below with a specific plan of action based on Moustakas' suggested five-step method (pp. 21-24) of analyzing (explicating) data (listed below):

1. Recognizing the value of qualitative designs and methodologies (p. 21).

   Studies of human experiences are not approachable through quantitative approaches. The band experience cannot be quantified. Such an exercise would be a futile attempt to mathematically delineate and scientifically classify something inanely *human*. Zinker (1978) says that the term

phenomenological implies a process that emphasizes the unique experiences of research participants. Throughout the analysis, I framed the discussion through the phenomenology illuminated via the lens of the theoretical mix tape. The value of this design allowed for the possibility that new, updated, or additional perspectives in band philosophy might emerge as a result of the study.

2. Focusing on the *wholeness* of experience rather than solely on its objects or parts (p. 22).

   What about the entire band experience points to community, culture, or indoctrination? I looked at patterns that emerged in the study that eventually pointed to additional areas for reflection and re-conceptualization.

3. Searching for meanings and "essences" of experience rather than measurements and explanations (p. 23).

   In terms of this study, I define "essences of experience" as the common threads of life experience described by the subjects in the study. The method of collection assumed that there might not be a common essence of experience and that there might be a salient element (or elements) of the band experience that point to new meaning.

4. Obtaining descriptions of lived experience through first-person accounts in both informal and formal conversations and interviews (pp. 23-24).

   I conducted long, multi-day interviews with each of the participants over a period of several weeks per participant. I noted and expanded upon particularly provocative points brought up by the subjects in each follow-up meeting. Both the interviewer (myself) and the interviewees completed a

reflective journal upon the conclusion of each interview and each listening or watching activity.

5. Formulating questions and problems (through genuine inquiry) that reflect a deep interest, shared lived experience, and personal commitment of the researcher (pp. 24-25).

Without asking leading or presumptuous questions, I sought to uncover and relate the subjects' experience to my own. Themes were described through the clustering of common experiences. Hycner's (1999) explication process would call this question formulating as the "extracting" of general and unique thematic material and the creation of a composite summary. The final step I used in the explication process was imaginative variation: varying the frames of reference and the perspectives, employing polarities and reversals (Moustakas, 2004, p. 181), and looking for discourses that may permeate all stories. This sort of crystallization allowed for contradictions and ambiguities. Interview questions evolved as the study went on. I took some of the initial answers from the interviewees and adapted them to elicit even richer responses.

Chapter IV

MOVEMENT I

Jessy Williams: A Story of Perseverance

Introduction

My first interviewee, Jessica ("Jessy") Williams, was born in 1935 in a coal mining town in Eastern Ohio. At the time of our first introduction/observation (J. Williams, personal communication, September 13, 2017), and interview (J. Williams, personal interview, September 23, 2017), Jessy had recently turned 82 years old and had been playing the bassoon for over 67 years since her high school band director encouraged her to switch from the B-flat clarinet during her sophomore year in the Fall term of 1950. She graduated from high school in May, 1953 and attended college as the first member of her family. She excelled in college while working part-time as a server in a greasy spoon diner, graduating on time in May 1957 with a 4.0 GPA and program honors with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics degree. During college, she auditioned for and played in the top band at her university as a non-music major, receiving a scholarship every semester in exchange for playing in the school's concert band. After graduation, Jessy immediately entered the work force and began earning in one year more money than her coal mining father and stay-at-home mother earned in two or three years. She eventually re-entered the same public Midwestern university and obtained a Master of Science degree in Mathematics in 1962. She spent her working career as an actuary, solving complex mathematical and algorithmic equations to help

predict risk for insurance companies, pension plans, and life insurance policies. Jessy was married for 36 years to her high school sweetheart, James, and they had three children. Neither her husband nor children played band instruments, but her immediate and extended family always supported her community band, university band, woodwind quintet, and other chamber music outlets of expression. Jessy took some time off from playing in community bands to have three children, but at the time of our interviews, she had played a band instrument nearly uninterrupted for over 70 years. At the time of our interviews, Jessy's three children and 13 grandchildren were scattered in different parts of the United States. Her husband James ("Jim") passed away in 1994.

Jessy retired from her work at an actuarial firm in Cincinnati, Ohio, and had moved to Florida approximately five years prior to our interview. She made the choice to retire in Florida partially because several lifelong band friends from college and her previous community band in Ohio had also retired to the same Florida location and had begun playing in a well-regarded local community band. I chose to interview Jessy because I believed her remarkable story of longevity and continuity was worth studying and exploring. I wanted to know why she dedicated more than 70 uninterrupted years to playing band instruments in the school, college, and community band setting. I was particularly interested in her background as a mathematician and statistician and how the work of her "day job" might show dissonance with many of the more expressive and "gray" areas we often teach in band. I was also fascinated by the possibilities of studying and understanding Jessy's motivation for continuing the rituals of the band community and band experience with such consistency over such a long period of time. I felt that Jessy might provide insight into the long-term value of playing a wind instrument, and I

was frequently surprised at the tangential, yet beautifully connected, stories that gave breath and life to her vivid band experience.

Framing the Setting

After exchanging emails and obtaining Jessy's permission to go forward with this study, my first in-person introduction to Jessy occurred before an evening band rehearsal on September 13, 2017. Jessy entered the practice suite where the local university band hosts her community band so quietly that I did not realize she had already sat down and begun to take out a notebook. I was busy checking email on my iPhone and trying to coordinate appointments for the next set of long interviews in my iCal app. I completely missed Jessy's entrance and felt that I had sent us off to a terrible start, as I had planned on making a positive introduction with eye contact, and assuring, and welcoming gestures. But Jessy quickly reassured me with a comforting smile: "Oh, don't worry. I am used to sneaking in quietly." I immediately became aware of a very soft-spoken and somewhat gingerly nature. She initially seemed reticent to do more than just provide clear, concise, and short answers to my questions. Those initial concerns were quickly alleviated, as we spent two hours before rehearsal exchanging introductions, pleasantries, and framing a plan of action. After connecting with general band "shop talk" that often seems universal to the band experience (favorite works, favorite composers, inside jokes), we agreed that the first night's introduction and my observations of the rehearsal would serve as a catapult to frame the long day (eight hours) booked for Saturday, September 23, 2017. The three long interviews and concept formation/reflection sessions that followed were conducted on September 23, 2017 (8 am – 6 pm with informal lunch and dinner debriefing), October 7, 2017 (9 am – 6 pm with informal lunch and dinner

debriefing), and October 21, 2017 (2 pm – 6 pm with a final debriefing) at Jessy's home. The findings and discussion that follow are divided into three vignettes: Focused Life History, Presentation and Discussion of Artifacts, and Reflection on Meaning. I present each interviewee's vignette and discussion as an individual story of band, assuming that these vignettes can function much like a single movement standalone musical work, or tone poem. The Explications chapter that follows the three vignettes synthesizes the research and points toward implications for the field through elements that showed consonance throughout all three subjects while contrasting dissonant or disparate themes.

Jessy and I completed the introductory meeting, and she returned to the large rehearsal hall, beginning to put together her bassoon. Just as she had entered our interview room, she quietly and unassumingly took her seat at the end of the second row, stage left, behind the principal oboist and in front of the principal bass clarinetist. Jessy presented a physically commanding but restrained presence as a tall woman with gray hair kept in a bun, dark-rimmed bifocals, a pantsuit (other members of the band were dressed much more casually, including some in shorts or tracksuits), and a professional bassoon (Heckel) that would be the envy of many professional orchestral musicians. Her reed knives and reed case showed great care and attention to meticulous details, skills required of a double reed player who makes her own reeds. The large symphonic band appeared over 80 musicians strong, and a young woman in her 20s sat next to Jessy in the second chair spot. When Jessy reached her seat, the young woman immediately gave her a hug as a family member would do upon being reunited. The similarly seasoned principal oboist, who appeared to be somewhere between the second chair bassoonist's age and Jessy's age, also gave Jessy a welcome hug. A senior tubist who would later

prove to be quite the practical joker and eye roll-inducer during the band rehearsal made his weekly joke about he and Jessy being the oldest members of the band. Pointing to a younger male euphonium player, the tubist chuckled in a heavy old Brooklyn accent "I have a hip that's older than this guy." The ensemble, like many community bands in the United States and abroad, consisted of musicians from post-high school age to retirees.

At precisely 7:00 PM, the conductor, an older gentleman with wavy white hair reminiscent of Beethoven, approached the podium. The band snapped to silence, in the same way that well-trained high school groups respond when a conductor steps on the podium. The principal oboist sounded a concert A, and the woodwinds entered on a unison concert A beginning with the bass clarinets, bassoons, and contrabass clarinet. The oboist then moved up a half step to concert B-flat, and the brass entered on a unison concert B-flat that inevitably morphed into concert F and other tuning of overtones. The two- and one-half-hour rehearsal covered a significant amount of repertoire, from traditional band standards to new works by a diverse body of composers. I noticed that the same small groups of band friends tended to remain with each other during the two short breaks given by the conductor. Jessy quietly read excerpts from a book during one short break, and she spoke with her cohort of oboe and bassoon friends during the second break. She appeared to be enthusiastically engaged throughout the rehearsal and quietly leading musicians around her toward a better understanding of phrasing and dynamic interpretation. Framing the forthcoming interview session by seeing Jessy interact with her fellow bandmembers helped me to prepare for our first long interview.

Interview I: Focused Life History

I began the first long interview at Jessy's home by asking a broad question that I hoped would elicit an open response: "Tell me about how you decided to study a wind band instrument. Describe as vividly as you can remember the process you went through, and talk about how you arrived at your choice." My initial concern from our first introduction meeting that Jessy would only answer questions with simple answers proved to be completely unfounded. She began with this response:

> You're asking me something that takes me back to the late 1940s and early 1950s, whew! […] But I'm happy to tell you I remember it nearly as clearly as yesterday. I wanted to join the band at my school because I desperately wanted to feel like I could make friends. I spent most of elementary school sitting on my mama's front porch doing math problems and practicing penmanship. I'm a real introvert. And I had the hardest time in elementary school any time a teacher would call on me to give an answer. I would just freeze up and stare into space. I can't remember exactly how I decided on it, but someone came into the cafeteria where we were doing show and tell of band instruments for the fifth grade and played a clarinet. It sounded beautiful to me…sort of like a mournful and mellow or quiet animal [laughs]. The brass instruments sounded *way* too forceful for my taste [laughs]. My only big concern was that my parents wouldn't be able to afford to rent me a clarinet. My mother was a stay at home mom, and my daddy worked in lower paying job at a coal mine. We weren't dirt poor, but we were pretty close. Anyway, after the show-and-tell day, my band director offered me a metal clarinet that the school owned so that I wouldn't need to buy or rent my own. I think during the war, the manufacturers experimented with trying to use metal to make woodwind instruments. The result wasn't very good. I played the clarinet because I hoped to sound like the senior girl who came to play for us that day…oh gosh, I can't remember her name…but the way I sounded on the instrument wasn't anywhere near as close! [laughter]. (J. Williams, personal interview, September 23, 2017).

I asked Jessy a follow-up question, wondering if she felt lesser-than or socially outcast because of the hand-me-down metal clarinet, and she responded:

> No. There were boys playing these little baby tubas that were more beat up, moldy, and in worse shape than my metal clarinet. Our school district was rural and most people worked in manufacturing, farming, or the coal mines. I never worried about social class – and I kind of guess it went away even more when I became part of the band.

I followed up by asking "So, how did being part of the band and all that went along with band membership make you feel by the end of that first year?" She replied "I think it gave me some reason to get out of my own head and make an attempt to make friends." Interestingly, Jessy recalled that her entire fifth-grade class had been given an aural skills test before the "show-and-tell day" to predict which instrument might be a good fit. Jessy remembered taking the test, but she could not remember how she scored. She would go on to play the clarinet until her high school band director suggested the bassoon to help the band's instrumentation that lacked the color instruments of oboe and bassoon.

We then pivoted to a discussion framing the setting of the band room, including Jessy's recollection of the physical space where she rehearsed, her classmates, and her teacher on a typical day in beginning band class through middle school band, and high school band class. As is typical of band programs in the United States, many practicing band directors were military musicians who served in World War II. Jessy's first two band directors, from grade six beginning band through high school, both served as former army musicians and insisted on a very methodical, organized, regimented approach to daily fundamental training. Discipline was harsh, often punitive, and often designed to instill fear into other students through a negative-consequences model. Jessy remembers one sixth-grade trombone player being paddled in front of the class for constantly dropping his slide. Jessy described the band room setting as "not very conducive to creativity" and "kind of prison-like and bland at times – but we all just somehow innately knew how to work around the military stuff – similar to what went on in our other classes." Her first band room was located at the far end of an annex building that had

been built onto her K-8 school to accommodate new students and growth in the school district.

> This was just before the Baby Boom era happened, but our town had already been growing quite a bit. And after the war, more people seemed to be settled and moving in. We were given an old dingy storage room as a band room. I think it had two little windows in the back. It often smelled musty, but it was home! [laughter].

Jessy recalled that her daily band routine often revolved around tuning: "We spent what seemed like hours tuning. I'm sure it wasn't that bad, but for a sixth grader that's painful stuff"; the band also routinely did fundamental studies:

> We were very good at getting articulations to line up. I remember [the band director] playing on his trumpet each articulation in a call-and-response exercise. It worked to help us conceptualize those things which we all know are hard to do with band. And when we got to the actual music, it seemed so exciting. But we read off these little tiny march-sized folios. I didn't have the best vision even back then, so I often missed notes and entrances. It was frustrating, but I eventually got the hang of reading off those annoying microscopic folio-sized pieces of music – just in time for the publishers to start printing band music on normal sized paper.

At this point in the interview, Jessy and I had spent a good deal of time talking about the setting and the atmosphere of the room. We then pivoted to the first pressing question, about her own lived experience in band:

Jason: I want to change gears a bit now and ask you to remember a specific time early on where you felt a negative emotion or frustration in band. Could you think back and recall any negative energy or emotions that stand out to you all these years later?

Jessy: Well, that's an easy one for me. I can tell you that the first time, or 20 times, I was asked to play in front of the class were absolute torture for me. As I mentioned, I'm an introvert – and even though I practiced exactly as I was supposed to, I always seemed to totally screw up things when [the band director] made me play in front of the class.

Jason: Can you describe how these playing tests went? Were they pop quizzes—unannounced?

Jessy: He would just decide that he wanted to do "quality control" to make sure everyone was pulling their musical weight. I used to think he picked the most shy [*sic*] kids on purpose. The blasty [*sic*] trombone player, Timmy, when he wasn't being spanked and paddled for throwing his slide, never seemed to have to play for the class. But all the quietest kids went through this torture. I guess he (the band director) was trying to bring us out of our shells. Or, I don't know…maybe he was being evil on purpose. He liked to remind us that he was the boss.

Jason: You seem to remember this vividly.

Jessy: I do. It was a pattern for me in all my classes. I don't know how much this is relevant to your research, but I've had a problem most of my life with agoraphobia [an anxiety-based fear of spaces that can force some to stay at home and avoid crowded public spaces]. I also prefer to not speak in front of large crowds. That's why I loved being an actuary. It's one of the lowest stress jobs on earth. I got to sit at a desk and quietly run numbers and solve equations. One of the ways I've overcome some of my worst fears has been through playing the bassoon and forcing myself to get past some of those fears. It's been a lifelong issue.

Jason: Do you think the band director meant to do a "baptism by fire," when he asked you to play for others? Did he know you had agoraphobia?

Jessy: Oh, I don't think he could've even spelled agoraphobia. Back then, teachers weren't really trained to deal with psychological issues. It was sort of like a factory and mass production in those days. I don't think he had bad intentions. At that point I think most teachers were authoritarians. School was about law and order. I obviously didn't hate the guy, or I would've probably quit band. I wish I could've told 12-year-old Jessy that it's not the end of the world if you miss a D-flat. But everything was a crisis for me back then. I don't know. It was just really, really painful. I used to have horrible dreams about forgetting my lines reading poetry or missing every note at the band concert. It was pretty awful. Makes me feel kind of sick again recalling this now, but I'm happy to be over those worst times.

At this point, I noticed that Jessy seemed to feel uncomfortable and sad. She was no longer smiling, and she seemed to be exasperated. We stopped the recording and took a long tea break. She made me English breakfast tea and spent time showing me pictures of her grandchildren and photos of her in community band performances. We later resumed informal chatting for 30 minutes about the element of fear in her band experience. The

strong element of fear established itself as a thematic vignette that we agreed to explore through subsequent interviews. I wondered if Jessy's teacher felt that he was helping her by forcing her to endure and experience such a purposefully painful exercise. I felt a hunch that further reflection on fear-based instruction and the value of fear in motivation with Jessy would provide a topic worth researching and elucidating further. I found that the informal setting seemed to help Jessy to feel less "on the record" and more comfortable recalling memories. The rest of the morning block was spent discussing her feelings after playing her first concert, her final concert in high school, and how her perception changed throughout the years of public-school band instruction (grade 6-12). A decidedly positive description emerged that centered around pride and a feeling of accomplishment. She mentioned on numerous occasions how proud she felt when her parents, who never missed a band concert in junior high or high school, attended her concerts. She then noted that her eventual high school director, also a middle-aged heterosexual white man with a previous military pedigree, also ruled with an iron fist.

Her most salient and vividly recalled memories involved the final encore selection played at her last high school concert, E. E. Bagley's "National Emblem March" (1902), where she described the feelings surrounding the performance as "electric," noting that she "nailed" the third movement of Percy Grainger's 1937 band classic "Lincolnshire Posy." The third movement features a disjoint asymmetrical duet between woodwind players that gave even professional musicians difficulty at the time. Jessy's band had played Grainger's version of this movement that included a bassoon solo. It was a defining moment for her, as she felt like she had "overcome" some of her worst

performance anxieties for the first time. She still "shook and felt nauseous" before the performance, but she described the feeling after that April, 1957 concert as,

> a total high. I had never felt so powerful. And I appreciated all that my band director had done for us. It felt like we had this huge victory. Here was this school in a small town sending out a huge band that would be selected the next year to play for the state conference.

In another critically important moment that would define themes for further interviews, Jessy recalled how hearing the third movement of "Lincolnshire Posy" still put her "back in that room all those years ago" when she played the piece the previous year: "I could close my eyes and see and feel the room where I first played the piece. It's like watching a great movie again, or reading a wonderful book that brings back such good memories."

Jessy's problem-solving and methodical nature, combined with excellent aural skills and patience, led her to become an accomplished bassoonist in a short amount of time. She made the All-State band her senior year after only playing the instrument for two years. She told me that every concert and performance made her feel "less afraid, more confident, and more motivated to be a good musician." I wanted to know more about *why* she was motivated and I wanted to know *how* she was motivated. I noticed that Jessy never mentioned marching band, an art form that has become ubiquitous in American culture. She clarified for me that she did do marching band all four years in high school as a B-flat clarinet player, but she found it "quite boring, and so repetitive." We talked briefly about marching band, and she noted that it wasn't the same "highly theatrical" and "make or break" artform that it is currently. She proudly told me,

> We didn't need amplification and keyboards and all the crap they're doing with the marching bands these days. We just played, and it wasn't all that interesting. Back then you played from goalpost to goalpost. You should probably talk to someone else about marching band, because I don't remember much except the

> fun part of being with my friends at freezing football games, the pep rallies, and the college band knockoff tunes we played.

Throughout our conversations to this point, I noted that two themes, fear and motivation, seemed to permeate much of the discussion.

We then moved the discussion to the post-high school years, thinking back to Jessy's transition from a high school band member to a college and eventual community music member in these excerpts from our afternoon discussion:

Jason: Did you remain friends with any band members after you graduated from high school? If so, tell me about a few of your most important relationships.

Jessy: Oh yes, I did. Three of us went to the same college. Meredith, Jimmy, and Susan all played in the marching band and concert band with me in college. We wound up being friends for many years. Meredith is still around. We all became friends in high school, and the bond never died. We all lived in Ohio until retirement age. Meredith is still in Cincinnati. Jimmy and Susan have passed.

Jason: That's fascinating and wonderful that you had such a long bond with the three of them. Do you think you would've been friends had it not been for band?

Jessy: Probably not. For some reason, I was more social and more open to making friends in band. I doubt I would've hung out with them or talked to them much in algebra or trigonometry class.

Jason: Why do you think that band provided an outlet for this kind of long-term friendship to flourish?

Jessy: I think it's time. It's all about the time we spend together. I assume the time factor is even bigger with today's band kids, as they spend crazy hours rehearsing marching band shows.

Jason: Oh, wait a second. You did marching band in college? It was so boring in high school, right? How was it different in college?

Jessy: [laughs] Yes. Big Ten marching band is much more fun than high school band. It was a natural extension for me. Since I knew how to play the clarinet, I played clarinet in the [marching band] and bassoon in the concert band. I was able to still be part of the band club even though I

> wasn't majoring in music. The music faculty asked me at least once every month to become a music major, but I enjoyed it for the sake of being in band and playing my instrument. I guess I probably felt like a career in it would make me less likely to love it.

Jessy went on to recall that she only stopped playing the bassoon briefly for a few months before and a few months after she had each of her three children. The last part of our interview involved recollections of non-musical memories. I asked her to think back to the non-musical moments she experienced as a member of a band and to tell me some of the most important memories that are connected to her life as a band student or band member. I asked her to think about which non-musical experiences she remembered the most among her band experiences. The majority of her initial memories recalled significant events in American history (e.g., the JFK assassination, the Vietnam War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and other significant moments in history) and how these seminal events that shaped history were received in whichever band she played in at the time. She remembered with ease which pop tunes/top 40 musical works were popular during significant times in history and in her own history. Jessy's frequent connection of music of a time period to a personal story/life experience helped me to see the possibility of a "life soundtrack," or musical memory shaping our life stories, as another vignette worth further researching. I notated the idea of musical memory and "soundtracks" as a possible avenue for further exploration.

We closed the first long interview with a debriefing and assignment. I asked Jessy to brainstorm and create a journal of thoughts and memories that might bubble up or appear between the first interview and our next scheduled interview on Saturday, October 7, 2017. I asked her to gather any recordings or videos that she might have of band performances in her past, as well as photos and pieces of music. I framed the next

interview as a session where we would watch or listen to a few of the performances she selected, along with any music or photos or other artifacts she selected. I encouraged her to think about the details regarding the items she selected for deeper inquiry. I encouraged Jessy to use non-traditional methods of recollection, including drawing or writing a poem, in an effort to be as descriptive as possible in the next meeting.

Interview II: The Details of Experience, Presentation and Discussion of Artifacts

We began our second interview with a group of purposely collected representative artifacts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The following outline of inquiry was used to elicit open responses:

1. Tell me what this artifact is.
2. Describe how you fit into this performance, picture, or event.
3. Who was the intended consumer or user of the artifact?
4. What do you think this artifact describes about this moment in time?
5. What is missing from this artifact? Think of the “back story” like in the Broadway show “Wicked.” Is there any underlying experience you felt that might not be evident in the public presentation?
6. What was happening in society or history at the time of this event?
7. What was happening in your life at the time of this event?
8. What kind of meaning did this have for you at the time you experienced it? What about today? Is the meaning different today than it was when the event occurred?

Jessy presented several artifacts, but the most striking artifact and story involved a photograph of her college wind ensemble, a copy of sheet music to Percy Grainger’s setting of “Danny Boy,” also known as “Irish Tune from County Derry” (1911), a photo of her late father, and a poem written to her by a man who was once her closest friend. The story that followed, and its intersection with my own band experience, proved to be incredibly powerful and something that would be impossible to be repeated in any other setting. Jessy’s father died of lung cancer at age 55 after a career of working in a coal mine. One of Jessy’s closest friends in college, a gay man who was not out in an era of

extreme persecution and intolerance toward the LGBTQ community, died in the late 1980s from complications of HIV. Jessy showed these artifacts to me and asked "Have you ever watched the movie *Brassed Off*? I think it is so relevant to the value of band" (J. Williams, personal interview, October 7, 2017). I immediately responded with excitement "Absolutely! It was the best movie of 1997!" The movie was released in the United Kingdom in 1996, and it made its way to the United States in 1997. I had not seen the movie in many years, but Jessy's artifacts reminded me of how music intersects culture and society. The discussion that followed would help provide a deeply personal, reflective, and illuminating account of Jessy's band experience through "Danny Boy."

"I still can't make it through playing or listening to this piece without crying," Jessy exclaimed as she took me through the meaning of the artifacts she collected. She continued,

> You see, I think a piece of music can change meaning over time. The more I thought of it, the more I was able to remember the difference in feelings I had from the first time I played "Irish Tune"/ Danny Boy" until today. Life has a way of reshaping a melody into something really tragic or really beautiful.

Like the conductor character in *Brassed Off*, Jessy's father suffered from lung cancer as a result of working in a coal mine his entire life. In one of the most poignant scenes in the movie, the brass band gathers outside a cold, dark hospital to play "Danny Boy" for their dying conductor. Jessy recalled playing the work in college with her best friend Ray:

> Ray was the gayest man on earth. And everyone knew it. We all loved him so much, and back then you just didn't talk about it. He played bass clarinet in the wind ensemble at [the university] and sat near me for all four years of undergrad school. We became instant friends the first week of our freshman year. He was a music major who wound up becoming a band director. We stayed friends for the longest time – over 25 years. He wound up being a casualty of the AIDS epidemic [...] and I miss him so much. This photograph here [points to a photo taken of her college band] was taken after we played "Irish Tune from County Derry" as

> one of the pieces at this concert. That's Ray [points to him]. Why on earth did he have to go, and why did so many people have to die?

Jessy recalled the pain and suffering her father endured at the end of his life: "He wasn't even a smoker! That stuff was completely toxic!" She then showed me a poem given to her by Ray. He had written the poem for a man he loved. The man loved him back, but his Baptist upbringing meant that he had to cease all communications with Ray. I began to cry, as my own memories of death and coming out as a gay man flooded my emotions. The interviewer became the interviewee, and Jessy and I began sharing stories around the *Brassed Off* theme in an improvisatory-like exercise in free association. I shared with Jessy that I dedicated a performance of "Danny Boy" to my father in the last concert he saw me conduct in April 2008. He died shortly thereafter on May 27, 2008. At the time of this interview, I had also recently lost my mother to metastatic breast cancer. The fall concert that I was about to conduct would be the first concert she had not attended. Jessy suggested that "maybe we can reclaim, 'Danny Boy' as a song of hope rather than sadness?" I replied, "I think it already is about hope in a way – and maybe it's okay for it to be a song that always brings tears. I don't want to forget the good things about my dad, and I don't necessarily want to erase the bad memories. But maybe we should reclaim it." The depth and breadth of this second meeting far exceeded anything I would have imagined. I included reflections on *Brassed Off* in Chapter VII because of this informal conversation.

Our conversation then turned to a discussion of how music creates emotion and cements memories. Jessy played some examples of ensemble recordings where she served as a member of the ensemble. She kept a CD library and older cassette recordings of all the live performances made throughout her performing career. She pulled a copy of

a recording of a sorrowful bassoon duet at the beginning of "Whatsoever Things," by Mark Camphouse (1997). The work was written to memorialize John P. Paynter, conductor of the Northwestern University Symphonic Wind Ensemble. Jessy explained how when she listens to that recording today (three years after the concert), she is exceedingly proud of her protégé young bassoonist friend who sits second chair. Jessy helped the player overcome her own fear of a difficult to tune, highly exposed duet that is fraught with musical landmines for many amateur bassoonists. She said,

> I guess I do have it in me to be a teacher. Or maybe we're all teachers! I feel a huge sense of accomplishment if I can help a younger musician. I've been there, and it's no fun without a mentor to encourage and show you how it's done.

Interview III: Reflection on Meaning

"Band gave me the tools to deal with a problem I had that was negatively impacting my quality of life. I feel like being in band helped me to at least learn to cope." The final interview focused on what Jessy's band experience meant to her. The purpose of the reflection on meaning interview was to "gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). On the positive side, Jessy articulated a very clear memory of band being the experience that brought her closer to friends, created a sense of community, and fostered a sense of belonging. She credited the band experience with preparing her to deal positively with agoraphobia, and she credits being in band to fostering "what very little bit of a social life" she has. Speaking to the role of teamwork and cooperation, she said "I feel like band specifically encourages musicians to figure out quickly how we're going to work with each other. The restaurant can't be full of chefs, and we all need each other to perform the right duty at the right time."

The second personal meaning that Jessy uncovered through the artifacts exercise and guided reminiscing was that much of her life can be set to a “life soundtrack.” This new revelation came as an outgrowth of the artifact-gathering exercise and our focus on creating vivid memories connected to music. She felt that the connection of music to specific memories might help her to retain her own memory and cognitive function going forward.

> I’m sure there’s science out there to show this. Maybe playing a musical instrument well into your senior years can stave off dementia? I certainly feel sharp still. And I love the constant “puzzle solving” we do by playing in an ensemble. All that finger and tongue moving while using the ears to listen and adjust balance has to do something to our brains. I’m so fascinated by this now. Thank you for opening my ears to these details!

Jessy felt that this exercise reaffirmed her commitment to being in a band and playing a band instrument. She wasn’t quite sure if she could articulate or define “the band experience,” however. She suggested that maybe the experience could prove different for each individual, and that “maybe it depends on your own mental state.” After much discussion and reflection, Jessy arrived at the belief that the value of community and the value of motivating one’s self (e.g., intrinsic motivation) probably makes up the core band experience. Jessy has seen all types of band directors and band conductors, from the traditional militaristic omnipotent dictators to the more progressive constructivists. She felt that a band director who insisted on high musical standards (“Don’t throw the musical baby out with the bathwater!”) while managing to not belittle, degrade, or dehumanize students would be an “ideal” director. She repeatedly mentioned that she felt band directors need to seek a steady balance between traditional performance-based goals of band while remembering that “we are all humans with our own stories”. She acknowledged that the field, at least from her perspective, seems to be softening as

constructivist and progressive ideals continue to shape educational philosophy. When asked how the band experience might differ for a young person in 10, 20, 30, or 100 years from now, Jessy's biggest concern was that technology and social media distractions may have created a generation of "attention-deficit-minded" musicians. She said "I guess we will see, but it seems like everyone wants to be able to Google it rather than taking the time to learn the skills." When asked, "Can you imagine your life without band? How might it have been different, for better or worse?" Jessy felt overwhelmed with emotion:

> I probably wouldn't have lived half as good a life without being in band. It helped me in so many ways. Band gave me my life back. Well, maybe it gave me my life to begin with. I've spent my entire life playing this crazy instrument at least once or twice a week. I think life as a mom and actuary would've been just fine. But the music making has given me a chance to look at a side of my personality that was maybe less developed. I'm not a very "right brained," or whatever it's called…person. Being able to let go and just experience that sort of musical ecstasy that I get –the chills down the spine –is the best anti-depressant I could ask for.

We ended our interview with what seemed like an hour-long laugh over my planned final question, "Do you plan on continuing playing a band instrument for the rest of your life? Tell me about your future plans and aspirations. Is there a piece of music or a specific musical experience you wish to experience?" Jessy once again demonstrated quick wit and comedic timing with:

> Oh honey, at this point I think I've been there and done it all. It's been a good life, and I hope I can be playing in bands until I'm 100 or older. I really do believe it keeps me sharp, and it keeps me invested in humanity. For people like me who are loners and recluses, we need band.

Jessy gave me a hug that reminded me of a long-lost family member. She told me that she hoped her "little story" would help me find some answers. As Maxine Greene might say, the answers came…but so did the questions. I left Jessy feeling inspired and enthusiastic

about the idea that our band experiences evolve and morph over time, but that certain values remain constant. Jessy shows us that band can be a marathon rather than a sprint.

Chapter V

MOVEMENT II

Eric Thompson: Band is My Family

Introduction

"Eric Thompson" (referred to in pseudonym) is a 52-year-old Generation X data scientist/engineer trombonist who married his high school sweetheart whom he met in marching band. Born in an affluent suburb of a northeastern US city, Eric attended public schools throughout his K-12 experience, graduating at the top of his high school class in June, 1983. His higher education experience culminated in an undergraduate degree in engineering from a highly competitive research university in the Northeast, where he also received program honors and magna *cum laude* distinction. Throughout college, Eric continued to play the trombone in the "not as good as my high school band, but pretty good for a bunch of engineers" university band.

Eric first chose to study the trombone in the fall term of his fifth-grade year, because "that's where the nerds went," and "because I heard that colleges looked favorably on kids who played instruments. It was probably an entirely wrong reason to sign up for band, but something told me it would be a great experience, and it was! It became my entire life at one point." Eric met his wife Heather in his high school marching band during his ninth-grade year at band camp. Heather, an all-state trumpeter, would eventually become a band director after successfully attending a state university with a well-regarded music education program, some two hundred miles from Eric's

university. In spite of their geographical distance, the two stayed together throughout undergraduate school and joined a community band in the town where they settled after Eric's graduation. Heather began a teaching career as an elementary general music teacher, and she eventually transitioned to a middle school teaching role where she has served as a band director for the past thirteen years. She earned a Master's degree in music education from another state university while simultaneously maintaining a rigorous teaching schedule early in her career. They have two sons, Jack and Avery, who are in Heather's middle school band (grade eight, grade six) and who also play the trumpet and trombone. During the time of our interviews, Eric ran for and was eventually elected to the school board in their hometown. The family built their musical fort in a town and have been a staple of the community for over 30 years.

Eric's powerful story centers on the musical memories of his lived experience of band. His story serves as a coming of age and family building story where band plays the role of the constant unifying figure. Eric has lived a band experience that is deeply family and community oriented, and he has played the trombone without any significant breaks for over 40 years. He continues to see value in the band experience, and through his interviews he described the activities of a man and his family who are deeply immersed in the band culture of their community. In choosing to interview Eric, I believed that his story of band, like Jessy's, might provide insight into what motivates musicians to continue the rituals of the band community and band experience with such consistency over such a long period of time. I initially wondered if Eric kept playing the trombone because he loved the trombone, or because he loved the experience and sense of community that comes with being in a band, or both. I felt equal fascination with his

chosen career as a data scientist and engineer and how that highly methodical, detail-oriented work might intersect with the typical contemporary band rehearsal and band performance that often features neo-romantic and rubato-infused expressive music. His interviews provided a captivating, 4D experience by which a musician described living with a band director, engaging in highly positive and highly negative experiences with other band conductors, and feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment as the constant, lifelong goal of chasing the idea of "being better" at an instrument and "experiencing band" at a "higher level."

Framing the Setting

After exchanging emails and obtaining Eric's permission to go forward with this study, the first in-person introduction occurred before an evening community band rehearsal on Thursday evening, November 2, 2017. The band held rehearsals in a middle school (where his wife Heather served as the band director) every week from September to May. Heather set up an interview and introduction room for me to meet Eric in her office adjacent to the large rehearsal hall. Eric presented as a middle-aged man with salt-and-pepper hair, thick glasses, a goatee, and a casual deportment. He entered the office with a confident, welcoming, and highly energetic demeanor, shaking my hand firmly and proclaiming "I can't wait to do this study with you! I've never been involved in any research that's even remotely qualitative. And this is about as far out as I can imagine [laughs]!" I immediately felt that it would be easy to have long conversations with Eric, as he arrived prepared and anxious to jump into the full interview. Eric and the conductor of the community band agreed to let me observe the entire rehearsal, and we proceeded to the band room.

Eric made his way to the principal trombone chair, located next to the principal trumpet chair occupied by his wife, Heather. He gave Heather a quick kiss, and the two began to prepare for the forthcoming rehearsal with lip slurs, articulation exercises, and warm up exercises typical of most serious brass players. The conductor, a younger heavyset gentleman, approached the podium and gave a downbeat for a Concert B-flat at 7:03 PM. The rehearsal began, and the group functioned much as a typical band of any age, with frequent "chunking" (breaking apart larger sections, and sectionalizing problem spots). About halfway through the rehearsal, the conductor stopped the band for a scheduled break and announcements. Eric served almost as a band captain or drum major would serve in a high school band. He stood up from his chair and reminded the band that "it's early, but we need to get the golf tournament pledges in for the fall. Don't forget. See me or Heather for information." He then reminded the band: "If you need extra copies of the Gillingham for the page turns, please see me during the break." As the band took a 10-minute break, several fellow bandmembers approached Eric and exchanged warm and familial greetings. Eric seemed to be at home and in a place full of love. He was clearly revered and respected by the musicians, some of whom were much older—and some who appeared to be as young as their early 20s.

This typical teacher-led concert band rehearsal continued without any musical or rhetorical fireworks, and Eric stayed behind to help break down the band room: "I'm running for the Board of Ed, but I promise that's not the motivation on why I'm staying to help clean up!" proclaimed Eric as he proudly and neatly organized music stands and chairs for his wife's band room. He went on to add, "She [pointing to Heather] will lock me out of the house if I don't help put the band room back for her early morning 7 AM

eighth-grade wind ensemble class." Two fellow brass players came by to ask Eric and Heather "Hey, are you guys coming with us to [the pub]? First round is on us." Eric and Heather responded, "Sure. We have the babysitter until 10:30. We'll stay for a little bit. See you soon." I did not follow the bandmembers to the local pub, but I made a note to incorporate such impromptu gatherings of friends in the concept formation and reflections that were to come.

Three long interviews and concept formation/reflection sessions followed and were conducted on Sunday, November 12, 2017 (8 am – 6 pm with lunch) at Eric's home office, Sunday, December 3, 2017 (9 am – 6 pm with informal lunch and dinner debriefing) partially at Eric's work location and partially at his home office, and Sunday, December 17, 2017 (2 pm – 6 pm with a final debriefing) at Eric's home. An additional follow-up session was held via FaceTime where Eric shared further feelings and reflections on January 3, 2018. The findings and discussion that follow are divided into three vignettes: Focused Life History, Presentation and Discussion of Artifacts, and Reflection on Meaning. Eric's vignettes and discussions are presented in this chapter as an individual story of band, assuming that each vignette can function much like a single movement stand alone musical work, or tone poem. I initially planned that each "movement" might function entirely as a separate story, but consonant themes began to emerge as Eric's interview continued. The Explications chapter that follows the three vignettes synthesizes the research and points toward implications for the field through elements that showed consonance throughout all three subjects while contrasting dissonant or disparate themes.

Interview I: Focused Life History

I began the first long interview at Eric's home by asking a broad question that I hoped would elicit an open response: "Tell me about how you decided to study a wind band instrument. Describe as vividly as you can remember the process you went through, and talk about how you arrived at your choice." Eric began by saying "I thought it was a good choice for a total nerd [laughter]. That's it. Next question [laughter]." He then went on to describe in greater detail how he arrived at the trombone:

> I guess picked the trombone because I liked the way it sounded. It seemed like a funny instrument with all the "wah wah" sounds. I thought it was fascinating that the instrument had a slide. I had obviously seen the trombone before…but I do remember specifically the [middle school band] director saying, "This is the *only* instrument that can be played perfectly in tune!" I am quite the perfectionist, so I thought the idea of being the most 'in tune' person in the band was promising. I like to put complex things together and take them apart, so there wasn't much appeal there…being that the instrument has just a couple of parts. But it appealed to me from the beginning.

Jason: Did you have any experience on any other instrument before starting the trombone?

Eric: Nope. I was a good student, but somehow, I missed the piano or violin lessons that so many other students did during those times. I was a very good test taker and academic kind of guy otherwise.

Jason: Did you play sports or do other extra-curricular activities before joining the band?

Eric: I tried baseball, which was probably one of the most disastrous experiences of my life. I'm still kind of traumatized by it.

Jason: Why? What made it traumatizing?

Eric: Well, I don't have the best vision. And even wearing the giant coke-bottle glasses with the strap didn't help me. It's funny that an engineer today would talk about having depth perception problems, right? […] And I chose an instrument to play in the band that requires depth perception to move the slide accurately. I guess I wanted a challenge? Well…I stopped playing Little League type baseball after about two months when I was hit

in the face. My parents decided that they'd rather have me concussion and embarrassment free I suppose. I sure am glad I quit.

Jason: Did playing trombone cause any worries or concerns for you early on with the depth perception issues?

Eric: Surprisingly, no. I wasn't even aware of the frequencies of pitch and tuning things that I am now at that time in my life, but I think my fascination with physics made trombone a natural choice. I was tall enough to hit seventh position with no trouble. And I've always had a sense of humor [laughs] so it was very fun to play the "wah wah, Charlie Brown" themes to annoy people in my class.

After this exchange, I asked Eric how his band experience began to take shape in the early years, framing the setting of the band room, including his recollection of the physical space where he rehearsed, his classmates, and his teacher on a typical day in beginning band class through middle school band, and high school band class. He painted a picture of a well-organized and well-disciplined middle school band room full of typical sixth-grade band students:

> I think the biggest problem I can remember we had was people misbehaving and percussionists playing when the director tried to talk. I remember him making the entire class put our instruments down and do push-ups…outside…on a cold day when people just wouldn't shut up.

I asked, "Did you have lots of moments you can recall where the entire class was punished for the behavior of some of the bandmembers?" Eric quickly retorted:

> Absolutely, it happened all the time. I thought it was ridiculous, and of course now I know this isn't the way a classroom should probably be run or is run today…I hope. This kind of thing happened in our high school band, too. Especially during marching band. Marching band felt like Marine boot camp training some days. But thankfully it never happened at [the university] or at [the community band] where I play now. That would be pretty insane to send a bunch of adults who are willingly there to rehearse and have fun and make music outside to do punitive push-ups, right? [laughter]

Eric described both his middle and high school band directors as heterosexual white men who tended to "blow up at us a lot" and "seemed to be angry often, but by the time of the

concert [they] calmed down." I was interested in the anger and fear-based teaching that Eric appeared to be describing, so I asked a few more questions of the atmosphere of the band room in his grade 6-12 experience. One of the most revealing exchanges happened below. The thematic material began as a recollection of the environment and tangentially morphed into a discussion of competition:

Jason: Can you remember what your middle school band room looked like, and how it was organized?

Eric: Oh yes, I can remember it exactly. It was a large and fairly new building at the time. I think it had been built in the early 1970s. Our school district was a wealthy one, so we had lots of good infrastructure. We had one of those giant Peterson tuners that everyone wanted to buy back then. My sixth-grade year, the middle school band bought a xylophone and a set of timpani with really nice tuning gauges. We had all the bells and whistles anyone probably needed back then. We were really fortunate to be in an affluent neighborhood with good funding.

Jason: Do you remember anything about how you were asked to learn skills? Did you have to pass off scales or prepared pieces to receive a grade? What about chair tryouts? Did you do challenges?

Eric: I loved all of that stuff. I'm a really competitive guy, so it gave me some kind of pleasure to see that I was passing off scales and etudes faster than anyone else. The whole system was set up to be competitive. There was a big poster board on the wall with each section and our names written out. As you passed off a scale or a playing test, you got stars on the chart. I was really motivated to beat everyone else, as you do when you're a middle school boy, so it became kind of a game to me. I guess it had the effect of pushing me to get better. But I could totally see how that method might turn off others.

Jason: Fascinating. You're actually getting further into my line of questioning ahead of me.

Eric: Oh, sorry.

Jason: No, no. That's okay. I think we will definitely want to discuss more about how you liked competition. One of the themes I'm looking at is the role of motivation and how students are motivated. You seem to have at least initially been motivated by competition and gold stars or stickers, right?

Eric: Absolutely. I mean, by high school I was totally into the TOB (Tournament of Bands) thing. We had a really good competitive marching band in the TOB circuit. I think the organization was started in the early 1970s, and it's still around today. Now I don't care at all about competition, but it sort of became my sport of choice in high school, at least through the marching band circuit. I was drum major and Heather was the band captain. We were kind of band royalty.

This conversation provided an appendix to the lines of inquiry that I felt deserved further examination: how fear and competition motivated Eric in these formidable years. I also felt compelled to push further into the role of the band director in Eric's musical upbringing—noting several times Eric used terms like "I got good in spite of [him]," and "I think he [the band director] really got in the way sometimes and was his own worst enemy." The issue of competition is an important one for me, as I underwent a radical shift in my own thinking during my fourth year of teaching. Eric's recollections of fear and the value of competition helped shape my own reflections and views in the explications that follow in chapters seven and eight.

Interview II: The Details of Experience, Presentation and Discussion of Artifacts

We began our second interview on Sunday, December 3, 2017 with a group of purposely collected representative artifacts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The following outline of inquiry was used to elicit open responses:

1. Tell me what this artifact is.
2. Describe how you fit into this performance, picture, or event.
3. Who was the intended consumer or user of the artifact?
4. What do you think this artifact describes about this moment in time?
5. What is missing from this artifact? Think of the "back story" like in the Broadway show *Wicked*. Is there any underlying experience you felt that might not be evident in the public presentation?
6. What was happening in society or history at the time of this event?
7. What was happening in your life at the time of this event?

8. What kind of meaning did this have for you at the time you experienced it? What about today? Is the meaning different today than it was when the event occurred?

The Letterman Jacket

Eric brought several artifacts to our second meeting, including his band "Letterman" jacket, the sheet music to the Chicago pop tune "Hard to Say I'm Sorry" (1982), a photo of his friends playing a brass choir at his wedding with Heather, and a CD recording of a concert his community band had given in a major city five years prior. Each of the artifacts represented positive, deeply memorable and significant milestones in his band experience. We began with the letterman jacket: "Tell me about this jacket. Why did you pick it?" Eric said, "That jacket, to me, is a symbol of all the drama and hijinks and craziness of my high school band experience. It reminds me of how I met Heather, too." I followed by asking, "Can you talk about how you met Heather? How is the jacket significant to that?" Eric replied,

> We were in the stands at a football game. I remember it exactly like it was yesterday. I was on the top row playing my trombone. We had this amazing arrangement of the "Rocky" theme. It's how I learned that "do, daht, dahhh" rhythm…[laughs]. I had met Heather during band camp that summer. I was in the 9th grade and she was in the 10th. You had to be in the 10th grade to get a letter jacket with the band logo on it. She was wearing her letter jacket and just killing the high C's in "Rocky" on a freezing night in November. I thought to myself, "That's a total badass there!" And I met her under the stands and gave her a kiss on her cheek. I know that sounds like a dumb TV show, but it happened.

I followed by asking "Did you think you would wind up marrying her after that kiss under the bleachers?" Eric replied with laughter: "Oh no. I thought she might slap me. She was already trumpet section leader in the 10th-grade and was known for running a tight ship. I had no idea it would turn into something that wound up lasting forever." I pivoted back to the jacket, asking, "Do you still both have your jackets?" Eric replied,

"Absolutely. And I got a matching 'BRASS' arm patch to match Heather's when I finally got my jacket at the end of band camp the next fall. It just reminds me of how it all started. So many good memories." The jacket also brought back positive memories of marching band competitions for Eric.

> I remember the first time we won a Grand Championship [overall highest scoring marching band] award. Heather and I stood next to each other on the field as the announcer read off the ratings and placements. I was so proud.

I asked if he and Heather remained together nonstop, and he replied:

> We weren't exclusive during part of college. Kind of like on *Friends* when Ross and Rachel were "on a break." That part is in my next artifact, so wait for that. But we knew that we were right for each other […] at least by the time I was out of college.

I then used the letterman jacket story to give Eric an opportunity to free associate and reminisce about his band experience. He seemed to focus primarily on the time period in high school (1979-1983), recalling when John Lennon died, being devastated that Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States, and first learning about the AIDS crisis his senior year in high school. "That was a strange time, I suppose," Eric said. "The free love of the 70s came to a big halt right when I graduated high school, and there was a lot of uncertainty over what was going to happen in politics and globally."

His family were donors and supporters of President Jimmy Carter, and they all felt a sense of deflation and defeat when Carter lost in 1980.

> He won our state, of course…and that was great…but the country had made a real hard right turn. Kind of like the absolute nonsense we're experiencing now. But I hate to say it…Reagan was at least somewhat microscopically competent.

I asked how music, and band specifically, helped him get through those turbulent high school years. Eric elaborated:

> I think band was an escape. My family was really involved in Democratic Party politics, and the Democratic Party was nearly destroyed in 1980-1981. I felt like band gave me an outlet that was fun, worth practicing […] and an escape from all the drama of high school life and the drama that was going on in society at the time. You know, I've thought about this a lot since our last interview. I'm not sure if I'm only remembering the good things. But my experience in band really defined my high school experience. I'm not sure if it's because I met my eventual wife in band, or because I loved music, or both.

I then asked Eric about the role of band in his life and how it contrasted with his high-achieving academic and scientific mind: "Did you see band as something totally different and exciting because of its contrast to the upper level math and science courses you took in high school?" I wanted to examine if Eric saw a fundamental difference or contrast between the type of thinking required for his current field as a data scientist and band. Eric replied,

> Absolutely. I took calculus in the 10th grade, which was very unusual. I took all the upper level chemistry and honors physics classes, which were obviously totally different from the creative nature of band. For me, I loved that band gave me a chance to perform music a different way every time. It's almost like an experiment where the variables are slightly changed on each repetition. I realized quickly…at least in high school…that playing live music does something very special to you.

The Sheet Music and the Serenade

Eric and I turned our discussion to the sheet music he brought into our artifact meeting. The Chicago pop tune "Hard to Say I'm Sorry" (1982) was a top 40 hit in the summer and fall of 1982. Eric had taken a trip to New York City before the fall term of 1982 and purchased the sheet music (piano reduction with chords and vocal line) at The Colony, a record and sheet music store in New York. Eric placed the tune in a setting by saying, "That fall our marching band was doing '25 or 6 to 4' (another Chicago tune) in our halftime show. I was obsessed with Chicago, and I still think Peter Cetera and David

Foster are geniuses." Eric picked up the sheet music to "Hard to Say I'm Sorry" in New York that summer as the tune quickly rocketed to number one on the Billboard Top 100. That summer, he and Heather went "on a break" at the behest of their families, probably due to their ages. Heather was a college freshman in college, Eric remaining still a high school senior. Eric lamented,

> We spent a few months in the summer not even calling each other. I was miserable. I guess "Hard to Say I'm Sorry" wasn't exactly our story, but it was about a guy telling a girl that he was sorry…and didn't feel comfortable saying it…but he wanted them to stay together. So, I decided to serenade her with it during band camp.

Heather was called back to guest teach her high school band camp as a college freshman, and she would be on campus for two weeks as the band learned the marching band drills and music. Eric reminded me that "our band director knew that we were a couple, so I believe he purposely kept low brass and high brass far apart in sectionals at that band camp!" After rehearsal, a long 8 am to 8 pm day, Eric asked Heather to stay behind in the band room. He noted,

> We had an old upright piano…was never in tune…sitting in the band room. I brought out the music and played it for her and sang it really badly with a cracking/pitchy voice while missing most of the more interesting chords in the left hand. She cracked up, and I did too. It wasn't one of those Hollywood moments where we cried. It was more of a "Why the hell can't we be together?" I think we knew then that it was really dumb to stay apart. We only split up briefly once more in college, but I pretty much knew we were right for each other that summer…the summer of 1982.

Eric remembered the lyrics exactly and recited many of them as he explained the moment to me. "Do you remember the lyrics exactly?" I asked: "Yes, I haven't heard the song in ages, but it's permanently etched in my brain. I can even tell you what notes I played in '25 or 6 to 4' that fall" and where I stood on the field as I played them to the press box:

Everybody needs a little time away
I heard her say
From each other

Even lovers need a holiday
Far away from each other

Hold me now
It's hard for me to say I'm sorry
I just want you to stay

After all that we've been through
I will make it up to you
I promise to

And after all that's been said and done
You're just a part of me I can't let go
Couldn't stand to be kept away
Just for the day
From your body
Wouldn't want to be swept away
Far away
From the one that I love

Hold me now
It is hard for me to say I'm sorry
I just want you to know
Hold me now
I really want to tell you I'm sorry
I could never let you go

After all that we've been through
I will make it up to you
I promise to
After all that's been said and done
You're just a part of me I can't let go

After all that we've been through
I will make it up to you
I promise to
(Cetera & Foster, 1982)

Eric went on to say,

> I think that song just encapsulates perfectly the teenage angst I had in the summer of 1982. I think Michael Jackson was becoming more popular then, but I was all about Chicago. The brass parts were just so much fun to play in band. I loved the way band crossed over into pop. Back then, it wasn't a big deal or considered in bad taste to play good pop music arrangements in marching band.

I responded, "Do you think that marching band might have been different for you if it were more like today?" Eric replied,

> Maybe. I loved the competitive aspect of it, but nowadays it seems as though the marching band has become more of a theatrical place where kids sing, dance, and play a few whole notes while lots of "boom boom" electronics happen. Gosh that makes me sound old and curmudgeonly.

I then asked, "Do you plan on your sons joining the marching band?" and Eric quickly nodded,

> Yes, totally. I think it's one of the most important ways you build that band family thing. The music they play now isn't quite the same as what we did, but I'm not sure it's a bad thing. All the really good marching bands have arrangers now that write custom shows based on specific emotional and metaphorical themes. We just played "25 or 6 to 4," anything by Earth Wind and Fire, and "Lucretia Macevil" balls to the wall. It's different now, but I think the experience is probably just as valid or life-changing as it was for me. I love that our school district has an amazing music program. They have to do it. Their dad and mom did, so it must be valid! [laughs]

Laughing along with Eric, I moved this part of the discussion to a close by asking Eric how he thought his life with Heather intersected with band: "Do you see any parallels to being in band, being a member of the band, and the life you began with Heather in the 1980s?" Eric responded,

> We've never been a storybook marriage. I like to say Heather and I have always been real. You know, when you ask that question it makes me think […] there are a lot of parallels between being in band, the ups and downs of it, and being in a relationship. We've had days where we can't stand each other, but we know that we love each other. There are times that it feels like work. Hard work. [laughter] And there are times it feels like a vacation. I guess anything that's worth working for will experience these sorts of moments of doubt and frustration. I'm sure there are people who are 'married' to band who never have an argument or conflict. But most people—if they're being authentic—probably have days where they

> question it and wonder why they dedicate so much time to it. But then you realize on the day of the concert that it's totally worth it. That's the best way I can see the parallels. I don't know if it's because it's music. Or because it's band. Or because it's just some sort of activity that a person can do. But I know the feeling I get when I play a concert at a high level is an amazing one that I can't quite describe. Kind of like a musical "high" that makes me forget about all my other troubles. The best moments with Heather have been exactly the same way.

Rolling Thunder: Seeking Musical Highs

Eric's discussion and reminiscing on his relationship with Heather and its intersectionality with his band experience segued beautifully into a conversation about the CD that he brought to our second interview. "This is the only professional recording our community band ever did, and I am playing on it!" exclaimed Eric as he proudly showed me the CD that featured custom artwork. The band released a recording five years prior, and it was Eric's first experience with the process of producing and recording a performance. "I had no idea how many 'takes' it takes to get a perfect album," Eric noted. The community band produced the CD for a charity event to raise funds for music lessons for under-resourced students. Their conductor rallied the group around an intense two weekends of recording that would involve a great deal of personal sacrifice, extensive preparation, and fine detail work. Eric noted:

> It was amazing for me, because I love to take things apart and put them back together. I spent so much time talking to the recording engineers. It's just incredible how the editing and mastering process has changed over the years. We did this in four days.

One of the selections featured on the CD is Henry Fillmore's march "Rolling Thunder" (1916), known as a "screamer." Eric had played other circus marches and screamers before, but this would be the first time he was asked to record. Describing the process, Eric noted that,

> We got the entire trombone section together, all 8 of us. And I said to them that we would need to attack this as a group. It was so exciting to be a coach and motivator. We started with the metronome at 80 beats per minute…dreadfully slow. I saw what kind of musical high you can achieve by motivating others during the time we prepared this program.

In a post interview informal reflection exercise, I asked Eric to describe how he created a moment of "musical high," and he responded,

> The most fascinating thing to me was the fact that we had so many chances to make it right. The end recording was nearly perfect, but it was a splice of all the attempts. That experience made me think about authenticity again. There wasn't a single performance of "Rolling Thunder" that was perfect, but the combined collective effort was near perfect with proper editing. I think we did a wonderful job of it because the end result gave me those musical chills that seem awfully hard to come by as we get older. When we performed the work live at the concert the next week, it wasn't as perfect as the recording, but I felt more excitement and energy. I keep mentioning this, but I believe that there's something to be said about the thrill of making live music. I wonder if studio musicians in LA or New York struggle with this when they record things multiple times. Perhaps it's the same for actors in movies. The end story for us was amazing. And for me, I felt a particular sense of pride as I prepared our trombone section for the recording and performance.
>
> Eric's reflection provided a fascinating glimpse into the process that band members experience in creating professional or semi-professional recordings. His discussion of musical highs led me to seek further reflection and inquiry in chapter seven.

Eric repeatedly cited the value of bandmember ownership and voice, something that seemed worth further researching in follow-up discussions. The most frequent words that Eric used to describe the recording and "musical high" experience included: proud, community, collective, and effort. I wondered if the experience as an adult in community band, a place where adults of disparate careers gather together each week to engage in an activity which they first began in middle school, served as a replication or reliving of earlier experiences. I planned to ask Eric more about this in our final interview. We agreed to watch some videos (VHS, DVD) of prior performances of his community band and to make our third interview a discussion on meaning.

Interview III: Reflection on Meaning

"Band wound up becoming a family to me. A sometimes-dysfunctional family, but one that I loved for all its warts and faults." The final interview on December 17, 2017 focused on what the Eric's band experience meant to him. The purpose of the reflection on meaning interview was to "gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) and to focus on "created" or "crafted" reality (Bresler, 1995) through personal domains of private construction and interpretation where behaviors and actions are only a starting point to explore larger experiences and meanings. Eric further reflected on our final interview through additional written correspondence (email, essays) and telephone calls on January 3, 2018 and March 13, 2018.

In contrast to my experience with Jessy, the interview process with Eric did not provide for a deeply emotionally connected moment of shared anguish or grief. The experience provided further elucidation and a consonance with the idea that band promotes a sense of belonging, community, and purpose. Eric described his experience in overwhelmingly positive terms, with a frequent use of the words "family" and "values" and "achievement" in our informal and formal interviews. Eric frequently described in beautifully rhapsodic and connected variation the setting and feelings surrounding a moment in his band history. His hunger for competition and achievement seemed to wane as he entered middle age. In describing his middle and high school band experience, common words included "competition," "discipline," "organization," and "methodical." Those descriptors went completely missing by the time Eric entered college band as a non-major and the community band for which he currently serves as

principal trombonist. As he described his mindset change from high school "band as sport" to adult community banding, I wondered if the formerly competitive aspect of band kept Eric involved in band long enough to establish a more firmly grounded form of intrinsic motivation.

Eric's second personal meaning uncovered through the artifacts exercise and guided reminiscing was similar to Jessy's in that he frequently associated the music of the time (e.g., pop, top 40) and the music being played in band class with the progression of his own life's development. During our long interview and discussion time, Eric was able to recall with great accuracy specific programs, musical excerpts he had not played in many years, and the setting, atmosphere, and environment of experiences in band. Of the artifact and guided reflection process, Eric experienced musical memory similarly to Jessy:

> I guess all of us who are musicians tend to remember things that happened in life by what music we were playing, listened to, or experienced at the time. I'm frankly amazed that I was able to recall so quickly exactly what I played on so many concerts. The exercise we did to recall the emotional impact and memory associated with band performances reminded me that much of what we do in our lives is shaped by music. Movies are set to soundtracks that are designed to pull on our heart strings. Maybe that's what makes band so special? There's a primitive, innate ability of humans to remember and recall music as a means of communication. I think band is special because we do it in a way that blends art (music making) with family (community building). I can't speak to the other large ensembles that schools might offer, as I'm a lifelong "band guy," but I do believe that band is special.

Eric felt strongly that he would "never quit band at this point! What else would I do for fun besides golfing?" and that he believed band made him a more interesting and compassionate person. Speaking to his analytical and "methodically left-brained persona," Eric noted,

> I think band has given me the ability to bring out parts of my personality that weren't as strong. I enjoy the uncertainty of performing live music. I obviously wouldn't be able to tolerate such variables in some of the IT framework and machinery I design […] so it is a really beautiful contrast for me.

Eric's view of the band director or band conductor could best be described as a warm/cold and complex position. He said of band directing,

> I am so fortunate to have had nothing but directors who care. The problem I see is that so many directors…and this is from talking with my wife who's a band director and seeing others lose it […] They get so wrapped up in band and make it their *entire* existence. This is when anger and desperation come out. I've had band directors who made me want to quit the group because of their behavior, as I told you early on. And other times, they've just really gotten in the way of progress. I think the one thing that's kept me so motivated is that the directors I've had always have shown that they really do care about music and care about us. They might not have showed it in the most productive or effective ways, but they cared.

Eric went on to say about band directing as a profession:

> I think it's an awesome responsibility. It makes me so sad to hear from others who've had band directors who made their experience awful. We have people like that in [the community band]. I think you should find someone who's had a really negative experience and see why they're still playing. Or do the bad band directors run people off for good? I know some of mine have been pretty rancid on some days. One of them, made me feel like I couldn't trust him after he went behind my back and caused a lot of drama. I felt like I couldn't trust him as far as I could throw a tuba…and that's not very far. I don't want to say that being a band director should require a certain moral or ethical test, but it really is important that we have people doing this who are good people. That's why I think I stayed involved. Even through sometimes bad or questionable teaching, they all showed me that they believed in band and music and the experience as something worth studying.

We closed our time together with a discussion on the future of band and what band might look like 10, 20, 30, or 100 years from now. Eric believed that "band might be the only thing that looks the same 100 years from now. It is something you can't do artificially and online only." On revisiting the concept of fear, Eric emphatically believed that

> Fear is too big of a thing in teaching in general. I don't know why we still use negative consequences and old behaviorism methods to try to motivate kids. We have that problem today in the year 2017 in the [school district]. I just don't think

> it's healthy in the long-run. Kids need to have organization and structure, but we don't need to cause them a lifelong performance anxiety problem by traumatizing them.

Eric vowed to try his best as a newly-elected school board member to ensure that "life-changing" experiences kept being offered for his wife as a band director and his sons as students in the music program:

> This is my family, for better or worse. I don't see myself ever stopping playing. When the boys graduate from high school and go off to college, we may retire somewhere down south. But thankfully there's plenty of community bands across America. Band is part of my story. And I'm better for it.

Eric's story, as explicated here and through reflections in Chapter VII, provides a glimpse into the notion that one can become not only a member of a band, but embody the band experience through the process of passing down musical traditions and social rituals in a family. His unique lived experience as an insider and member of a band who married a band director provides a perspective unlike the other two subjects in this study.

Chapter VI

MOVEMENT III

Cara: Anger, Rebirth, and Liberation

Introduction

"Cara" (referred to in pseudonym) is a 35-year-old self-identified gay Hispanic woman. She came of age in a highly conservative suburban area of the southern United States. Her school district's band program was known for a long tradition of musical excellence spanning many decades. Cara never majored in music, but she continues to play the clarinet in a community band in the western United States where she and her wife are raising a two-year-old son. Cara's band experience began in the sixth grade when she selected the B-flat clarinet after watching a captivating multimedia and in-person demonstration of all the band and orchestra instruments. Her parents became active "band parents" in the school booster organization throughout her high school experience from 1997 to 2001. Cara's father served as head pastor at a large evangelical church, and her mother taught English at a neighboring school district. She graduated from high school in May, 2001, and Cara's turbulent college freshman year transpired with the tragedies of 9/11/2001. She took a year's break from college after experiencing an existential crisis, but she persevered, graduating in May, 2005 from the journalism program at a large state university. She met her wife, Pamela, during the fall 2004 semester of her junior year at a back to school LGBTQIA campus event. The couple relocated to the western US after college, where Cara currently works for a national

media organization and Pamela works as a registered nurse in the critical care ward of a local hospital. The couple married shortly after the Obergefell v. Hodges Supreme Court decision (2015) as Cara was expecting a son conceived via an anonymous sperm donor.

Of her instrument choice, she said, "I felt most connected to the clarinet, and I don't know why […] but I was drawn to it." At the time of this interview, Cara had played clarinet since age 12, pausing only for the birth of her son Jackson and for the academic year 2002-2003 when she took a year off from college. I was drawn to studying Cara's band experience because of the pervasiveness of anger and frustration that shaped many of her high school years. I felt that her background as a storyteller (journalist) would provide a rich environment for discussion and reflection. I initially had a hunch that Cara's story as a relatively younger person might point toward the showcasing of progressive ideas and less hegemonic stories of band. The series of interviews and meetings with Cara illuminated and bookended some common themes that seemed to pervade all three stories of band.

Cara's story is one of anger, rage, and frustration transformed into positive musical energy in spite of seemingly intractable obstacles. As with the previous two interviewees, I felt compelled to examine and reflect on factors influencing motivation and longevity, especially considering Cara's tumultuous relationship with band directors throughout the first six years of her band experience. Cara's interviews often showed a darker and even sinister side of band, as she vividly recounted stories about being motivated first by fear, which was soon followed by anger and spite. Her journey is one of frustration, rebirth, and eventual liberation from the negative feelings that often

permeated her experience in band. Her story provides a very raw, real, and unvarnished look at a type of cynical teaching practice.

Framing the Setting

After exchanging emails and obtaining Cara's permission to go forward with this study, my first in-person introduction to Cara occurred before an evening community band rehearsal on Monday, February 5, 2018. We arranged to meet in a classroom at the high school campus that hosted the community band's weekly rehearsals. Cara approached the room and presented as a confident woman managing three clarinets (a B-flat clarinet, an E-flat clarinet, and a B-flat bass clarinet) and three music folders. Cara began with an affable and direct introduction: "I'm actually playing all three of these tonight. It's a great program! Pleasure to finally meet you in person, Jason."

Cara immediately seemed anxiously prepared to tell her story: "I'm a storyteller for my day job, so you may have to stop me from pontificating for hours." I suggested, based on her affinity for writing and reflecting, that she should feel at liberty to follow-up from part one, two, or three of our day-long interviews with any written communication that she felt comfortable sharing. We also agreed to add additional time if new topics appeared that deserved further investigation. I felt almost as though Cara were the interviewer, because she asked nearly as many questions of me as I did of her at this introductory meeting. She expressed a clear excitement for uncovering meanings within the band experience. Her clear intelligence, quick wit, and ability to rapidly synthesize information gave me the sense that our conversations would prove to be revealing. She warned me several times in multiple phrasings foreshadowing that her "story is not always pretty. Sometimes it's awful. But I think people need to know that you still have

these types of teachers out there." Cara would later go on to describe several gut-wrenching moments that left me angrier about the state of our profession than I had been in years and have inspired me to critically self-evaluate and reflect.

I left the introduction meeting with Cara very enthusiastic about the potential for our interviews to reveal new information about the band experience. With her permission and the permission of the conductor of the community band, I observed Cara in rehearsal. As principal clarinet, she played a similar role to the typical high school section leader. Throughout the rehearsal, she supplemented the conductor's directions with section-specific suggestions to improve musicianship, tuning, and rhythmic precision. She played the E-flat clarinet, B-flat clarinet, and B-flat bass clarinet during the rehearsal. "I believe we should all rotate parts as much as possible, especially in a community band," she noted to me after the rehearsal. Several practicing band directors sat in the clarinet section with Cara. She seemed at ease with her leadership role and role as a generous section leader who spread the musical wealth throughout the section. I noted that she seemed to constantly be reassuring and building up the players around her with specific feedback about what they were doing. She also offered steps they should take to improve. The entire rehearsal seemed much more collaborative and musician-centered than most typical band rehearsals. There were frequent "take a minute to practice this in your sections" breaks that relied heavily on section leaders to carry out the musical wishes of the conductor. At the end of the rehearsal, Cara said proudly,

> I think others should do band rehearsals this way. When Pam and I moved here, this band was the best possible welcome we could've had. Maybe it's because we're in a progressive city, or maybe it's the positive message of the conductor. But I feel so much different…in a good way…than I did sitting through high school rehearsals.

Three long interviews and concept formation/reflection sessions followed and were conducted on Saturday, February 24, 2018 (8 am – 6 pm with lunch), Saturday, March 10, 2018 (9 am – 6 pm with informal lunch and dinner debriefing), and Saturday, March 24, 2018 (2 pm – 6 pm with a final debriefing) at Cara's home. An additional follow-up session was held via FaceTime where Cara shared further feelings and reflections on April 4, 2018. The findings and discussion that follow are divided into three vignettes: Focused Life History, Presentation and Discussion of Artifacts, and Reflection on Meaning. Cara's vignette and discussion are presented in this chapter as an individual story of band, with the assumption that each vignette can function much like a single movement standalone musical work, or tone poem. I initially planned that each "movement" might function entirely as a separate story, but some consonant themes began to emerge between the interviews of Cara, Eric, and Jessy. The Explications chapter that follows the three vignettes synthesizes the research and points toward implications for the field through elements that showed consonance throughout all three subjects while contrasting dissonant or disparate themes.

Interview I: Focused Life History

I began the first long interview at Cara's home by asking the same broad question that I posed to the previous two interviewees: "Tell me about how you decided to study a wind band instrument. Describe as vividly as you can remember the process you went through, and talk about how you arrived at your choice." Cara began with a very eloquently rhapsodic statement: "I was drawn to it in almost a cosmic manner. I was a fairly melancholy middle schooler, wrestling with my sexuality and my place in the

world. The mournful and dark sounds of the clarinet really spoke to me." She went on in further discussions to describe the instrument and how it fit her persona:

> The clarinet is an instrument that can dichotomously convey extreme sadness and jubilant celebration with the flick of the register key. I became instantly transfixed with the schizophrenic tessitura and massive range of emotion available in the clarinet. I felt that its ability to morph and adapt to musical environments was much like my own. I see the instrument like a painter's pallet that happens to feature greater shades of grays and pastels in addition to the bold hues of the brass and saxophones.

I asked Cara to reflect further on the process by which she decided to choose the clarinet, and she pivoted to an important discussion of societal and home life pressures in this exchange on February 24, 2018:

Jason: Did you have any experience on any other instrument before starting the clarinet?

Cara: Yes, I played piano for a few years. My mother signed me up for piano lessons when I was eight years old. At one point I could play most of the Baptist Hymnal book on piano. I got a good dose of self-hate every week by playing out of that book. [laughter]

Jason: Did you play sports or do other extra-curricular activities before joining the band?

Cara: I didn't. I was a PK [preacher's kid], and even by the 1990s, I felt like there was a bit of an unfair spotlight of judgment shining on me in anything I did or tried to do. I also was struggling with expressing my sexuality at the time, so I avoided most of the popular activities.

Jason: Why? What made it difficult or traumatizing? Can you talk more about your sexuality and how that affected your mindset?

Cara: My hometown is a suburb of a large southern city, as we've discussed. Twenty-five years ago, we were deep in the culture wars nonsense…and pre-ARV (anti-retroviral) therapy for HIV patients. I was in the sixth grade in the fall of 1994 just before the breakthrough in those drugs helped literally save millions of lives. I got bombarded daily about how the 'gay lifestyle' would lead to death, AIDS, loneliness, and madness. They [the public-school teachers] used fear to try to literally scare gay kids straight. This came from literally every corner of my little world back then. It was sort of understood in an underground kind of way that the only places the

LGBT students could go was to join the band or the theatre and drama club.

Jason: How was it known that band was a safe space?

Cara: I'm not really exactly sure, but there were a string of obviously gay drum majors and bandmembers at the high school. The high school band came out to our middle school several times during the year…I want to say two or three…to show us and talk to us about why we should join the band. I saw girls who dressed and looked like me playing instruments like the baritone horn and the sousaphone. I saw guys who weren't ashamed to play "girl instruments" like the flute and the clarinet. I could just tell that it was an alternative-friendly group. And I was totally, completely out then. I guess this was one of my first subtle "gaydar" episodes. [laughter]

Jason: Can you talk a bit more about how you felt this unspoken safety?

Cara: I wish I could describe it better or more eloquently. I think it was probably the behavior, dress, and short speeches given by the high school students. Anyone in the sixth grade looks up to the high school kids who come to do a presentation on the great wonders of joining the high school band. I don't recall anything specifically said that signaled me. It's not as if they waved rainbow flags and used hanky code to signal their fetishes. [laughter]

Jason: [laughter] Yes, I could see how that might come across badly in a conservative school. You were at a public school, right?

Cara: Yes, but that didn't mean anything. We prayed before football games, some teachers prayed before lunch with their classes, and there was a Jesus vibe all over the place back then. Again, I was particularly affected by this, because my dad was a preacher at a fairly large church. This area of [the state] has a Southern Baptist church on nearly every corner. It's like Starbucks in New York City where you're from. They're ubiquitous and stifling.

Jason: [laughter] I can't imagine what it would be like if all the Starbucks in New York were converted into Baptist churches.

Cara: [laughter] It would probably be about as miserable as my experience growing up in the damn Bible Belt. Oops, I said damn. Guess I'm going to literal hell again. [laughter]

Jason: Do you identify as gay, lesbian, queer, or otherwise? I want to make sure I am addressing and describing you as you identify.

Cara: Thank you for asking. I am old-school Ellen, circa 1997, and just refer to myself as a gay woman. I've always found the word lesbian to be kind of harsh sounding. And all I can think of when I hear the word lesbian is that hilarious scene in *The Golden Girls* where Blanche is confusing the word "lesbian" with "Lebanese."

Jason: [laughter] Oh gosh, yes! "Ain't Danny Thomas one of them?"

Cara: [laughter] Okay, we're BFF's now. [laughter]. I think every gay person knows that scene from *The Golden Girls*.

Jason: Yep. I remember watching that scene with my very conservative grandmother one weekend in Georgia. Talk about trying to butch it up!

Cara: Oh, yes. Now I'm remembering going to one of those insipid "Purity Dances." Good god, those were disgusting. I think I wore the ugliest dress I could find and made myself look as bad as possible just to piss them all off. This is going to be fun, Jason. I'll just be me, unvarnished to you. You may have to edit some of what I say! [laughter]

Jason: I'm glad we made this connection, and I'm glad you feel comfortable being yourself. Please don't self-censor. I'm not looking for any sort of romanticized or Hollywood-like depiction of what it's like to be in band. I guess one of my big goals in this research is to try to look at what makes band special through the lens of the individual. We spend so much time talking about band as a large ensemble…which it is. But I'm interested in the stories behind the scenes and how band has shaped individual lives.

Cara: Fantastic. I'm excited to share my story with you. I will say from the beginning, I think band is a great thing and is a lifeline for many kids. It was for me. But I think too many band directors…at least from my conversations with others…are absolute self-serving jackasses. Maybe it's just a [state] thing. I don't know. But so many of them seem to get their priorities wrong.

Jason: […] So much to unpack here. If it's okay with you, I'd like to go back to the earlier years and do a framing of the setting. I'm noting all of this information, and we'll go in chronological order if that works for you.

Cara: Sounds great to me.

After this rich exchange, I asked Cara to think about how her band experience began to take shape in the early years. I wanted her to frame the setting of the band room, including her recollection of the physical space where she rehearsed. I also wanted to get

a sense of her classmates and teacher on a typical day in beginning band class through middle school band, and high school band class. She described a militaristic, rigid, and in her words "creativity-stifling" experience that involved a very methodical daily drilling of fundamentals:

> My middle school band director was a student of the Eddie Green method. Never heard a "Concert F" he didn't want to tune with a drone all fucking day. [laughter] Listen, I get it and totally understand why fundamentals are important, but all I remember about middle school band is playing "Concert F around the room" and a middle school band room full of students who were bored to tears.

I asked, "Can you remember how much time you spent on the music?" Cara replied,

> I have no idea, but probably 10-20% of the class time. Again, I understand why fundamentals are important. I think all musicians do. But he [the band director] was obsessed with us standing in front of the Peterson tuner and marking us down as "in tune" as if we were magically "in tune" and set to go for the rest of the rehearsal.

At this point in the description, I began to wonder if Cara ever felt any form of creative energy or if she remembered being taught musical phrasing and aesthetics. I asked, "Can you remember musicianship training for playing with a beautiful sound in a specific musical phrase?" "Sure," she replied,

> I just remember that we spent many hours rehearsing fundamentals before we were even allowed to really shape phrases. I hope that directors incorporate this from the beginning now. It was a very dull existence for the first couple of years, but we did very well at [district and state] evaluations.

I followed by asking, "Do you remember what you played for middle school concert band evaluations?" Cara laughed and said,

> You know, I can remember one tune that was called "Windemere." I have no idea who wrote it. But it was one of those typical band tunes in sonata form with a lot of clichés. We nailed it as I recall. We never made less than a One rating.

I then wondered if Cara felt that all the fundamental training was worthwhile, and I asked her to reflect on the time spent mastering fundamentals. After some thought, she replied:

> I think that [the middle school director] knew what formula worked to get the highest number of musical accolades and awards. We never played at the [state] convention, but we always were really respected as being very good. Looking back on it now, I'm not sure how I wanted to continue. Because so much of the time we had a metronome running in class or a tuning drone. It felt very much like a factory. But [the middle school director] wasn't a terrible person. I think he was just typical of what you might see in a middle school band room. He talked often about how we had to meet the "standard of excellence" of the high school band and how he didn't want us to tarnish his reputation in the field. Seems quite self-serving now that I look back on it. But he wasn't a colossal asshole like my high school director.

Cara's comment immediately reminded me of painful memories surrounding my internship, which was my most significant experience of a hegemonic and authoritarian director. Her story of the metronome and tuner immediately brought a painful memory of my first year of undergraduate school with a professor who ran the metronome most of the time during my lessons. That instructor's insistence that I play all my scales as loudly as possible with no dynamic markings and his obsession on brightening my tone led me to transfer to another institution for the last three years of my undergraduate music program. Cara helped me remember the pain and loneliness associated with feeling like a factory-produced musician and a cog in someone else's machine. I never really thought about the hegemony of fundamentals training until I listened to Cara's story. At this point in our interview, she left me with questions on how educators might structure rehearsals and training without producing robotic caricatures.

Cara went on to describe both her middle and high school band directors as heterosexual, white, Christian, middle-aged men who tended to invoke a strong message of Christianity in the classroom. Cara considered herself an atheist at the time of our interviews, and she felt a strong feeling of anger over what she described as "straight up indoctrination" in the band rooms of the south. Her high school band program had a partnership with all of the area churches. All the churches and houses of worship near her school were protestant, most being part of the Southern Baptist Convention. She lamented that,

> It was just a full saturation, because the churches fed us before each one of the football games. They sent their preachers to pray over the food and the band and the football team before football games. My dad was one of them, so of course I was caught up right in the middle of all of that nonsense.

I became increasingly interested in exploring Cara's negative relationship with her high school band director. At this point in the interview process, I asked her to elucidate and help me to understand the relationship she had with him. As with Jessy and Eric, I began to see a pattern of anger and fear-based teaching being described, so I asked a few more questions about the atmosphere she experienced in her high school band room. One of the most revealing and powerful exchanges happened below. The thematic material began as a recollection of the environment and tangentially morphed into a discussion of competition, fear, and rebirth:

Jason: You've referred to your high school band director several times in less than glowing ways at this point. I'm wondering if we could spend some time discussing that relationship.

Cara: Sure. I will begin by saying I think he was, and I guess still is if he's still alive, one of the most miserable and worst human beings on earth.

Jason: Wow! That's intense. Okay, I really want to understand this. Can we go back to your introduction to him? Could you walk me through the experience with him?

Cara: Yes, sure. I think my experience with him would be described as an intersection of religion…fear…some self-loathing, and some serious self-esteem issues.

Jason: You've mentioned religion several times. As someone who also grew up in the south, I know how religion – specifically the Christian faith – tends to get intertwined with school bands and school sports. Can you talk a bit more about the religious aspect of things?

Cara: Yes. As I mentioned, my dad was a preacher at one of the Southern Baptist churches in the area. My band director…the high school band director…used to attend our church. He left our church when I was in middle school to join an even more conservative church called the Church of Christ. This church believed that literally everything would send you to their version of literal hell. It's around then that I think he became even more miserable.

Jason: Did he ever preach or proselytize in front of the band?

Cara: Oh, yeah. He would call on students to lead prayer before competitions. He would scream at women about modesty. Imagine a Catholic headmaster or a really bitchy old Nun in a convent running around screaming at children. That was him.

Jason: Sounds like it would've been difficult for you and any others who questioned the prevailing faith of your community.

Cara: Yes. There were a few kids in the high school band who were professed atheists at that time. [The band director] made sure they never got section leader jobs or principal chairs. I'm not sure honestly if the three or four of them deserved it, but he seemed to pick favorites.

Jason: Were students asked about their religious beliefs when they applied for positions as section leaders?

Cara: No. But it was that same sort of unspoken "wink wink, nod nod" thing. I guess they [the religious students and teachers] used it the same way that we on the gay side did.

Jason: Can you talk to me about when you came out. Did you come out in high school?

Cara: This is the worst part of my story, I suppose. I was obviously a really good clarinet player. I'm not saying that with braggadocio, but I made District band all All-State band every year from seventh-grade on with the exception of my 11th-grade year. I was really depressed in the fall of my

10th-grade year. I really cared about band. I still do, or I wouldn't be part of a band now. Well…I decided to come out to a few people who I thought were friends in the band after marching season my 10th-grade year. It was November 1998. They were all part of team Jesus, and they went running to [the band director] to tell him that his principal chair clarinet was gay. The director called me into his office. Mind you, I respected this guy at the time even though he was rude, arrogant, and condescending to people all the time. Treated the band like soldiers in his army. But I felt like he still cared about music. Otherwise why would he have been there? But anyway, he told me that he would pray for me…in that really condescending and critical way that religious conservatives do…and told me that I needed to repent or he would talk to my dad! I was mortified and scared for my life.

I thought dear god, my high school band director is going to get me kicked out of my house. I was an absolute basket case. I wound up going back in the closet and convinced him and others that it was a big misunderstanding. I didn't even try to embrace who I was until after I got out of high school. I really hated him for putting me in that position. It was ridiculous. And it wasn't the first horrible thing he did. It was just the one thing he did to me that affected me in the worst possible way.

Jason: That sounds horrible. I'm so sorry you had to go through this. Did you talk to anyone at all about it at the time?

Cara: No. I wound up retreating into my cocoon and just trying to bide my time until I could be liberated from that high school and those people.

Jason: Did you think about quitting band after this interaction with the director?

Cara: Sure. But I wanted to stay in band just to spite him, I think. He made me so angry on a daily basis even before that…so I decided to be a thorn in his side instead. I guess I was motivated partially out of the desire to get back at him.

Jason: Could you talk more about the other things that the director did that were upsetting to you and to others?

Cara: Yes. I could talk for days about that. I think this may still be normal in the south, but he used physical punishment like push-ups and running laps to punish the entire band any time that a single student did something wrong. The entire marching band rehearsal scene was usually him standing up on the tower screaming into a microphone that was turned up too loud, him berating us, him reminding us that we were going to be beaten by [a rival school] next week if we didn't get our act together. The thing that made it all the worse was that he wasn't a bad musician. He knew all the right techniques. But my god his delivery was just atrocious. I think the entire

band was motivated out of fear. But we weren't even sure what we were afraid of. We wouldn't fail out of school if we didn't win [the state championship] in November. But he had a way of making everything a big deal that caused a lot of us pretty bad anxiety.

Jason: It sounds like competition was a big focus. What do you think about that now, looking back on your experience?

Cara: For sure. Competition was huge. Directors in my home state could get fired like football coaches for not having enough winning seasons. Crazy stuff. He was obsessed with general effect scores, minutiae, and details. He never liked to blame himself when we didn't win, though. I don't know what I think about competition in general. I suppose it can be a healthy thing. The ironic…total hypocrisy…was that he would often tell us these broad sounding platitudes like "You're just competing with yourselves!" But then he'd go on later in the rehearsal to compare us to [another band] from down the road and tell us, "I bet [the other band] isn't making this kind of mistake right now. They're racking up the GE points while you're sounding like garbage."

Jason: That sounds very difficult and like a lose-lose situation for you and so many others. Did this kind of behavior change the way you viewed band?

Cara: Oh, yes. I used to want to be a band director. I mean…at one point in the summer and fall of my sophomore year before all the failed coming out drama happened…I was seriously considering a career in music. But I saw so many people who seemed to be so miserable involved in band. I decided that it wasn't for me [teaching band]. I'm not sure if it was *because* of him. But he certainly didn't motivate me to take up the field of band directing.

Jason: Can you talk more about how you decided that you wanted to keep playing music and being in band in spite of your director?

Cara: This is the positive part. I realized that I could still be happy playing the clarinet and wasn't in need of an omnipotent band director to bless me with his supposed knowledge. My junior year…it was the one year I didn't make All-State…was a turning point for me. I decided to just stop worrying about band like it was a sport and decided to play the clarinet just for me. In spite of the colossal douchebag who stood in front of our band every day, I really loved band. The music just did something for me. I loved the idea of how my part fit into a greater scheme that was bigger than any of us. I think most of us in the wind ensemble class felt the same way. We were damn good musicians. He would probably argue that it was because of him. Bullshit. Total bullshit. I do believe he gave us lots

of tools to be better musicians, but I think most of us who were successful did it in spite of him, not because of him.

Jason: That's very powerful. Before we break and do a reflection exercise, can you elaborate a bit on the turning point you just mentioned? How was playing in band after that?

Cara: I call it my "born again" moment. I guess you can say I was reborn as someone who loved the clarinet and loved band without the goddamned baggage. At that point, I didn't even speak to [the band director]. He knew that I thought he was a terrible guy. I wound up just focusing on me and focusing on being healthier mentally. By the way, I made first chair All-state my senior year.

Jason: That's incredible. Do you think the rebirth is why you made All-state?

Cara: Absolutely. I also just didn't give a shit at that point. I was in one existential crisis after another. I wound up making my clarinet my best friend, I guess. [laughter] My senior year I just wanted to get out of the Jesus belt and get away from my parents. It was the sweetest feeling ever to graduate and be done with that place. I was liberated. I survived!

This conversation with Cara pointed to lines of inquiry that I felt deserved further examination: the value of how fear and competition motivated her in these formidable years, the value of the band director in shaping negative feelings of self-worth and eventual stubborn determination, and the manner in which she constructed meaning to transform a negative experience into something that she reclaimed as her own. I felt emotionally and physically drained after the first interview with Cara. We spoke until 9 PM that first night, and I felt that we had made a significant connection. Her recollections of fear and ostracization resonated with me, and I made note of this in my own reflections on my own band experience. I felt a connection with Cara as a gay man who also came of age in the south. Her very difficult story of coming out left me thankful that my own parents accepted me. I never came out to my own high school band director, because I knew that he was a member of a very orthodox religious institution

that viewed being gay as a terrible sin. Cara's heartbreaking story of her high school band director hypocritically praying for her could have been my story. My high school director was a kind, genial, jolly Santa-like figure who professed love to all his students. But I remember him holding bible studies and other events off campus. I imagined when reflecting on Cara's first interview how I might have handled my own high school director threatening to tell my parents that I was gay. I would have probably retreated and left the field of music forever. In high school, I was nowhere near as strong-willed and defiant as Cara. I felt a lump in my throat and an uneasy feeling in my stomach as Cara's depiction showed me what an alternate universe version of my own band story could have been. I wondered if other students had been lost forever to music and to band because of directors like Cara's. I felt so sad and so lonely after our first interview, but I also felt grateful that I had not endured hurt like Cara. I left the first interview with a renewed, aching sense of question—wondering how this clarinet player could remain in band after the many negative stories she shared, and how she was able to turn some of the most difficult moments in her life into eventual triumph and enjoyment for the pure sake of music making.

Interview II: The Details of Experience, Presentation and Discussion of Artifacts

We began our second interview on Saturday, March 10, 2018 with a group of purposely collected representative artifacts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I used a method of artifact inquiry to elicit open responses, beginning with the description of the artifact. I then asked Cara to describe, as vividly as she could, how she fit into the artifact. We spent time reflecting and considering metaphor, or the back story and what might lie underneath the visible first layer. I asked Cara to think about what events

happened during her life at the same time the artifact was created, and we spent time discussing meaning—both at the time of the artifact and in the present. I found this method incredibly helpful with Cara, as it allowed her to recreate her story in a far more detailed and vivid manner than simply listing and describing. Cara brought eight artifacts to our second meeting, the three most fascinating being a grouping of a metronome, a tuner, and a Rose 32 Etudes for Clarinet book (1913), a coming out letter she wrote to her father in 1999 but never gave him, and a picture from her senior band banquet.

The Metronome, the Tuner, and the Rose Etudes Book: Compliance

"It just wouldn't stop. Click, click, click. I practically slept with the metronome set to quarter note = 132 beats per minute." Cara's first noted artifact consisted of two building blocks (a tuner, a metronome) and one vehicle to deliver a musical performance (a popular etude book used for All-state auditions across the United States). In describing her relationship with the metronome and the tuner, Cara painted a picture of a "prisoner, shackled to an unforgiving device." She described how her band room experience, from middle school to high school, also featured extensive daily use of a metronome "to the point it became indelibly cemented in my head. I couldn't get the click out." She described a setting of cold, dark, and unforgiving black vs. white tones in depicting the tuner: "It's a necessary evil…maybe? It forces us into compliance. We are good soldiers reporting for A=440 duty." Cara discussed with me how the metronome and tuner felt stifling and limiting to her:

> I felt that there was literally zero room for anything but pure technique when I memorized number six for that year's All-State technical etude audition. There's not a dynamic marking anywhere on that page.

I asked Cara to describe what was happening in her life at the time she learned page 6 in the Rose Etudes book. She noted that it was a time of conformity in general. She had just been outed to her band director, and she wanted to retreat into being a "cog in the band machine…not to be seen." At the time, the etude meant "everything" to her, as it served as the key to a successful All-state audition.

> Looking back on it now, I consider that etude to be somewhat worthless. I'm not unthankful that it helped me firm up my technique. But it seems awfully transactional and impersonal now. At the time, I felt like my whole life and musical existence hung in the balance because of page 6.

Cara further reminisced on her "love, hate, but mostly hate" relationship with the "great equalizer" metronome and tuner. She suspected that her rebel and renegade nature might have led to her negative association with these devices: "Someone who likes compliance or complacency would probably love these insidious devices. I found that they forced me into a box. Now I realize they were necessary. But I wonder how many musicians never get past this stage where it's just recreating sounds? Do you ever wonder how many people drop out of band because they never get past the fundamentals stage? It has to be a staggering number." For Cara, the tuner, metronome, and etude book marked a moment in her life where she wanted desperately to fit in to societal norms and prevailing band culture. In her state, hundreds of clarinetists played the exact same etude as part of the audition process. On the process, Cara reflected:

> I kept thinking, "what can I do to make me stand out from the rest?" and I never quite figured it out beyond just totally killing it in the sight-reading portion of the audition. There's no real creative way to interpret etude number 6. It's like…which robot that looks and sounds exactly like the other one will you prefer?

Cara saw the "back story" of this artifact as a metaphor for the type of myopic focus on the memorization of facts, transmission of data, and regurgitation of information that public school students are typically taught.

The Letter: Bernstein, Tchaikovsky, and Copland were Gay, and Why We Need Representation

The second artifact Cara brought to the interview was a typed letter via word processor that she composed to her father in 1999: "I never gave this to him. He eventually died without knowing I was gay." The 10-page letter was written in a very scholarly manner, making particular note of composers and conductors who were gay over time. "My dad was very proud of my work in the band program. I thought that maybe me pointing out that so many successful musicians had been gay or bisexual might be a tool to convince him." Cara planned on giving the letter to her father after she graduated from high school and was "safely away from my home," but she never gave the letter to him. He later passed away from a heart condition in 2009, nearly 10 years after Cara composed the letter. Cara was never able to officially come out to her father.

Remembering her father's steadfast Christian-infused beliefs that formed and solidified over a lifetime, Cara said:

> I don't think he could've ever dealt with it. He knew I was gay. He had to. But I don't think he wanted to know officially. He wasn't a dumb guy. He had a Master of Divinity degree from [a well-regarded conservative Baptist school] and really believed in the stuff he preached, I think. I didn't want to crush him by giving him the letter. But he knew that Pam was more than just my friend. She came to Thanksgiving and Christmas. Of course, my mom knew, too. I came out to her. She's great now and the best grandma in the world to Cooper, [Cara's son].

I asked Cara to reflect on why she chose musicians, rather than historical figures, to make the case to her father in the never-delivered letter. She felt connected to musicians

because of her love of the clarinet, and she was "living, eating, breathing, and sleeping band" at the time. It just seemed like the best way outside of making a big theological argument to ask him to accept me." One of the most significant and important suggestions came from Cara's reflection on that 1999 letter. She noted that she did not know a single out gay teacher or out living composer at the time of the letter's writing.

> I know things are different now. [The conductor of the community band] is out and brings his boyfriend to concerts. There are openly gay composers now. There's openly gay university conductors now. Randall Standridge writes music for middle school band and posts on his Facebook page about how much he loves his husband. He sells thousands of copies of his music. No one is boycotting him. Julie Giroux who we've played several times in this band has a wife and is my spirit twin. She posts on social media daily about her liberal politics, her dogs, and her wife and mom and family. No one is boycotting her, and if they are they're missing out on some of the best writing in the world. That's a beautiful thing. I think we need way more of that. We are out there [...] and we need to be seen. I missed it during my high school experience. I feel like if I had it to do all over again, I would've come out to my dad. Maybe if it were today versus 1999. A lot has changed in a couple of decades. But I'm optimistic that the world is so much more real now in the year 2018, even in the face of uncertain political times.

Cara saw that letter as a capstone on a very difficult year of her high school life, occurring during the same junior year where she failed to make All-state and decided to be "reborn". She shaped this concept of rebirth not through a Judeo-Christian lens, but through a radical revolution based on victory over oppression.

The 2001 Band Banquet Photo

Cara's third artifact of note consisted of a framed 8 x 10 photo of her senior band banquet. In the photo stood four of Cara's closest friends in band: Tim and his girlfriend Kerri, Chase and his girlfriend Bree, and Cara without a date. The band banquet is a traditional gathering of high school students to celebrate the end of a year with food, awards, and dancing. It almost functions as a "band prom" and is something that occurs

as part of the rituals of band with regularity across the United States. Cara attended her senior band banquet without a "band date" or "even a date at all, band or not." The photo was snapped on May 24, 2001, and Cara spent a good deal of time discussing the setting, what music was popular, and how her life changed between the band banquet of 2001 and the fall term of 2001:

> This was the end of innocence for me. I had just gone through the whole rebirth thing. And I was determined to be happier and come out of my shell…and come out finally. And then 9/11 happened that fall and all the fear in the world came back. And life wasn't innocent again.

Cara then shared a particularly touching story about what happened behind the metaphorical curtain as the band banquet photo was being taken:

> I was madly in love with a girl…let's call her Sally…and she was standing in the line waiting for her picture to be taken next with her dopey boyfriend who she would later marry a few years later. I remember the song "Angel" by Shaggy was playing as we were in line. I considered Sally my angel. She never knew how much I cared for her, but in another world, she was mine

Cara remembered specific music and the order of concerts, details, and events surrounding the final months of her high school band experience. The band banquet photo showed a "moment in time where we all thought everything was going to be alright."

Cara noted that she has continued to keep in touch with three of the four friends since high school, and that,

> Kerri broke up with Tim shortly after this picture was taken. I have no idea what she wound up doing. She was a student from another school, so she wasn't really part of the band family. She just showed up as Tim's date that night. She was his girlfriend back then, but she wasn't part of our clique.

Interview III: Reflection on Meaning

"Band is something I don't regret for one minute. I do regret that I didn't have the nicest or most supportive teachers, but no one can ever take away the joy I've had from playing in band. Band is something special." The final interview on Saturday, March 24, 2018 focused on what Cara's band experience meant to her. The purpose of the reflection on meaning interview was to "gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) and to focus on "created" or "crafted" reality (Bresler, 1995) through personal domains of private construction and interpretation where behaviors and actions are only a starting point to explore larger experiences and meanings. Cara further reflected on our final interview through additional written correspondence: email, essays, and a FaceTime video call on April 3, 2018.

Like Jessy and Eric, Cara frequently used the term "family" and "community" to describe band. Cara's experience could be classified as dichotomous and often violently contrasting. Negatively connoted descriptors of the middle and high school experience which occurred frequently in the interview transcripts included "miserable," "conformity," and "stifling." After Cara's "rebirth" experience in 1999, she used descriptive terms like "intrinsic motivation," "for the sake of music," and "liberation" to describe her collegiate and adult community band experience. She believed that her positive college experience playing in the university symphonic band and wind ensemble and her current adult community band experience served as "a just reward" for enduring years of self-doubt, negative and behaviorist teaching, and she lamented directors who seemed "to be in the whole game for themselves or just to inflict harm on children."

Like Jessy and Eric before her, Cara noted that much of her life, particularly the moments of existential crisis and anguish, were "set to music" and vividly recallable. She recalled an Alanis Morissette tune "You Oughta Know" (1995) as serving as a metaphor for her breakup with her past. Of the artifact and guided reflection process, Cara experienced a similar reawakening of musical memory:

> I feel badly that I can't remember anything I played in middle school band except that "Windemere" piece. The more I thought about this, the more I thought that maybe I don't remember much about middle school band music because we didn't play much that's memorable. I only remember specific Rose Etudes because I practiced them so many times. They didn't really *do* anything for me. As much as I hated the high school band director, we played at least one band classic and one newer piece on every program. I was able to play both of the Holst Suites for band, the Hindemith Symphony, and newer music like "Heroes, Lost and Fallen" by David Gillingham (1989). It's so sad, but one of my most memorable memories of playing Heroes was the asshole director screaming at us in a ballroom after we played that piece along with the Caillet transcription of, "Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral" (Wagner, 1846/1938). I am forever scarred in a way when I hear the middle section of Heroes.

Reflecting on our concept formation and musical memory recollection exercises, Cara noted in this written reflection:

> I was able to reawaken some dormant feelings through the exercises and work you did with me. The act of musical scrapbooking and collection of artifacts was particularly useful and powerful. The eight artifacts I found all reminded me of a story, a place, a time – and they guided me to reflect as a married woman with a child on a time in the past when I was a different person. I understand now why I enjoy programmatic music so much. Much of what I remembered was music that either told some sort of story or *created* a storyline in my mind. I think of "The Movie in My Mind" from MISS SAIGON, minus the gendered pronouns:
>
> > Flee this life, flee this place
> > The movie plays and plays
> > The screen before me fills
> > He takes me to New York
> > He gives me dollar bills
> > Our children laugh all day
> > They eat too much ice cream
> > And life is like a dream

> Dream, the dream I long to find
> The movie in my mind

> The act of reliving the painful experiences for me was cathartic, in that it validated my belief that I did the absolute best I could under the circumstances at the time. My band experience follows some violent moments of triumph and some crushing moments of defeat, and it defines me as a human.

Cara's views and checkered experiences interacting with the band director and conductor role consumed a large portion of the interview process. On band directing, Cara said:

> I think…well, I hope…this is not a systemic issue. Maybe times have changed. But I believe with every fiber of my being that we should only send people out to become band directors…no, teachers in general… band directors or teachers of any kind…who really care about the subject matter but most importantly care about people. I only stayed in band because my love of music and love of the whole scene that is band outweighed my total disgust with the band director. How many people did he turn off? Probably thousands. It was a big program. I think band directors need to stop seeing children as transactional objects. We are individuals with the same human needs, insecurities…and baggage as you. I appreciate anyone who wants to be good at anything. But there's a way we can do this without destroying humans in the process. I think, when this guy dies… I know that sounds so dark…will anyone come to his funeral? Will anyone see him as anything but a pusher of conformity? I don't know. I am not going to end this with a happy ending. I'm not a forgiver. I don't know where he is or what he's doing or if he's even alive. And I really don't care. I don't think I owe him or any other hypocritical teacher any forgiveness. But I am glad I forgave *myself*. And I'm glad I was able to deal with that anger and frustration and do something positive with my life. And I really am glad that I was able to take those good aspects of band and continue doing it. You have no idea how happy it makes me feel every week to unplug from writing and to sit in a band and relive the *good* parts of the band experience. It's a huge gift. I hope we pay band directors and teachers what they're worth, and I hope we only send people into that field who love life and love other humans unconditionally.

Cara and I ended our time together with a dinner and "celebration" of getting through "weeks of existential angst." I felt exhausted after the unraveling and uncovering of meanings with Cara, but I felt the same sense of accomplishment that one does after mastering a new technique or a musical work. Cara left me with an entirely new set of my

own existential questions, and I took an extended time after her interview to engage in a particularly painful retro-analysis of my own experience as both a bandmember and a band conductor. Cara left me with the inspiration to review decades-old student surveys, correspondence, and performance archives. She motivated me to carefully examine moments in my own teaching history that may have been hegemonic, authoritarian, or insufficiently inclusive. Musing on Cara's narrative forced me to critically examine elements of my own teaching practice that might place the desire of a perfected product over the value of the journey and the individual. I felt heartened that I had never engaged in even remotely as negative behaviors as Cara's band director. But I felt Cara's story pointing me to the possible hidden hegemony of band. Could Cara's culture be the metronome, and her sexuality be the tuner? How would I reconcile my own desire to continue teaching and reinforcing musical fundamentals in a manner that might foment less dread from my students? I felt particularly fortunate that Cara's interview occurred as the last of three long, detailed sessions. I felt that her movement providing a close to the "band suite" that makes up this study provided a particularly dramatic, raw, yet real glimpse into the darker underbelly of the band experience. I left our interview determined to make sense of her story, examine how it contrasted and provided consonance with the other stories, and use her story to help guide recommendations for the field and for future research.

Chapter VII

EXPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS PART ONE: A THREE-MOVEMENT SUITE

Band is the perfect combination of life events, social development, the need to work for the greater good, and the thrill of being part of something that's greater than one's self. The culture surrounding band continues to foster a strong sense of identity and community through its frequent opportunities to present live music to a receptive audience that itself is part of the community. The experiences and stories of Jessy, Eric, and Cara showed that the most effective and lasting motivation comes from within. The stories of Jessy, Eric, and Cara paint three portraits of musicians at different points in their journey of band and of life. Essences of hegemony (Cara, chapter VI), community (Eric, chapter V), and life-long learning (Jessy, chapter IV) emerged through long interviews that were designed to allow for metaphor, musing, and explication from multiple aesthetic perspectives. The three stories of band in this research form a suite of sometimes related and sometimes starkly different elements. Indelibly etched in each of the stories is the notion that the band experience provides meaning and a soundtrack to one's life through the act of realizing and experiencing one's contribution to the greater good of an organization that is bigger than any one individual. But this study showed that some directors hinder intrinsic motivation, and the study further showed that the value of the individual and her story is often overlooked in much of the structure and form of the large ensemble classroom.

I undertook this study to enrich my understanding of why students do the things they do in band and why they stay in band. I felt a critical need to undertake this type of research to understand the band experience in both its liberating and oppressive dimensions, an experience that could be either socially rich or socially devastating; a road to creativity and imagination, or a road to conformity. Ultimately, the study was undertaken with a strong desire to reflect and improve on my own teaching practice and to reconceptualize and rebalance my educational credo and values, which I describe in chapter VIII through my own journey as a teacher.

In chapters IV, V, and VI, stories of band were presented in an open fashion, allowing both consonant and dissonant meanings to emerge. Stories and portraits were painted of the three participants in three separate vignettes, or "movements," without knowing beforehand if any consonant thematic material might emerge. This chapter will discuss a specific and more focused synthesis of the lived band experience as told through three stories and reflect further on moments of intersectionality and narrative that developed and emerged. The pursuit of multiple interview environments (written reflections, rehearsal observations, and classic recorded interviews with transcripts followed by informal conversations) helped to investigate the "setting of the person" (Bailey, 1996, p. 72) in a reciprocal dialogue. I took great care to foster an environment that would allow the data "to emerge" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) rather than being forced or contrived. This study further adopted Miller's view of the "life story" as representing the account given by an individual, with emphasis upon the ordering into themes or topics that the individual chooses to adopt or omit as s/he tells the story (Miller, 2000, p. 19). I describe these areas as consonant and dissonant, in the manner a musical work

might utilize tonality vs. atonality, harmony vs. serialism, or tension vs. release to create a coherent musical picture.

Review of Research Questions

Two broad research questions emerged after a review of the literature and refining of the goals of this study. I asked two overarching questions that guided the interview process. First, is there such a thing as a "band identity?" I wanted to know how band shaped the lives of three individuals who have spent their lives playing, experiencing, and performing band music. I wanted to know if there was some sort of essence to band. I wanted to understand more about how their concept of self was and is determined and shaped through participation in band. Life in band shapes life outside of band. For that reason, I elected to spend a great deal of time hearing the stories of each of the subjects.

Secondly, I wanted to be open to the idea that these stories of band would intersect with my own and that I would learn something about myself and my own band identity from conducting this research and asking these questions. As a band director, I constantly seek ways to update and refine my own educational credo and teaching vocabulary. I had an initial hunch that undertaking this study would make me a better teacher. Because this phenomenon takes place as an interaction with works of art (musical works written for the wind band) in a primarily educational setting, philosophies of aesthetic experiences (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Greene, 1995, 2001; Hubard, 2008) informed the discussion, or explication, of the phenomena described by the interviewees. Greene (1990) writes about the ability of imagination to help us "realize" works of art in light of our personal experiences (pp. 80-81). When what we know about music intersects with what we know about ourselves and the world, we are able to bring new meaning and

imagine the work in a new reality. This chapter discusses how experiencing these works of art (playing and performing band music, in this case) in the presence of others can often allow for a "complex conversation" and "transactions" to take place in a communal context (p. 82). The stories of band that emerged after extended, multiple formal and informal interviews with the three interviewees are discussed below through the musical metaphors of consonance and dissonance.

Consonance: The Mix Tape of Meanings

Four common areas of agreement, or consonance, emerged to a degree between and across all three interviewees. For the purposes of this research, I approach consonance metaphorically (Jorgensen & Yob, 2019) as part of a musical work, or in this research a life story, that "fits" together in some manner to provide a salient, or "matching" thematic congruence (Plack, 2010, pp. 476-478), similar to consonant music that tends to "fit together." Explications are organized into the following four sections: The Pervasiveness of Fear, The Soundtrack of Band Life: MEAMs, Band as a Community: *Brassed Off*, and Rebirth through Intrinsic Motivation. The consonant sections constitute a musical "Mix Tape," and the notable dissonant sections form a "Mash-up" that contrast disparate themes. For the purpose of this study, only the vignettes that related to the research questions are explicated in this chapter.

The Pervasiveness of Fear

All three interviewees described in great detail the process of undergoing, experiencing, and being frequently subjected to multiple forms of fear in teaching. For all three interviewees, the fundamental structure of band in grades 6-12 featured a highly methodical, organized, regimented approach to daily fundamental training. Discipline

was harsh, often punitive, and often designed to instill fear into other students through a negative consequences model in all three stories. The strong element of fear established itself as a theme in all three interviews. In each situation, we agreed to explore the concept through subsequent interviews and a combination of formal and information discussion. Jessy, Eric, and Cara all felt that their respective band directors consciously intended to provoke and stoke fear, but they all three believed that their directors did this because "it was the way you do things in band," or that, for instance, "I don't think he had the worst intentions […] but his delivery was absolutely terrible."

Plack (2010) argues that, despite what he calls, "compelling and convincing evidence" to the contrary, too many teachers still believe that fear—fear of failure, fear of an unwanted call home, fear of the teacher, fear of ridicule, or fear of an unpleasant consequence—is a prime motivator for students to do high-quality work. The intentional creation of fear in the classroom remains one of the most widely used strategies for managing student behavior and encouraging academic achievement (p. 43). Jessy, Eric, and Cara all described classic behaviorist (Skinner, 1938) methods where a band director exerted control and forceful dominance over a band with a series of negative consequences. One interviewee, Jessy, frequently mentioned that she skipped school when band playing test exams were scheduled because,

> The idea of failing made me physically sick to my stomach. I was paralyzed. I experienced all sorts of fear in other areas of my life, but he [the band director] made it particularly painful with the pop quizzes and those terrifying moments where we had to stand-up to play in front of the band.

Jessy, Eric, and Cara all described negative consequences as a motivating factor to perform at a higher level, but they all believed the threats of grade reductions, physical

punishment (push-ups, running laps around the field) did not positively influence or shape their reason for pursuing musical excellence and musical expression.

Descriptors used to label the value or perception of fear included “necessary evil,” (Jessy) “just the way we did things then” (Eric), and “easiest method to get the class to behave” (Cara). Interestingly, none of the interviewees spent much of their interview time lionizing director figures or showing off awards and trophies and other “gold stars” (Kohn, 1999) that so many band directors spend time pursuing. While one interviewee, Eric, rhapsodized in a partially nostalgic manner for the value of competition, he did not choose to bring any artifact (trophy, medal, certificate) that described an extrinsic reward to the second interview. The artifacts that the interviewees selected to demonstrate and describe their band experiences all evoked personal connections through narrative tone, imagery, themes, ideological setting, nuclear episodes, images and endings (McAdams, 1996, pp. 308-309). Each artifact helped to tell the story of the interviewee and provided contextual understanding of meaning. Cara’s metronome and tuner, Jessy’s copy of “Linconshire Posy,” and Eric’s sheet music to “Hard to Say I’m Sorry” all captured moments in time and allowed the interviewees to reconstruct the band experience in a way that personalized and narrated the band experience.

The Soundtrack of Band Life

Jessy, Eric, and Cara all recalled autobiographical memories through the process of creating music-evoked autobiographical memories, known as MEAMs (Belfi, Karlan, & Tranel, 2015; Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski, 2007; Janata, 2009; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). All three of the interviewees described in vivid detail the “soundtracks” of their lives through a combination of pop music of the time and the

music they played as part of their band experiences. The music-evoked autobiographical memories from the three interviewees all followed similar patterns of vivid imagery (Belfi, Karlan, & Tranel, 2015) and featured the specific recollection of certain musical material (Janata, 2009) that highlighted and made the experience richer through a 4D crystallization of memory (Blais-Rochette & Miranda, 2016). The selection of artifacts and discussion/explication of artifacts provided Jessy, Eric, and Cara an opportunity to rhapsodize, reflect, and re-construct a narrative of band through the "music of their time" (Belfi, Karlan, & Tranel, 2015).

Particularly fascinating in this study was the situational intersection of pop culture and pop music (e.g., Eric's recollection of the Chicago "Hard to Say I'm Sorry" sheet music as a moment of light-hearted yet heartfelt communication to his girlfriend Heather) with prevailing band music that is part of the existing, insular band culture. Jessy, Eric, and Cara all recalled with historical accuracy the music of their time (Laukka, 2006) that enhanced and informed their individual stories of band (Miller, 2000). As in previous psychological research on musical memory, most of the musical memories that the interviewees chose to discuss in the artifact and concept formation exercise evoked positive and nostalgic feelings. Perhaps the rich and detailed descriptions provided by each of the interviewees were made even more memorable because of the intersection of band culture and pop culture.

Cara remembered the Shaggy tune "Angel" playing in the background as she stood in line waiting for her senior band banquet pictures to be made. Cara remembered the event positively and framed her unrequited love for a classmate positively, in spite of that time period of her life being marred with tumult, self-doubt, and depression. Eric

associated highly positive memories with the playing of the "Rocky" theme (remembering this is how he mastered the sixteenth-note dotted eighth rhythm) and other 1970s hits like "25 or 6 to 4" as he contrasted his family's dismay and sadness over the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. The musical "soundtrack" proved to be an uplifting means of helping Eric, Cara, and Jessy cope with life changes and psychological phenomena that plagued each of them in different ways during their middle and high school band experiences.

As part of an exercise of concept formation, recollection, and reminiscing, I asked the three interviewees to create a musical "Mix Tape" or "playlist" for both their band experience (e.g., the music played in band class that they could remember) and the music that was popular or that they associate strongly with a positive or negative experience. I asked each interviewee to do this exercise completely from memory without contacting any external research sources. Jessy, Eric, and Cara all recalled with striking accuracy the music that made up the Billboard Top 40 and Top 100 lists during their high school years without referencing any research tools. They all associated popular music of the time with the typical moments that define a high school experience: the prom, state testing exams, homecoming, dances, graduation, and parties. All three interviewees remembered most of the literature they performed in high school band, and they each remembered at least one piece that "changed" their values and belief system surrounding band. Jessy remembered the red "clutch purse" she carried with her to the Sadie Hawkins Day dance her 10th-grade year. In one moment, Jessy, a then 82-year-old woman, transported herself and me to a school dance floor in the 1950s.

The middle school years, interestingly, featured far less recollection of specific works. For all three of the interviewees, the middle school experience was remembered as primarily a skills-building and fundamentals-forming era. The literature suggests that some of the most salient and “everlasting” memories form during the formidable high school years (Lippman & Greenwood, 2012) as personal identity and existential crises intersect (Greene, 1995). The emergence of the “musical soundtrack of life” as indelibly connected and hard-wired to memory was the most unexpected, yet welcome “essence” (Heidegger, 1962) revealed in this study. Perhaps band provides a type of heightened awareness through tonal memory.

Band as a Community: Brassed Off

The first interview with Jessy (2017), provided a moment of reciprocal interviewing and personal narrative congruence that helped to illustrate the value of a phenomenological and “mix tape” approach to research. Phenomenological researchers are considered insiders and participants in a study, and they have a critical role in shaping the research setting (Bresler, 1995), unlike the more passive role of an ethnographer or observer. Because phenomenology remains a malleable form of inquiry (Groenewald, 1994), and because I have lived the band experience, phenomenology found a natural home as the beginning conceptual force that drove this study of the band experience. Deeply personally moving themes of culture and community emerged in my discussion with Jessy. Jessy and I spent an extra unplanned day re-watching the 1996 movie *Brassed Off* and connecting a particularly touching story of loss in the movie to our own band experiences.

The film *Brassed Off* illustrates poignantly the unique struggles and situations that can bring together communities of music in the "real world" (Bradley, 2017). The film serves as a microcosm for the typical challenges that both band directors and community bands face in the United States. Deep sociological connections are shown, through both metaphor and direct staging in this outstanding depiction of life in a community band. A community of coal miners in the fictional town Grimley is brought together by the camaraderie, musical enjoyment, and safe outlet from the harsh realities of daily life. They gain a sense of satisfaction that playing in a quality ensemble provides them. The movie is an important cultural study for music educators because it depicts some important sociological issues relevant to music education. According to Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman (1995), music is a social activity where people must understand what organized sounds are, and what they are for, or else the sounds are meaningless. In this respect, and looking at the work of Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer, music making is inherently a human activity, and part of the human condition (1995). What makes music different from any average "human activity" is the potent aesthetic/emotional component that is so hard to quantify or assess. Jessy's recollection of "Danny Boy" as a memorial for her departed friend Ray juxtaposed with my own recollection of playing it for my father just before his death in 2008. For us both, the value that band provided in memorializing and canonizing the experience paralleled the band that has become an institution (or institutionalized) in the town of Grimley in *Brassed Off*. There are several sociological functions depicted in the movie. Some of the most striking follow:

In the movie, the band director points to a photo of the founding conductor of the band just after the band has poorly rehearsed a passage for an upcoming competition. He

says angrily to the band members that the founding conductor would be turning in his "bloody grave" if he heard the way the band has just played. This scene demonstrates that the Grimley band has produced a sense of cohesiveness in town and has itself become a crucial social institution. The members are motivated to perform better because of the rich history, tradition, and maintenance of that cohesive society. Secondly, the group's choice of music (British brass band tradition) is a striking example of how ethnic groups tend to prefer certain types of music. Much in the tradition of British brass band, the Grimley band plays Western-Classical transcriptions arranged for brass band and Judeo-Christian hymns popularized by Anglo culture in the 19th century. We do not see the Grimley band playing Hip-Hop, Rap, or Rock music. This would be contrary to its mission and tradition, and crossover would not be likely just as it is not in musical communities in the US (Wells 1990, quoted in Abeles 1995). The insular nature of the wind band experience is dramatized and exemplified in the regimentally predictable way the musicians enter the room, warm up, prepare to rehearse, and rehearse under a teacher-centered, traditional model of wind band (Allsup & Benedict, 2008). This familiar routine forms part of the building blocks of the identity of band.

Thirdly, the Grimley band shows a unique blend of "Mass Taste" existing in the UK that has, as of today, not been replicated exactly the same way in the US. Brass band competitions in the UK, and the resulting social interaction between spectator and band, are a unique blend of "high culture" (some of the types of music played) and mass culture ("popular" crowds that attend these performances for the enjoyment of listening to the bands, socializing with each other, and seeing who wins). The closest example of this "massification" in the US is the marching band and drum corps competitive idiom.

Marcel van den Haak (2018) argues that the manner in which we define and historicize high culture affects how one perceives a blurring of boundaries in the present time. If one perceives high culture as a clearly demarcated domain of certain art forms, then the rise of cultural omnivores, who combine high culture with popular culture, would logically result in the weakening of its boundaries (Peterson & Kern, 1996). If we, however, perceive high culture as the logical consequence of cultural distinction by high status people, and as phenomenon that is dynamic in nature, some form of high culture will always endure, even though its content will continuously change.

The *Brassed Off* movie, and the experiences of Jessy, Eric, and Cara illustrate the adherence to primarily band "high culture" in programs considered excellent or outstanding. All three of the interviewees in this study participated in band programs of higher levels of distinction, as evidenced by state conference performances and recording sessions. A question emerges with regard to the "quality" of band programs: Are programs considered "excellent" because of "rigid, methodical" teaching? Or are they "successful" (Cara) "in spite of" (Jessy) or "even when the band director got in the way of progress" (Eric)? The Grimley band functions similarly to the community bands to which Jessy, Eric, and Cara currently belong. The band room is a place of sanctuary and respite from the harsh realities of everyday life of a coal-mining town. Jessy, Eric, and Cara all described multiple moments where "the band room felt like my cocoon of safety" (Jessy), or "the band room was where I hung out daily with my friends […] it was the family office watering hole and gathering room" (Eric). Even Cara, who associated negative memories of her high school band director, noted that,

> The band room…just being in there and practicing sometimes on my own […] made me feel like I had a place that I belonged. It becomes a home away from home when you spend so much time there.

Fourthly, the Grimley band shows how a musical group promotes socialization in a society. A high school student often assumes her/his identity as a "band member" through the socialization process that occurs in high school bands (Dejager, 1967). One cannot help but to notice "the band" at football games, etc., because they are dressed alike, stick together, and in most bands generally seem to an outside observer to be enjoying a marvelous time playing music together. The Grimley band shows this process, where a new member (female) joins the primarily male band and is met with initial disrespect and skepticism, especially considering her role as an assessor for the government redundancy program. She has to prove her "street cred" through repeated positive interaction with the boys in the band. It is only after she pleads with the guys repeatedly that she is "on their side" that they eventually welcome her as a true *member* of the band. This fraternal socialization occurs in many organizations (Elks club, Masons, etc.) and is part of the human process of sorting and bonding. The combination of aesthetics, performance art, and social concerns provide for an exciting blend of variables in band. The formation of peer groups (Conkling, 2017) and communities of practice help to strengthen the familial bonds of the band experience. All three of the interviewees in this study remained friends with at least two of their fellow high school band members.

Jessy, Eric, and Cara all told stories that blended reflections on the aesthetics and "goose-bump inducing" (Cara) aspects of the band experience with the value of band as a community. Keywords frequently used by all three interviewees in describing the value

of band included a “sometimes dysfunctional family,” “band was my life,” and “became part of who I was and am.” Lives were shaped and molded by these deeply intimate moments spent over many hours with a “band family”. The large ensemble model worked for these three individuals, even with its often hegemonic and “creativity stifling” (Cara) moments. The interviewees overlooked and forgave the problems of large ensemble teaching because they felt a greater sense of excitement, purpose, and familial bond with the other musicians that they attributed to being a member of band. All three agreed that their lives were “better because of being in band” and “would not be the same” had they studied an instrument that required no ensemble experience.

Rebirth through Intrinsic Motivation

Jessy, Eric, and Cara all continue playing band music and vow to continue playing band music, regardless of who stands at the podium. All three alluded to the conductor being a motivator and inspirer but often “getting in the way” (Jessy, Cara) without realizing it. My interviewees alluded to moments where making music felt secondary to achieving reproducible, sterile goals (Jessy, Cara) and “checkboxes” (Eric). Ultimately, Jessy, Eric, and Eric all identified a time in their band experience where a “breakthrough” happened (Eric) and “clarity and purpose” (Cara) replaced previous fears. This moment of mastering the instrument and realizing that they wanted to continue playing an instrument in some form happened at different times in their musical development, but it uniformly occurred after a period of intense practicing and skills building. All three continued to enjoy the community band model that provided for no high-stakes trophies and competitions and pledged to continue playing their instruments “regardless of who is standing on that podium” (Eric). None remembered the number of

trophies/medals received, but they all remembered the value of the aesthetic experience gained (Greene, 1990). In spite of overwhelming research in the social sciences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Deci, 1971) on the value of promoting intrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation, band programs in the United States continue to promote a behaviorist "do this, and you'll get that" (Skinner, 1938) model for motivating students and a perhaps unhealthy focus on competition and music "as sport" (Jackson, 2010).

I felt saddened and often angered at the number and prevalence of mentions of how the three interviewees managed to succeed "in spite of" (Jessy, Eric, Cara) imposing band directors. The three interviewees endured "useless pass-offs" (Cara), "the incessant click of the metronome" (Cara), "completely time-wasting hours standing in front of a Peterson tuner" (Eric), and "so many things that seemed designed to just replicate sounds without really understanding why" (Jessy). The moments that Jessy, Eric, and Cara remember the most fondly are those where open learning, intrinsic motivation, and self-directed learning were allowed to occur without the master-apprentice model stifling their musical growth (Allsup, 2015). The most significant moments of self-discovery and musical "wow" moments occurred for all three interviewees as an outgrowth of an intrinsic desire to better themselves through "projects" (Allsup, 2003) and collaboration with peers, rather than at the behest of a demand, deadline, or high-pressure playing exam administered by a band director. Jessy came out of her shell as an introverted bassoonist through leading small woodwind sectionals with her peers. Eric reveled in the ability to serve as a "band student leader" and carried that torch with him into the adult community band. Cara's cited as her most positive recent experience the moment she achieved a perfect balance, phrasing, and aesthetic "trifecta" in Percy Grainger's "Children's March"

(1916-1918) in a quiet rehearsal space with only her fellow musicians listening. Allsup's "Garage Band" model hints at a deeper and more authentic experience in a small, student-centered or peer-led setting (2003). Likewise, the interviewees in this study cited the "least amount of stress" (Cara), the "most awesome connection to my friends and to the music" (Eric), and "the moment I came out of my shell and felt comfortable speaking and performing in front of others" as occurring during these small, peer-led sessions. The body of literature and the research in this study point toward continued validation of the notion that large ensembles can provide needed moments of large community, being, belonging, and a sense of purpose and identity as part of something which is greater than the individual (Lautzenheiser, 1993). However, at the same time, the large ensemble model invites criticism through continued stories of a "missing element" (Cara). Stories of musical rebirth and repurposing occurred only when student-centered ideas were allowed to flourish (Eric, Jessy). Contemporaneously, a large number of high school band directors continue to fight the idea that the traditional large ensemble model is susceptible to critique. The experiences of the three interviewees in this study point to the need for a blended experience in the large ensemble classroom where cultural and performance standards are respected, but where the voice of the individual student is considered and honored (Allsup, 2015).

The Mash-up: Dissonance and Contrasts, a Short Coda

Disparate and tangential stories and incongruent opinions emerged through the process of telling three life stories through band. Given current trends in the literature and body of existing research, this study discusses three areas of dissonance that are worthy of examination: the value of competition in band, the value of marching band, and the

value of discipline and punishment in band. The interviewees did not agree on the value or experience gained through competition, an area that continues to divide music educators (Lowe, 2018). Cara and Jessy found the focus on band competitions to be "entirely useless" (Cara) and "the tail wagging the dog" (Jessy). Both felt that competitive marching band had a deleterious effect on the stability and musical depth of school music organizations. Jessy felt that "the entire activity is still not very fun for woodwinds" (Jessy), and Cara commented that "they're asking kids to do things now that completely compromises tone and beauty of sound in the name of theatrical dancing and prancing on the field." Eric loved the idea of competition, but he wondered several times if it "has gone too far" in the age of "electronics and six-figure marching band budgets."

I wondered if Jessy's experience might have been diminished given her instruments of choice (bassoon in concert band, clarinet in marching band) and the type of historically brass-heavy performances that pervaded the competitive marching band world during her high school years. Jessy's band attended competitions that had been formed 15 years prior by the instrument manufacturers, and Cara's high school band competed heavily in a state known for precision and accuracy in marching band. Cara's band performed more of a "corps-style" highly competitive program that did feature prominent woodwind playing, yet she had a similar experience to Jessy in that she found marching band "awfully redundant" and wasted "a lot of time to practice seven minutes of music." Eric's band performed in the Tournament of Bands (TOB) circuit at a time when it was "socially acceptable" (Eric) to play "pop music in a competitive marching band show." Eric was not sure if he would still find marching band as interesting today, given the "over-focus on visual tricks and smoke and mirrors," but he acknowledged that

part of this could be because he was now “an old curmudgeon who thinks it was better when we just played ‘park and blow’ (standing still and playing loud music to the press box) versus all the highly choreographed work they’re doing today.”

All three participants remembered and recounted vividly moments of physical punishment (e.g., push-ups, running laps around a marching band field, breaks with no water) as specifically part of the marching band experience. Two of three believed the punishments to be “not a big deal” (Eric) or “typical and I guess it doesn’t bother me now that I’m an old woman” (Jessy). The discussion of competition and the lengths to which groups go to produce excellent performances, specifically in the marching band, deserves further research. Because all three of the participants in this study participated in competitive marching band, it might be illuminating to repeat the study with musicians who attended schools without marching band. Much has been discussed and debated about the value and the experience of marching band and drum corps (Vance, 2014). All three of the participants in this study agreed that the “fundamentals” and “skills” learned in marching band were, in fact “useful” to their musical development and progression as accomplished amateur musicians, but they disagreed on the value of competitive marching band as it currently exists in much of the United States.

As with the dissonance generated over the discussion of marching band and competitive band, the role of discipline and punishment served as another topic that garnered passionate views. Jessy and Eric, members of older generations where “extreme punishment” was a staple of band life in nearly every band room in the United States, both described the heavy-handed punishments and rewards of band as “a necessary evil” (Eric), or “not that big a deal” (Jessy), and as “a means to getting a bunch of crazy sixth

graders to shut up" (Eric). Jessy and Eric noted that their band directors often exhibited signs of bullying through frequent "picking on" individuals, but they believed that their respective band directors "had the best intentions for us" (Jessy) and "meant well but just didn't know how to say it without sometimes coming off as a total jackass" (Eric). Cara's experience, however, clearly exhibited signs of frequent bullying and coercion on the part of the band director (McEvoy, 2014). Cara's story of bullying and extreme religious pressure by her band director led me to search for literature that researched bullying by teachers. Not surprisingly, very little research exists with a focus on teacher-as-bully. In a 2014 publication titled *Bullying Surveillance Among Youths,* the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledges that its report "excludes abuse perpetrated by adults against children or youths." McEvoy argues for a "common sense" set of guidelines to identify teacher bullying and a method for initiating a quick response and intervention (2014). McEvoy believes that generalizations can be made regarding the patterns surrounding bullying behavior in teachers, which include:

- Bullying behavior often involves the public humiliation of targets.
- There is typically a high degree of agreement among students (and colleagues) on which teachers engage in bullying behavior.
- Teachers often bully in their own classrooms, where students witness the behavior but other teachers don't.
- Teachers are perceived to bully with impunity; they are seldom held accountable for their conduct.
- Schools generally lack a means of redress for students (or their parents) who register complaints against a teacher who has been perceived to bully.

(McEvoy, 2014)

This depiction of the ideally conducive environment for teacher bullying to occur describes a high school band room in terrifying accuracy. Cara's band director never allowed anyone from the outside to observe their band rehearsals, and he presented himself to parents and the community as a "gentle giant who was a deeply religious and

soft-spoken man in front of the school board and parents." When asked if other students knew her band director was a bully, Cara responded, "Sure, absolutely! Literally everyone knew it. But I guess we put up with it because we were winning every competition and getting awards left and right."

Cara felt that her band director had "total impunity" because of his standing as a "pillar of the community and teacher of so many students" (written reflection). Cara further described her conservative southern school district as a "place where teachers are omniscient and omnipotent. No one would question a teacher who had been featured in the [nearby large city] newspapers for his program of excellence." Cara used anger and frustration to harness and leverage her already high level of musicianship and catapult it to an even higher level, but she admits that,

> This was not healthy at all. I was using rage and hatred of [the band director] to prove him wrong in every audition and every concert. He picked on me daily after he knew I was gay. He would ask me to demonstrate a difficult passage in front of the class less than 30 seconds after we played. I would hit about 90% of the notes and rhythms, and he'd respond with something like, "well, clearly Cara isn't the best sight-reader and doesn't have the best tone, but let's give her an A for effort." He didn't know what to do with me, because I refused to back down. I think he wanted me to quit band.

In the age of the #MeToo movement, we can only hope that the days of band directors (and general education teachers) wielding rhetorical and emotionally abusive swords with impunity are numbered.

Chapter VIII

A BAND DIRECTOR'S JOURNEY

"He made me so angry that day. I wanted to quit band, but I decided to stay just to piss him off even more."
(E. Thompson, personal reflection, March 2018).

"Even after going through that, all the fear and loathing, I wound up loving being in band. I think at least for me I wound up motivating myself out of a need to feel connected to others. Music is the vehicle, and band is the community."
(J. Williams, written reflection, March 2018)

"Even his shitty attitude and childish behavior didn't stop me from loving music."
(C. Rodríguez, personal communication, March 2018)

"I think music and especially the experience of being in band has a way of transcending all the negativity that pervades the teaching field."
(E. Thompson, written reflection, March 2018)

"I'll never forgive [the band director] for dragging us all into a ball room after the biggest performance we ever had and screaming at us like we were fucking children. All over a triangle beater and a wrong mallet. 'Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral' was the closest to a spiritual experience I ever had, and he absolutely ruined it with his usual stupidity and domineering douchebaggery [*sic*]. I don't regret never speaking to him again after high school. I've been able to love band and love playing the clarinet in spite of him. And I'm sure he's still just as miserable as ever."
(C. Rodríguez, written reflection, March 2018)

The unvarnished, frank quotes above illustrate the awesome power a band director wields over her students. This study asked two questions: Is there a band identity, and how is that identity shaped through the beautifully effervescent fleeting moments that make up the band experience? Second, how will the stories told in a year of "band

family" making undertaken with three beautifully complex and authentic souls shape my own teaching, credo, and philosophy of education? I begin this final chapter as a "professor in search of community" (Greene, 1991). Throughout my professional career of now 20 years, I have constantly wrestled with the aching questions of being, meaning, and authenticity. Early in my career, I adopted teaching tactics reminiscent of some of the authoritarian and "douchebaggery"-laden experiences shared by Cara, or the competition-infused "tail wagging the dog" methods shared by Eric. My early experience as a band director was one of violently disastrous moments peppered with musical "excellence," but ultimately sunk by the hubris of a young teacher in search of identity who felt pushed to be someone he was not. The goal of undertaking this research project through a phenomenological methodology was to arrive at a point of uncomfortable dissonance. This crucial moment of discomfort would inform growth in the field of music education, growth in musical practice – and growth in my own teaching practice.

This chapter's story begins with excerpts from a conversation with one of my mentors, the late Maxine Greene. We were in her apartment on Fifth Avenue on a frigid February evening having Chinese food:

> Jason, I always feel a kinship to you. Maybe it's because you're a southerner who's an outsider and because I have always been an outsider myself. You need to be yourself. All this existential angst you're feeling probably comes from a place of fear. Just be yourself. It doesn't matter how many people you reach. It doesn't matter a damn. It matters how well you reach the people you do get to teach.

That weekly "therapy" session with Maxine Greene served as part of two independent studies and two classes I took with Maxine at Teachers College, Columbia University. By May 2009, I knew that I wanted to undertake a deeply reflective study of the hidden

stories of band, weaving and fully immersing myself in the kind of "beautiful uncertainty" (Greene, 1995) that guided much of Maxine's work.

Reading Maxine's own body of literature and the literary giants she assigned in her weekly "salon" (Arendt, Foucault, DeLillo, and Morrison among others) had awakened a shamefully dark corner of my own view of band and teaching. For the first time in my life, six years into my teaching career, I began to critically and reflectively analyze and "do philosophy" (Greene, 1973) on the career path I had chosen at age 15. And I soon discovered that I might have made gravely poor decisions along the way. The journey that follows is one of a return to authenticity, admission of failings, celebration of rebirths, and perseverance to continue the beautifully uncertain journey of teaching.

My journey as a teacher has been filled with extremes: from the ultimate highs to the most devastating lows. Over the last 20 years, and specifically after beginning studies in the doctoral program at Teachers College, Columbia University, my central focus and credo has moved firmly from "me" to "we", and from "my band" to "our band." I reprioritized the non-educational aspects of my life through an evolutionary process guided by the stories in this research and the individual stories of my own students. Part of my journey and my band experience is shaped by my openness and willingness to accept "no clear answer." Maxine Greene challenges the traditional assumptions that teachers are "clerks," simply spewing back information and mindlessly assessing students (1995). Maxine writes that imagination is "what, above all, makes empathy possible" and "permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions" (p. 3). I began my career as a typical band director overly focused on racking up trophies, accolades, and gold stars

(Kohn, 1999). The themes central to my journey are the idea of recalling our pedagogical roots, recalling how childhood memories can shape the thinking of an educator many years later "getting over ourselves," and tackling fear through empathy and humility framed in authenticity.

Remembering Why I Became a Teacher

Jerome Bruner (1960), Maxine Greene (1973, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1995), and Parker Palmer (1998) all helped refocus my energy on good teaching and the pursuit of honest, open, sometimes painful reflective practice. Jerome Bruner speaks at length in the first chapter of *The Process of Education* about the idea of connecting a concept to deeper meaning, or underlying fundamental principles. Bruner's plea to remember "where we come from" (p. 36) but to avoid replicating the ineffective strategies we encountered in our educational journey immediately (p. 67) reminded me of the type of archaic education I received in rural Georgia. Similar to Jessy, I was taught in most classes to regurgitate obscure facts and trivia, without any structured pattern or connection to reality. Like Jessy, I grew up on a steady pedagogical diet of swift and behaviorist punishment as part of a negative reinforcement scheme in most of my classes with primarily rote learning and repetition as a central curricular driving force. As Bruner (1960) says,

> Perhaps the most basic thing that can be said about human memory, after a century of intensive research, is that unless detail is placed into a structured pattern, it is rapidly forgotten. Detailed material is conserved in memory by the use of simplified ways of representing it. (p. 24)

Reflecting on Bruner's ideas filled me with educational grief, as I barely remember anything from many of my classes. Did I just "play the game" (p. 116) to get excellent grades throughout my K-12 education? Probably. Bruner and Greene helped me realized

that I had been complicit in this behavior by designing band curriculum and skills-building exercises that taught my students knowledge rather than understanding. Bruner's description of a teacher mired in minutiae and obsessed with mere factual regurgitation (p. 37) mirrors Jessy's conversation with me, which described a "sterile, business-like" band room where the band director served as an "omniscient robot-like transmitter" of the "correct way" to play.

One of the most profoundly reassuring ideas that parallels my own living and evolving teaching philosophy is Bruner's assertion that,

> The teacher who is willing to guess at answers to questions asked by the class and then subject his guesses to critical analysis may be more apt to build those habits into his students than would a teacher who analyzes everything for the class in advance. (pp. 61-62)

Eric echoed Bruner's position when he described a moment of reciprocal learning where his band director invited a student who had studied with Wynton Marsalis to "student teach" the jazz band and to discuss jazz fusion with the class – something Eric's band director did not completely understand.

Soon into my career, I began asking "WHY" from as many angles and positions as possible. Maxine Greene's guided and multi-layered questions on doing philosophy led me to recall childhood memories of teachers who made a difference in my life and led to my choice to become a teacher. Not surprisingly, my music teachers and my mother, a well-regarded math professor and teacher, were the most progressive educational thinkers in my early life. I soon realized that the inspiration provided by my music teachers and mother were the obvious reasons I became a teacher. But I yearned for more depth, and began to ask more questions as I unraveled more information. Greene's *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) asks the constant and vastly open uncomfortable question "Why?"

Greene says that true learning happens when we break free, take a leap, and ask an authentic question (p. 6). I see so many parallels between this dictum and my turbulent educational life experiences. Is challenging educational orthodoxy and prevailing hegemonic culture the crossroads where true meaning and learning hide? At this point I still do not yet know the answer after 20 years of reflecting on Greene's eloquently nebulous plea for metacognitive reflection.

Maxine Greene helped me to remember, through her own method of questioning and interviewing me informally during our weekly discussions over Chinese food, that I had an early history of "discovery based" curriculum that I initially could not remember. My first piano teacher, Enid Newman, sat with me at the piano when I had reached the ripe age of four and let me explore (bang on) the beastly piano in all its unfettered glory. I never really gave her as much credit as she deserved in my musical development until years later. Enid asked mostly "open" and "guided" questions (Allsup, 2008), and she always connected every musical concept to something greater in life. I had experienced many "light bulb" moments with Enid that had been forgotten until Maxine awakened my musical memory through the same type of guided recall I used with the three interviewees of this study. Piano lessons with Enid were, to an outsider "messy." We often talked about family, friends, and the world in general. Enid would then connect a story or an idea to a children's song or a piece she wanted us to explore. Much of my first two or three years playing the piano were spent plodding around and exploring the keyboard, being a child at play on a musical playground. To a traditionalist, this would have looked like disaster. To a constructivist, this was gold (Zaretskii, 2009). Eventually, we *did* learn about notation and all the technical aspects of music making.

But it was the formidable first years with Enid that shaped my later personal philosophy. I realize now that Enid provided my first example of an outstanding non-familial teacher through her democratic and constructivist lessons.

I recall a childhood memory of playing a few tunes on the piano over and over, *ad nauseum*, to the point of self-intoxication. I played the music backwards, upside down, and three times the written tempo just for fun when I was five or six years old. When I was seven, I even made up a little jingle on the piano judiciously alerting Santa Claus that my brother had been "really mean" that year. Sadly, now that I am approaching 43, I cannot report the same kind of openness and willingness to experiment with sounds that I once had. I often think myself into oblivion when it comes to putting into words, or music, my feelings on an issue. This phenomenon occurred after weathering years of brutal competitions, grades, GPA's, music "performance assessment" evaluations, and other typical facets of the American educational system that "don't mean a damn thing in the end" (M. Greene, interview). In the mid 2010s, I began to revisit those child-like concepts of experimentation with sound and musical concepts. When I was six years old, I did not care what the collective world thought of me as a musician. I just knew that I liked playing the piano and I liked making up my own songs. I truly enjoyed and felt fulfilment in doing, making, and living music. I spent a great deal of agonizing evenings pursuing the possibility, as Emma Sheehy (1952), a formidable original scholar in progressive music education says, of *becoming* the music that I conduct, write about, or compose. One of the WHY questions emerged as: WHY do I care so much about what the rest of the musical world may think of me if someday I were to let go, stop worrying, and just have fun playing music backwards?

By the time I entered middle school, I was recruited for the band program. Like Jessy, I took a “musical aptitude” test and scored “superior.” My first band director encouraged me to play horn or trumpet, and “anything but the saxophone.” I chose the saxophone. The middle school years were filled with exploration, anxiety over chair placements and solo/ensemble festival scores, heartbreak when I didn’t get selected for honor bands, and triumph when I did. My middle school band director was an inspiring figure who also played the saxophone. She kept me focused and disciplined without being an overly assertive presence. I entered the school marching band in the eighth grade, an honor that was reserved for only the stronger musicians. Our rural high school band, particularly the marching band, garnered respect and admiration from the community. It was during high school that I had what could be described as the typical “band experience.” My parents became the typical band mom and band dad, accompanying me to all home and away football games, all competitions, and all honor bands. Like Jessy, Eric, and Cara, I found the value of community in band to be something worth experiencing often. My closest friendships were with fellow band students, and like Cara, I confessed my sexuality (identifying as a gay man) to my best friend: a clarinet player in the high school band. As mentioned in previous musings in chapter VI, I had a different coming out experience than Cara. I felt that my experience coming out could have easily been as difficult as Cara’s, given our similar upbringings in conservative towns. I served as the drum major, saxophone section leader, and Georgia All-State representative twice (1994 and 1996). I was inspired to become a band director after looking up to and revering my own high school band director. After undergraduate school, I embarked on a teaching career that was met with serious obstacles.

Getting Over Myself: The First Four Years

In the academic semester preceding my first year of employment, I student taught with a well-known band director who could be best described as an even more hegemonic and authoritarian version of Cara's high school band director. It was my first time experiencing the type of aggressive and punitive teaching that I later realized continues to pervade much of the band world. I spent 10 weeks observing and practice teaching in a band program that was administered much like an autocratic and brutally authoritarian regime. I witnessed the band director use racial slurs toward his students (who were mostly first or second-generation Americans of Hispanic origins), including the most salient memory that remains burned in my conscience when I witnessed him scream, red-faced and panting, "Get on your fucking boats and go back to Cuba!" I witnessed him throwing items (chairs, drumsticks, instruments), pout in his office while the students were required to sit in their chairs outside without playing, and be a generally miserable person who seemed lost and full of self-hatred. Working with that band director caused me to experience anxiety on a scale I had never experienced, and I felt like I had to promise myself to never become this type of teacher. The band director left his school to take a university job, and I was offered the full-time position at the school where I had interned. The band director spent a few years trying to discredit my work and besmirch the reputation of the school's band program. I experienced a bitter ugliness on a level that I hope I will never have to endure again. I mention this traumatic experience to frame the mistakes that I made in my first years of teaching as a result of inauthenticity and self-doubt.

My first and second years of teaching were fraught with self-doubt, second-guessing, and teaching as acting. I often resorted to negative and authoritarian methods of teaching as a means of creating order and calm. I sadly replicated some of the behaviors of the band director whom I had replaced, believing that it must lead to musical success. I resorted to some of those behaviors out of desperation when I felt the musical goals and program quality slipping away. My students saw through the veil of inauthenticity, and they implored me to just "be yourself" as Maxine Greene would later urge. After a first two years of violent swings and deep reflection, I finally felt that I had found my musical footing. In 2003, I was diagnosed with testicular cancer, just in the middle of the peak of my third, and at that point, most successful, year of teaching. I was fortunate enough to make a nearly complete recovery, but the experience changed my perception of what is important and refocused my energy on attaining long term artistic goals and re-evaluating my personal philosophy. Barely a few months into my recovery from cancer and back on the job in January 2004, I was stricken with a principal "from hell" (Palmer, 1998) that I will call Dr. Serpent, because of the vicious and snake-like properties this man possessed.

I had been blessed previously with a wonderful principal who supported the arts, mentored me as a young teacher, provided tough love and advice, and generally loved his job. I will call him Mr. Perfect for the purposes of illustrating his role in my teaching journey. Mr. Perfect was removed from the classroom because a teachers' union representative accused him of changing grades for athletes. This was later proven to be completely false, and likely a product of professional jealousy and revenge, but he was never allowed to return to the school. Our school district installed Dr. Serpent in the

place of Mr. Perfect to send a message to the faculty and to "clean house," as Dr. Serpent spewed toward the faculty in our first face-to-face meeting with him. I became a target of Dr. Serpent's unfounded rage and hysteria for many reasons, one of which being my sexuality. Serpent was a former Catholic Headmaster of a boys' school and a Franciscan Monk, who later said the "only people I know who are gay are dead of AIDS." He summonsed me to his office on January 16, 2004, and my life was never the same after that first meeting. I experienced a phenomenon of teacher abuse, workplace bullying, and illegal activity that nearly ruined me professionally and emotionally.

I spent the next two months in early 2004 defending every decision I made as a teacher to Dr. Serpent, who systematically deconstructed the entire band program that we had built in our school. He bullied me on a level that made the band director I replaced look saintly, calling me into his office 16 times for harassing discussions. One of his ruinous decisions was to halt all purchasing by the school band, which rendered our band inoperable. By February 24, 2004, Dr. Serpent managed to convince the school district to reassign me to a desk job in a windowless room. I was astonished. Our program had been so successful. In the four years prior to Dr. Serpent's arrival, the band was selected to play at Carnegie Hall, recorded a professional CD, commissioned a new piece of music for the wind band repertoire, received commendation letters from senators, congressmen/women, and had enjoyed increased enrollment. One person, a singular entity, shut down the entire operation in a little over a month. I recount the story of my first bout with cancer, Dr. Serpent, and the band director I replaced as defining moments of trauma that forced me to "get over myself" and return to the values and mores that existed in me. In spite of those obstacles, my band experience and journey as a teacher

moved forward. I left for New York to seek graduate schooling and to pursue teaching in places that I believed valued education. The next 16 years have featured a mission of constant reflection, the pursuit of authenticity, and a winning battle against my own fears, demons, and moments of self-doubt.

My Mix-Tape of Band: Life Gets in the Way

The years from 2004-2020 have defined my life as a teacher through the same type of "life gets in the way" moments (as Jessy calls them) that define and forever shape our place, position, and perception of the world. My soundtrack of band is filled with unexpected twists and turns of serendipity, tragedy, and triumph. I took a high school teaching job in 2007, and I immediately began implementing – albeit slowly – methods of creative teaching and inquiry while simultaneously learning about these techniques in the doctoral program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Consistently, without fail, I have seen my best moments as a teacher emerge when I am most authentic and genuine in the approach I take with my students. At the same time, my family has endured so much heartache during this journey, which occurred simultaneously as growth in my own teaching practice continued. I lost my father to metastatic prostate cancer in May 2008, and I lost my mother to metastatic breast cancer in July, 2017. I was diagnosed with metastatic thyroid cancer 15 years after my first cancer. But life moved on, and life continues to move on. My daughter Ava was born eight days after my mother, Janet Brown Noble, passed away. Part of my journey of band is forever bound to the personal and familial triumphs and heartbreaks along the way. My own soundtrack is peppered with moments of reverie, heart-stopping anxiety, and an ultimate denouement

that reminds me of the power of band and how band binds us forever as members of a community of practice.

Epilogue: Social Isolation and The Purpose of Band

As I type the last words of this research, the city of New York is on lockdown and practicing social isolation due to the global COVID-19 virus pandemic. The world is upside down, and we do not know when we will be able to return to school. We do not even know if the world will look the same when this terrible pandemic is over. My band students have reached out to me with concerned messages of anxiety, social isolation, and depression. They have also formed virtual bands of families online, carrying on as much music making as they can do through Zoom, Webex, or Google Hangouts. I am reminded again of the beautiful scenes in *Brassed Off!* where the band members rallied behind a common goal, whether it be to save their redundant coal mining jobs or to lift up a sick member of the band. So many students, current and former, have reached out to me in the last weeks, reminiscing and rhapsodizing on the value of band. Countless former students have contacted me to see if I am surviving mentally as an extrovert during these isolated times. Former students have instant messaged me sharing recordings of works we performed 10, 15, or 20 years ago. My own memory of band is jogged and colored by the outpouring of positive communication I have received during a time of forced isolation and reflection. The themes consistently shared with me informally in the past two weeks of isolation are nearly identical to those of Jessy, Eric, and Cara: Band is a function of community made all the more powerful by the awesome and life-changing power of instrumental music. The act of making music together, simultaneously, in a large ensemble, is something that cannot be replicated virtually or

through individual experiences alone. Band is bigger than any one personality, no matter how much larger than life that personality may be. But we must listen to the voice of the individual as we move forward in changing times.

The band identity is wrapped around and melded with concepts of the power of the group dynamic, the magic and memories formed from devoting time to the activity of music making, the power of music on the brain and thinking, and the relationships that are built upon the time spent together. This thesis shows that band directors should pay much closer attention to and nurture the value of the individual by listening intently to the individual soundtracks of their students and sincerely working to understand the complex stories and life experiences that the individual brings to a group setting. I hope this research will lead to more discussion of the value of band and how band can evolve in the 21st century and beyond. I hope that this research will inspire further examination of the delicate ecosphere that exists between the story of the individual and the public story of the band. The field must progress in a manner that respects the individual and treats students as "persons with projects" (Allsup, 2004), rather than as transactional objects.

On the surface, band may look like any other group activity. But the powerful combination of mastering an instrument, learning how one's instrument fits into a larger ensemble, and navigating the social and family-like drama as one's life story unfolds makes the band experience unique. The three participants in this study showed us that the band experience is inextricably woven into the identity of individuals who continue to devote time and energy to instrumental music. We spend so much time as band directors seeking the perfect product, the perfect performance, and the perfect group experience. This research reminded me and validated my belief that the real power of creating

memorable and life-changing musical experiences lies not in the director, but in the individual. The stories of band and the journey of band show us that the process is never-ending. It is a story that will continue to be told, through pandemics, hurricanes, terrorist acts, assassinations, political upheavals, and radical social changes. Listening to the Hindemith *Symphony for Band* can be a completely different aesthetic experience on any given night, depending on which wind band is playing and which conductor is conducting. Jessy showed us that playing Grainger's "Lincolnshire Posy" can be as exhilarating and goose bump-inducing at age 82 as it might have been at age 18. Music, and band music particularly, provides such a rich palette of tonal colors and energies. Much like the living organism metaphor, the band is always changing and adapting to new sounds. It is my hope that this research will add to the repertoire in a manner that will allow for the continued growth and development of an activity to which I have dedicated my life. I hope that the moments of sorrowful hegemony and needless authoritarianism painfully illustrated in this thesis will give pause to the community. This research changed me. This research gave me permission to return to authenticity, admit my failings, celebrate my own rebirth, and cherish the beautiful uncertainty that is teaching – especially when the subject matter is band. I ultimately hope that we, the community of band, will continue to thrive, evolve, and morph while retaining the beautifully unique tenets that only our community of practice can provide. The story continues…

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000

INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: A Phenomenological Study of the Wind Band Experience

Principal Investigator: Jason Noble, Teachers College 212-260-1703,
jason.noble@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this research study called "A Phenomenological Study of the Wind Band Experience." You may qualify to take part in this research study because of your experience and continued participation as a member of a large ensemble defined as a wind band. The study seeks musicians who are not professional musicians or teachers of music who continue to play a wind or percussion instrument in a wind band. Three people will participate in this study, and it will take approximately four weeks to complete.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

This study is being done to describe the experience of band as it is lived by musicians who continue to play their instruments after graduation from a high school band program. The stories of band and narrative experience of band will be explored through this study.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed in several long sessions over the course of approximately three weeks, with a follow-up reflection interview during the fourth week. You may be asked to recall potentially uncomfortable or very personal reflections on your experience in band. This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio recording is written down (transcribed) the audio recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will be able to participate as long as you permit handwritten notes. Each interview will take place over the course of three hours. There will be a one-week break between interviews to allow for reflection and focus on the following week's interview. You will be given a pseudonym or false name/de-identified code in order to keep your identity confidential. You then will be asked to reflect on your lived band experience in one of several creative ways, which may include: poetry, artwork, musical improvisation, or continued oral recollection where you will discuss your experiences

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INFORMED CONSENT

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss problems that you experienced in band. However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of teacher education to better understand the band experience and how band directors and leaders in the field shape the curriculum. The study may lead to further reflection on the shortcomings or strengths of the traditional band model.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the interview and reflection. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven't finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

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INFORMED CONSENT

The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down, and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will be published in a dissertation and may be used in journals or presented at academic conferences. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will still be able to participate in this study.

____I give my consent to be recorded ____
Signature

____I **do not** consent to be recorded ____
Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

__I consent to allow written or audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College ____________________________
Signature

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INFORMED CONSENT

__**I do not** consent to allow written or audio taped materials to be viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University ____________________________________
Signature

CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes ________________ No________________
Initial Initial

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes ________________ No________________
Initial Initial

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Jason Noble, at 212-260-1703 or at jason.noble@tc.edu or the faculty advisor, Dr. Randall Allsup, at allsup@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

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INFORMED CONSENT

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion if the initial interviews do not provide material suited for the study.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: ____ **Date**: ______________

Signature: ____

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