Adult Music Engagement: Perspectives from Three Musically Engaged Cases

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Introduction

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Musically Engaged Adults

- Participation in music naturally
  (DeNora, 2000, 2003; Gaston, 1968; Langer, 1957, Merriam, 1964, Plato)

- Choose to participate musically because it fulfills a personal need in their lives
  (Cavitt, 2005; Coffman, 2002; Meyer, 1956; Minichiello, 2005; Myers, 2005; Rohwer & Coffman, 2006)

- Choose musical environments that accommodate their particular needs at given points in time.
Purpose

To explore the phenomenon of adult music engagement from the perspectives of musically engaged adults not currently participating in activities that are direct extensions of the typical K-12 music curriculum.
Guiding Questions

1. What are the musical life histories of these adults?

1. How do these adults situate their current musical settings within the context of their lives?

1. What meanings do these adults derive from reflections on their musical engagement?

2. How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2010)

Hermeneutical

Phenomenological

Holistic (Collective Case Study)
• Holistic = no sub units within the the individual case (Yin, 2009)
• Collective = Multiple (Stakes, 2001)
• Case = individual
Perspectives on Music Engagement

Current Construct

- Details of Current Musical Engagement
- Focused Musical Life History
- Reflection of Meaning

Based on a structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing (Seidman, 2006)
Purposefully Chosen Cases

Avid Listener

Bluegrass Guitarist and Lead Vocalist

Church Praise Team Member
Data Collection - Procedures

Interview 1 - 2

Musical Setting Observation

Interview 3 - 4
Interview Protocol

Interview #1
- Musical Life History
- Pre-adult through early-adulthood

Interview #2
- Details of Current Setting
- How case situated this engagement within life overall
- Early-adulthood – present

Interview #3
- Reflection on derived meanings
- Entire lifespan
- Thoughts regarding future musical engagement

Interview #4
- Wrap-up
- Review
**Musical Learning Analysis**: within intra and inter-case analyses, I focused on direct and indirect references to musical learning.
Validity

Check for Trustworthiness
- Member Checks
- Triangulation
- Rich Data
- Multiple Datasets

Interview Transcripts

Observation Field Notes

Researcher Interview Notes
Emergent Themes by Case
Max – Music is Magic

- Choice and Investment
- Types of Listening
- Individuals Influences
- Dance and Movement
- It’s Magic
- Knowing about Music
Jane – Music is in my Soul

- Music and Identity
- Types of Listening
- Music and Worship
- Enjoyment/Fulfillment/Accomplishment
- Essence of Praise
John – Music is My Thing

- Music Around the House
- Discovering Bluegrass through Listening and Learning to Play
- That Lonesome Sound
- Performing
- The Mediator
- Music is My Thing
Collective Emergent Themes
Question One
What are the Musical Life Histories of These Adults?

- Childhood interest at a young age
  (Bowles, 1991; Stollak & Stollack, 1996)
  - Music in the Home
  - Family Outings
  - Neighborhood Surroundings
  - School
  - Peer Groups

- Pre-adulthood moments of “epiphany”
  (Allsup, 1997; Andruske, 2000; Brookfield, 1993; Coates, 1984; Jutras, 2006; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2009; Pickles, 2003)
  - Junior Year Abroad in Sweden (Max)
  - Conversion to Catholicism (Jane)
  - Learning to play banjo and guitar (John)
Question Two
How Do These Adults Situate Their Current Musical Setting?

- **A matter of choice - Developing a niche**
  
  
  - Democratic Management Process (John)
  - Fellowship and Spiritual Connection (Jane)
  - Personal Listening Preference (Max)

- **Self-directed**

  
  - Prior Experience
  - Personal Needs
  - Personal Values
  - Expectations
What Meanings Do Adults Derive From Musical Engagement?

- **Fulfillment**
  
  (Cavitt, 2005; Elliott, 1995; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Gates, 1991; Johnson, 1996; Jutras, 2006; Tucker & Mantie, 2006)
  
  - Accomplishment/Validation
  - Realization
  - Reaching Goals (expected and unexpected)

- **Connection to Humanity**
  
  
  - Deep Emotions
  - Transcendence
  - Expression
  - Quality of Life
Question Four

How have these musically engaged adults experienced musical learning throughout their lives?

- **Formal Learning Settings**
  (Bowles, 1991; Cavitt, 2005; Cooper, 2001; Jutras, 2006; Stollak & Stollak, 1996)

- **Self-directed Learning Settings**
  (Andruske, 2000; Brookfield, 1993; Collins, 1996; Cope, 2002; Green, 2002; Tucker & Mantie, 2006)

- **Community Learning Settings**
A Few Take-Away Implications

- These adults found their way to musical engagement.
- Many influences comprise their musical whole.
- Meaning is individually constructed and situated within a particular moment in time.
- The socio-musical benefits of musical engagement seem to be strong motivators for their participation.
- These musically engaged adults (musickers) did not identify their musical learning as learning, although they described many instances of music learning in their musical life histories.
Further Questions

- What can be done to foster more musically engaged adults like Max, Jane, and John?
- Can the scope of music education expand further to:
  - More broadly consider adult music learning and teaching,
  - Create viable learning communities for continued musical learning, and
  - Enhance the connection of school music engagement with music engagement in life during and after the schooling years.
Special Thanks to Max, Jane, and John for their willingness to share their musical life stories and assist in interpreting their derived meanings and perspectives

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