Western [mis]conceptions underplay intrinsic human musicking: A hermeneutic exploration

Eve Ruddock M.Mus. Ed. (UWA)
Thesis Declaration

I, Eve Ruddock, certify that:

This thesis has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in the degree.

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution.

No part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of The University of Western Australia and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

This thesis does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

The work(s) are not in any way a violation or infringement of any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.

This thesis contains only sole-authored work, some of which has been published and/or prepared for publication under sole authorship.

Signature: Eve Ruddock

Date: 30/03/2017
Abstract

This thesis confronts restrictive Western cultural assumptions to consider: How can everyday musicking be freed from socially evolved constructs that restrict instinctive musical expression? An arts-based, hermeneutic research study, the project is underpinned by seven publications, the first of which lays the main concern on the table. In the first paper, 'It’s a bit harsh isn’t it?’ empirical data from self-perceived non-musical participant text presents previously unused findings from my MA study (Ruddock, 2007b). Research narrative (often captured in poetic form) confirms how performative notions, premised on Western dualistic assumptions, undermine essential human communicative action. Drawn from both self-perceived musical and non-musical participants, this PhD investigation reveals a cultural reality where music is perceived as a performance associated with talent; something to be critically judged. These notions support a belief that singing, playing and dancing are dependent upon perceived genetic endowment rather than engaging in intrinsic musical action. Developed as a hermeneutic exploration between participant text, the literature, community reader responses, and the researcher, the core concern reveals an abyss between those who feel that they can and those who are convinced that they cannot.

Epistemological issues within the phenomenon of culturally imposed non-musical being see this project develop from narrative empirical data through dialogic interactions to hermeneutic reflections on everyday musicality. Findings show how judgemental dismissal of musical actions very often arrest intrinsic musicking, confining it to a competitive professional domain; many individuals doubt their musicality.

To properly explore this tension between intrinsic musicality and lack of freedom to engage in connective musicking, I turn to dialectics (after Gadamer) to uncover those unseen cultural influences lying within the research text. Lived experiences reveal how everyday societal influences underdetermine musical being and dictate life-long inhibition. Participant text combines with material from interdisciplinary literature to reveal misconceived beliefs that silence intrinsically musical individuals. Unrecognised cultural directives, embedded in everyday language, label musical beings as either musical or non-musical. The hermeneutic exploration delivers nuanced understandings to challenge the status quo, to wonder what being musical might entail and to argue for an inclusive educational practice which gives everyone an opportunity to be musical.
Where current polarised music education provision supports a discriminatory system that leads to widespread underdeveloped musicality, I draw on Gadamer and Dewey to explore how musicking integrates cultural development and to question the value of a practice that leaves many of us musically disabled. In the organic process of my inquiry, this project develops an interactive hermeneutic process to engage in “serious play” (Gadamer, 1960/2004) between participants, literature and researcher before arriving at a deeper awareness of the cultural impact of Western conceptions on human musicality. Rather than music as product, a ‘something’ to be consumed, a performative act embedded with pride and ownership, I acknowledge the communicative nature of the musical arts to restore societal cohesion. This thesis argues for an inclusive educational practice that recognises the influential role of culture on health and well-being. Intrinsic musicality, an integral part of human being, can play towards individual and societal health.
Publications arising from this thesis

"It’s a bit harsh, isn’t it!" Judgemental teaching practice corrupts instinctive musicality

A spiral design delivers recognition towards harmony.

Societal judgment silences singers

“Sort of in your blood”: Inherent musicality survives cultural judgement

Misconceptions underplay Western ways of musicking

Western prejudice towards intrinsic musicality

On being musical: Education towards inclusion
# Table of Contents

Thesis Declaration .................................................................................................................. ii

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iii

Publications arising from this thesis ...................................................................................... v

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................... vi

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ x

sounds sing ............................................................................................................................... xi

Glossary ................................................................................................................................. xii

Community Reader .............................................................................................................. xii
Humanning: ......................................................................................................................... xii
Musicality: .............................................................................................................................. xii
Musicking: .............................................................................................................................. xii
Never picked: ......................................................................................................................... xii
Harry: ...................................................................................................................................... xii
Western: .................................................................................................................................. xiii

**PART I: INTRODUCTION** ............................................................................................. 14

Humans: a musical species? .................................................................................................... 15
Musicking .................................................................................................................................. 16
Exploration toward understanding: The organisation of this thesis .................................... 17
Research processes toward a question that explores humanly experienced musicality .......... 19
Published papers tell a tale ..................................................................................................... 21

**PRELUDE** ..................................................................................................................... 26

Provocation of the *never picked* .......................................................................................... 26
Lament for intrinsic being ....................................................................................................... 26
*Sounds weird?* ...................................................................................................................... 28

Paper: - It's a bit harsh, isn't it ............................................................................................... 30

**PART II: FUGUE** .......................................................................................................... 43

Chapter One .......................................................................................................................... 43
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Processes</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper: - A Spiral Design Delivers Recognition Towards Harmony</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuning in to arts-based research and research questions</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher reflections affect processes</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of this research</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant selection and role</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants influence: Towards dialectic interplay</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts-based research</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher as bricoleur</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research as organic overview</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Fugal Way</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the study</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the scope of this thesis</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode I</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serious Play</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Playing towards a question</em></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians and non-musicians silenced</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper: - Societal Judgement Silences Signers</strong></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian musical experience for those not chosen</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overshadowed by words</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left out of education and everyday living</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encultured performance expectations distort</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need to expose a ‘sick culture’</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural practices questioned</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research question is <em>within</em> participant experience</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher reflections affect processes</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human musicking compromised</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perceived musician voices</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perceived non-musician voices</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New voices provoke new ways of working</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not sing</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode II</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voices sound</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Towards order ................................................................. 116

**Chapter Three** ............................................................................. 117
Captured knowing locks out being .............................................. 117
"isn’t this…the song that dialectic sings?" ............................. 117
Musicality perceived as developed performance ability .......... 120
Dialectical research processes playing towards awareness ...... 126
Harry’s musical involvement ...................................................... 128
Toward knowing beyond conditioned perception and judgement: and a good deal more .......................................................... 134
And the question is ................................................................. 140
Episode III ................................................................................. 141
*Culture bound* ......................................................................... 141
Dialectics battle through contradictions .................................... 142

**Chapter Four** ............................................................................. 143
Dualistic view distorts vibrant musical engagement ...................... 143

**Paper:** "Sort of in your Blood": Inherent musicality survives cultural judgement ................................................................. 145
Episode IV ................................................................................ 161
“like water on a stone” .............................................................. 161

**Chapter Five** ............................................................................. 168
Misconceptions underplay connection ........................................... 168

**Paper:** Misconceptions Underplay Western Ways of Musicking .......... 171

**Episode V** ................................................................................ 201
*Judged out* ............................................................................. 201

**Chapter Six** ............................................................................. 202

**Paper:** Western Prejudice Towards Intrinsic Musicality .......... 204
*We sigh and decline* ................................................................. 215
Caught in time ........................................................................ 216

**Chapter Seven** ............................................................................. 217

**Paper:** On Being Musical: Education Towards Inclusion .......... 220
Episode VII ............................................................................... 230
# Table of Contents

*Being Musical* ................................................................. 230

**PART III: CODA** .................................................................. 231

**Chapter Eight** .................................................................. 231

- Seeing beyond the ‘seen’ .................................................. 234
- Prejudices lead to loss .................................................... 240
- Concluding thoughts ....................................................... 243

**References** ....................................................................... 246

**Appendix 1** ........................................................................ 266

**Appendix 2** ........................................................................ 267

- Published papers tell a tale ............................................ 267

**Appendix 3** ........................................................................ 269

- Participants’ pertinent observations for this study .......... 269

**Appendix 4** ........................................................................ 272

- Community Readers [CR] .............................................. 272

**Appendix 5** ........................................................................ 276

- Sonic hug ........................................................................ 276

**Appendix 6** ........................................................................ 277

- Serious Play ..................................................................... 277

**Appendix 7** ........................................................................ 278

- Table of Figures ............................................................. 278

**Appendix 8** ........................................................................ 279

- Misconceptions Underplay Western Ways of Musicking: A Hermeneutic Investigation ........................................... 279
Acknowledgements

“…what is…understood is not the Thou but the truth of what the Thou says to us. I mean specifically the truth that becomes visible to me only through the Thou, and only by my letting myself be told something by it.” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. xxxii)

So, this research project is not about the participants. It is, however, entirely dependent upon their experiences and the rich participant text which enabled me to engage in dialectic play toward understanding. I am humbled by the participants’ generosity and their inner strength as they allowed themselves to be vulnerable in telling how their experiences really are, not how they might appear to be. My first acknowledgement, then, is to all of those who contributed as participants and readers who dared to expose how they felt so that this hermeneutic exploration could happen.

While I cannot name these individuals who offered so much, I can say how grateful I am to a unique philosopher farmer, Felicity Haynes. Over a period of five years she helped more than she might imagine. Her intuitive responses to my emails offered a warm support as her rich experience and magic touch helped to deter fear and frustration to make way for the joy of a special adventure.

For institutional support at Murdoch University, I wish to thank Peter Wright for providing facilities, discussion and support to begin this study.

My warm thanks go to Suzie Wijsman who not only recognised that this project could properly be pursued at the School of Music, UWA, but who went beyond the call of duty to ensure my candidature was accepted. I am also most grateful to Nicholas Bannan for being brave enough to accept someone whose research procedures might appear to be so ‘different’.

I have acknowledged the value of community readers in the thesis but wish to add a special thanks to André Lebel for his perceptive reading of two chapters. My deep appreciation also goes to Lenora Luciani for her perceptive comments and for recognising the exposure of Western misconceptions in Kafka’s Josefine. Warm thanks, too, to Bruce Haynes for his interest and concern with dialectics and tradition.

My deepest gratitude goes to Howard Anderson for his generosity and technical expertise in formatting this thesis. Not only did he overcome technical problems
involved when inserting published documents, but with great forbearance and good
humour he transformed my rough pencilled outlines into fine figures.

And finally, I wish also to thank all of my family who remain at the heart of my
being. To name some would mean to omit others and this thesis is about connection and
belonging.

...a tribute

sounds sing
Just when it seems
there is nothing,
no sound
no rhythm
true to life,
words ring
to restore hope;
connecting
human
living.

When we met
You said nothing
Yet through silence
Knowledge stirred
Growing
through contested content
to bring
new awareness
to life’s
being
Glossary

Brief general definitions for the purposes of this thesis

**Community Reader**: The notion of *Community reader* is adapted from Lincoln’s exploration of “Community as arbiter of quality” (2002 pp. 334-6). For this study, interested readers from the community were invited to criticize, annotate or contribute their personal experiences when reading researcher published papers.

**Humanning**: refers to a connective living towards health and worth — it embraces participatory cultural inclusion (Nzewi, 2013a, p. 4).

**Musicality**: Humans are all musical (Trevarthen, 1999; Nzewi, 2009a). With the exception only of those suffering from a pathological dis-ease, we all have a potential to develop this intrinsic part of our being which involves both responsive and generative action.

**Musicking**: Christopher Small (1987/1996, p. 50) challenged our assumptions about music and advocated the use of the verb musicking. Concerned about the common view of music as object, Small sought to recognise the human value of playing, singing, listening, composing, dancing or any actions involving music — to engage in musicking embraces all senses as we feel alive and respond musically to our lifeworld. This thesis recognises that:

> ...the structures of music are etched into the fabric of human consciousness: they exist in the forms and shapes of speech melody; they vibrate in every corner of the world; they sway with the rhythms of our bodies and the beating of our hearts; we only need to listen. (Paton, 2011, p. 131)

**Never picked**: This term is taken from words of participant Sonya (used in The Ballad of the never picked, Ruddock 2007b); it refers to those who feel that they are not musical, who would never be chosen or who would exclude themselves from singing, dancing or playing:

> Wasn’t picked as a dancer which was a great shame,  
> I first realised that I couldn’t sing  
> When never picked at school, bitter that adults could be  
> So stupid, not have a better grasp of musical ability.

**Harry**: A participant from the *never picked* study, Harry claims that he is not musical but admits to enjoying his musicality from an appreciative perspective. Not only a reliable contributor for a decade, Harry is valuable to this research project as an
articulate representative of the ubiquitous, dichotomous, assumption that dominates musical practice in the ‘West’ where we are held captive by a mythical belief that individuals are either born musical or they are not. Harry argues that music education is a frill to the important subjects, language and mathematics which are “central to the task” of education.

**Western:** “the term ‘Western’ is applied in a similar way to the common usage of the term ‘Asian’ and refers broadly to Anglo-Saxon, European and American cultures” (Leong, 2003 p. 169). It represents a way of being that, in many instances, excludes holistic, embodied awareness. This thesis is in sympathy with Paton’s (2011) understanding where ‘Western’ refers to the imposition and consequent domination of Western European cultures (p. 124).
PART I: INTRODUCTION

Participant experience, captured in my *never picked* study (Ruddock, 2007b), exposed how self-perceived non-musical people feel distanced from their inherent musicality. Findings revealed that widespread notions of *music as performance for critical judgement* meant that many individuals did not feel free to engage in music making. Instead, they lived with an underlying belief that a person needed to be born with musical *talent* if they were to sing or play. Thus, in their Western lifeworld, many intrinsically musical beings lived with encultured self-perceptions of being either musical or non-musical. The puzzle of this oftentimes invisible, unnatural dichotomy lies at the heart of this thesis.

Musician and teacher Trendwith (2003) argues that such restrictive Western views of musicking, where music perceived as a performance by the talented, denies everyone access to an enhanced spiritual dimension that can be part of humanising engagement. Instead, he advocates “inclusiveness” (2003, p. 321), where music as an integral part of education can lead to a “development of the balanced individual” (p. 319). Bodkin (2004) also emphasises the damaging effects of pervasive Western practices where only the talented few are perceived to be born with a capacity to be musical. In her research where she compared early childhood teachers from a Western environment with those from Māori and Samoan cultures, she found that the former felt musically “inferior” (2004, p. 256) whereas the latter comfortably embraced music as part of their work; this allowed the children to engage in musicking as a ‘normal’ part of being human. Bodkin concludes her thesis affirming that “[m]usic is a part of everyone’s lives, at many different levels, and there is no reason why everyone cannot think of themselves as being musical” (2004, p. 256). As Nzewi confirms (2014), all healthy humans are born musical (p. 19).

For most of the participants in this PhD project, however, this is not the case – they present poignant cases of feeling non-musical. A series of published papers report on a system that distorts everyday musicking and where the notion of stardom leaves many individuals caught up as consumers of others’ performances. This thesis engages in hermeneutic practices to explore and critique concepts that lead many of us in the West to judge ourselves away from intrinsic musical expression. In this project, then, I seek enhanced understanding – I question how it can be that we suppress an intrinsic part of our being.
Humans: a musical species?

Music is intrinsic to human nature (Trevarthen, 1999), yet how each of us engage in making music, how we sing, play, listen and move to music depends upon historically developed cultural processes (Cook, 1998 p. 17). This thesis considers perceptions of musicality that have developed within a culture that fails to support healthy, “humanising” (Nzewi, 2007. p. 31) musicking – where “problematic assumptions” (van der Schyff, Schiavio, & Elliott, 2016, p. 3) restrict instinctive primordial responses and lead to a widespread “general social dysfunction” (West, 2009 p. 215). While Frith (2003) understands that “the musical experience...is special...a way of one person reaching another without deceit” (p. 47), Lines posits that, in “the day to day lives of a large proportion of unsuspecting men and women in the West, worlds of music remain unopened and unrealised” (Lines, 2003, p. 164). Indeed, in a world dominated by the notion of performativity, music has become something that is made by the musicians for consumption by consumers (Leong, 2003 p. 159). Thus, music as product, a *something* (Cook, 1998, p. 99) to be consumed (Paton, 2011 p. 173), leaves many to live in a world dominated by pride in performance (Kirnarskaya, 2009. pp. 260-1) and ownership of knowledge about (Cook, 1998, p. 99) rather than benefitting from the communicative nature of music referred to by Frith.

Arguably, education systems perpetuate this reality in the West when what actually happens in a school is justified by skill acquisition that leads to suitable employment (Fitzsimons & Haynes, 1998, pp. 98-9). Fitzsimons and Haynes, for instance, recognise how unfavourable conditions arise when education is used as an essential cog in the wheel of globalised neo-liberal domination where it is forced to “move...away from notions of equity towards economic considerations” (Fitzsimons & Haynes, 1998, p. 100). Such focus on the economy, they argue, while purportedly increasing chances of being competitive in a globalised world, leads to a lop-sided educational provision (p. 98). Despite predominance of capitalist expectations, however, it is possible to address this reality by the provision of an informed, inclusive music education which could offer opportunities for “embodied regions of presence and change” (Lines, 2003, p. 24).

Yet, in the current globalised neo-liberal world, this does not readily happen. As Lines reveals, “a meaningful and life enriching music education is a rare occurrence; listening, creating and making meaningful music is not a central concern of Western education” (Lines, 2003, p. 164).
Musicking

Since living and connecting within a culture blinds us (Cook, 1998, p. 17) to commonly accepted assumptions that drive the way we think and act, in this thesis the word *musicking* (Small, 1987/1998, p. 50) is used to help distance the reader from practices that “seem natural” (Cook, 1998, p. 17) yet are cultural constructs that have developed as part of the neo-liberal society in which we live. Thus, the use of *musicking* is intended to open perceptions that allow us to question the status quo and recognise that, “shaped by the social-historical” (Straume, 2015, p. 1468) the notion of “the unmusical majority” (Small, 1987/1998, p. 347) affects both everyday musicking and music education. While it might seem to be a useful aspiration that education aims to prepare individuals for future employment, a system that fails to genuinely engage young people in a living, learning environment not only fails to achieve effective learning but also alienates individuals to leave them floundering, unengaged and unconnected (Robinson, Smyth, Down, & McInerny, 2012). Yet, there are music educational programs that demonstrate a capacity to connect across communities (West, 2016) and time (Paton, 2011) to involve people with special needs as well as skilled musicians. The philosophies underlying these practices, far from working within a regime of elite performance practice, focus on connections through musicking to wholly engage all participants. Such inclusive musicking has a capacity to “make sense of ourselves in relation to the world…to the rhythmic quality of our inner lives and feelings [and] awareness of time’s significance (Paton, 2011, p. 21).

Understanding the power of music to humanize and change, for instance, Nzewi (2009a) emphasises that “[n]obody is born a-musical [and that] the musical arts nurture a society that prioritises, inculcates human conscience or otherwise from childhood” (p. 76). This view contrasts with the lack of a developmental musical environment, so often found in Western communities (West, 2009), and may be attributed to a widespread belief that only some people are born musical (Abril, 2007; Kirnarskaya, 2009, p. ix). This belief, questioned early by Meyer (1899) who warned against dividing individuals into musical or unmusical, was famously brought to attention by Blacking who asked: *Must the majority be made “unmusical” so that a chosen few may become more “musical”?* (Blacking, 1976, p. 4)

While research now reveals the essential communicative nature of music (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Trehub, 2006; Trevarthen, 2005), the influential notion of *talent* (Howe et al., 1998b) continues to persuade individuals that they are either musical or they are not (Ruddock, 2007b) and is still evident in psychological research (Law,
Further, some experts argue that talent is a necessary innate endowment for an individual to be properly able to make music (Kirmarskaya, 2009). Small and Paton speak truly when they posit that “some kind of tectonic shift in cultural perceptions” (Paton, 2011, p. 175) would be necessary if we are to establish a belief in intrinsic human musicality.

**Exploration toward understanding: The organisation of this thesis**

My Masters study into individuals who perceived themselves to be non-musical (Ruddock, 2007b) found that widespread concepts of *talent* and *critical judgement* of *performance*, precluded intrinsically musical humans from being freely musical. Yet, in their words, silences and gestures, participants in my qualitative study unknowingly lived a rhythmic and melodic musicality; a musical reality captured in their own words (Ruddock, 2012a). Insights from this investigation revealed that, in a contemporary Western community, individuals can too easily have their musicality silenced, even or especially by members of the music teaching profession. Questions raised by the *never picked* study (Ruddock, 2007b) have directly led to this thesis as I sought a clearer understanding of the phenomenon where individuals feel that they are not able to engage in musical action, a phenomenon that arrests instinctive human behaviour. Thus, the reality of the *never picked* (Ruddock, 2007b) (a title adopted from one participant’s text) propelled me to pursue a deeper understanding into such an ‘unnatural’ cultural persuasion. Figure 1 depicts the evolving of this thesis from the ‘unfinished business’ of my *never picked* Masters research, through analyses of qualitative data based on conversations with a deliberately selected participant cohort (Punch, 1998, p. 193), to dialectic interactions and hermeneutic understanding.
From initial qualitative empirical data, then, this investigation moves back and forth via dialectic interactions and hermeneutic consciousness to new recognitions of societal damage to our sensual, musical selves. Issues raised in the *never picked* project (Ruddock, 2007b) led me to seek an understanding that could more clearly articulate the “essence of a distanced musicality” (Ruddock, 2007b, p. 102); but finding a way to ‘flush out’ this cultural phenomenon was no clear-cut task (Van Manen, 1997, p. 39). Accepting the inevitability of researcher subjectivity colouring the text (Punch, 1998, p. 61) meant that it was also important to keep in mind that, although we might retain a certain subjectivity in the search toward meaning, it is also possible to become “open” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 271) to others’ perspectives. It became an ongoing task to somehow give expression to beliefs that belong to hidden cultural persuasions which effectively govern our actions (Foucault, 1972). Throughout this thesis, then, I drew on participant experience interpreted in the light of hermeneutic “play” (Gadamer, 2004,
which “transcends the experiential world in an act of reflective existence” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 97). This interpretive-hermeneutic research process “systematically develop[ed] a certain narrative” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 97) to explicate findings that had emerged from dialogic connections as they worked toward “sense-making and interpreting of” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 98) the phenomenon. This process was assisted by dialectic exchanges and review comments (from peer reviewers\(^1\) and community readers\(^2\)) that contributed to this exploration of how it was that individual’s judged themselves away from their sensual, musical selves. It remained important for me, as researcher, to maintain the “seriousness [of the] play” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, pp. 102-3) toward new awareness and possibilities.

**Research processes toward a question that explores humanly experienced musicality**

To work toward change requires that there is a clear understanding of what needs to be changed. Despite the role that talent (Kirnarskaya, 2009, pp. 10-11) maintains in Western cultures, influencing individuals to believe that only some people can sing and that only some can really know about music (Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014, p. 247), music remains a central part of the way people connect from infancy (Trevarthen, 2005 p. 64) and the way we communicate and socialise (Frith, 2003). The questions teased out and addressed in the *never picked* study (Ruddock, 2007b) maintained their relevance as they kept the focus on the phenomenon of self-perceived non-musicality, the issue at the centre of this research into human musicality. While the *never picked* project revealed how individuals learned to feel that they were not musical,\(^3\) however, it could not pursue the question as to how this reality could be so, and what could be done to address this belief.

The central purpose of this study was to identify conceptions of musical reality – to capture societal assumptions that underlie everyday musical experiences. No clearly stated hypothesis, however, could appropriately be devised (Punch, 1998, p. 41) to properly research this phenomenon of exclusive musicality. As Punch emphasises, “there is no point in simply having hypotheses for their own sake” (Punch, 1998, p. 41). In this case, then, it was vital to work toward a research question (Rolling, 2013, p. 6) that would be relevant and that could lead to meaningful understandings not only for

---

\(^1\) Reviewers’ comments on published journal articles presented in this thesis.

\(^2\) See Appendix 4.

\(^3\) See Appendix 1: *The ‘Unnatural’ Path of the never picked* (Ruddock, 2007 p. 92)
those in the music education profession, but also for parents and others who care about what being musical might mean.

In the first instance, however, it was important to reconsider understandings exposed by the never picked participants (Ruddock, 2007b) in the light of lived experiences from a fresh cohort. To this end, twelve individuals agreed to engage in conversations for this research. I also included participants who perceived themselves as musical non-musicians in order to contrast their perceptions with the self-perceived non-musical non-musicians who became the focus of the previous study. Raw data from this new cohort presents an empirical source for further investigation of the phenomenon of individuals who find themselves distanced from their intrinsic musical selves. Van Manan (1997) uses the term, “hermeneutic tool” (p. 170) to describe this way of working towards a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question.

**Hermeneutic wondering**

Firstly, then, it was important to identify a central research question that would determine the approach to be taken. In recognising the crucial role of the question (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 357), one that could position this puzzle in a way so that its perspective could direct toward a way of making sense, to “break open the being of the object” (p. 356). As Gadamer (1975/2004, p. 356) understood, it was within the question itself that the sense necessarily lay. In his words:

...dialectic proceeds by way of question and answer or, rather, the path of all knowledge leads through the question. To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled. It must still be undetermined, awaiting a decisive answer...brought into this state of indeterminacy, so that there is an equilibrium between pro and contra. (p. 357)

Thus the important first task was to uncover the question, one that would reveal insights behind apparent everyday experiences in order to offer understandings and so be useful to others (Rolling, 2013, p. 6). It was no simple task to find a way to ask the question that could throw light on this puzzle where so many individuals in Western culture learn to feel distanced from their intrinsic human musical selves. It was necessary to look beyond qualitative research processes to more subtly discern participant perceptions; thus it became important to include hermeneutic approaches which, as Gadamer (1975/2004) considers, have a capacity to reveal prejudices (world-

---

4 “…wondering…is where philosophy begins” (Plato, Theaetetus, 155 d)
views) (p. 454). It is helpful to heed Punch when he cautions that the use of these ways of accessing, of engaging in research practices, “cannot be...neatly described” (Punch, 1998, p. 148).

Participant life experiences, however, continued to reveal a key to understanding; it was within their life experiences that insights from their “historically effected experience” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. xxxii) could be gleaned so as to move toward understanding. Gadamer (1975/2004) notes the importance of recognising what is; not what might, at first, appear to be so. For, being open to engage in a way that is not pre-determined and not tied specifically to self-awareness of the individual participant can allow genuine insight into the human condition. Following Gadamer (1975/2004, pp. 356-61), I considered how an experience could hold within it an understanding beyond the particular experience of the individual. Again, in Gadamer’s words: “the paradox that something standing over against me asserts its own rights and requires absolute recognition; and in the very process is understood” (1975/2004, p. xxxii). Indeed, it is in her insightful exposé of interpretive research that Josselson (2011) presents comparative examples of a particular participant’s experience to demonstrate how such an understanding is brought forth from the text to show how “hermeneutics [is] a disciplined form of moving from text to meaning” (Josselson, 2011 p. 5).

**Published papers tell a tale**

Developed over a series of papers, this research is an in-depth study that is presented together with introductions and interconnecting interludes (Episodes). As a thesis by publication, it has the benefit of informed responses from peer reviewers. My quest, then, is to “break free from outworn vocabularies and attitudes” (Rorty, 2009, p. 12) to bring to consciousness those societal habits that constrain instinctive human action. Following the above general background structure of the thesis, this Introduction now presents a brief overview of the chapters.

The **Prelude** to this thesis presents material from the never picked project (Ruddock, 2007b) to explicate societal acceptance perceived non-musicality. It considers the phenomenon uncovered by the 2007 study, one that splits human musicality into a dichotomous reality, where individuals view themselves being either musical or non-unmusical. For those considered ‘musical’, individuals those born with a special talent, many assume that these ‘lucky’ ones should expect to be encouraged to develop their performance skills. For those who feel that they were not ‘lucky’ to be

---

5 See Appendix No. 2 for a brief overview.
endowed with innate talent, many feel that they lack a licence to sing, play or dance; they very often join the ranks of the never picked to become a consumer of others’ musical work. Here, I illustrate the poignancy of the never picked to raise the question as to why many individuals would be influenced to deny their inherent musicality. Moving beyond effects experienced within educational environments, those examined in the Ballad of the never picked, the Prelude introduces the powerful influence exerted by the notion of exclusive musicality within the wider community. Considering inhibitions resulting from the ‘musical-unmusical’ dichotomy, this introductory section emphasises the need to question the status quo and work towards ways to address an ‘unnatural’ way of being.

In **Chapter One**, I discuss research practices that can probe cultural mores that undermine intrinsic musicking and subdue a real part of our Western consciousness. The paper, *A spiral design delivers recognition towards harmony* (Ruddock, 2011), considers qualitative methods used in the never picked study (Ruddock, 2007b). Here, I reflect on the widespread influence of performativity as it reduces the confidence of those individuals who are perceived to be non-gifted to freely engage in musicking. Considering ways of moving beyond recognition of the phenomenon of the never picked, the opening paper reflects on the narrative research used in the precious study before wondering how to explore beyond the unseen societal directives that reduce opportunities for many musical humans to be musical in their everyday lives. As I seek richer and deeper connections between the contributing elements of the study, qualitative and narrative methods develop from the more linear spiral design to include interactive process between participant data, the literature, dialectic interchange and philosophical reflection. This chapter considers the hermeneutic processes to be involved so that this investigation can move toward enhanced understandings.

Importantly, research methods embrace *bricolage* (after Kincheloe, 2001) to include an arts-based (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 127) practices which offer a potential to notice aspects of the everyday that are otherwise obscured by accepted patterns of speech. Resulting texts join participants’ transcripts and information from interdisciplinary literature to become a part of the hermeneutic process (after Gadamer, 1975/2004) towards understanding. Thus, the purpose of this thesis, to confront restrictive cultural mores that subdue a real part of our Western consciousness, is prepared to work toward recognition of societal underpinnings that, operating beneath conscious awareness, undermine free musical expression. I begin to tease out the research questions in an ongoing process of knowing and unknowing which continues
until, within a rich play of participant experience and thoughts, the journey will arrive at the central question in Chapter Three. A brief introduction to the participant cohort acknowledges their part in the adoption of dialectic and arts-based research practices. Finally, the overarching analogy of a fugal design is introduced. As a connective devise, the fugal analogy provides a way to present the investigation as an organic whole, combining qualitative research practices, poetic expressions and hermeneutics that, together, allow me to more deeply explore this phenomenon. Chapter One concludes with Episode I where three short poems reflect on hermeneutic play.

Musician participants deliver a surprise as they are confronted with challenges to their musical selves in Chapter Two. Two ‘talented’ students, both having been accepted into a prestigious music institution (several years apart), reveal the devastating aftermath of critical judgement. In both cases, narrowly confined judgement stops their musicking. Their experiences demonstrate how the phenomenon that distances intrinsic musicality can readily extend beyond the school classroom and the broadcasting studio to affect skilled performers. In Societal judgment silences singers (Ruddock, 2010), the paper reproduced in this chapter, I first consider the experiences of two young women (both self-perceived as being non-musical) who had been silenced. Their stories were familiar. One was told, when she was not quite six years old, that she could not be in the school choir, despite the fact that ‘everybody’ else in the little school was in it, whilst the other was told to mime when, at ten years old, her class choir was preparing to sing in a choral festival. Neither of these young women will now sing in public, but ‘choose’ to either mime or simply move out of range at group carol singing and family birthday celebrations. However, when they are sure that ‘nobody can hear’, both ‘belt out’ songs whilst doing chores or driving. Both enjoy listening to ‘their’ music. While these two ‘non-musical’ students demonstrate their vulnerability to criticism and confirm Lamont’s (2012) understanding that a negative self-view of being musical can lead individuals to “disengage from musical activities” (p. 578), yet both maintain a deeper, ongoing musicality. In contrast to a pervasive societal view that only some individuals are born with a capacity to sing, these self-perceived non-singers show that their intrinsic musicality remains to connect them with their world – not while ‘performing’ for critical judgement but simply singing and being musical as they go about their daily lives. This chapter questions the value of perpetuating practices that cut us off from vital being; I continue the search for a research question within participant experience, one that has a potential to break open the limiting cultural position that arrests musicking.
**Episode II** draws on voices from philosophy, music and neuroscience to reflect on current confusion and point a way towards making sense of contradictions.

In providing a philosophical base to understanding for the remaining chapters, **Chapter Three** first focuses on the nature of dialectic inquiry before playing out the nature of a central participant’s musical experiences. Here, I explore and then engage complex and nuanced hermeneutic processes that allow for the unexpected. This chapter exemplifies dialectic moves toward insight into the human condition as I play with how we interpret what we ‘see’. For this process, there can be no definitive ‘method’, no directive hypothesis – but, rather, nuanced and intricate back and forth of interactions that lead, not to explication but, rather, to unspoken understanding with a ‘magical’ resonance that includes a richer perception of human *being*. While richly versed in dialectic play, the central protagonist of this chapter maintains Western dichotomous experiential knowing with regard to his musicality; he accepts the talent account as being useful. His experiences are recast here so that what is seen and known before may be understood in an entirely different and possibly incommensurate way. **Episode III** questions the culturally bound acceptance of the ‘everyday’ experience before doubt suggests the value of dialectic wondering to open thinking toward new possibilities.

**Chapter Four** re-examines lived experiences from the *never picked* project with the central research question in mind. To this end, the paper *Sort of in your blood: Inherent musicality survives cultural judgement*, explores how it is that many individuals withdraw from communicative human action to become consumers of others’ musicking. Participants’ experiences reflect an upbringing that leaves their musicality underdeveloped having been judged as non-musical in their attempts to sing, dance or play; they bring to life elements of cultural constructs that restrict musical expression. Here, this research considers the value of the recognition of intrinsic musicality to individual and societal well-being. **Episode IV** includes a discussion arising from an Australian television program; it further exposes the effects of music as gifted performance as it reveals a Western dualistic view which has a capacity to distort vibrant musical engagement. Finally, a short poem, *Recognition*, draws on Paton (2011) to consider musicking for everyone.

In **Chapter Five**, hermeneutic interactions play between participant experience and the literature to reveal powerful societal assumptions that lead individuals to doubt their intrinsic musicality. Conversations show how readily individuals can ‘learn’ that “other people make music”, that they are not musical, and that they necessarily accept a non-musical position. One participant reveals how it is possible to resist powerful
societal directives centred around talent while others show how the entrenched music/non-musical binary maintains its hold to misconstrue the nature of human musicality. In Episode V a brief poem presents an overview and then a challenge to societal misconceptions.

To further explore the nature of the influential misconceptions, Chapter Six seeks to articulate societal assumptions that undermine inherent musicality. Western prejudices, imbued with classical consciousness, blind us to influential myths that deflect musical action; individuals find themselves acquiescing to the pervasive notion that, to be musical, they need to be born with a gift. This thinking, with its emphasis on excellence and judgement (Arendt, 1978), excludes many from active participation, leaving them to miss out on a crucial contributor to health and well-being. Yet, deeply embodied lifemusic (Paton, 2011) survives as part of connective human engagement. Examples from Aboriginal Australia (McKnight, 2015; Trendwith, 2003) and Africa (Nzewi, 2013a) show the importance of connective, humanising action. Human musicality, at the heart of what it means to be human, connects within and across time as a vital contributor to cultural resilience and to well-being. Episode VI presents a pathological acceptance before acknowledging the hope that the musical arts can ameliorate disconnections that disturb the human condition.

In the abstract of the final paper I refer to a reality where “current polarised music education provision supports a discriminatory system that leads to widespread underdeveloped musicality, I draw on Gadamer and Dewey to explore how musicking integrates cultural development and to question the value of a practice that leaves many of us musically disabled”. Thus, Chapter Seven questions discriminatory practices that deny musical beings opportunities for connective engagement as part of everyday vibrant being. In this final chapter I challenge the false credibility of performative notions that deprive the community of essential communicative acts that enhance holistic human development. Episode VII presents a short poem to consider the value of feeling free to be musical in everyday living through time.

The Coda presents a condensed reflection of this hermeneutic exploration to consider the story of Western restrictive practices. It includes reflections on traces of embedded cultural traditions which, carried over from our Greek heritage, continue to affect the potential to be musical. Dialectic interactions between researcher, participants, peer reviewers and the literature expose prejudices within everyday living to reveal how notions of performativity undermine the freedom of many of us to feel free to engage in musicking. Participant voices bring the thesis to a close.
PRELUDE

Provocation of the never picked

Lament for intrinsic being

In the thesis for my MA, “The Ballad of the never picked: A qualitative study of self-perceived non-musicians’ perceptions of their musicality” (Ruddock, 2007b), participant experience reflects a world where individuals feel distanced from their intrinsic musicality. To address ‘unfinished business’ brought into focus by my 2007 study, this PhD project further explores perceptions of human musicality that are undermined by notions of performance, critical judgement and talent. Taking care to avoid methodological processes where perceptions of participants’ texts could be “corrupted by the English language” (McKnight, 2015, p. 279) or simply mirror current cultural perceptions, I draw on interdisciplinary research to fuse traditional qualitative research practices with what Kincheloe (2001) calls “philosophical research” (Kincheloe’s italics, p. 687). My search to find appropriate ways of working are helped by Gadamer’s understanding of serious play (1975/2004, p. 103) when, through hermeneutic explorations involving participants’ texts and interdisciplinary literature, I seek a question that has a capacity to “break open” (p. 356) the puzzle where intrinsically musical beings are judged as being either musical or non-musical. In the first instance, however, it is important to present participant voices in a way that their experiences may be alive for readers who can then become an integral part of the interpretative process (Lincoln, 2002, p. 328).

Part of the plan for presenting this thesis lies in a framework (to be discussed in Chapter 1) that includes the analogy of an overarching fugal design, one planned to play toward a revelation of societal assumptions that disable intrinsic musicality. This project presents the phenomenon uncovered by those who view themselves as never picked to consider this reality through artistic means. Viewing participant feelings and experiences through an arts lens provides a means whereby it is possible to capture nuanced expressions and move toward fresh perceptions. As Barone and Eisner (2012) explain:

Arts based research...is...an effort to utilize the forms of thinking and forms of representation that the arts provide as means through which the world can be better understood and through such understanding comes the enlargement of mind. (p. xi)
Arts-based research, as a particular way toward understanding (Barone and Eisner 2012, p. 164), has a capacity to “diversify the pantry of methods that researchers can use to address the problems they care about” (p. 170). While true insight is ever elusive, arts procedures can help to expose deeply ingrained assumptions by presenting a nuanced access to how individuals feel. Words of the following “Lament”, for instance, are from never picked participant Caterina’s (pseudonym) transcribed interview. In this excerpt I draw on unused material collected during the Masters project (Ruddock, 2007b) to portray a world where a musical being feels distanced from her inherent musicality. Taken directly from her interview transcript, words are broken into shorter lines to catch the rhythm and pathos of her language; Caterina’s text serves to bring the phenomenon of the never-picked to life:

**Caterina’s Lament**

Music

*listening to the trees and the birds*
*a music of life, it’s the sounds of life*
*a mystical thing to me*
*I think it…very, very, very special…music*
*I’ve always believed that I am ‘tone deaf’.*
*I’ve always believed that I’m a bad singer.*
*I love music but I’ve never believed that I’m someone who can perform in any way…or can sing in any way*
*I’m just an observer of music*
*if God or whoever could give me a gift…I would love the gift to sing.*
*I would love to be able to sing!*
*I’m not musical. I’m not trained.*
*As a family, we were brought up around music*
*but none of us could sing,*
*so I wouldn’t say any of my family were ‘musical.’*
*I always think ‘God I wish I could sing’*
*‘God I wish I could sing’*
*I’d love to do singing lessons*
*but I’d be too embarrassed*
*…the teacher’s going to go*
*‘Oh, no hope’*

Caterina concludes her interview with thoughts about some music teachers:
...certain teachers - they want the bright students
...the talented, the gifted ones.
That makes it easy for them.
And possibly because they’re not natural teachers themselves,
they have to be a lot more judgemental.
and music...
...music is everything.
Music is...

sounds weird.
but music can be just the sounds of...of life.
I mean, to me that can be music as well.
I know that sounds a bit abstract but, you know,
just sitting quietly and listening to the trees and the birds,
and to me that’s a kind of a music of life,
it’s the sounds of life.
So it’s almost a mystical thing to me I think.
I don’t know about spiritual or if that’s too far ‘cos I don’t really mean spiritual...
but more mystical.
So that’s why I think it’s something very, very, very special...music.

Sounds weird?

Pondering over Caterina’s words, it is ‘weird’ that, to me, Caterina’s voice — the
voice of a self-confessed ‘bad singer’ — sings. It is weird that her musical voice, the
voice that can tell how music is so special, remains silenced. She has been judged! She
is not one who can make music. She has learned that music making is for the ‘talented’. I wonder⁶:

How could it be that musical beings (Nzewi, 2009a; Welch, 2005) find
themselves living with beliefs where:

- only some people are born with musical talent,
- being musical is a “thing one is or isn’t”
- you come from a family that is not musical
- they live with an awareness of not being free to sing and/or play
- they do not really understand music at all?

⁶ (Plato, Theaetetus, 155d).
Instead of experiencing a way of being that enhances healthy, holistic existence (Nzewi, 2009a), feelings such as embarrassment, self-consciousness and frustration undermine the intrinsic musicality (Ruddock, 2012a) of the self-perceived participants of the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b). The paper reproduced below, “It’s a bit harsh, isn’t it!” Judgemental teaching practice corrupts instinctive musicality (Ruddock, 2008), captures some of this reality to tell how it feels to live with cultural perceptions that deny recognition of inherent humanity (Nzewi, 2014). In reflecting on self-perceived non-musical participant experience (the focus of the never picked project), this harsh tale acts as a Prelude to this thesis. In the telling, it steps outside the educational environment to expose an unnatural phenomenon that is not only located within formal education but is also to be found in the wider community; it focuses on perceptions of human musicality found in everyday life.
“It’s a bit harsh, isn’t it?” Judgemental teaching practice corrupts instinctive musicality

Eve Ruddock, Murdoch University, Australia

None of us could sing, none of us can... so I wouldn’t say any of my family were musical (Caterina, office worker).

A recent study of self-perceived non-musicians demonstrates powerful negative perceptions of musicality. Current literature shows that this phenomenon is widespread in Western culture despite increasing evidence to support an understanding that humans are instinctively musical beings. This paper traces reflective qualitative research methods that led to an expose of lived experiences to reveal a judgemental society in which music is perceived as a performance by the talented.

Introduction

It was all too easy to find ‘non-musician’ participants willing to take part in my research that investigated perceived musicality. Although I deliberately sought to include those who might feel that they were ‘musical,’ twenty out of twenty-nine participants of this study (Ruddock, 2007) saw themselves as being ‘not musical’. Their tradition had taught participants of The Ballad of the Never-Picked that people were either ‘musical’ or ‘unmusical’ (see Nettl, 2006). In my study of self-perceived non-musician participants, those individuals who considered themselves ‘non musical’ thought that music was something people could only do if they happened to be born ‘musical’; i.e. they ‘possessed’ a ‘natural’ musical potential. Should this not be the case, then they expected to live as passive receivers of music performed by professionals (except on those occasions when they ‘did’ their own music in ‘private’ or when drunk). This paper traces reflective research methods to reveal how previously convinced non-musical non-musicians actually have innate musicality.

“[W]e shape all knowledge in the way we know it” (Polanyi, 1966 p. 77) so that when individuals ‘accept’ an ‘unmusical’ label, they necessarily limit how they can perceive and respond to music in their lives. In the same way that “we can know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1966 p. 4), Serafine (1988 p. 234) claims that her research into cognitive music knowing indicates that not only is the acquisition of musical skills analogous to learning of language and number, but that all persons have a considerable knowledge of music (Serafine, 1988 p. 1). In my study seeking to understand how music might be perceived in my community, a general understanding emerged from ‘conversations’ with twenty-nine self-perceived non-musicians that individuals either came from a ‘musical’ background or they did not; that they had a propensity to do music or they did not. Two young mothers, for example, considered themselves to have come from ‘non-musical’ families and wished to give their children different opportunities so that they could feel part of the musical world, while an 82 year-old retired Scottish farmer was more fatalistic: “...there was no music in our house. We didn’t have this musical connection.”
Several participants told stories from their school days that related directly to traditional practice in schools:

- There was little or no music learning (see Australian Government Department of Education, 2005).
- They were never picked to sing in a group.
- They had no opportunity to access instrumental tuition.
- They were asked to mime when ‘singing’ with their class.

In this last instance, where the teacher had directed a twelve-year-old boy to mime, the now 37 year old physiotherapist reported thinking ‘I’ll never be a rock star.’ He remembered that while he “thought it was funny, just accepted it at the time, later on – looking back, [he had] thought the teacher could have been more encouraging.” That such incidents may have long-lasting effects is reflected in his feeling that “it’s a shame as even when on my own, I still, even now, feel self-conscious...let alone sing with other people around” (Ruddock, 2007, p. 55).

In similar vein, a new study from Canada reports on four cases where teachers cause individuals to ‘learn’ they are ‘non-singers’ (Whidden, 2008); it reveals how the ‘education’ of four women had an ongoing negative impact on their musical lives. Whidden goes so far to assert that the Canadian schools which tolerate such practices are responsible for allowing a “social injustice” (Whidden, 2008, p. 11). Her paper, tracing particular long lasting effects of inappropriate practices of some ‘music educators,’ questions a dominating adherence to the ‘talent account’ (see Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998). In her concern for individuals who experience “humiliating” experiences in relation to singing, Whidden touches on the widespread phenomenon in ‘Western’ culture where complex societal responses lead individuals to judge themselves to be non musical (Ruddock, 2007).

Music education research is increasingly exposing traditional common practice in schools that has a negative impact on students’ musical development. Despite the fact that many music educators do perceive individuals to be inherently ‘musical’ (see Burnard, 2003, pp. 29, 30) it was the actions of music ‘tutors’ and ‘teachers’ who were responsible for ‘non-musical’ perceptions of participant in my recent study. Could it be that these music educators’ work is directly affected by perceptions similar to those of a group of educators (most of them in the field of education) reported by (Sloboda, 1996, p. 108)? Sloboda reports that 75% of a group of professionals believed that innate talents were pre-requisites for singing and playing instruments. This understanding, too, is found by Burnard (2003) in her exploration of notions of human musicality. She refers to current research that reveals a general belief in the “talent account” (see Howe et al., 1998) and emphasises that current exclusive practices in the arts need to adapt to embrace new perspectives in music education (Burnard, 2008 p. 61).

In both the United Kingdom and Australia, educational focus is frequently directed towards those ‘gifted’ individuals who are believed to have a propensity to develop excellent music skills. In her contribution to a broadly focussed volume which provides
fresh perspectives towards effective music education (Leong, 2003). Burnard (2003, pp 29-36) exposes the crucial aspect of language where our everyday use of words inculcates perceptions that ensure the longevity of the notion of and preference for the ‘gifted’. Her research supports that of O’Neill (1997) and Ruddock (2007) who warn of the negative effects of discriminatory practice; to label students as not ‘musical’ means more than to restrict access to music learning; it has been seen to lead to an alienation from an essential aspect of what it means to be human (Nzewi, 2007).

Burnard’s work reflects a reality that is shared in the Australian community, one that is reported in the recent National Review (Australian Government Department of Education, 2005). In my research, drawing upon participant experiences in Western Australia (Ruddock, 2007), individuals reported feelings of being ‘not musical’ because of their experiences of unsatisfactory instrumental learning; in several cases, long-term negative self-perceptions can be directly related to instructors’ focus on successful performance ability. Instead of learning to \textit{do} music, participants revealed that their music ‘tuition’ had resulted in their loosing confidence in themselves as musical beings; they felt that they should not attempt further access to singing or instrumental lessons because they ‘knew’ that they were musically inadequate (Ruddock, 2007). School learning and private tuition had taught them that they were ‘not musical’ because of negative responses to musical actions.

Societal views outside organised education, too, challenge individuals who attempt to learn to play an instrument or to sing. One recent public example that illustrates a preconceived notion of what it is to be able to play or sing was when Maushart (2008), a popular presenter in a segment of ‘Life Matters’ on Australian National Radio, observed the first violin lesson of a 51 year-old lawyer who had decided to learn that demanding instrument. Maushart’s ‘voice over’ is revealing:

\begin{quote}
You look so happy. Your eyes are shining...the whole thing was pretty damn heart-warming but I was still interested in whether [the teacher’s] ‘feel the fear and do it anyway’ approach was as valid musically as it clearly was therapeutically.
\end{quote}

Although this man had not yet begun to become familiar with the instrument, Maushart raises issues of ‘performance, judgement and talent’. She fails to appreciate the neophyte violinist’s immersion in the physicality of the action itself; of the pulling of the bow, of feeling the sound; of being \textit{in} the music. Yet, in this case, the instrumental teacher was knowledgeable and encouraging. Unlike many ‘judges’ in the community, she understood the learning that was necessary to gain performance competence; she expected to hear ‘beginner’ sounds; a reaction in contrast to the presenter who reflected a widespread societal ‘norm.’ In our culture where commercially available recordings present ‘professional’ and frequently ‘tidied up’ versions of performances there is not general societal understanding of the processes involved in the acquisition of music performance skills. This lack of awareness also contributes to ‘judgemental’ perceptions of those many professional educators who do not recognise ‘normal’ music learning processes. When this is considered together with the reality that many children only get a chance to learn
an instrument if they ‘win’ a place in a ‘select’ school instrumental program, I suggest that it is not surprising to find that “it is common to distinguish between ‘musical’ and ‘unmusical’ persons”… in Western societies (Nettl, 2006).

Humans: Instinctively musical

Neurological science now provides substantial evidence to challenge societal practice that lead can lead to an estrangement from a sense of musicality. Indeed, work on brain specialization shows that we are specifically equipped to process music; humans are hard-wired to do music (Tramo, 2001). We experience powerful physical responses to sound and Tramo et al. (2003) remind us of long-term human interest in these affects when they quote Galileo’s writings on “consonance”. It was in 1638 when Galileo considered the discomfort of particular combinations of sound that happens when their vibrations “strike the ear out of time” (p. 135); such physiological response to sound is now being understood in finely measured detail. Research on harmonic perception by Tramo and his colleagues (2003), for instance, leads to deeper understandings of our musical behaviour; I suspect that their fresh view on consonance will lead to a freedom from some traditional teachings regarding this phenomenon.

A detailed review of neuropsychological work reveals that music is not only a product of culture, but is an instinctive human behaviour (Peretz, 2003 p. 192). Work being carried out in the field of psychology also indicates that music cognition is dependent on normal cognitive learning experiences (Serafine, 1988 p. 234), so detailed scientific research now supports Davies’ earlier view that being musical need not depend on the “magical properties of some sort of musical priesthood” (Davies, 1978, p. 15). On-going work shows that the acquisition of musical skills depends on both long-term listening experiences and formal learning (Altenmüller, 2004); Altenmüller carried out experiments to reveal that even brief musical training can enhance brain activity; musical skills can be learned (2004, p. 29). This verifies the earlier work of Serafine (1988). Indeed, measurable brain patterns show how quickly long-term music learning can take place and Altenmüller’s work revealed that neuronal changes not only remained for up to a year following music-learning sessions but they showed no signs of diminishing (2004 pp. 30,31). Neurological research, then, is providing evidence to support the understandings of those who question the talent notion. An expanding field of research (see, for example, Peretz & Zatorre, 2003) now exists to support the importance of listening and learning; the experiential account for acquiring musical ‘ability’ is increasingly being backed up by ‘scientific’ evidence.

Does music matter?

What does it matter whether people do music, art or dance? Since I first witnessed the severe restraints that some individuals expressed when they considered singing or playing, this question about doing music has become an ever insistent issue for me. What use might the arts offer to us in an everyday sense? Does it matter if we feel free to do music? As she mused: “What is music to me?” Caterina, a self-perceived non-musician from my study (Ruddock, 2007) considered that:
...music is everything. Music is...sounds weird, but music can be just the sounds of...of life. I mean, to me that can be music as well. I know that sounds a bit abstract but, you know, just sitting quietly and listening to the trees and the birds, and to me that's a kind of a music of life, it's the sounds of life. So it's almost a mystical thing to me I think. I don't know about spiritual or if that's too far 'cos I don't really mean spiritual...but more mystical. So that's why I think it' something very, very, very special...music.

Caterina, generously offering her thoughts during her lunch-time break, expressed an aspect of relating to the arts that has been considered in depth. It is through the arts that we can experience “a truth” that we can access in no “other way” (Gadamer, 1989 pp. xxii, xxiii). Yet a gradual transformation of arts into ‘objects’, into ‘things’ to be judged has occurred in the ‘West’ since the so-called ‘Enlightenment’ of the late eighteenth century. Participants in my study (Ruddock, 2007) who perceived themselves to be non-musical felt directed by an invisible societal dictate that the doing of the ‘arts’ (including dance, music and visual arts) was necessarily performed only by talented individuals who could use their genius to create potentially great works. Allowing this perception to dominate their actions frequently meant that individuals would avoid any attempt to be actively involved in music making (especially where they believed that someone might hear them).

It is important to ask here in what ways it might matter if humans undermined their artistic acts by feeling that they could not appreciate a play or understand certain music. In considering the powerful affects of “play”, Gadamer (1989, pp. 116, 117) explores how, when engaging in drama, music, dance or art performers and listeners together cause these “play” forms to transcend everyday existence. In this ‘doing’, Gadamer argues, the form becomes greater than the separate parts (i.e. of the performer/painter/dancer and the spectators) as artistic involvement enables a consciousness that opens up a deeper way of knowing; it can allow the doer to experience an essence that evokes an ‘enlightenment’.

To do arts, then, is to engage in a deeper knowing of our being; it enables us to access an important aspect of our humanity (Nzewi, 2007 p. 31). To make music is to be able to transform our being through sound, to bring us towards a tangible awareness an essence of being than cannot otherwise be “recognised” (Gadamer, 1989). To have a separatist cultural ‘heritage’ that denies individuals from engaging in artistic acts, to exclude people from feeling that they are part of aesthetic life-forms can limit their essential knowing of their being. It can undermine potential interrelation with others and deny deeper awareness. To sing, to play an instrument, to paint or to act out a drama can become ways towards a sensual ‘knowing’ of reality, “a knowledge of the essence” (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 114, 115) of the ‘played’. In this way, the ‘arts’ are no mere entertainment but are a means towards essential self-knowing.
Research Methods

For research findings to be trustworthy and to have findings that can be useful for societal practice, the work must be transparent and demonstrate rigorous methodological procedures. While I had initial guiding questions to direct our minds towards perceived musicality, “conversational partners” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) were encouraged to make free responses, to ponder on their own experiences and to express their feelings, both negative and positive. Rather than researcher directed questions, participants actually responded to my interest in their stories: they allowed me to hear their reflective understandings and to learn about the reality of music in their lives (I did, however, initiate a return to points where I felt that there was ‘more to tell’). Surprise revelations from participants challenged my understanding as a music educator that everyone was essentially musical (Bumard, 2003, p. 30). From the outset of this study, pilot case studies revealed that beneath the veneer of the successful lawyer, teacher educator, high school teacher and retired technician lay deep convictions of being non-musical.

These participant experiences led towards a central question: How could it be that members of a musical species would take on and act out a non-musical role? With researcher journal entries recording changes in perceptions of both myself and the participants, I began to realise that my own views were becoming enmeshed with the informants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Words and impressions continued to gather in a confusing cloud of experiences and thoughts. Iterative revisiting of transcriptions showed layers of meaning where constructed narratives told tales revealing disparate participant realities.

As voluminous data began to swamp clarity I sought insight from ‘experts’ in research (Lincoln, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and I recognised the need to employ various methodological procedures to facilitate effective analytic and reflexive research practice. After careful observing, listening, and transcribing, I coded and analysed material from participants to find their reality governed by three particular perceptions; performance, talent and judgement. So that perceptions could be set side by side, it was useful at this early stage to use comparative tables (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 249). Table 1 is an example of how I clustered perceptions; this procedure led to a categorisation of themes.

Detailed material from participant contributions comprised transcriptions, notes (of my own reflections, telephone conversations, observations and ‘casual’ comments), tables, codes, memoranda, and a research journal. These all needed to be set into a form so that a reader could appreciate rich insights as they reflected aspects of music teaching practice. It became crucial to transform the morass of data into coherent text. It was important to turn confusion into sense; to make apparent contradictions reconcile towards accessible form. Further, in order to be credible, the research process had to be transparent and to be filtered through perceptions other than a single researcher. In addition to reflective participation of researcher and researched I sort to include reflective help from a wider community of readers (Lincoln, 2002). To in-depth reflections on my own interpretations, then, I valued input from a group of community readers who provided comments from their own different perspectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sonya</th>
<th>I have cousins who belong to marvellous choirs. There’s no doubting their musicality. Mine never was / never will be at that level.</th>
<th>I love to clap and dance along to the music and I love to listen. I enjoy it much more if I don’t have to keep still. I want to move not just with the beat but the emotion that I hear in it.</th>
<th>I do consider myself ‘musical’ if you include enjoyment and a passionate commitment to helping others enjoy it too. I’m assured that I can’t sing in tune...I accept ruefully.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vi</td>
<td>...they have to be able to project themselves satisfactorily to other people as being ‘musically’ talented. If I hear a singer [who does not sing well] I’ll say, ‘Who the heck told them they could sing?’</td>
<td>[A musical person] can sing or play a ‘musical’ instrument. [Their sound] must be easy to listen to, relaxing, inspiring, stirring or stimulating to my senses. Knowing that I have a hopeless voice I would not like to inflict my singing on someone else.</td>
<td>I don’t consider myself ‘musical’ compared to a musician. I’m not even in the [same] ballpark. I don’t really think I am musical. I have no voice to sing I would love to be able to sing. I enjoy humming along with the radio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterina [A musical person is] someone who is a trained musician in some sense, or they have a gift. [Their music] moves you in some way.</td>
<td>They have a natural ability to be ‘musical’...they’ve got this innate gift in them. That’s what I would think if someone said...a ‘musical person.’ If it sounds nice to me...sounds in tune, ...just is a nice sound in my ear...something in it that moves you in some way. ...certain hymns that all the children liked...ones that would be really popular, an’ they’d all start singing it really well; I love singing hymns.</td>
<td>I’m not musical. I’m not trained. As a family, we were brought up around music but none of us could sing, so I wouldn’t say any of my family were ‘musical.’ I always think ‘God I wish I could sing’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This helped to ensure that insights and questions would receive wider interpretations than possible when limited to one researcher and one supervisor (Haynes, 2006). In an attempt to reduce excessive length and to make the data accessible, I adapted participant words to form a narrative core where iterative interpretations were allowed to become vibrant sources of understanding, not just ‘interpretations of interpretations’ (Levering, 2006).

**What ‘non-musicians’ can tell**

God I wish I could sing. I’d love to do singing lessons but I’d be too embarrassed...the teacher’s going to go ‘Oh, no hope’ (Caterina)
Voices of self-perceived non-musicians resonated with musical memories; of reveling in drunken singing with friends; of having no interest in music yet bursting with pride to tell of a son’s singing; of fear to do music in public because of ridicule. Participants told of musical experiences that stayed with them; memories of music in their lives revealed deep layers of connection, disconnection and contradiction. When the number of ‘conversational partners’ reached twenty-nine I was satisfied that their information had reached saturation (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Minichiello, Aroni et al., 1995). At this point, it also became clear that participants’ experiences highlighted non-musical self-views that reflected findings reported by Davidson et al. (1997, p. 197) where negative effects of criticism impacted on individuals during their school years. Tables 2 and 3 present examples of participant experiences that show how non-musical perceptions emanate from school and instrumental ‘learning’.

### Table 2. Negative Effects of School Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Perceptions of being Not Musical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caterina</td>
<td>Learning the recorder at school started putting me off ‘cos I thought ‘I can’t just read it...I can’t read music!’ I felt stupid. I am the most unmusical person...I’m not musical. I’m not trained...God I wish I could sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chas</td>
<td>By about age 8, I knew I was not musical...this knowing was a gradual thing. I cannot say how it happened. I hardly outshone...others in the class when we learned the recorder. Whereas I excelled easily in maths. [Private piano learning confirms this conviction.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>I...didn’t play a musical instrument because I felt that I just was shocking when I did try – and that everyone else would think that I didn’t know how to do it right. Year six was the first...attempt at playing a musical instrument...my problem was that I couldn’t read music. My brother and sister had been introduced at a younger age and they could do it and I couldn’t. Dad used to teach dancing...he has good rhythm an’ beat...I can’t even jive. I put one too many steps...very self-conscious anyone’s watching...really embarrassed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>I was pretty good in primary school...then I just didn’t like it...my teacher [was] boring. I’m not really musical cos [to be]...musical [is to be able to] play an instrument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonya</td>
<td>I was never picked to sing or play at school. I don’t consider myself musical. I’d love to be a proficient practitioner, but I’m not...don’t regard myself anywhere in relation to a practising musician. I’m assured that I can’t sing in tune and the only thing I can play is a CD. Yes, I enjoy it. No, I can’t do it. That’s why I’m not even in the ballpark [of a musician.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>The teacher told me to mime. I thought ‘I’ll never be a rock star.’ At the time I thought it was funny...just accepted it. Later on – looking back, I thought the teacher could have been encouraging. It is a shame as even when on my own, I still, even now, feel self-conscious...let alone sing with other people around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>I couldn’t even play the recorder...would rather do detention than do music at school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their words, individuals exposed self-perceptions of musical inadequacy; feelings that reflect a widespread influence of the ‘talent-account’. These reported negative perceptions could have been turned around by the knowledge that singing and playing, like other skills, need to be allowed normal development. Small recognised this and advocated “practice and encouragement” (Small, 1998 p. 212). He abhorred the practice of silencing individuals because they had not learned to sing in tune, stating that:

The voice is at the center of all musical activity, but it is all too easy to silence and very hard to reanimate, since those who have been silenced in this way have been
wounded in a very intimate and crucial part of their being. In my opinion any music teacher caught doing such a thing...should be sacked on the spot (Small, 1998, p. 212). 

### Table 3. Negative Effects of Private Music Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Self-perceptions of being Not Musical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>...we always sing [in Croatia...but after] singing lessons [in Australia where an] eisteddfod was a disaster...I was embarrassed. [Now] I don’t think I have an ear for music because I think I’m tone deaf...I never thought I was but I think I am. I am not musical but I am not unmusical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chas</td>
<td>When faced with the demographic statement ‘I have learned to play a musical instrument’ Chas responds: ‘I was taught but I never really learnt. There is a subtle difference...I didn’t have an aptitude for it...I wasn’t good at it straight away.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>When I attempted to learn the trumpet it was a matter of seeing how it went. I got to a certain point that the amount of effort involved and level of expertise [achieved meant] that I was not musical. It was not something which came easily. The disappointment that the results were not as attractive as one might’ve wished [led me to abandon such learning].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice</td>
<td>...it normally means someone who performs. [When I was little] I thought I was crash hot...the crunch came when I actually started to learn the piano and...found out that music wasn’t all nice at all...it was full of people who growled at you all the time. It was a disillusionment to me. I felt a bit of a failure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessy</td>
<td>When I think of ‘musical’ I always think of classical music. I kind of don’t like it much and don’t understand it. I was a little bit frightened because you feel you ought to...you’re lacking some kind of refinement if you don’t understand. [Piano learning] undermined my confidence. I felt stupid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>I did want to learn guitar. I didn’t understand what a note was...I just felt it was a foreign language and I just couldn’t grasp it. I just had no innate ability to understand it. Theory lessons [seemed to be] a foreign language and I just couldn’t grasp it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was during a drama exam that Caterina experienced a judgement regarding her voice; this instance affected her ongoing self-perception:

I failed my exam because...she said my voice, my pitch in my voice was too singy. That was pretty devastating.” I’ve always believed that I am ‘tone deaf’. I’ve always believed that I’m a bad singer. I love music but I’ve never believed that I’m someone who can perform in any way...or can sing in any way...or...I’m just an observer of music. I like it. I would...if someone, if God or whoever could give me a gift...I would love the gift to sing. **I would love to be able to sing!**

How can it be that Caterina ‘learned’ that she was ‘tone deaf’? Small (1998) confronts this notion of leading people to believe that they are “tone-deaf” as “odious,” and laments this situation where “somebody [teaches] otherwise intelligent and articulate [people] that they could not, must not, sing” (pp. 211, 212). He recognises that this can be an outcome of teachers believing it was their function to discover potentially talented students who could become professionals rather than undertake inclusive music education. Caterina’s experience confirms perceptions explored by Small. It was after I had shared perceptions of my own musical inadequacy with Caterina that she became increasingly confident to tell of her own musical disappointments. She talked of her hopes to give her unborn child a chance to experience music, yet she feared that it would be a “struggle [because] we’re
not a musical family". Before she continued, she checked on the confidentiality of our conversation then confided her fears regarding her young child learning music had been exacerbated because of her observation that:

...certain teachers - they want the bright students...the talented, the gifted ones. That makes it easy for them. And possibly because they're not natural teachers themselves, they have to be a lot more judgemental.

In was her work in a music department that led Caterina to observe that teachers preferred students who were “going to make it”. She lamented that they did not “encourage the ones that maybe aren’t as...‘gifted’. It’s a bit harsh, isn’t it?”

**Conclusion**

Together with the other participants in my study, Caterina’s experiences revealed the potency of teacher actions to impact on musical identities. For fifty percent of this group of ‘never-picked’ it was the actions of music teachers, either in schools or in private studios, which led toward participant negative self-perceptions. Yet, while it is tempting to ‘accuse’ particular teachers for undermining innate musicality by unrealistic or ineffective teaching practice, observations made during my study suggest that these ‘tutors’ acted with the best intent to respond to societal expectations. Echoes of the early Australian tradition continue a perception that music is “a desirable artistic pursuit and social accomplishment for the children of upper and middle class families [and tutoring in music was mainly available for] young people who exhibited particular musical talent and wished to undertake vocational training as performers” (Stevens, 1997). Values from these expectations are reflected in participant embarrassment at ill-prepared attempts to ‘perform’ which lead many to experience a reluctant acceptance of their ‘lack of talent’ and they acquiesce to societal pressure not to sing and play. Despite recognising the vital part that music played in their lives and self-knowing, the respondents who perceived themselves to be non-musical nevertheless accepted their ‘lack of being musical’ status without question.

Where our understanding of what it is to be ‘human’ is increasingly being informed by neurological (see Peretz et al., 2003), philosophical (Gadamer, 1989) and other scientific findings (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008; Sacks, 2007), we can now recognise the important effects of engaging with music and other art forms. To ‘play’ or ‘work’ in the arts gives us an access a deeper sense of self and communal knowing that can take us beyond everyday chatter towards a deeper awareness of existence and of being a living part of something greater than a shallow surface reality. To be denied access to active involvement in the arts, as experienced by the ‘never-picked’ participants of my study, is to be denied a fundamental aspect of human living. Their stories reveal a reality where they are unable to engage in an important means of experiencing the interrelationships of tangible and intangible aspects of their lifeworld.

I wish to assert that false separations like the ‘musical-unmusical’ dichotomy are not useful constructs. As Lines (2003) argues, “music and cultural work form a synthesis and...their separation, by means of objectification, is actually a radical break away from
‘what is’” (p. 239). Where music is a part of everyday life, not just something to be consumed and not something made by only by specially gifted individuals, it can add a rich dimension to our life’s awareness. So, with measurable data now supporting an understanding of the crucial role played by listening/doing/learning towards musical being and doing, I argue that informed education practice can make it possible to reverse the unnecessary musical/unmusical dichotomy. By focusing on the vibrant engagement of the students rather than on the excellence of ‘performance,’ music in schools need not “contribute to...demusicalization” (Small, 1998, p. 212) but can instead, celebrate “the musicality of the ordinary person” (Small 1977, p. 163).

I believe that the experiential account for acquiring musical ‘ability’ (Serafine, 1988; Sloboda, 1996) provides a convincing basis from which we can argue for music to become part of an inclusive practice in general education. It is important to question why it is that our tradition of teaching in schools (Small, 1998 p. 212) leads musical beings to believe that they are not musical. How can it be that some teachers accept negative aspects of traditional practice that accentuate ‘performance’ at the expense of human musical expression? How is it that instinctively musical beings can learn they are not musical? My inquiry into this phenomenon shows a need to address these questions if we are to change for the better.

Unrealistic or inappropriate ‘standards’ that lead many individuals to ‘learn’ that they are not musical, are part of an ill-informed education structure that has no place in an ‘enlightened’ educational setting. As music educators, we can influence educational practice by noting negative effects that undermine holistic development; we can speak out about the long-term dehumanising influences of outdated traditions with roots in the so-called ‘enlightenment’. I look forward to inclusive understandings of human musicality as innovative music educators continue to create ways to inspire students to engage in music making as it connects “us into a resonance...that [can] quicken and alert us of our condition as creative humans immersed in cultural and expressive life” (Lines, 2003, p. 241).

References


PART II: FUGUE

Chapter One

*Conceptual analysis is essentially dialogic: difficulties and torments are encountered which are then to be dissipated by a clear analysis of the source of the confusion (Haynes, 2013 p. 149)*

Research Processes

This research systematically develops an understanding of how it is that the phenomenon under investigation – a distancing of musical beings from their intrinsic musicality – exists in everyday living but resists recognition and change. In this chapter, I describe the research processes suitable to address this issue, and consider the use of arts-based methodologies that augment the adoption of hermeneutic inquiry. Introducing the researcher as *bricoleur* (Kincheloe, 2001), I reflect on the hermeneutic process of meaning-making, and discuss methodological details of this research. The paper reproduced below re-examines the research design used in the *never picked* (Ruddock, 2007b) project to recognise questions arising from this study. It then considers processes planned to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of cultural distancing from inherent musicality. Here, I acknowledge the importance of participant insights from the 2007 study which become a springboard toward research approaches for this investigation.

---

A SPIRAL DESIGN DELIVERS RECOGNITION TOWARDS HARMONY¹

Eve RUDDOCK
Murdoch University, Australia
e-mail: ruddock@iinet.net.au

Abstract
This paper reports on a research design planned to reveal lived experiences of individuals who live with a disharmony between their potential human musicality and everyday reality. Out of a cohort of twenty-nine self-perceived non-musicians, twenty individuals uncovered a world where music was something performed by the ‘talented’: there was no place for them. Especially planned to be responsive to participants’ lived experiences, the research uses a composite framework where initial qualitative analysis leads through constructed narrative to a final philosophical reflection. Participant experiences appear to be responding to “invisible rules” that disallow musical expression and preclude action toward healthy being.
Keywords: research methodology, human musicality, cultural constraints.

Introduction

Through space the universe grasps me and swallows me up like a specie; through thought I grasp it (Pascal, 1966, 113, 59)

This paper reports on a research design that was especially planned to be responsive to participants as they revealed disharmony between living reality and potential human musicality. A constructed narrative tells of everyday experiences before it “spirals” through a philosophical filter to explore a dislocated musical reality. My recent research (Ruddock, 2007) demonstrated the power of music to promote wellness as it acted as a conduit for developing selves and communal identities as well as being a balm for emotional distress. An unexpected revelation of my study was that this pervasive power of music maintained its widespread subliminal effect despite participant protestations of being non-musical. Such a perception conflicts with reliable research which verifies the instinctive musical nature of humans (Peretz, 2003; Tramo, 2001); it raises many questions.

¹ An earlier version of this article appeared in the Proceedings of the 29th World Conference of the International Society for Music Education, Beijing, China.

ISSN 1691-2721
One question relates to opportunities for individuals in our Australian communities to engage in music learning. Although music educators endeavour to provide a music environment for all, efforts to ensure holistic education are hindered by a societal perception that only some people are born to do music and the dominance of the notion of "performativity threatens to marginalize music and music education" (Koopman, 2005, 119). In my recent study (Ruddock, 2007), for instance, 20 self-perceived non-musicians contributed in-depth perceptions of their daily musical experiences to reveal a world where music was something performed by the talented, the gifted; these individuals were consumers of other people's music. When I spoke to a young friend about this predicament he thought for several moments before commenting:

"We are vessels through which we experience,
BUT are we being tuned?
Do we tune ourselves?"

"Are we being tuned? Do we tune ourselves?" Or are we already tuned? In direct opposition to recent research (Peretz, 2003), one participant reflected the belief of many professionals (Slaboda, 1996) when he insisted that humans are born musical or they are not. These questions bring to mind the consideration of M. Huberman and M. Miles where they see human beings as complex entities for whom "social phenomena not only exist in the mind but are externally derived from the regularities and determinisms that surround [them]" (Huberman & Miles, 2002, 1). When participants told tales of their non-musicality they created a research quest to find how musical creatures could feel so distanced from their instinctive human quality. A cacophony of voices overwhelmed initial attempts to unravel their delivered puzzle; of the 29-member cohort, 20 said they knew that they were not musical. Nine individuals were satisfied to engage in music in their own way; they saw themselves as musical non-musicians. This study focused on those who lived with a debilitating knowledge that undermined the extent to which they dared to do music.

It was not that these individuals eschewed music in their lives. They enjoyed music made by others and some would even join in with the music making when satisfied that they were alone or as inhibitions left their conscious control when drunk. Yet music is a communicative medium: it is a way to connect and be human through non-verbal aural connection not limited by text and time; it can offer a means whereby we can experience a harmony that is not limited by time as it exists in time. As I. Cross and I. Morely (Cross & Morely, 2009) argue, music has evolved as a ubiquitous part of human culture to become an embedded aspect of our social human development that offers us ways of knowing who we are and where we belong. Yet, despite recognizing the vital role that music played in their self-knowing, two-thirds of the participants accepted their non-musical status without question. It is important to ask to what degree this perception might be attributed to participants' restricted active musicking; only the fortunate few in Australia have access to sequential, sound music education (Pascoe et al, 2005).

Arguments for the inclusion of music in the curriculum make sense and become compelling when viewed through the reflective lens of W. Bowman: he recognizes the potential of music education to embrace body and mind (as one) in a learning that leads towards whole self-knowing (Bowman, 2002). Since musical education
experience can lead to deeper human knowing, given appropriate learning conditions (Bowman, 2002). It is important to challenge widespread denial of such experiences that deprive students from essential educational provision with its potential for the nurturing of spiritual and social awareness.

Despite the recognized value of music learning and music-making in primary education, when it comes to policy decisions, music does not rate as an essential subject. With our system only providing a substantial background in music experiences for some children, and where teacher education institutions continue to tolerate a minimal music component, many teachers feel that they lack basic musical skills that would enable them to include music in their everyday practice (Russell-Bowie, 1997). As long as many professionals (including educators) maintain the belief that we are either musical or not (Welch, 2001) then it remains a challenge to convince policy makers that music has a rightful place in the curriculum.

Methodology

Use of narrative form and philosophical reflection grew from the demands of the participant data itself. While narrative form might not provide a basis for truth claims (Bruner, 1985, 113), its value was evident because it delivered insights not otherwise apparent. I became conscious that the rigorous process of detailed listening, coding, and analyzing uncovered previously hidden complexities and contradictions. Engagement with participants and their perceptions over a period of five years added depth to the interpretative process and provided an increasingly fair representation of their disparate views. The framework for this aspect of the study is summarized in Table 1 (modified after Lincoln, 2002, 329, 330).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Iterative discourse with participants to ensure their views are truly told</td>
<td>Ethical considerations maintained throughout every phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Views of all contributors (interviewees and authors of documents) to be given balanced exposure.</td>
<td>With no dominating view. Societal effects on non-musicians are articulated and so can be heard in social and educational planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher/Researched Mutuality</td>
<td>Humility of researcher by maintaining an awareness of equal partnership in exploring feelings of musicality</td>
<td>Increased understanding happens for both researcher and researched;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Sharing new understandings, encouraging change and providing information for education planning.</td>
<td>Provides an opportunity for the view that it is as normal to do music as mathematics, so that music could be included as part of the core curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITERIA</td>
<td>ACTION</td>
<td>EFFECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophic lens</td>
<td>On-going reading brings philosophic insights to the interpreting of data.</td>
<td>Deeper philosophical and theoretical awareness provide a framework within which broader and deeper reflections bring new meanings to participant data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td>Careful recording of all data; on-going reflection to strive for conscious awareness of assumptions; constant member-checks to verify accuracy of interpretations.</td>
<td>Checks and re-checks so that queries from participants and interested educators or researchers can be accurately addressed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understandings emerging from data evolved to speak in theoretical terms as the research process progressed through a spiral of data gathering, data analysis, and philosophical reflection using social perceptions theorized by J. Habermas (Habermas, 1997), C. Small (Small, 1977, 1998), and R. Bhaskar (Bhaskar, 1989).

Figure 1 outlines the process of iterative analysis where work on data progressed through initial qualitative analysis before being reduced to manageable proportions in narrative form (in this case as a ballad) and thence undergoing philosophical reflection.

*Figure 1: Overarching Spiral Research Design Reflects Reduction of Data through Qualitative Analyses and Narrative Construction before Final Philosophical Reflection*
Philosophical Reflections

Influences of Western dualism came to light as complex layers of lived musical experiences revealed a dominance of negative self-judgment and convictions that individuals were either “musical” or “not musical”. Participant experiences told of unfortunate attempts to learn to sing or play an instrument that led to beliefs that to be musical is to have a “gift”, something inherited by only the few. Their stories revealed a domination of entrenched societal notions of “performance” and “talent” (see Howe et al., 1999). As a wealth of participant material brought this reality to life, I recognized the importance of allowing the data to speak for itself. My assumptions about what is “music” and what is “musical” were challenged as I absorbed and reflected on the data. I began to understand that participant stories raised ever deeper questions about the experience of music in our society and about our approach to the teaching of music in our schools. Dictated by the words and actions of participants, this study began to reveal why many people in our society might feel excluded from involvement in active music making. This investigation became a vehicle for an expression of and a reflection on participant data.

An understanding of musical harmony tells us that dissonance can enhance harmonic tension as it heightens movement towards resolution; in such a way, voices of participant conflict led this research project through levels of interaction to narrative cohesion thence through understandings of expert thinkers. As the journey continued that seeks to understand how it is that so many of us in the “west” live with a reduced access to our musical expression, this overarching spiral design assisted by providing a “purposeful” methodological way of coming to know the “present” while helping to keep excess clutter at bay (Foucault, 1972, 232). It helped me to avoid imposing my limiting worldview on what might be revealed and to work towards recognition of what is. This made clear that, despite our supposedly advanced state, we are often left to contend with mystery (Foucault, 1972). The crucial aspect this research, then, is to wonder – to discover the question. This is the quest – to question again and again until the work can reveal more from within the lived experiences of individuals, until the question leads to fruitful thought and to an enhanced perception.

Evidence from participant experiences revealed a central problem: these individuals lacked a freedom to be musical in their everyday lives. As their stories uncovered an unnatural distancing from inherent musicality they revealed that this imposed “unlearning” was often an outcome of interactions with teachers, oftentimes music teachers. This led me to wonder how it could be that the “owners” of musical knowledge were those whose comments cast a limiting, long-lasting judgment onto the self-perception of individuals.

H.-G. Gadamer referred to “[P]opular consciousness [being] affected by the eighteenth-century cult of genius and the sacralization of art that we have found to be characteristic of bourgeois society in the nineteenth century” (Gadamer, 1993, 93). Dominant in the mind of the observer, the doing of the arts became something expectant of public criticism. Where judgment, rather than an appreciation of meaning, became an important aspect of “art”. It is such “judgment” that interferes with the development of musical ability as it leads to self-consciousness and withdrawal. However, via the work of thinkers such as H.-G. Gadamer (Gadamer, 1993) and M. Foucault (Foucault, 1972), we may further explore this phenomenon: we can
embrace their insights as guides towards understanding. Indeed, following the practice of M. Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), we may recognize that a careful phenomenological examination of individual experiences can reveal a raised consciousness of our reality.

From their lived experience, participant perceptions indicated that there was a subconscious directive to their acceptance of a non-musical disposition. If we are to allow music to be a widespread and expressive part of our society that can help us move towards harmony between our neighbours and ourselves, then it is crucial that we are able to recognize this pervasive and persuasive directive that affects our musical reality. Participant experiences echo an understanding that comes from within our “western” consciousness, an understanding that is not accessible to our knowing although it directs us by “rules” about which we remain unaware (Foucault, 1972, 232). Through harmonious discourse wherein the players find disagreement enlightening, we can hope to discern the source of societal persuasion that undermines freedom to engage in human musical action. While they remain in the unconscious, these unseen directives disallow musical expression (and other ways of expressing human connection): they reduce an important way of healthy being. Where a majority perceive musicking to be an occupation for the “gifted” it will continue to be viewed as a peripheral “frill” and music will remain an optional extra in the curriculum, something to be included if there happens to be a staff member who is able to do music.

A Final Thought

To B. Pascal’s aphorism at the beginning of this paper, I would add: through music I become in tune with it, in reference to a music that is understood in its broadest sense to include particular sounds that result from human action as well as our perceptions of, and responses to, the sounds of nature. With a focus on harmony within and between individuals, it is possible to see how communicative musicking could work against economic and national constraints to contribute towards human connection and cooperation. As we reflect on this, I would like to recall Pascal’s emphasis on the importance of individual thought and extend this to include recognition of our inner human harmonic dimension. If we wish to live in accord with others, it is essential that we first learn to live with our own inner harmony. But in our world, where we so often leave musicking to the professionals, we find ourselves missing a vital aspect of our humanity: an essential part that offers a way towards communicating and being in harmony with ourselves and others. Rather than aspiring to advance and dominate our world, the possibility of global harmony would be more truly enhanced through our recognition of a connective role that music can play in the home, the school and across nations. Through music we can become in tune with our world.
References


Received 24.12.2010.
Accepted 13.04.2011.
"Never picked" study raises cultural questions

Deciding the question is the path to knowledge

(Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 358)

Through music we can become in tune with our world? Findings from the never picked study (Ruddock, 2007b) indicate that societal assumptions in Western environments do not allow everyone to feel musically involved. While insights from the participants in the never picked investigation led to an enhanced perception of how Western notions of music (something to be critically judged as performance) affected an individual’s capacity to be musical, I continue to wonder how it is that this can be so? Reflecting on Gadamer’s words above, I note the importance of defining and limiting a question so that a quest may lead to understanding. Initial questions set the project in motion:

- How is it that a musical species would create a culture that fails to acknowledge an intrinsic aspect of human being?
- How is it possible to be “in tune with our world” when distanced from freedom to engage in communicative musicking?

For individuals such as the never picked, everyday living is constrained by convictions that a person is either born musical or not. Further, musicking loses the capacity to connect as the predominance of the notions of performance and critical judgement (Westney, 2003, p. 138) interfere with inherent musical responses even before skills are developed (Ruddock, 2007b, pp. 88-102). It is not surprising, then, that puzzles raised by the never picked experiences are at the heart of the current project.

Harry enters the conversational arena

Serendipity would play a part in determining a way of working toward understanding; this would occur when an evocative exemplar of the phenomenon uncovered in the never picked study, one whose voice represented the musical vs. unmusical conceptual status quo, read the Spiral Design paper (reproduced above). This previous participant (Harry), as a dialectic partner in this proposed study, would become a valuable protagonist for the never picked. His texts were to provide a base upon which a fusion of horizons (Vessey, 2009, pp. 531,541) could open up the conversation to become a catalyst toward deeper understanding. In the first instance, his written
comments on the above paper (Ruddock, 2011) alerted me to limitations that the spiral model from the *never picked* study would have for the current project.

Reflecting on the interactive nature of this project, I re-imagined the overall structure to realise the design described below (see Figure 2). As Rowe and her colleagues (1989) found, it is not easy to represent “on paper” such a complex interactive “spiralling…process…[that can lead to] more and more refined and clarified interpretation” (Rowe, Halling, Davies, Leifer, Powers, & van Bronkhorst. 1989, p. 237). So it was that Harry’s observation, pointing out that the process is not linear, but that there is “a much more interactive process that is not lockstep or predictable” (email: 1/12/2010) alerted me to pitfalls of the former research design as it might apply to this project. Thus, as seen in Figure 2, reflective interplay continuously spirals through raw data, insights from literature, qualitative analysis and dialogic interchanges, to make it possible to envisage clearer perceptions that could make way for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This organic procedure draws on participant lived experiences, evolving insights from interdisciplinary literature, dialectic interchange and philosophical reflections as they “play” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, pp. 103-5) with and against each other in a dance toward a “truth” (p. 124) of human *being*. So, iterative connections between these elements are planned to deliver ongoing insights so to articulate pertinent questions that could lead to enhanced understanding through this heuristic\(^8\), longitudinal study.

Figure 2  Reflective processes dance through a heuristic spiral to enhanced understanding.

\(^8\) ‘Heuristic’ serves as an adjective, in the sense that the investigative process includes exploring back and forth between participant data, researcher knowing and the literature, gradually delimiting nebulous awareness to work toward a clearer understanding of the phenomenon. As a noun meaning “the art of discovery” (Mautner, 1997, p. 249), it captures the essence of this project
Tuning in to arts-based research and research questions

When recognised as part of everyday living, rhythm and harmony have a capacity to connect not only to community, but to our life-world (Nzewi, 2009a; Trevarthen, 1999). However, given the reality faced by participants in the never picked study, it can be seen that the performance aspect of musicking, where Western societal emphasis plays directly on the individual’s capacity to become a musician, pre-judges the person as being either musical or not. If the individual is judged to have potential to become a musically “active, economic agent” (Dudley, 2009) then she is encouraged; otherwise she fails to have a “licence” (Ruddock, 2007b, p. 164) to be recognised as a musical person. Such a view undervalues everyday arts practice. It restricts the potential musicking of self-perceived non-musical participants in this research project; they feel, like Kafka’s Mouse People\(^9\) (Kafka, 1924/2007), that they are silenced consumers of others’ musical products. Rather than exhibiting communicative musicality (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009), individuals baulk at the potential costs of active musicking: these include choices with monetary considerations (e.g. access to learning and or musical instruments) and the perceived need to protect themselves from embarrassment in face of “critical judgement” (Westney, 2003, p. 138).

Researcher reflections affect processes

This research project was not originally conceived from within what Jorgensen terms, the “scholarly community” (2009b, p. 418). Rather, it emerges from empirical evidence of those participants for whom the music education establishment has offered little, or worse, has led to a distancing of their instinctive musicality (Ruddock, 2007a). Nevertheless, the research journey, once begun, has drawn upon a cross-disciplinary research base. This encompasses cultural neuroscience (Chiao, 2009b), qualitative methods (Jorgensen, 2009a), arts-based practices (Barone & Eisner, 2012) and hermeneutic practices, thus relies on developed and developing research traditions. From the questions that emerged with the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b) investigation, each step in this study is reasoned and intentional (Jorgensen, 2009b, p. 406); all aspects

\(^9\) In his short story, Josefine, the Singer, or the Mouse People, Kafka notes that “a certain exhaustion and lack of hope leaves a heavy mark on our otherwise tough and optimistic people...Our lack of musicality is probably something to do with that” (1924/2007, p. 274). Throughout this thesis, Kafka’s story will be employed to offer insights into the phenomenon of distanced musicality.
of planning, participant contact, and hermeneutic processes are made as transparent as is possible. In my role as researcher, for instance, I wish to acknowledge the epistemological value of musicking when, through the process of playing the Prelude and Fugue (Bach, 1742/1993), poignancies of participant experience arose in my mind; these were to lead to questions that challenged accepted ways of musicking. This lived response to participant experience was to lead to more holistic ways of understanding— including poetic bricolage. This arts-based approach is no peripheral decoration; rather, it is an integral part of the research (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 61) that can provide an accessible text for sharing participant experience and emerging perceptions. Reflections on experiences were to play out through representations of dialogic connections, by presenting participant perceptions via direct extracts in poetic form (Liu, 2011, p. 8) from transcripts, email responses, or annotations on my published papers.

As I have already acknowledged, my research puzzle emerged from the experiences of the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b). Yet, what these might mean, and how they can be theorized or explained, is not the prime quest. Rather, what is important is to work towards a way of “explicating the essential qualities, structure and forms” (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008, p. 58) from previously unused material from the never picked participants together with new data emerging from the research cohort especially found for this study. During the research process, close readings of related literature were to be maintained in order to ensure on-going fresh views and insights that could deliver a deeper understanding of musicking in contemporary Western everyday living. Taking note of Jorgensen’s (2009b, p. 416) warning that a multidisciplinary approach can be necessary, rather than basing research processes on a particular aspect of music education research practices, I refer to literature from related disciplines throughout the thesis rather than gathering review material in one particular chapter.

Again, I recognise the importance of making clear the interconnectedness of disparate voices; I need to acknowledge the influence of my self “consciousness” (Aldridge & Adridge, 2008, p. 58) as it effects aspects concerning:

- the evolving of the project, the
- emergence of the questions, and
- how I would approach an interpretation of participant experience.
Because my own consciousness is necessarily at the centre of this research procedure, it was important to take constant care to note my own actions and reactions in regard to participant revelations; it was important that participant stories did not become submerged beneath my “analysis and theorizing” (Levering, 2006); it was always necessary that I was constantly aware of the challenge to provide the reader with a chance to recognise considerations arising from data and data events themselves and so provide direct access to participants’ telling. In line with understandings from Aldridge and Aldridge (2008, p. 60), I adopted a useful way of achieving this by keeping regular reflections in a research journal (an on-going document that was always available for checking perceptions and events); this exposed “beliefs, bias and assumptions” that helped me to recognise my own “subjectivity” as it came from my fingers on the keyboard (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18).

It was also helpful to note that my surprise at unexpected realisations along the research route would be considered by Merleau-Ponty as “indispensable to describing” (in Aldridge & Aldridge, p. 59) the phenomenon experienced by the participants. While instances of my experience and evolving consciousness are articulated in the process of writing this thesis, prime consideration remained focussed on how exclusionary aspects of the phenomenon compromised human musicking for the participant cohort. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) understood, it is always important to recognise the centrality of the role of the participants themselves regarding actual perception. So, it is important that the integrity of this dialogic process is enriched by new understandings from the literature as I ‘see’ how each participant ‘sees’, as perceptions are teased out towards enhanced understanding.

**Purpose of this research**

A major function of this project, then, is to confront restrictive cultural mores that subdue a real part of our Western consciousness: to recognise this phenomenon in everyday life and to find ways that work to subvert it. Interestingly, even researchers who sensitively capture how it feels to be so restricted, and who work to effect change for particular individuals, may fail to venture beneath the “sovereignty of collective consciousness” (Foucault, 1972, p. 24) to identify the root of the problem. In the reporting of a particular study, for instance, neither Rolling (2013) nor the researcher who was directly involved questioned what it is in Western culture that brings individuals to feel a particular way: they simply accept the ‘reality’ and work from there to ‘fix’ it. They do, however, clearly describe the “fear and insecurity...the deeply
embodied resistance” (2013 pp. 93-94) that prevent some people from even beginning to engage in the arts.

As mentioned above, this under-researched area of human being was recognised by Kafka (1924/2007) – almost a century ago when he dammingly evoked the reality of a people for whom imposed non-musicality reduced vital humanity. In what might be read as a phenomenological study into human musicking in our current Western culture, Kafka penetrates the false veneer of adulation of the ‘star’ performer to portray a people where imposed non-musicality reduces vital humanity. Despite writing that:

> life is hard, and once we have tried to shake off the worries of the day, we are not capable of raising our spirits to something as remote from the rest of our lives as music...we do not miss it very much, (p. 264),

his story then proceeds to deal with this sense of missing. His words capture feelings experienced by many individuals in our everyday Western reality when he proclaims that, except for the singer with an “extraordinary gift, given to no one else...” (1924/2007, p. 276), “[w]e are completely amusical” (p. 264).

In light of perceptions that are reflected in the never picked project (Ruddock, 2007b), I argue that it is important to further explore this notion of the talented individual, one perpetuated by an educational system that undervalues the arts as an integral part of essential learning. For many, a lack of opportunity may lead to a failure in the recognition and development of inherent musicality. It is my intention that, through a portrayal of participant experience, we can consider problems that arise when culturally imposed beliefs lead individuals to live as ‘receivers’ of music. Believing that they are not ‘musical’ leaves those like the never picked to defer to professional musicians as ‘owners’ of the music. This investigation is planned to unravel such a misconception of human being; to question how it is that we accept a world of reductionist thinking (Straume, 2015, p. 1474) that can undermine musical being. In acknowledging the power of the status quo, subversion of human musicking, the current study aims to make the influential “collective consciousness” (Foucault, 1972, p. 7) increasingly visible. This could help to prevent the arrest of developing musicality (Welch, 1986). It could contribute to knowledge that could reduce instances where children label themselves as not being musical. For, while at birth human infants demonstrate intrinsic musicality (Trevarthen, 1999), by the time children go to school, many have already found themselves labelled as unmusical (Welch, 2005). In seeking to ‘out’ those dissuasive elements in Western communities where musicking is, in the
main, the prerogative of official ‘musicians’ or ‘those who can’, this thesis embraces the following aspirations.

**To raise awareness towards inclusive musicking**

This study cannot attempt to offer authoritative knowledge leading to directive policy. Rather, it seeks to tease out questions (Gadamer, 2004 p. 357) that can challenge damaging exclusionary views that are reflected in élitist music teaching/learning practices in the wider Western environment. Small (1977/1996) makes it clear that long-term detrimental effects, where individuals tend to be judged as musical or unmusical, is not the fault of a particular teacher; rather, he notes that this endemic problem is rooted in cultural mis-understanding (p. 204). This study aims to engage in a wider discourse that interrogates access to development and expression of individuals’ musicality.

**To recognise unwitting undermining of musical development**

A major aim of this project is to focus on raising an awareness of situations where music is perceived as an unessential *frill* (de Vries, 2010 p. 41); to challenge practices that deny familiarity with and development of skills and connections with the musical arts. Excellent work towards inclusive, innovative music education is more likely to be implemented in settings where decision makers are aware of the inherent value of arts learning and practice. Unfortunately, however, there are observations of *those teachers who create the self-fulfilling position in which their practice is FOUNDED on the belief that a proportion of students are not musical and ‘not worth teaching’. Many schools in WA operate like this, administering the Bentley Tests (which dear old Arnold disowned decades before his death!). Our own colleagues are the worst offenders. (Nicholas Bannan, personal communication, 25/08/2015).*

Yet, despite their best intentions, even the most passionate supporters of music education may fail in their recognition of every child’s musicality. Examples occur during everyday involvement in schools and in research. De Vries reveals an instance that occurred in a school situation (de Vries, 2010). He offers useful insights into the frustrations of teaching music in a school where music is not perceived to be as important as other ‘core’ aspects of the curriculum. While the story of his return to teaching after a break conveys his passion for music education, this coloured by a frustration that the generalist staff did not appreciate the value of music in education.

*As a music teacher it frustrated me that these generalist classroom teachers did not want to engage with music in their classrooms, and as a teacher educator I found it frustrating that they were disinclined to engage with current research literature.*
But I was the substitute music teacher. How much further could I go with this casual staff room conversation? Not far, as it turned out. I talked up the specialist music lesson, what happens, how the children enjoy these lessons, how it was part of a rounded education. (2010, p. 41)

Thus, it was in a “casual staff room conversation” where music was being labelled as a ‘frill’ that the passionate music teacher maintained his composure despite the fact that his life’s work was being undervalued. De Vries did follow up the conversation with informed details as to why music was important, even offering to supply the teachers with research papers that confirmed the importance of music as part of the educational process. He does not, however, report that he submitted any formal report/memo to challenge the uninformed music educational practice that he had just encountered.

To recognise assumptions that block musicking as a universal human behaviour

In this light, it is important here to reiterate that a key purpose of this study is to play toward a question that can lead to recognition of societal assumptions which affect access to musical involvement. Gadamer insists that, for instance, that “[t]he essence of the question is to have sense [which] involves a sense of direction...[and] perspective” (1975/2004, p. 356). Yet, as Davidson’s (1994, p. 102) research shows, when dominated by the talent account, individuals experience a skewed view of the reality of music in their everyday lives. Davidson alerts us to the fact that unfortunate limitations of human expression are caused by educators’ and musicians’ limited understandings of what it means to be humanly musical. Further, unacknowledged assumptions are exposed in the questionable use of the term musical, where references to musical versus unmusical have the capacity to undermine an individual’s sense of intrinsic musicality. For example, when de Vries writes “The use of pre-packaged resources such as CDs and textbooks, utilizing the talents of musical [my emphasis] children in class and making teachers aware that music activities can be facilitated even without the teacher having to sing or play a musical instrument are ways that teachers can at least begin to have music in their classrooms” (de Vries, 2011, p. 10). While it may be unintentional, the use of “musical children” too readily perpetuates the notion that musical children have talents [my emphasis]. What of those students who have not experienced musical environments within which their musical skills could be developed? As Welch asserts: “We are all musical: we just need the opportunity for our musicality to be celebrated and developed. Such is the prime purpose of music education” (2005, p. 119). It is revealing to note that one of the novice teacher interviewees (quoted in de Vries paper) avoids discriminatory
labelling by, more appropriately, referring to “children in my class with musical backgrounds” (de Vries, 2011, p. 11). Disturbingly, in another example in this same paper, de Vries makes no particular response to assertions from a teacher in the first year of service that only those who wanted to sing would do so in his class, since not all children enjoy singing (p. 17). It is of concern that the author fails to bring attention to an unfortunate assumption where children who ‘do’, can, while those who ‘do not sing’, too often believe that they cannot (Ruddock, 2007b). West would remind him that: “We are musical beings, yet most of us don’t make music” (2009, p. 212). She also presents telling evidence to show that our “psychosocial condition [is not merely] a problem for music education [but also] a general social dysfunction” (p. 215).

To defer to lived experiences: to confirm? to provoke!

In stark contrast with intrinsic human musicking where the musical arts contribute to physical and mental health (Nzewi, 2008), experiences of the self-perceived non-musician participants from the never picked study (Ruddock, 2007b) revealed how their narrow, selective arts curricula left them with negative self-regard; one which undermined both individual and communal health. With this in mind, the current investigation is planned to identify societal assumptions which lead to systemic practices that deny many individuals an opportunity to enjoy experiential music education (Pascoe et al., 2005).

Before addressing unanswered questions from the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b) investigation, however, it was necessary to gain access to a new cohort in order to confirm (or otherwise) findings; participants who could further enrich the study with their own experiences (Creswell, 1998, p. 55). It was also important to access perceptions from individuals who perceived themselves as musicians. Here, serendipity played its part; even before the Research Proposal had been officially approved, I was introduced to Hope (pseudonym) at a social gathering. Her response to hearing about my project was to explain: ‘I learned to play but am tone deaf…I’m not musical’. Since she was interested in becoming a participant, I carefully filed her contact details. Then, after submitting and gaining Ethics approval (Human Ethics Permit 2009/029), I contacted Hope to check whether she would still be willing to talk about musical aspects in her life for my research. She was.

Researcher in the play towards understanding

Aldridge and Aldridge (2008) emphasise the importance of acknowledging the conceptual background that reflects the researcher's philosophy. To this end, I revealed
my subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988) throughout thesis chapters and Episodes; it was relevant, for instance, to reveal my background as a classroom teacher prior to my training and experience of working as an instrumental music teacher. My teaching experiences led to ongoing wondering about music in our culture; these remained as underlying influences as I worked toward a research question (Peshkin, 1988). They effected how I planned to engage with participants towards a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008, p. 57).

I acknowledge that my lived Western life experiences necessarily affect the interpretative processes from both my perspective and that of the participants (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008, pp. 56-9) and also recognise my part as “agent” (p. 56) in the intricate “play” (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 102-3) of bringing lived experiences to life for others to consider. Further, I accept how important it is to keep in mind Peshkin’s (1988) awareness that a researcher’s subjectivity remains an integral part of the investigation at every stage of the project, but especially so in the initial stage where personal perceptions affect the formulation of the research questions. I was to remain acutely aware of my researcher subjectivity affecting word choice, particularly when recording participant experience (Punch, 1998, p. 61) and how this would influence the whole of the research project (Peshkin, 2000).

In this research, I was aware of the need to recognise the value within each participant’s contribution (Shaw, 2008), despite the disparity between levels of awareness and information that would be accessed from each different individual. There was a two-fold value in honest revelations from self-perceived non-musical participants; firstly, their experiences contributed to research texts awaiting analysis and, secondly, individuals could benefit from becoming aware of restrictive cultural assumptions that had undermined their instinctive musical responses. What always needed to be kept in mind, though, was to be ever conscious of the ethical aspects of interacting with participants; an understanding that led Lincoln to caution that “standards for quality in interpretive social science are also standards for ethics” (Lincoln, p. 342) which, in this research meant that it was always necessary to ensure that each participant offered their perceptions after they had granted informed consent. Further, I recognised the importance of maintaining confidentiality and privacy.

This investigation was to emphasise the value of lived experience as I sought new insights into musical experiencing. I planned to adopt a conceptual framework that combined a re-analysis of data previously collected for my Master’s thesis (Ruddock, 2007b) together with data from twelve additional participants whose texts delivered
nuanced perceptions; these were to contribute to a complex dialectic interplay toward new understanding. Apparently free conversations between researcher and conversational partners were first to explore responses to everyday musical experiences in a hermeneutic reflective plays towards meaning [Gadamer. 1975/2004, pp. 469-470]. Within the flexibility of discourse, conversations made it possible to wonder and to keep returning to the importance of the question. Playing and re-playing with participants’ text, together with insights from multidisciplinary literature, uncovered previously hidden cultural influences.

**Participant selection and role**

While participants were selected because of their potential to advance understanding (Polkinghorne, 2005) of musicking in our Western culture, I was ever aware of the need to safeguard the standing of each very different individual. Before contributing information for this research, the potential participant first read the official Information Letter and signed the Consent Form. Chosen because of each one’s capacity to offer varying insights into experiences of the phenomenon under consideration, as a cohort, they had a potential to offer “maximum variation sampling” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 141) as may be seen in Table 1 below. Whereas participants in the never picked study (Ruddock, 2007b) were self-perceived non-musical individuals, the cohort chosen for this study comprise both self-perceived non-musicians and musicians; this was to provide an opportunity to more broadly address the question of musicality in a Western cultural setting. They represented wider representation of lived experiences of perceptions of both being and not being musical: from a belief that being able to play or sing depended upon innate talent, through understandings that being musical depended upon a mix of nature and nurture to perceptions that humans are intrinsically musical and that how we express our musicality will depend upon environmental conditions. Interestingly, two of the four self-perceived musicians were to reveal that their self-view of being musical were as vulnerable to criticism by ‘experts’ as were their self-perceived non-musical counterparts.

**Table 1 Summary of Participants’ contact and perspectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym/ communication</th>
<th>Pertinent observation for this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope *</td>
<td>Enjoys group musicking; Hope’s observations support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
findings from *never picked* study.

**Simone ♫ ***: A communicative and sensitive singer from whom an elite music institution took “all the joy out of it” because of its intense focus on technical proficiency.

**Tanya ♫ e+d**: [comments after reading Simone’s story in *Societal judgement silences singers* (in Chapter 3)] “…after uni I felt I couldn't participate anymore…pretty much everything about Simone's story really hits me hard in the guts! I’m very glad that I'm not the only one.”

**Marg *+d**: “For some people, music *is* innate but it is deeply buried and they need someone to show them”. Marg enjoyed singing in everyday situations until, living in an isolated environment with a partner who did not sing, she stopped.

**Lily ****: Enjoys listening and singing in everyday life despite early cruel judgement.

**Jamie ***: After being told to mime at school (she was ten, now is in her ‘twenties’) she still declares that she does not sing where anyone might hear. She sings along to recorded music while doing chores or driving her car. She comments that she does “find [her]self singing sometimes to [her]self [without] really intending to”.

**Andrea ***: Accepts societal reality where music is perceived as performance; acknowledges there’s ‘something missing’…appreciates *spontaneous sort of music* when it happens. She notes that ‘you have to be good at it to go public’, it’s not accepted that just anyone can sing/play. She found it amusing when her daughter recalled being “asked…not to sing ‘just to mime’” when her school choir was to sing in public: she can sing but won’t be a star…at all…takes after her Dad…that’s what I say’. She responded very positively to information that music learning happens in a musical environment; she recognised a gap in her early musical background.

**Dave ♫ e*****: Independent thinker who perceives himself to be a musician (although not ‘professional’).
Chapter 1

GP Perceives musical ability as a ‘gift’, one that she does not have: “I don’t have the sense of music in me…[she said that her] nieces and nephews had lessons to see if they had a gift – it would be terrible to find, at 20, that they did have a gift – too late”. [Familiar with the University’s Ethical procedures, this GP signed the Permission Form before consenting to the use of her words. While her contact for this research was brief, it remains valuable.]

RM a+e+d “As a child I learned that other people do music. It was clear to me and others that I had no ability at all…You have convinced me of inherent musicality.”

Julian ♫ *+e Professional musician for whom music is “so much part of what I do”. He has empathy for individuals such as the never picked.

Mel a+e+d “Music is a primeval response to life. But I feel sad for the little girl me. Would be devastated if my daughters ever feel this way where they feel that they had no right to sing in the school choir but they had snuck in”. Takes great care to ensure her children experience music education (her family moved house to ensure they could attend a school with an inclusive music program).

Key

Symbol Communication type
♫ Acknowledged as ‘musician’
* Tape-recorded interview of 1 hour or more
** Two recorded interviews of 1 hour or more
E Communicated via email
a+e+d Communicated via email and annotations to researcher paper and/or in-progress dialogic (Van Manen, 1997 p. 100) interchanges.
*** Dave (David Miller) opted to use his real name; the remainder of the cohort use pseudonyms
An Interview Guide approved by the Ethics Committee, was prepared to ensure that initial communications with participants could gain essential information that would enhance meaning (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 142). However, research conversations were effectively unstructured as I followed up on participant comments to gain insight into nuances that would enrich perceptions of their particular human musicking. Contributions were planned so they could be gathered in various ways. Six participants engaged in taped face-to-face interviews of more than one hour’s duration (one person returned for a second conversation to verify and extend her contribution).

Communication between researcher and participants included iterative contact via email and written annotations on researcher published papers. Electronic engagement in inter-participant dialectic exchanges were to develop in the latter phase of the process. In Table 1 above, the Summary of Participants’ contact and perspectives presents a summary of participant communications.

**Participants influence: Towards dialectic interplay**

*Harry*

As mentioned above, Harry was an integral part of the *never picked* investigation. A provocative dialogic protagonist, his thinking represents the perception of the phenomenon of a human musicality dependent upon talent; his contributions would become central to this dialectic intercourse between me as researcher, the literature, and other participants. Caught in his particular cultural reality, Harry was not in a position to recognise how his everyday cultural assumptions “disabled” (Nzewi, 2014, p. 2) his intrinsic musicality. He asserted that, since the arts are only *frills*, it was necessary to remember that “life is harsh as the economics of scarce resources always kicks in”. He was convinced that “language learning, maths and getting a job [were] more worthy of effort (given limited resources) than aesthetic activity (including music)” (Ruddock, 2007b, p. 145). He failed to acknowledge the long-term delimitation of human development that as an outcome of one-sided learning; he failed to appreciate the disabling consequences for students caught in the system (Eisner, 1979, p. 88; Robinson et al., 2012). Eisner (1979, p. 92), on the other hand, argues how such diminished educative opportunities, where individuals are caught within a restrictive tradition, undermines thinking and enriched ways of being.

Despite his otherwise broader outlook on educational opportunities, Harry emphasised the development of literacy and numeracy skills in schools and an academic learning that focused around effective preparedness for inclusion in the economy.
Again, he failed to perceive the value that the arts can offer in opening the student to enhanced being. Canatella (2008), on the other hand, emphasises how the arts have the capacity to enable deep connections that bring understanding and intelligent experiencing to the curriculum. Yet, Harry persisted that his outlook was not skewed; he seemed to lack awareness that insightful learning in the arts did not always entail great expense. Canatella (2008), for instance, shows this in his example of rich learning offered by the humble milk bottle (pp. 110 - 116); here, students do not simply ‘look at’, but imagine beyond the object to become fully engaged in life and being as they complete their art assignment. Significantly, Harry’s view failed to ‘see’ the limitations that arise from a curriculum without the arts, one which misses opportunities for learning, thinking and enriched ways of being (Eisner, 1979, p. 92). Winn (1998), however, eloquently argues that the musical roots of the West were restricted from the time of Plato, and that “Plato’s privileging of words over music continues to shape the typical practices of modern humanists” (p. 12). Further, he suggests that a lop-sided development in the West, which he describes as a “pale of words” (Winn, 1998), is instrumental in the distancing of the musical arts from our academic institutions. Bringing to mind the life affirming effects of the ‘milk bottle’ art experience, Winn notes that developmental learning occurs when children are nurtured in a musical environment as they “build more neural connections in their developing brains...that increase their capacity to learn all kinds of cognitive skills” (p. 127). He argues that “students whose ears have been sharpened by musical performance hear the sounds of foreign languages and the rhythms of poetry more readily” (p. 127). Winn is one voice amongst many whose work highlights the danger of a conception of the arts as unnecessary extras (see also Bowman, 2010; Nzewi, 2013a) and whose thinking would support the following research questions developed from participant experience:

*How can it be that cultural influences restrict intrinsic musicality?*

*How can it be that members of a musical species take on and act out a non-musical role?*

**Hope**

A self-perceived non-musician, Hope brought a fresh voice to confirm perceptions from the *never picked* study. Her lived experiences offered a comprehensive overview of findings of self-perceived non-musicians and she proved to be a valuable participant who had direct experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, p. 55). Our hour-long conversation confirmed that notions of performance, critical judgement, and talent were

Chapter 1 66
the persuasive elements that guided an individual’s potential musical actions. Echoing Harry’s conviction that:

*Not only am I not musical, but I can’t dance either... White men ain’t got no rhythm.*

(Ruddock, 2007b, p. 119),

Hope put it her way:

*...we Caucasians... get embarrassed a lot of the time... we have inhibitions that won’t allow us to express ourselves as we possibly could (transcript, 1/10/2009).*

A summary of perceptions of musicking according to Hope read:

- Music is a positive part of our lives and listening to music affects how we feel.
- Musical acts are often perceived as a ‘performances’ to be judged.
- Only some people can actually do it well.
- Our widespread belief that music requires special talent explains why some people can sing and play without prior training; others may not be **lucky** [researcher’s bold] enough to sing or play well and musical ability seems to run in families.
- Communal musicking is fun; it connects people as it helps us feel part of a group rather than being alone.

**Marg**

Rather than perceiving that only the talented have a capacity to do music, participant Marg understood that:

*For some people, music is innate but it is deeply buried.*

When Marg responded to an invitation to become involved as a participant, like Harry, she provided a connection to the *never-picked* study. Previously a community reader for the former study, her contributions as a participant were to unwittingly provoke a move toward dialectic research practice. Her actions also demonstrate how serendipity plays its part. Already familiar with my previous research material, she allowed herself to be persuaded by a friend to attend a two-day singing course for non-singers. Indeed, I must stress my appreciation for her generosity because, despite finding even the idea of the course to be stressful, she determined to make the experience useful for my research. Further, as a community reader, she combined her reflections on how she felt during the course with her considerations of others’ experiences in the *never-picked* project. In addition to the affective account of her experience, Marg’s perceptions offered a

---

10 See Appendix 4.
particular contribution to this study that had a direct influence upon my choice of research style. Not only were her experiences relevant in that her account provided an example of the constrained musicality endemic in Western culture, her lively countering of Harry’s views (presented in Chapter Two) were to suggest the value of dialogic and poetic research practices (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Liu, 2011). These would lead me, as researcher, towards deeper understandings of this phenomenon.

**Hermeneutic processes**

Essentially, questions brought to light by the *never picked project* lie at the heart of this project. How could it be that an instinctive aspect of human being was perceived as something performed, something awaiting critical judgement? How could it be that individuals were judged as being born either with or without musical talent? A judgement made even before cultural music experiencing? With these questions in mind, it became important to access a new, purposefully selected cohort of participants who could bring new experiences (Creswell, 1998, p. 55) that could contribute to enhanced understanding. The new participant cohort (discussed below) did confirm the questions raised by the *never picked*; they presented a view of human musicality that needed interrogation. Their experiences led to questions as to how instinctive musical expression was arrested and how it could be that individuals would refrain from direct participatory involvement. Figure 3 represents an aspect of this subverted musicality.

![Intrinsic musicking subverted: 'never picked' left out](image)

**Figure 3** Tension between judged performance and perceived opportunity.
It was important to properly explore the tension between intrinsic human musicality and a perceived lack of freedom to engage in connective musicking. I sought a way to break open the puzzle of subverted musicality. Despite benefitting from excellent research resources, including, for instance, detailed ways of working presented by experts such as Polkinghorne (2005) and van Manen (1997), it was to Gadamer (1975/2004) that I turned in an attempt to find ways to perceive beyond restricted “unconscious systems” (Foucault, 1972, p. 15) to understand how everyday practices could undermine instinctive musical responses. In his penetrating work on human understanding, Gadamer (1975/2004) demonstrated how we are all part of “universal life” (p. 188) and that it is possible, through artful play, via the medium of hermeneutics to move toward enhanced perceptions; we can move beyond a limited horizon of knowing to expand understanding. However, he took great care to emphasise that “[t]he ‘method’ of understanding…remains an art…it cannot be turned into a mechanical application of rules” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 189), thus it was pertinent to consider how to begin to engage with texts in a dialectical process; how to ask a question that had a potential “to gain insight [since I really] want to know” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 357) because at this point I did not know. As Gadamer (1975/2004) notes:

*For this reason, dialectic proceeds by way of question and answer or, rather, the path of all knowledge leads through the question. To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled. It must still be undetermined, awaiting a decisive answer…brought into this state of indeterminacy, so that there is an equilibrium between pro and contra (p. 357.*

In an attempt to represent this process, Figure 4 represents the central role of the question where it provides a way for dialectical processes to engage players in the work of hermeneutics.
In order for me, as researcher, to be able to re-cognise the dialectic partner’s view, it was important to be able to put myself in the other’s place and also to look back to my own position; for, when we cannot perceive our unseen assumptions, we cannot accept what it is that influences us. We are not in a position to hear another. To this end, participant contact was to include research conversations, annotations on developing texts, email interactions, and face-to-face interactions. Through qualitative analysis, individuals’ ways of perceiving were first laid open before developing into rich interactive exchanges that were to offer dialectic insights during this hermeneutic project. As the play of my thoughts became increasingly enriched with participant words (together with insights from interdisciplinary literature), my perceptions moved via complex and nuanced hermeneutic processes (illustrated in context in Chapters 2 through 5) to new understandings. Iterative revisiting of original data continued to play towards enhanced meaning as hermeneutic practices (particularly in Chapter 5) led to
evolving perceptions that were to expose underlying societal drives (Chapters 2 through 6). As Gadamer wrote, this is “the task of hermeneutics” (1975/2004, p. 361).

**Arts-based research**

It is important to note that this investigation is empirical in the sense emphasised by Barone and Eisner (2012, p. xi); it emerges from participants’ lived experiences. Represented in narrative, poetic and dialogic forms, voices of participants and community readers are partners in a dialectic interchange with the researcher, the latter informed by recent findings in the literature (including from interdisciplinary fields which particularly draws on research in music education, cultural neuroscience and philosophy). Further, in acknowledging “literature as a potential source of educational insight” (Roberts, 2013, p. 356), it is important to recognise that, to have meaning or to be influential, both simple and sophisticated stories have a capacity to reveal “the dialectic of estrangement” (Roberts, 2013, p. 358). Here, I mention two examples that evoke the phenomenon at the heart of this study. The first (as mentioned above) is Kafka’s Josefine (1924/2007) where the author delivers nuanced phenomenological insights into the cultural distancing of inherent musical expression. Then, in his deceptively simple example of such distancing from a human attribute, Andreae (1999) garners empathy for his fictional ‘Gerald’; Gerald, the giraffe, *simply froze up* when his friends accused him of not being able to dance. Having demonstrated the loneliness of exclusion and drawn empathetic understanding from the reader, Andreae leads us to realise another way of being — a way out of the exclusion:

*So he crept off from the dancefloor*  
*And he started walking home,*  
*He'd never felt so sad before*  
*So sad and so alone.*

*Then he found a little clearing*  
*And he looked up at the sky,*  
"The moon can be so beautiful,"  
*He whispered with a sigh.*

"Excuse me!" coughed a cricket  
*Who'd seen Gerald earlier on,*
"But sometimes when you're different
You just need a different song."

In *Giraffe’s Can’t Dance* Andreae (1999) engagingly portrays how it feels when actions by others lead to judgemental perceptions that may leave individuals feeling constrained not only from group action, but also from their own capacity for human artistic action (in this case, dancing). In a way analogous to Andreae, I draw on arts-based practices (Barone & Eisner, 2012) to include poetry (original researcher composition, data from participants’ texts, and juxtaposed data from acknowledged sources) in order to explore estrangement from essential human *being*.

**Researcher as bricoleur**

It is also important to acknowledge the epistemological value of musicking in this investigation. An example of this occurred one day at the piano whilst playing Bach’s Prelude and Fugue BWV 881 (Bach, 1742/1993). For me, a visceral response involving participant voices together with Bach’s fugal melodies suggested a fugal analogy as a way to present conflicting data in a condensed, accessible form. So it was there, at the piano, where poetic bricolage presented itself as way of sharing participants’ lived experiences with the reader (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. xii). As Cannatella (2008, p. 99) understood how embodied awareness can enhance our thinking towards more intelligent perception and knowing, I recognised the potential of the melodic lines of this particular Fugue to represent disparate but related human experiences. Again, as Cannatella (2008) understood, the arts can lead to embodied awareness, can nurture potential sensitivities and lead to vital ways of knowing. In this case, it is an awareness of lost musical *being* which leaves individuals to live with unquestioned acceptance or wistful longing; both brought into being by unsolicited cultural judgement.

It is in such an artful way that Bach’s Fugue helped me to garner understandings from within participant voices by opening my awareness to subtle societal persuasions as musicking became a catalyst to thought and a path to deeper perception. Thus, in the examination of participant experience, not only did I find that it was essential to draw on diverse research practices to access deeper implications from data, but also that it was important to engage in different ways of presenting data to portray nuance and meaning. Using a fugal analogy as part of the research process allowed me to feel, to recognise and to play out connections in ways not otherwise possible. Thus, filtering participant experience through a variety of disciplinary perspectives, developed via *bricolage* (after Kincheloe, 2001), helped to enhance findings initially teased out through qualitative research analyses. It also facilitated innovative ways of presentation.
that made it possible to use a mix of prose and poetic writing to offer subtle perceptions to the reader. Importantly, as Kincheloe would argue, it helped to overcome the narrow singularity of a particular research method (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 681).

**Arts-centred awareness**

Eisner borrows the term, “flexible purposing”, from Dewey (Eisner, 2002, p. 77) to explore the challenge of responding to fresh perceptions that emerge during painting, musicking and educational research. He understands how valuable it is to work with unexpected nuances that develop and how limiting it can be to attempt to adhere rigidly to a pre-determined design. Indeed, improvising in reaction to “unanticipated” (Eisner, 2002, p. 78) revelations may offer valuable insights that bring depth to an understanding of the phenomenon. Where Foucault freely acknowledged that his work provided questions, not prescriptive answers (in Flyvbjerg, 1998, p. 224), so my project seeks questions from within everyday interactions wherein musical individuals learn that they are not musical. This widespread reality is contrary to what should arguably be an expected ‘norm’ for, as Trevarthen asserts, “all of us are…musical from birth […; we engage in the rhythmic impulse of living, moving and communicating” (1999, p. 157). However, by the time individuals (such as those in the never picked study) have reached their teen years, their ‘programmed’ reactions to environmental influences mean that they inhibit vibrant musical connection with their lifeworld. It is in the shadow of this cultural reality, where musical beings feel compelled to deny their inherent musicality that I explore this ‘unnatural’ phenomenon.

This research draws on arts-centred awareness that can connect subconscious being to our lifeworld. Invited to connect in any ways that have a potential to most deeply communicate their experiences, participants’ communications evoke those seemingly indescribable, invisible social directives imposed upon them (like Kafka’s Mouse People (Kafka, 1924/2007) mentioned above), where opportunities to engage in musicking are subdued. By attempting to pursue deeper understanding here, it is relevant to heed Turino (2008) when he explains that: “participatory performance does not fit well with the broader cultural values of the capitalist-cosmopolitan formation, where competition and hierarchy are prominent and profit making is often a primary goal...” (p. 35).

**Research as organic overview**

An important aspect of this research project, then, is to provide substantial revelations from lived experiences that have the capacity to challenge widespread
acceptances of performative practices which silence people like the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b). It is relevant to question why only some can while others feel that they are, necessarily, listeners of the talented (this does not refer to people when musicking as listeners). To consider intrinsic human musical engagement from a broad perspective, I refer to interdisciplinary sources of information. The neurological work of Damasio (2006), for instance, provides substantial evidence that leads us to question why we would choose to live in an unnecessarily dichotomous culture. His research convincingly indicates that unsupported, pervasive separatist notions leave individuals floundering in “adverse environmental conditions” (Damasio, 2006, p. 114) where cultural influences negate innate human response to disturb the intricate connection of body and mind. Here, his understanding echoes the caution given by Pear (2011) when, a century earlier, he questioned the assumptions underlying the use of the terms ‘musical’ and ‘unmusical’. Considering them ill-considered concepts, he quoted Meyer (1899) to ask that their use, as in practice at the time, be “completely banished from tone psychology” (p. 94).  

Thus, I draw upon the work of experts who recognise the organic nature of intrinsic human qualities (e.g. Damasio, 2006, pp. 159, 160; Dewey, 1896; Gadamer, 1998) before proceeding to work within a complex, embodied play between myself as researcher, participants, readers, peer reviewers and related literature. My study not only embraces qualitative research practices to work towards clearer understanding of our uneasy relationship with our musical nature, but also draws on wider influences, including those from educational philosophy, and cultural neuroscience. Since our perception of the world is necessarily an inseparable combination of how we see and how we interpret everyday experience, the arts, too, play an important role (Sullivan, 2005). Indeed, as mentioned above, Kafka’s (1924/2007) short story about Josefine, the Singer, or the Mouse People, may be read as a phenomenological reflection on the phenomenon at the centre of this investigation — societal arrest of intrinsic human musicking. Further, in this investigation, I draw upon a fugal analogy to present this research.

A Fugal Way

A fugue is a musical composition based on a brief but memorable theme. This theme, this melodic idea, is also called the subject. This subject begins the piece as a strong introductory statement; it is then followed by persistent repetitions, sometimes as an easily recognisable copy of the original, sometimes in ingenious variations that only become apparent with repeated listening or playing. As the piece unfolds, we hear both melody and harmony in complementary or conflictual combination as different voices take turns to sing the melody in different guises, sometimes overlapping, but always making sense as each one sounds against other voices to make an overall harmony. In the case of the works by J. S. Bach, the fugue continues to explore myriad sound possibilities as it plays towards a seemingly inevitable rhythmic, melodic and harmonic conclusion. Listeners do not need to understand the complexities of the compositional process to hear these pieces as melancholy, strident, or energetic. Ingeniously developed repetitions of the main melodic theme are interspersed with sections that are usually made up from ideas suggested by the theme but which can function to relax the tension created by the rich complexity of voices as the themes weave complex patterns. Sections between the thematic statements are called episodes.

So, how does this metaphor of a fugue relate to individuals’ feeling that they are deprived of the reality of their everyday musicality? Each day, as I read diverse literature while reflecting on participant data, it became my practice to take refuge in playing the piano. While playing the Prelude and Fugue in F Minor BWV 881 (Bach, 1742/1993), it seemed as if voices of the never picked sounded — sounded in sync with Bach’s musical voices — sounded with and against the voices from multi-disciplinary literature. From the fugue’s strident opening statement, it was as if I could ‘hear’ participant voices, ringing out long silenced protests against measured, knowing experts. The more familiar I become with the fugal voices, the more they sounded to evoke empathetic resonance with participants’ silently accepted distancing from their primeval response to life. My daily musicking suggested a way to proceed with this thesis which could capture its organic nature by playing out the related network of voices, both those of participants and those of experts; playing them out, against each other — with each other, towards a newly informed conclusion. Just as Bach takes one short theme and explores its potential, so participant realities present latent, as-yet unexplored challenges to the status quo. Their voices raise questions — not answered by works from the literature. In their raw state, it seems to me that they offer fresh
perceptions and demand fresh interpretations that can cast new light upon notions of everyday musicality.

**Significance of the study**

Through the revelation of repressed musicality in everyday life, this study is a step towards a seeing of the unseen. As Goodman acknowledges (in Barone & Eisner, 2012), art “may bring out neglected likenesses and differences...and in some ways, remake our world” (p. 127). By adopting arts-based methods, it is my intention to present participant experience in ways readily accessible to the reader so that such a reality can serve to disrupt accepted practice of unrecognised restriction and strengthen the potential for vibrant music engagement (including playing, singing, dancing, listening) for everyone, not only for the ‘talented’ few. Through the arts, the artist, singer, dancer or writer can sensitise the percipient to a hidden world of (in this case) a pervasively influential musical/unmusical dichotomy. Maxine Greene (1988) so clearly captures the capacity of the visual artist to open our eyes to subtle aspects of light, space and time so that it is possible to perceive and so understand in new ways, in order that we may question the ‘truth’ of a formerly fixed reality. She also demonstrates how poetry sensitises our perception so that we can uncover previously unsuspected depths to perceive the formerly unimagined (p. 131). So too, through re-presentation of participant experience, including through the use of “dialogic research” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 131) and presentation of data in poetic form (Slotnick & Janesick, 2011), this project opens an alternative way to perceive human musicality in a particular Western cultural context.

**Beyond the scope of this thesis**

Participants raised myriad issues that have either direct or indirect connections to human musicality and that do relate to this research. However, practical considerations of length and specific purpose mean that it was essential to focus only upon particular aspects of participant data that had a potential to lead to an enhanced understanding of the central questions. Issues with relevance to conceptions of musicality that warrant further serious investigation but that cannot be considered here include, for instance, the lived experience of the ‘arts’ as they work towards a sense of ‘belonging’, of ‘community’. These include activities that enhance feelings of self-worth and participation which may involve musicking, so often found to be invaluable as affective and effective “cultural work” (Lines, 2003). It is necessary to acknowledge the place of pursuits other than music that may include: sport, cooking, or myriad communal and
individual activities (including ‘hobbies’) with links to convivial awareness of community, spirituality and ways of living that enhance well-being. Conversely, this research does not include an examination of the performative aspect of musicking where trained musicians perform for public appreciation and/or consumption; this aspect cannot be considered within the confines of this study.

Further, it is not possible to include considerations of individuals who suffer from amusia, a condition Brust (2003, p. 183) defines as “an acquired impairment of musical processing”. Welch (2005) describes those who appear to have this rare condition as being those “who find little sense or enjoyment in much musical activity” (p. 118).

A participant observes

During the process of his extensive contribution to this research project, one participant (known as ‘RM’ and introduced fully in Chapter 5) imagined potential aspects that could be expected in research such as this project relating to human musicality. His perceptive questions directly relate to areas that need to be studied but which cannot be included here because of the limitations mentioned above. In RM’s words:

1. On the basis that music is merely a part of the whole human experience, how do you justify music being a clearly delineated part of the state or privately funded education curriculum, alongside say maths or geography? Is it not simply an add-on like poetry or pottery, an enrichment subject not required for the economic success of the community? (They may not be allowed to ask this, a blatantly political question.)

2. If as you report, humans are neurologically fitted to musicality, should music be placed as equal to other neurologically fitted abilities such as the use of tools or "fight or flight"? What makes music more important in your view than these? Why for example should not metalwork, self-defence and "running away" be taught instead? If adults reported that they felt too shy to make anything in public or for the public, would that raise as much concern as the same people being unable or too shy to "do music" in public? What makes music so special?

3. Is it safe to assume that humans are also neurologically fitted to making drawn images, to express themselves or to communicate graphically? If so, what evidence have you found to support the idea that the never-picked are specific to music? Are the same principles applicable to graphic arts as well?

4. If so, are the same people who are members of the never-picked in music also in that group in graphics or do they form different groups, willing participants in one but not the other? Are the same ideas extendable to poetry, sculpture and or any other form of expression? Do you have evidence to support your case?
5. Are there fundamental differences across the world? As an analogue, people in China suffer from a higher rate of disease X whilst in China but this rate changes to Y for those who move to the USA and take-up the local lifestyle in an area where the rate is already Y. Is that true of the musical never picked? Are differences simply cultural or are there differences in the propensity to become a never-picked between races in the same way that differences in average height show themselves?

6. What harm would it do to society if practically everyone were to consider themselves to be amongst the musically never-picked? We are doing OK now as a society, so why is it important to change, why have you embarked on this research instead of say poor education in maths or English?

7. Have you found any research that shows that humans are intrinsically shy? Have humans evolved intrinsic shyness as a protection from harms in the same way that they shy away from fire, cliffs and large animals? Should shyness be encouraged or taught in an effort to enhance this possible protective mechanism? For example, many people will report that being shy of nakedness in a social setting is natural, part if what makes a human being. "everyone knows" that to be the case? Naturists will disagree, saying that it is purely a matter of up-bringing and social pressures from out-dated ideas, but what evidence is there to support such an assertion? Is not any inhibition an intrinsic and very useful part of what it is to be human, has it evolved in humans or is it learnt?

8. If the members of the never-picked are so numerous, what evidence would you present to explain the popularity of karaoke?

RM not only presented these questions to ensure that he would know precisely what was being questioned and why, but, most generously, he submitted this list to ensure that I would be aware of potential challenges. His work here is gratefully acknowledged, together with the deeply perceptive and thoughtful contributions from all of the participants in this project.
Statement of a truth
There is a truth
There is matter
What we perceive as truth
Is another matter.

A hermeneutic approach↑12
Truth is primarily
A matter of perspective

Data that we are dealing with is core
Inform us
Central, important
The axes on which
People’s lives turn
She was a participant—not about her

Interpretive stances,
Not properties of a text itself
We are studying
We recognise that
There are many truths.

Playing towards a question
Harsh judgement
Stops the voice
Lets us know
We’re not musical.
Voices blend thoughts jar
to show
Vibrant being
Of sounds
Of rhythms
Technical distraction
Embraces bodies
to distance
From natural flow
Of music
Of being
Yet still we know
As voices flow
to connect and cross
Or roughly rub
Joining this song
On the way
to unravel
A question.

↑12 *Serious Play* uses only words taken from Josselson (2011)
Chapter Two

Musicians and non-musicians silenced

In the play toward a question that can bring a deeper understanding to experiencing human musicality in everyday life, it is revealing to note DeNora’s (2000) reference to a Nigerian, living in London, who “knew…music [to be] an integral element of social life” (p. ix). Free of cultural constraints such as those experienced by the never picked participants and DeNora’s Londoners, the “Nigerian” experienced music as a connective aspect of daily life. DeNora appears to appreciate his view, yet in Music in everyday life (2000), she describes music as a tool, a “prosthetic device” (2000, p. 103) where music is presented as a functional aid to enhance living. This aspect will be properly considered in Chapter Six where I argue that this is an unfortunate analogy; it not only fails to recognise intrinsic musicality (Westney, 2003, p. 9) but it also misinterprets the explanation of musical experience as related by the London based Nigerian. For, as the Nigerian understood and voices from the literature confirm, far from being a useful object that is separate from intrinsic human being, music describes a part of life’s process where, in healthy living, musical being is as inseparable as heart-beat and rhythm (Nzewi, 2014). Indeed, research confirms that the musical arts are part of healthy human being (Walser, 2014; Welch, 2005). Cultural historian Cavicchi agrees, but notes a constraint that prevents many of us from a freedom to enjoy connective, musical living. As he reports:

“For years, ethnomusicologist Charlie Keil has been talking about the ways in which Musicking is a fundamental part not only of human culture but also of human biology. However, he has argued that while everyone is hard-wired to naturally groove together through playing and dancing to music, many of us have buried that capacity through the oppressions, dislocation, and alienations of modern civilization.” (Cavicchi, 2002, p. 7)

Then, Cavicchi offers some valuable advice toward more inclusive behaviour: I would urge teachers to at least try to loosen their focus on genres and performance and introduce reflexive thinking about practices and behaviour...With that small shift in emphasis, music class will no longer be known as only for the “talented” or “inclined” but as something for everyone” (2002, p. 13).

Yet, Cavicchi (2002) has a personal tale of rejection. With his busy life leaving little time for active musicking, he reveals that even his infrequent attempts at instrumental playing are arrested by his children when they “beg me to stop” (p. 2).
How can this be? It is important to ask how it is that this scholar and author, with his
deep understanding of music and culture does not question such a request from his
children. I pause to wonder whether this non-acceptance of his musicking led Cavicchi
to desist with no protest. Is he and/or his musicking being judged? While on the one
hand, Cavicchi offers valuable advice, yet, on the other, this comment about being
begged to stop playing raises questions—questions that will be further addressed in
Chapter Five.

Cavicchi was simply playing at home and might not be expecting to be judged.
Two of the participants whose stories are told this chapter, however, reveal how their
sense of being musical is shattered by critical judgement at an élite Tertiary Institution
for Arts (IfA). They struggled to adapt to the atmosphere of competition and preferment
which, too often, dominates student learning and life experience in an élitist
establishment (Perkins, 2013, p. 207). Indeed, Perkins reveals how the perceived work
of a conservatorium leads to a musical hierarchy wherein the high status musician
becomes the provider of a quality product; it is their “cultural function” (p. 207). Her
report on two case studies into the learning culture within a particular élite institution
reveals a serious cause for concern. Unwarranted preferment meant that only certain
students were recognised as potential musicians while others, if they had a particular
resilience, survived through their own ingenuity. As in the cases considered by Perkins,
the two participants considered here were also caught in an environment that allowed
them to suffer unnecessarily. Perkins calls for this situation to be challenged, despite the
assumption that the job of a conservatorium is to produce high class musicians
demanded by society (2013, p. 207). Suggesting the need for further investigations into
the cultures of such institutions (e.g. Sibelius Academy and the Guildhall School
examples), she emphasises the need for “conservatoire practices [to] be reshaped in
order to enhance the learning experiences and possibilities of all students” (p. 208).
Simone and Tanya, self-perceived musical participants in this study, might agree that
this advice would change IfA for the better! Both chosen as talented student to become
students in a jazz course, their experiences at IfA, led to the destruction of “the simple
joy” [Tanya, email: 29/04/2010] of musicking. Simone tells her story in the following
paper.
Societal judgment silences singers

EVE RUDDOCK
PhD Student
School of education
MURDOCH UNIVERSITY
ruddock@uinet.net.au

KEY WORDS
Everyday musical experiences; Instinctive musicality; Music as Performance; Musical v Non-musical; Judgment & Talent; Communicative musicality.

ABSTRACT
This article outlines recent recognition of the instinctive nature of human musicality against a backdrop of individuals who feel that only the talented have a propensity to be musical. Where notions of performance, judgement and talent undermine attempts to engage in music as a natural human communicative action, it is important to recognise societal expectations which leave some individuals disengaged from a healthy aspect of what it means to be human. As participant stories uncover an “unnatural” phenomenon, they bring an understanding of how pathological educational practice continues to estrange individuals from a natural human activity. Experiences of those who have been distanced from their inherited potential can contribute to our understanding of music in our society to offer ways towards healthy attitudes to music and musicking in schools and wider society.
I wouldn’t sing... out in public. People would look... and think
‘oh my god she’s just so different from everybody else’
- High school teacher

February, March, April... just three months... I was a goner!
... crying... staring at the walls... too distressed
- Drop-out from Performing Arts Institution

INTRODUCTION

Music is a ‘natural’ part of our lives (Green 2009, pp. 127-9) because music ‘practices transcend... contexts’ and occur in all cultures ‘by themselves without conscious or formal intervention’ (p. 128) over time. Contemporary research continues to reveal the intrinsic and instinctive nature of human musicality (Dissanayake 2008; Peretz 2003 p. 192). In addition to this, Cross and Morley (2009) recognise the evolutionary nature of music as they consider the ways that it has evolved to become a ubiquitous part of human culture; an embedded aspect of our social human development which provides ways of knowing who we are and of discovering where we belong. Music continues to define who we are as it evokes our emotional response and promotes cohesion of group members, even where current Western musical practices [dictate that] music is produced by few and consumed by many’ (Cross & Morley 2009 p. 66).

Children reflect their musical environment as they absorb their musical heritage and learn to be musickers within their particular culture. A heightened sense of identity and acceptance within a group are part of the benefits gained by those who experience communal music making, whereas, those who develop within a non-musical environment may succumb to societal expectations and categorise themselves as ‘non-musical’ (Ruddock & Leong 2005; Small 1995). Many ‘learn’ to inhibit their musical responses by the time they reach their teens so that, when they leave school, ‘a malfunction of our enculturation processes’ (West 2009 p. 215) leads young people to believe that they should not sing.

In my recent project involving self-perceived non-musical non-musicians (Ruddock 2007), contradictory layers within participant stories tell of non-musical selves despite musical nuance in language revealing persistent musicality. In contrast to their convictions, my study revealed that these self-perceived non-musical humans were ‘self-deceived’ by layers of societal expectations dominated by notions of performance, judgment and talent. Participant revelations expose a society that is directed by notions of musical persons (those who have innate talent) versus non-musical persons. The latter necessarily become the consumers; the receivers of music products made by those who are considered to be musically ‘talented’. This paper draws on lived experiences of individuals caught in a judgmental society that has a powerful potential to dissuade individuals against instinctive human action.

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Recent research (Ruddock 2007; Ruddock & Leong 2005) shows the extent to which our perceptions are affected by the notion of music as performance; indeed, this ran as a consistent undercurrent that stopped individuals from singing for fear that others might hear and judge them. This scenario presents a reality of the arts
in our society where it is the performance that counts; participants' experiences showed that they "learned" to doubt their musicality when their singing was judged to be not acceptable for others to hear. Interestingly, an Australian Government report, just released, asserts that the 'Arts and culture play a vital role in the lives of all Australians' and that 'Australian's value the arts!' (Australia Council for the Arts 2010). Key findings deliver the following:

*Nearly all Australians intentionally listened to recorded music and over half attended live performances. Most went to watch live music such as pop, rock, country and dance. Musical theatre/cabaret was the second most popular form of music attendance at 22%, followed by classical music (13%), and opera (8%). Making music was also popular (15%) with one in ten playing an instrument and 5% singing* (p. 4).

This report aimed to supply information to 'arts marketers and policy makers' and its findings illustrate to what extent the 'arts are strongly supported by the community'. However, the focus appears to rest on passive engagement of individuals as consumers of others' music-making; only 5% reported that they sang. These findings contrast with situations in a nurturing environment where creative music making allows for improvised human expression that enables 'learners [to] feel safe and valued' (Wiggins 2009 p. 120). With a focus away from marketing, industry and consumption, the musical arts (a natural fusion of music, art and dance) can become powerful entities that garner human inventiveness towards imaginative vibrant survival (Nzewi 2003).

'My breath is music. My body is dance' (Nzewi 2003 p. 221). Nzewi's vision of arts as a holistic expression for all is clearly distant from our reality in the West. In his reflections on modernity, Habermas (1997) notes how professionalisation of the arts not only separated them into disparate spheres but distanced those who were not trained as artists, dancers or musicians, so that many individuals experience an 'impoverished...lifeworld' (p. 45). Indeed, recent research shows how this widespread misconception of human musicality affects everyday living (Ruddock 2007; Welch 2001). West (2009) views this denial of an inherent human trait as a psychosocial disorder (2009 pp. 214-5) and suggests that our dysfunctional attitude may be overcome by reconceptualising music and music making. In her proposal for remedial action on a fresh interpretation of essential aspects, West first insists that 'singing is... both the most basic form of music making and an indicator of the musical health of the individual' (2009 p. 214). However, one participant of my recent study (Ruddock 2007) would have a serious problem with this view; a senior teacher educator was at pains to point out that he had no inclination to 'burst into song'. He was one of many whose music education at school had been limited to singing along to the radio in his primary school classroom; he remembers singing along with his classmates. But since his teens he has carried a belief that he cannot sing at all; like others, he was deterred by the 'talent' myth. He never thought to challenge the widespread assumptions in our society that 'musical' persons are only those who are born with a natural gift which enables them to acquire music skills with ease (Sloboda, Davidson, & Howe 1994 p. 349).

Contrary to this assumption, however, multidisciplinary research projects (Bannan & Woodward 2009; Bowman 2010, 2002; Dissanyake 2009; Peretz & Zatorre 2003; Small 1998) now show how music is integral to human development and health. Unfortunately, much of our current music education in Australia fails to provide adequate developmental musical learning (Pascoe et al. 2005). Before we may properly address this widespread void, it is important to explore societal perceptions that view active music making as something necessarily restricted to those talented individuals who have the ability to become professional musicians. It is necessary to be aware of how it feels for those many individuals in our communities who feel that they cannot sing (West 2009 p. 212). We need to understand more clearly how it is that individuals come to accept such an 'unnatural' condition, especially since restraint from engaging in an instinctive human action can cause unnecessary stress.
(West 2009 p. 215) and contribute to pathological symptoms within society (Habermas 1997). As West points out, young people do not knowingly become non-singers, rather they ‘learn’ to feel that they should not sing as ‘a malfunction of our enculturation processes’ (p. 215).

Contemporary thinkers are exploring the extent to which many in our Western societies fail to fully engage with their musicality (Bannan & Woodward 2009 p. 478; Nzewi 2007; West 2009). Rather than being a source of communication, the ‘musical arts have become a diversion instead of a core business of life’ (Nzewi 2007 p. 26) where individuals are manipulated for profit by the music industry and where the cohesiveness of these creative arts have been shattered ‘into isolated enclaves of specialization’ (p. 26). This restricts human connection by limiting a means (through musical activity) whereby individuals can express emotions and engage in a vibrant way to achieve wellbeing for themselves and the functioning community to which they belong. If music is viewed as a performance object with a focus on judgment and talent (Ruddock 2007; Small 1998; West 2009) then an artificial void is created in our Western culture, with a culturally constructed musical/mon-musical (Nettl 2006) dualism. Such a societal view disenfranchises many individuals from their innate musicality (Ruddock 2007) as it reduces the power of music to act as humanising ‘glue’ (Spychiger 2001 p. 65) towards a coherent and connected society.

From birth we demonstrate innate musicality (Trehub 2003) but children, whose early experiences do not include musical influences, may commence primary school and then be ‘branded’ as non-musical because they have not yet developed culturally defined singing skills. Welch argues convincingly that this ‘limiting conception of humankind as either musical or non-musical is untenable’ (2001 p. 22) since the apparent non-musicality is merely an outcome of their experience to this point (Welch 1988, p. 297). An investigation into everyday experiences of music (Ruddock 2008) uncovers educational experiences that become a ‘process of demusicalization’ (Small 1998, p. 212), where music teaching practice focuses on teacher and/or school kudos with little awareness of the potential negative effects on long-term musical self-perceptions of individuals. Small (1998) laments detrimental effects that can occur because of:

... those music teachers who care more for what people will think of their ensemble than for the real musical development of their students. Some children do indeed have difficulty in learning to sing in tune, but the difficulty will be overcome by practice and encouragement, not by telling the child that she should open and shut her mouth and make no sound, a practice that seems to be as common today as when I was at school. The voice is at the center of all musical activity, but it is all too easy to silence and very hard to reactivate, since those who have been silenced in this way have been wounded in a very intimate and crucial part of their being. In my opinion any music teacher caught doing such a thing or using the epithet tone-deaf of a pupil should be sacked on the spot (p. 212).

However, West also offers some defence to erring educators because they are ‘surely part of our culture as well’ (2009 p. 213). But, at the same time, she notes that ‘[s]ing seems to be a particular problem for both adults and children’ (2009 p. 212) and that many individuals perceive themselves as non-singers; she goes on to report that there is ‘a decline in interest in singing as children move through school’ (p. 212). By the time many individuals complete school, they become part of those ‘... many adults who are unmusical, as evidenced by their inability to sing in tune’ (reported in Trehub 2003, p. 3).
EMBARRASSED? EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF SINGING REVEALS ‘UNNATURAL’ REJECTION

It was during a conversation with this researcher (Ruddock 2007) that a nineteen-year-old participant inadvertently revealed a widespread assumption that reflected societal beliefs. He doodled absent-mindedly as we considered puzzles relating to his perceptions of music; while he did not comment on this (see Figure 1) at the time, he later reported that it was a ‘pretty obvious phenomenon’ (Ruddock 2007 p. 147).

Figure 1: Musical = being able to sing (Ruddock 2007, p. 147)

His doodling emphasises the central role played by singing as it highlights the dilemma faced by those who have been led to believe that they cannot sing. They are musical beings who respond to and wish to engage in musicking yet feel that they have to ‘accept’ a subtle societal message that they are non-musical. Self-perceptions of participants’ views of their singing ability from this study are presented in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participant raw data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Can't sing, not even in the shower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Me sing? I have no voice to sing! I would love to be able to sing. Knowing that I have a hopeless voice I would not like to inflict my singing on someone else... some people might consider themselves good singers and their sounds come out as utter noise. I would be one of those. I would hate to inflict that on someone else. I did singing at school and high school. I've got one of those voices that just fall all over the place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterina</td>
<td>My husband, he's from Ireland... they sing all the time'n his Irish friends sing all the time. 'n I always think 'God I wish I could sing' I've always believed that I'm a bad singer. I love music but I've never believed that I'm someone who can sing in any way. I'm just an observer of music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>In school... I know I wasn't very good... the music teacher would listen to all singing and say 'there's someone over there that's just not quite in tune' 'n and 'just do it again' 'n so we'd all sing again, but this time I would just mime it. I wouldn't actually sing... and get her very upset... 'N she never quite picked out that I was singing and then miming 'n she was trying to listen for really out of tune voices coming through. It felt like I couldn't sing and I guess that's why... I have always felt like I can't sing. I'm not a very good singer.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>We always sing (in Croatia). [But when I went to singing lessons here] I started to sing - 'oh my God, that's awful'. I was sure I was singing all the time out of tune. [At the eisteddfod] I thought 'all these poor people, all these poor ears'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>I love singing. But I wouldn't sing... out in public...'cos I don't think I've got the voice to sing out in public. I sing at home with my family or I might sing... if we were having Christmas carols. It's the society we live in and... the judgmental nature of and the critical nature of people... [to sing in public would be] perhaps drawing attention to yourself... like wearing... something that's a really loud colour like a-a vivid green or a bright fluoro pink... people would... look at you and think oh my god she's just so different from everybody else...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>My Dad was very flat. He'd try and sing and you know, he'd put everybody out of the room. Neither of the children could sing – in tune – they sing very flat like we all do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>[Sing?] No not me! But my young bloke sings a bit – Elvis and that. You're born to play football (or to sing). Born with a gift... sort of in your blood I reckon. [Music] wasn't in mine though.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>A lot of blokes in my generation are very... if you sing then they'll go: 'oh shut the fuck up... fuckin' hell I don't want to listen to you fuckin' sing'... and they'll put on the radio or something and listen to it... but they don't sing along. [It's] probably worse with males... I don't know...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participant raw data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>just a suspicion... it's just like the denial of emotion. I think... they're probably related... that masculine construct that everyone's talking about? I'd say on par with that. When you're totally drunk... all your mates do[sing]... then, it's not only O.K. It's kosher. It's the done thing. You know... and they love it too! They love it!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Ruddock 2007 p. 191)

Table 1: Participant views of their own singing

Similar views were colourfully caught during some research into acoustics that was commissioned by the Vauxhall motor company in England. Researcher Dr Stuart Colam found ‘that almost 60% of people admit they can’t carry a tune and 41% of us who sing in the car refuse to sing in places where others might hear us. And when busted, most of us try to pretend we’re on a phone call’ (this version was reported by Easdown 2008 p. 54).

Unsolicited comments from participants (Ruddock 2007) reflect Colam’s findings where their stories include many instances of being able to enjoy singing in the car – as long as the window’s up! This subverted place of singing continues to emerge in my current study into the phenomenon of everyday musical experiences (research in progress). A 23 year-old honors science student, for instance, relates a story regarding her boss; this professional preferred to accept a warning from a traffic policeman rather than admitting that she was singing:

My boss actually was singing... she doesn’t think that she’s a very good singer... she was driving to work one day and she was singing in the car to the radio... a police officer pulled her up and said that he was warning her for talking on her mobile phone. She was too embarrassed to turn around and say that actually she was singing. She got a warning. She said she was getting really into it! She was more embarrassed about getting caught singing than getting a warning for talking on her mobile phone.

This tale confirms a general view that emerged from the earlier study (Ruddock 2007) where participants perceived that an ability to sing is a gift restricted to the talented few and that only these gifted individuals had a licence to sing in public. Unless inebriated or safely alone, the consensus of the cohort of self-perceived non-musical non-musicians from the study (Ruddock 2007) was that singing in public is something performed by talented musicians for an audience.

Details from conversational partners in my new study continue to tell of situations where singing is discouraged; conversations centring on everyday musicality tell how these individuals have been silenced. Their experiences resonate with the understanding that ‘...most people believe that musical “talent” is inherent and not something that can be taught, and therefore do not really believe that music education is necessary or realistic for all students’ (Wiggins & Wiggins 2008, p. 18). That such a belief can have a negative impact on a child as early as Grade One is illustrated by the experience of the 23 year-old participant of my current research (mentioned above). It was when Lily first went to school in her little country town that her teacher made her ‘try-out’ to become a member of the school choir. But Lily and one other very young child ‘failed’ their auditions to be part of the choir. Lily’s brothers and all the rest of the school were in the choir; she was not yet 6 years of age. She recalls:
I remember...
like I was tiny
I had to audition to go into the choir
I had no real interest to be in the choir
but everybody was in the choir
I had to sing ‘Twinkle, twinkle little star’
and then she wouldn’t let me in
and I was so embarrassed and
I went home and I cried.
(Lily’s words were spoken exactly as presented here.)

Another example comes from a 26 year-old who, in Grade 5, was asked to mime when her class was about to sing in a big hall with students from other schools. Now, she says:

I don’t sing for anyone.
Not since I was nine.
When I belted out the song
My singing was just fine.
The teacher, then, I think she said
Just to move my lips instead.
(These phrases are selected directly from Jamie’s transcript.)

These participant reports show how individuals’ childhood musically was undermined by cultural constraints; how their musical development was ‘sacrificed’ to enhance performance ‘standards’ of their choirs. They reveal a system where judgment has become a normal part of the process of musical action as listeners become ‘judges’ who determine whether the ‘product’ is satisfactory or not. As their conversations reveal, long term effects of such exclusion remain part of an individual’s musical self-perception.

Illustrating our culturally based reticence to embrace music as an essential part of our human lives, these lived experiences reflect serious gaps in the provision of music education throughout Australia (see Pascoe et al. 2005). West defines SMM (Selective mutism for singing) as a syndrome where individuals maintain physiological ability to sing but, for ‘psychosocial reasons’ (2009, p. 214), they remain mute. In her definition of the problem, West (2009, p. 212) mirrors findings from my work (Ruddock 2007) where participant experiences show that our musical world is dominated by the notion of performance; most of us are reduced to being consumers of products provided by the talented.

Unnatural restraints on instinctive human actions place an unnecessary stress on the individual and such imposed inaction can add to pathological symptoms in a society (Habermas 1997 p. 45). As West points out, young people ‘learn’ to feel that they should not sing as ‘a malfunction of our enculturation processes’ (2009, p. 215). Similarly, in her study of English students in 2001, Lamont (p. 2) attributed her findings of children’s negative musical self-perceptions directly to their everyday school context. Then, during a radio interview, she noted that this issue where individuals believed that they could not sing ‘is a peculiarly western construct... and perhaps also a kind of Anglo issue’ (in conversation with Mitchell 2002).
A SINGER UNSUNG

It may not be a surprise that the SMS syndrome (West 2009) affects those who have been judged as non-singers in their childhood years, but we might not expect to find that a successfully launched performer, doing well-received paying gigs with her trio, had also been vulnerable to losing her sense of musical self. When Simone tells her story (as part of this my current research) it is clear that, for her, one of the most precious aspects of singing and teaching singing is to be emotionally connected with others. Her experience as a developing musician reflects current research in musical development that emphasises the importance of the initial nurturing environment to the enculturation process (see Trehub 2006, pp. 43,44). Singing and playing the piano had always been a part of life for Simone. In her words:

During high school I couldn’t walk past the piano without playing it... just loved playing it... took refuge in it during my 20’s... singing was a way of coping and of carving out an identity. Singing with the Songbirds [pseudonym for her professional trio] was important... felt it was something I’d created myself, rather than fitting into a pre-determined job or position... helped create an identity for myself.

Before she auditioned for the jazz course at a prestigious performing arts institution (AI), her confidence was boosted not only by a recent distinction for the AMEB eighth grade singing examination but also by the assurance from current students of the jazz course that she would have no problems succeeding in the audition and in coping with the course because her vocal skills were superior to singers who were already studying at the AI. Despite these assurances, during the audition she became acutely aware of the effect of the judges: ‘two people down below... sitting there in the dark... adjudicating’. As Bowman recognises, our bodily responses to music ‘in Western culture [are] decidedly secondary to the serious business of knowing’ (Bowman 2010 p. 2) and Simone was to discover this to the detriment of her musical career.

She clearly expressed her perception of being musical:

Musical is something a person is— and people differ in the degree to which they are musical. The more competent they are the more musical they can be considered. However, I would also consider someone musical if they were passionate about and committed to playing music, even if they weren’t terribly ‘competent’ at it. My answer surprises me.

I’m musical in the sense that sometimes I just want to sing for the pure joy of it, and lose track of time when I do; and have in the past, worked to improve my singing. I’m non-musical in the sense that I don’t want to do this all the time i.e. for a living – my life’s purpose isn’t fulfilled purely from singing. And I’m non-musical in the sense that I don’t think that I’ve excelled in any of the genre’s of music I’ve engaged in – pop, classical and jazz.

But then she revealed how her feelings had undergone a dramatic change. ‘Currently, I sing only as a way of making money by teaching singing... get no personal joy from music at present... only listen to it or learn a song for the purposes of teaching’.

From the moment of her audition, her musical self dissipated. ‘February, March, April... three months... I was a gone!'
At the tertiary institution for arts (AI), Simone unexpectedly experienced an environment that was sapping the vitality from her singing. Her embodied joy turned to fear. 'Positive aspects of a performance were not acknowledged, only performance flaws. It was often a humiliating and belittling experience. I learned to hate singing and performing'.

Not feeling free to be 'in the world', she retreated not only from the institution, but also from her world of music; she entered a period of grief. For more than a week, she cried. Self-confined, she slowly began to view her reality as that of another. While she could not face returning to the AI, an awareness of what had happened emerged within her reflections. Her loss was overwhelming; no longer part of a musical or social world, she had a heightened awareness of how, in the words of Merleau-Ponty:

...forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical. (1962 p. xii)

Simone recognises how those strong negative 'judgments' were turning against her deep inner musicality to endanger a treasured part of her identity. Musical connection with people, so crucial to her singing (and her being) was undermined; joy was taken out of singing itself. She began to feel that she never wanted to sing again. Her means of making herself 'feel better emotionally... means of connecting with people [of giving] a purpose in life' had been taken away, yet she found herself in a position where she was free to discern complex hidden influences that are part of our structured capitalist reality (see Faubion 2000, p. 66); influences that curb much musical expression.

Thus, after only three months into her jazz course at AI, Simone knew that she was a 'goner'. As she spent 'a week sitting in a room crying... staring at the walls... too distressed' to either contact the institution or to engage with her daily living, Simone found her consciousness escaping the everyday norm towards a new knowing. She felt that it was not her acts alone that led her to this place. She recognised that, musically, she was as capable as others who successfully completed the jazz course and that her personality contributed to her reaction. With voice you're completely naked you know, it's part of you and any disapproval of your voice is like, you know... disapproving of part of you! At the same time she recognised that the technical preferences of her lecturers were not those of her own favoured jazz styles; she was being judged for not meeting criteria that were both unfamiliar and uninviting to her. The negative experience that affected her most was the loss of connectivity in her singing: '...music making is about connecting; communicative musicality is about entering into the space of others and how they feel'. Simone believed that the teachers had failed because 'they tell you what they want from you but they don't tell you how to get there'. She knew that she was 'technically competent but stylistically incompetent [from the perspective of her teachers since she] didn't fit... the style of singing that they were looking for'. With the focus on technical competence and judgment relating to preferred jazz styles, experiences at the AI have destroyed Simone's instinctive human musical connectivity. Her lament tells her music story:

[Music is] therapeutic and it's communicative... but we've turned it into something that needs to be... technically competent, and that's taken all the joy out of it. The most destructive music education experience was when I started the Bachelor of Music (Jazz) at AI. What I was supposed to achieve was clear, however, how to achieve those objectives was not made clear. Being a performance art meant that if those objectives were not achieved, it was obvious to all in the class. It was often a


humiliating and belittling experience. Positive aspects of a performance were not acknowledged, only performance flaws. I learned to hate singing and performing.

For Simone, the joy of musicking began to diminish from the time of the audition itself, judgment took over connection; all that mattered was effective style. As Faucault noted (Faubion 2000 p. 83), we need to question the value of a system where value lies in work and in the product of work; Simone's capacity for healthy musicking disappeared when dominated by systemic politics in a tertiary institution.

A WAY AHEAD

Since the creative arts are now being recognised as a useful means towards product innovation and increased wealth, they have achieved political importance (Bumard 2008a, p. 2); they are included in governmental planning as a necessary element of a competitive economy (EDWA 2005, p. 4). However, music is more than a useful contribution to our knowledge economy. When participant Andy exclaims of his friends singing, 'It's the done thing. You know... and they love it too! They love it!' (Ruddock 2007, p. 148), he reflects our natural desire to engage in musicking as a response to our own instinctive drives as we respond to our environment (see Bannan & Woodward 2009, p. 465).

If the making of music is dominated by notions of performance, then active involvement (particularly singing) is too easily perceived as something that is reserved for the 'talented'. In order to reverse such a narrow conception of music making, an effective mechanism would be the introduction of enlightened music programs in schools so that children can learn to become musickers in their own idiosyncratic way. Where programs are based on inclusion, innovation and understanding (Wiggins 2009), individuals grow to be part of a community freed from constraints where narrowly defined judgment preempts action; they can enjoy a 'humanising' (Nzewi 2007), communicative music as it plays its part in maintaining a healthy society.

If we are to meet the many challenges in our complex educational reality where planners attempt to fuse divided ideals towards effective policy (Bumard, 2008a), we can ill afford to ignore the 'hidden' world of individuals such as Simone. Insightful researchers have already begun to alert us to the powerful impact of language. Bumard, for instance, illustrates how societal use of the word 'musical' is not merely 'descriptive, but rather a form of discrimination which denies individuals the opportunity to develop their innate musical potential' (2003, p. 36), thus allowing us to take a new look at how we understand and use the word 'musical'. Further, in the light of reports on the current exclusive practices in the arts and the need for new perspectives in music education in England (Bumard 2008b, p. 61) we may recognise that similar problems exist in Australian schools (Fascoe et al. 2005). Once we can accept the extent to which the arts reflect societal values and acknowledge the dysfunctional view of cultural pursuits being measured specifically in terms of their capacity to effect economic potential without the essential attendant wisdom (Craft 2008), we will then give ourselves the opportunity to properly address the policy conflict between 'education' and 'work' (Bumard 2008a, p. 2) and move towards an increasingly healthy society.
CONCLUSION

Although the musical nature of humans has been substantiated in recent research, participants’ everyday experiences considered in this article highlight continuing unhealthy examples of cultural restriction. An appreciation of how these instances can repress individual musicality can provide a deeper awareness of how music is actually experienced in everyday life in our society. We may recognise how the notion of singing as performance can override potential acts of singing as communicative action and lead many individuals to perceive themselves as non-singers. While some people maintain their robust sense of musicality and continue their listening and responding to music, there are many instances of people whose embarrassment in the face of expected societal judgment means that they refrain from musical action. To truly recognise participant experiences, such as those reported in this article, is to begin to become aware of the many others like them in our communities. Their experiences can also alert us to those elements within our society that sustain such a phenomenon and, through such recognition, encourage us to ensure that we provide an educational environment to change judgmental attitudes. We can learn to listen and respond to people, so that their songs are no longer judged as a ‘performance’ but a way of human connection.

Participants in my on-going research reveal experiences that expose a judgmental society dominated by a belief that only some individuals are born with sufficient talent to sing to an acceptable standard. Such a societal perception contributes to a false musical-unmusical divide that undermines musical opportunities for those individuals who find themselves unnaturally silenced. This phenomenon sits uncomfortably with recent cross-discipline research that shows singing to be a normal human action. It is important, then, to question how it can be that this phenomenon is prevalent in our society, given that singing, arguably, a preeminent aspect of human musicality, is known to promote health and a sense of community.

We might question how, in this month’s report from the Australia Council for the Arts, research findings record that only 5% of individuals report that they sing, at the same time as a declaration that the arts are playing a ‘vital’ role in Australia. That the report was commissioned at all, however, is a positive move towards an enhancement of the arts; as is the increasing government support now being given to healthy programs that encourage active engagement in singing (Australian Music Therapy Association 2010). To have long-term impact, it is necessary that such initiatives as ‘Active music making for wellbeing’ (Australian Music Therapy Association 2010) are supported over time so that their informed work practices can help to redress pathological divisions that allow for only the ‘talented’ to develop their musicality. To be alert to research that substantiates human musicality is to be informed; it can enable us to reject unnecessary judgment that undermines musical development that restricts communicative musicality. Informed educators, parents and the general public are in a position not only to question detrimental negative judgment but also to take advantage of innovative thinking and outreach music programs that can offer refreshing and inclusive perspectives.
REFERENCES


Australian musical experience for those not chosen

Many Australian children have yet to benefit from a healthy music experience informed by holistic human practice such as that considered by Trendwith (2003) in the above paper. Musical understanding in Australia continues to suffer from misinformation as we separate “performance from practice” (Trendwith, 2003, p. 320), so that, in line with Western cultural perceptions, we regard singing as something dependent on special talent (Nzewi, 2014, p. 27). We maintain a belief that only those individuals perceived to be gifted are to be offered opportunities to learn to sing, dance, paint or play musical instruments (Kirnarskaya, 2009). Again, participant Harry provides an experienced Australian educator’s perspective. Having read the above paper, he writes:

*In all this the only thing I can suggest is that you consider the musical as being no different (and therefore as important) from the physical, the mathematical, the artistic, the practical, the critical, etc. We are hardwired to do these things and inappropriate condemnation early on or lack of perceived early success on nominated standards may inhibit subsequent effort, enjoyment, production etc. This inappropriate condemnation happens to all of us in various contexts throughout our lives - so ???. Some of us are wired to make some of these activities easier than it is for others or more capable of refined performance. Leonardo is an aberration.*

(email: 02/10/2008)

His words would be powerfully true if music were as available as the physical, the mathematical, etc. However, such is not the case when considering education in Western Australia, the home for the participants in this project (with two exceptions, viz., Tanya lives in Tasmania and RM is a Londoner). The reality of music education in Australia has not improved since the National Review (Pascoe et al., 2005, p. 27) where the research team found that, even where music was offered in schools, in many instances, the quality of the programs was variable. So, to ensure access to music learning, individuals may need to fall back on their own ingenuity. When one mother discovered that there was no music program in her ‘home’ area primary school, for instance, she worked to move the family to a home in a location where the local school offered music as part of the curriculum. For those children without a parent who particularly seeks to ensure that they experience music as part of their education, however, opportunities to engage in music learning are largely a matter of chance.
Overshadowed by words

Music is not only missing from children’s school education but, echoes of our Western heritage leave many to perceive music as an object (Small, 1998, p. 2), something created by the talented (Blacking, 1976, p. 4), where music fails to maintain an equable position as part of the Arts (Winn, 1998). For instance, while McDonnell acknowledges the important function of art to provoke ways of thinking that support the democratic process (2014, p. 51), she allows her discussion to play around the effect of literature to appreciate the power of words. Music is not considered. Such omissions are common and provide evidence of what Winn (1998) perceives to be a lop-sided emphasis on words in the West, where an unrecognised bias disturbs the full potential of human arts to fully play their role (Nzewi, 2009c). In contrast to McDonnell, Boyce-Tillman, tellingly argues that “[w]ords divide, but sounds unite” (2000, p. 93), thus emphasising insights from Winn who draws on English poets to expose the “primacy of the verbal” (1998, p. 67). While mis-perceptions may underplay the sensual aspects of the arts, leaving them to be perceived as “mere glitter” (Winn, 1998, p. 67), however, musicking continues to play an important role towards health.

Left out of education and everyday living

Working from their music therapy perspective, Aldridge and Aldridge (2008) understand that, to feel free to do music, to engage in an active response with another person or freely improvise by oneself can allow an individual to “create something out of [an] inner self that is...aesthetic” (2008, p.179). They emphasise the importance of this self-experiencing which can open up a way to hope and contemplation (as opposed to an orientation towards achievement, materialistic acquisitiveness, and consumerism). Such freedom is, however, denied to the many individuals in Western society where formal education so often fails to include aesthetic ways of knowing and “[w]e seem to believe that what we cannot say, we cannot know” (Eisner, 2005, pp. 114). This is especially the case for those who do not experience effective arts education. Sadly, the widespread belief that an individual requires a special talent to learn to play or sing continues to determine who will be able to access music learning. Yet, even those who have no formal knowledge about what is involved in making music or who have a challenging disability, can listen and respond (Williams, 2013, p. 19) to benefit from the value of exposure to and involvement in musicking.
Encultured performance expectations distort

In the prevailing culture of practised performance, the nature and value of musicking may be distorted such that Western education practice can lead to a loss of ability to respond at deeper sensual levels (Eisner, 2002, pp. 43-5). Cook (1998), for instance, alerts us to detrimental aspects of paying excessive emphasis on knowing and categorising. He consider that, on the one hand, detailed knowledge of structure and form can enhance our engagement with music, on the other, it can distance us from deeper connection (Cook, 1998, pp. 99-100). Both Tanya and Simone recognised the damaging effects of the intense focus on technical ability and critical judgement; both aspects dominated their experience at IfA to prevent effective nurturing of their musical development.

Listening to participants in this study continues to emphasise findings from the never-picked project (Ruddock, 2007b) where notions of performance, critical judgement and talent emerged as defining elements of human musicality. This reality leads many individuals to accept the role as consumer of musical peoples’ work as well as to feel themselves being musically disabled. I suggest that this culturally constructed everyday perception benefits neither musicians nor non-musicians. While professional musicians might appear to hold the power of music making, yet as Leong understands, their livelihood is controlled as a capitalist venture (2003, p. 159). Further, the musician’s reality is mostly one where she is beholden to the music industry with its associated focus on market control (Jenner, 2010).

It is this notion of music as judged performance that leads to widespread perception that an individual must have talent if s/he were to do music. To feel non-musical, to fear any public display of musical action may too readily lead individuals to be caught in a cultural bind where the resulting bi-polarity arrests singing and playing. It can also subvert intrinsic musical development to restrict the free rhythmic interplay that has a capacity to nurture connective musical experience. Musicking, in its many and various guises, enables a living experience unfettered by verbal and visual constraints where we may move beyond limitations of everyday being (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008, p. 325). To engage with music gives us access to another way of knowing ourselves and our world.

The need to expose a ‘sick culture’

Unsettlingly commonplace, many of the experiences that led to participants’ non-musical self-views became increasingly apparent to me during the process of researching this phenomenon; yet these critically judgemental events very often remain
hidden from general view. Where the *never picked* study traced individuals’ experiences to expose patterns of behaviour that led to their feelings of being distanced from intrinsic musicality, this investigation focuses on developing a deeper understanding of the pervasive quality of the powerful yet mostly unseen part of our everyday culture (Foucault, 1972, p. 232) that subverts intrinsic musical response.

When cultural constraints influence individuals’ self perceptions to ‘learn’ that they are not musical, a dichotomous reality is seen to exist; on the one hand, individuals respond emotionally to music while, on the other, they control their natural response to ensure that each one is not seen as a “naughty little thing” (Kafka, 2007, p. 267) to dare to engage in out-of-turn musicking. I argue that Damasio’s reference to our “sick culture” with its “amputation of the concept of humanity” (2006, pp. 258, 255) is appropriate not only in reference to his world of medicine but also in relation to the world of arts and humanities. I am left wondering: how can our world be so? How is it that many intrinsically musical beings, living within our everyday cultural influences, learn to believe that they are not musical? In their sense of damaged musicality, participants lead me to ask: how is it that the *Western* (Leong, 2003, p. 169) reality of the participants’ everyday cultural practice develops to deliver negative influences on an aspect that is intrinsic to human being?

**Cultural practices questioned**

While we might recognise that many practices in our everyday living have their roots in our past, yet it is also relevant to consider a way of more readily acknowledging this from moment to moment. Vibrant being need not be cut off from what *was* in order to vitally live what *is*. Indeed perceiving may be even more immediate and real, Gadamer suggests, if elements of the past are not mere echoes of a way of being, but are a more vital part of our everyday experiencing (Gadamer, 1998 pp. 18-20). Trend with sensitively explores such rich engagement via musicking (2003 p. 319) to acknowledge the mysterious yet palpable connection to more than a singular present; he attributes deep experiential learning to understandings of the Australian Aboriginal people who appreciate the vital place of music in “the development of the balanced individual” (p. 319).

Music, for many living in a consumer oriented practice (Leong, 2003, p. 153), however, cannot fulfil a vitally connective role when so dominated by the performative aspect of musicking (Leong, 2003, p. 156). The limiting, performative-individualist model is being challenged by researchers who have a vision “to connect with evolving arts practices” (Leong, 2003, p. 154). Naughton and Lines (2013), for instance,
demonstrate how sensitive direction toward a listening pedagogy can lead student teachers toward a new world-view on the music learning process where they recognise the value in providing an appropriate learning environment. In their research, Naughton and Lines (2013) lead participant student teachers toward a realisation that children can create and learn together with the teacher in a way that connects individuals and inspires creative musicality. In her reflection of an incident, for instance, one of their student teacher participants reveals how potential mis-labelling of a young child may be averted: “Like some kids they are very musical, some they’re not but they want to be but you can see that we’re trying to bring that out from them”. As a group, the young students directly identify intrinsic musicality, noting that, in order for the young children to be free to develop their musicality, they just needed “the confidence to...do it...without all the attention being on” them (p. 29).

Too often, we fail to notice how our conception of music mis-directs potential action; we do not realise that what teachers do can actually “shut the children down” (student teacher’s observation, Naughton & Lines, 2013, p. 32). It is long now since Small (1977, p. 163) and Blacking (1976 p. 4) warned that such an understanding limits human being, yet, caught in a belief that music is something that that is performed by the talented, music continues to be reified such that the musical act is removed from everyday human being. Recent research shows that human musicking is not only an integral part of our evolutionary path (Cross & Morley, 2009) but that musical responses continue in many ways (Trevarthen, 1999), even when not recognized (Ruddock, 2012a). Music, unfettered by performative commercial dominance, is a way of being that enables humans to connect with our primordial nature (Del Nevo, 2008); it can make a possible connection within our being over time, connecting us to others and evoking an awareness of the spiritual dimension (Trendwith, 2003, p. 319).

The research question is within participant experience

I am indebted to insights from Gadamer (1960/2004) that led me to recognise otherwise hidden cultural perceptions and misperceptions emerging from experiences within the lives of participants. Most importantly, depth of cultural knowledge within his writing alerted me to the value of the role of the question in hermeneutic processes which, thoughtfully found, could effectively define research procedure toward enhanced understanding. Gadamer argued that “the problem of the beginning is, in fact, the problem of the end. For it is with respect to an end that a beginning is defined as a beginning of an end” (1960/2004, p. 467). Participant experience, recalled from data
delivered during the process of the never picked project (Ruddock, 2007b), revealed how embedded societal expectations influence their intrinsic sense of musicality. Despite feeling that music is a primeval response to life (p. 110), many struggled to engage freely in musicking in their everyday lives. For individuals in my never picked study, music teachers were too frequently implicated in undermining their perception of their musicality. Indeed, as she stressed the importance of further consideration of this issue, one leading music educator wrote that “…it is not uncommon for individuals to hold negative perceptions of their own musicality as a result of interaction with members of our profession” (Examiner’s Appraisal, 30/07/2007). Yet, like Small (1977/1996, p. 204) and West (2009, p. 215), it is also important to recognise that professional musicians, music teachers, and classroom teachers, some of whom are involved with the perpetuation of a pervasive sense of non-musicality, are an integral part of the society and so tend to reflect embedded societal values.

**Researcher reflections affect processes**

This research project was not originally conceived from within what Jorgensen terms, the “scholarly community” (2009b, p. 418). Rather, it emerges from empirical evidence of those for whom the music education establishment has offered little, or worse, has led to a distancing of their instinctive musicality (Ruddock, 2007a). Nevertheless, the research journey, once begun, has drawn upon a cross disciplinary research base. This encompasses cultural neuroscience (Chiao, 2009a), qualitative methods (Jorgensen, 2009a), arts based practices (Barone & Eisner, 2012) and hermeneutic processes as I work within developed and developing traditions of practice. From the questions that emerged with the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b) investigation, each step in this study is reasoned and intentional (Jorgensen, 2009b, p. 406); all aspects of planning, participant contact, and hermeneutic processes are made as transparent as is possible. In my role as researcher, for instance, I wish to acknowledge the epistemological value of musicking when, through the process of playing the Prelude and Fugue (Bach, 1742/1993), poignancies of participant experience demanded further understanding. This led to more holistic ways of understanding — including poetic bricolage. This arts based approach is no peripheral decoration; rather, it is an integral part of the research (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 61) that can provide an accessible text for sharing participant experience and emerging perceptions. Reflections on experiences are then played out through representations of dialogic connections, by presenting participant perceptions via direct extracts in poetic form (Liu, 2011, p. 8) from transcripts, email responses, or annotations on my published papers.
As I have already acknowledged, my research puzzle emerged from the world as experienced by the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b). Yet, what their experiences might mean, and how they can be theorized or explained, is not the prime quest. Rather, what is important is to work towards a way of “explicating the essential qualities, structure and forms” (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008, p. 58) from previously unused material from the never picked participants together with new data emerging from the research cohort especially selected for this study. During the research process, close readings of related literature has been maintained in order to gain fresh views and insights that have a capacity to deliver a deeper understanding of musicking in contemporary Western (human) everyday living. Taking note of Jorgensen’s (2009b, p. 416) warning that a multidisciplinary approach can be necessary, I refer to related disciplines as they are required rather than incorporating research detail in a single literature review chapter.

Again, I recognise the importance of making clear the interconnectedness of disparate voices; I need to acknowledge the influence of my self “consciousness” (Aldridge, p. 58) as it effects aspects concerning:

- the evolving of the project,
- emergence of the questions, and
- how I approach an interpretation of participant experience.

Because my own consciousness is necessarily at the centre of this research procedure, it was important to take constant care to note my own actions and reactions in regard to participant revelations. It was important that participant stories did not become submerged beneath my “analysis and theorizing” (Levering, 2006). It was always necessary that I was constantly aware of the challenge to provide the reader with a chance to recognise considerations arising from data and data events themselves by providing direct access to participants’ telling. In line with understandings from Aldridge and Aldridge (2008 p. 60), I adopted a useful way of achieving this by keeping regular reflections in a research journal (an on-going document that was always available for checking perceptions and events). This exposed “beliefs, bias and assumptions” that helped me to recognise my own “subjectivity” as it came from my fingers on the keyboard (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18).

It was also helpful to note that my surprise at unexpected realisations along the research route would be considered by Merleau-Ponty as “indispensable to describing” (in Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008, p. 59) the phenomenon experienced by the participants. While instances of my experience and evolving consciousness are articulated in the process of writing this thesis, prime consideration remained focussed on how...
exclusionary aspects of the phenomenon compromised human musicking for the participant cohort. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) understood, it is always important to recognise the centrality of the role of the participants themselves regarding actual perception. So, it is important that the integrity of this dialogic process is enriched by new understandings from the literature as I ‘see’ how each participant ‘sees’, as perceptions are teased out towards enhanced understanding.

**Human musicking compromised**

So that the reader may read participant dialogue directly, and not be subject to “interpretations of interpretations” (Levering, 2006), the text below presents original texts from Tanya and Simone. Firstly, Tanya (at this stage, a trained music teacher in a Tasmanian High School) responds to Simone’s experience recorded in the paper above (Ruddock, 2010). Together, in their responses to emails, they present insights into perspectives of self-perceived musicians whose musical integrity has been challenged:
Self-perceived musician voices

Tanya  Wow. I read just the bit about Simone and completely relate to her experience. I am too pressed for time to read the whole article now but I'll try to get back to it and write something in response very shortly. (If I don't, can you please get back to me and hassle me to do it?!)

I think what happened to me is that after uni [IfA] I felt I couldn’t participate anymore. The jam sessions where I was either judged by or fearful of being judged by fellow students (therefore more often than not I didn’t play) because of my technical ability (or perceived lack thereof) was enough to take away the simple joy of playing.

...pretty much everything about Simone’s story really hits me hard in the guts! I’m very glad that I’m not the only one. [Email received: 29/04/2010]

Simone  ...thanks for sharing Tanya’s insights...It’s quite amazing the similarity between mine and Tanya’s perceptions and experiences. She expresses her experience very eloquently, and hits the issue on the head. I think there would be a heap more from the [IfA] jazz course with similar reactions - particularly females. The drop-out rate of females when I was there was quite high. [Email received: 15/07/2012]

Eve  Hi Tanya,

...in case you might have time to read this, have re-attached the article with ‘Simone’s story (Ruddock, 2010) – and another paper (Ruddock, 2012a) along with responses [from and] to an anonymous reviewer (it seems that some ‘music educators’ do seem to be far away from understanding ways of musicking/being musical that you’d find in the ‘folk scene’ you mentioned...). Some researchers/prof educators also do not ‘see’ what I’m on about – but, so many individuals I meet know exactly what I’m trying to explore – they’ve lived the story themselves. [Email sent: 16/07/2012]

Tanya  ...I skim-read a bit and have saved them to my files for future cup-of-tea reading!

It doesn't hurt to be reminded of all of this stuff because I sometimes feel I’m in danger of inflicting the same sorts of hurt on my students.

I’m teaching...at a high school. It’s hard work but rewarding now that the kids have gotten to know me and we’ve settled into the year. [Email received: 16/07/2012]
Unlike opportunities envisaged by Boyce-Tillman where the arts are recognised “as a place where adults can play, be free to explore their own subconscious and to make mistakes as “important arenas of self-development” (Boyce-Tillman, 2000, p. 91), Simone and Tania’s reality show that this was not their reality. Instead, their experience was subverted by the “values of a capitalist society where the notion of a product is central to the notion of the marketplace” (Boyce-Tillman, 2000, p. 94). Their learning was diverted by limitations imposed by particular performance expectations that did not allow the freedom necessary to nurture musical development. For Tania, the negative effects experienced at IfA were gradually countered by positive pre-service and then purposeful engagement in music teaching, even to the extent of ‘forgetting’ of the trauma of IfA experience. Generously, she shares her concern that, once accepted into the system, it is all too easy to become a perpetuator of the phenomenon that can distance students from vibrant musicking. Contrary to Roberts’s “identity construction theory” where, he argues, the music school acts as an environment in which students develop their musician identity (Roberts, 2010, pp. 3-5), Simone and Tanya entered their music institution with strongly defined musician identities only to have them shattered within its culture.

**Self-perceived non-musician voices**

It is useful here to recall Marg, the nurse introduced in Chapter One. ‘Found data’ below (from her conversation following a short singing course) reveals the destructive influence of critical judgement, performance and talent. Despite the presenter’s best intentions, Marg’s deeply held cultural inhibitions did not allow a happy appreciation of his excellent work; positive encouragement was not enough to combat judgemental elements that Marg had assimilated from the wider community. In her response to material from Harry (a major contributor of the never picked study) Marg uncovers tensions to offer the researcher an opportunity to tease out societal practices that distance individuals from an inherent part of their human nature.
I can’t sing (Marg)
Saturday
singing at the course
I could only do it
if I could see
the group leader
or if everybody’s singing
the same part
I struggled with the tunes
felt quite threatened
it was fear that I couldn’t sing
[You’ve no idea
how much I was trying to do!
hear, feel, follow directions,
understand,
get my body to do unaccustomed things,
be aware of how I was feeling
so that I could report it to you]

I felt quite discouraged
I felt really discouraged this morning
remembered I used to sing
always sing
sing along with the wireless
in the kitchen
in my garden I would sing
I used to like
listening to singing and
doing it as well
Late teenage years
there were good sing-along tunes
As a nurse
I’d sing in my bedroom
if no-one else was there
But – when I went to the farm
I shut the shop
stopped music altogether
until the kids came along
He didn’t like it
We did it anyway

I was still aware of the bit that I was out of tune...I made a ‘harsh’ sound several times
On about 4 occasions
a reasonably high note sounded
reasonably good
coming out of me
Most of the sounds were o.k.
but sometimes
they were just horrible!
not normal
to be seen to be singing
in public
unless you are a performer.
Despite such powerful inhibitions that misdirected her singing, there were times when Marg would enjoy responding her intrinsic musicality; she would just sing:

- *hanging up clothes this morning*
- *looking up*
- *superlative blue sky*
- *treetops on three sides*
- *made me sing.*

*I had to sing*

This experience presents a contrary view to the reality presented by Harry, a continuing participant from the *never picked* study. Amongst his extensive comments to the *never picked* investigation was Harry’s vehement assertion that he: *Cannot sing, not even in the shower.* While such a perceived position is “almost part of cultural identity” (Richards & Durrant, 2003, p. 80), as a dialectic contributor to this investigation, Harry was to surprise me. In an interchange that included several participants who, not feeling comfortable to sing Happy Birthday, tended to mime, Harry wrote: “I can do happy birthday with gusto. I cannot do the current national anthem because I do not know the words and I do not like it.” [Harry’s sense of the ridiculous led him to add: “I keep thinking of Advance Australia Where? and wondering why Gert is on the beach!”] In deep contrast with Marg, Harry maintained his determined conviction that being musical “is a thing one is or one isn’t”. To appreciate the difference between these two ‘self-perceived non-musician’ views, it is helpful to refer back to Marg’s annotations (as a community reader of the *never picked* study) where she revealed concerns regarding positions held by Harry:
Harry’s words from the never picked study

Music’s not important; it’s just something to do with extras if you can manage it.

Marg’s responses as a Community Reader

Music is vital, spiritual
the fourth aspect of being human:
1. physical
2. emotional
3. intellectual and the
4. spiritual
Education business
deals with the first three
the fourth is ignored
as if it doesn’t exist
to our detriment.

It’s a sidepiece to the whole educational business.

I’m not musical because I can’t play.

He’s dangerous.

...doesn’t he know the difference between musical and musician?

...the real demands central to the [educational] task rate language learning, maths and getting a job as more worthy of effort (given limited resources) than aesthetic activity (including music).

Pity. There might be less drugs if kids had some emotional fulfilment. Sport seems to be seen a central, at least in primary school.

Why not music as well?

Harry failed to appreciate the nature of instrumental skill acquisition; this left him vulnerable to disappointment when he could not immediately demonstrate some technical skill in a short-lived attempt to learn the trumpet in his teens. This one event shattered his sense of being musical leaving him feeling that he was not musically talented. Further, having taken on a negative view regarding his own musical potentiality, he appears to have generalised his understanding to embrace the mythical “‘talent’ model in which ability is fixed and innate. The implication is that others are incapable of developing musical ability and therefore it might be a waste of time.
teaching them” (Richards & Durrant, 2003, p. 79). After his “disappointing” attempt to play the trumpet, Harry confined his musicality to appreciating particular music made by other, ‘gifted’ individuals. Yet, to perceive music in this way is to arbitrarily create a separatist notion which undermines the very process of musicking. Such a way of seeing, I would argue, distances us from intrinsic human action to disallow the subtle interplay of sound, time and action toward connective being. It disturbs “a synthesis and…their separations, by means of objectification, is actually a radical break away from ‘what is’” (Lines, 2003, p. 239).

In his continued determination to perceive music in terms of performance by the talented, Harry illustrates a perceptual distancing, one that captures a widespread Western assumption where the act of musicking suffers from constrictions that Lines suggests is akin to “anthropocentrism” (2003 p. 240). Harry’s view, then, represents a way of being where so many of us in the West, like Kafka’s Mouse People (Kafka, 1924/2007) briefly outlined in Chapter One, are not free to develop an inherent musical voice. Unlike Harry, however, Marg maintained her musical self-perception until long after her school days; it was not until she found herself living in a more judgemental circumstance (living with a non-appreciative husband in an isolated situation on a farm) that her musicality suffered fatal questioning — that was when she experienced a separation from her instinctive musicality. Her final response, several years after her annotations regarding Harry’s material reveals deep reflection:
Eve  When ‘Marg’ says that Harry is ‘dangerous’ regarding his comment that music education is ‘a sidepiece to the whole educational business’, what, do you think, might you mean?

Marg  As an ordinary member of the public, [I understand that] music education is said to develop skills across the curriculum, it’s important not to deprive children of the chance to have their learning made easier. All children deserve to have the sheer pleasure of enjoying music in a variety of ways.

... I think some children have an innate sense of finding ways of making music themselves – because that’s the way they are

BUT – there are other people who, unless someone suggests something, they wouldn’t think about it. For some people, music is innate but it is deeply buried and they need someone to show them – and they will run with it once this happens

...for a lot of children, if they only hear pop songs on the radio, they don’t know the huge variety of other styles and sounds that are available SO I don’t think that side-lining music is reasonable at all.

**New voices provoke new ways of working**

As a Community Reader, Marg had recorded her comments regarding the *never picked* participants – now a participant, she reveals a passion to be heard. She substantiates lived experiences of the *never picked* while simultaneously presenting inherent contradictions. Between the telling of her own experiences and her responses to my previous work, her contribution suggested two techniques for this project. Firstly, to present material from participant experience in a poetic way and secondly, to engage in a dialectic approach where participant voices could work as an ensemble in this investigation towards understanding. While a singular research lens could limit potential understandings, perceptions from a participant cohort, including self-perceived ‘non-musical’ individuals alongside ‘musician’ participants, offers an effective dialogic opportunity where interchanges between participants can contribute first-hand recognition and articulation of understandings.

In this cultural study on individuals’ conceptions of music and musicality, participant voices present an overview of their lived experiences to reveal how, within their everyday culture, they experience their intrinsic musicality. In Figure 5 below, all twelve voices are represented to express disparate positions, yet ‘sounding’ together, to
present a composite picture of their musical realities. Opening with a theme of the *never picked*, RM’s voice is heard:

*I do not sing because others will judge me by my efforts and think I am a very poor specimen of a human being; keeping quiet protects me. Music remains distant – unattainable.*

Then, at measure 11, Julian commences as a bass voice:

*I always felt myself talented - music is at the heart of my life and drawing, painting and visual arts, side by side integrated so much of what I do. But when my sister got the fatal tap on shoulder she clammed up shut in her mind, Did not sing until the birth of her child Because she had been told she was a listener That is a very, very sad story.*

Mel joins at the beginning of measure 12:

*Music is a primeval response to life but I feel sad for the little girl me. ‘would be devastated if my daughters ever feel this way where they feel that they had no right to sing in the school choir but they had snuck in.*

and, joining them from measure 12, Jamie’s voice is heard:

*I was off tune. Told I should mime. Pretend. I’m not a singer – don’t sing for anyone.*

These three voices present conflicting views of being musical and of feeling distanced from intrinsic musicality. The ‘Fugue’ ends with the two upper voices proclaiming a love for making music. Lamenting the part that i-pods play in disallowing spontaneous singing together, however, the bass voice acknowledges a technical regime wherein each person wants to listen to their ‘own’ music. Juxtaposing the voices in this way makes it possible to deliver an overview of different perceptions in one space. Thus, extracted from their long transcriptions, all participants’ voices ‘sound together’ in their composite ‘fugue’, *I do not sing.* This ‘snapshot’ in time delivers an overview of Western experiences that beg explication.
I do not sing
Chapter 2
Figure 5
Voices sound
Towards order
Voices sound
vibrations blend
in cacophonous chaos.
Send confusion
raise questions
dancing out of time
so miss sublime.

Mess with mind
Until they,
Hans-Georg\(^1\) and J. S. Bach\(^2\),
Damasio\(^3\) and all
Show the way.
Artful insight
Makes sense of contradictions
And brings
Ways to show
Captured knowing
Locks out being.

---


Chapter Three

Captured knowing locks out being

...culture has a stultifying effect on music (Community Reader, Susan)\textsuperscript{13}

"isn't this...the song that dialectic sings?"\textsuperscript{14}

Having been immersed in self-perceived musician and non-musician participant experience, I return to questions posed by a community reader when reading a paper (Ruddock & Leong, 2005) based on the never picked study (Ruddock, 2007b):

Could [this phenomenon of self-perceived non-musicality] be because there's a socially-agreed (engineered?) concept of what music is?

Is it necessary to make a music that's above a lowest-common-denominator base-line before it's considered "good"? i.e. should one be able to "appreciate" and/or "perform" with a minimum level of socially-proven/acceptable competence before being considered musical? [Bob, 23/04/2005]

Both questions remain insightful and pertinent to my investigation. Slowly but inexorably, insights have emerged from considerations of participants’ perceived musicality as they are examined alongside new understandings from the literature. Participants’ feelings of being ‘non-talented’ lead them to feel reluctant to become actively involved with musicking, a phenomenon also recognised as affecting individuals in Canada (Joyce, 2003), Britain (Welch, 2000) and New Zealand (Bodkin, 2004) — countries all reflecting Western cultural values. For these individuals who feel restricted regarding their musical expression, it becomes clear that to be encultured away from an intrinsic aspect of humanity is no small affair. Westney explains:

Humans are musical beings...[w]hat could be sadder than to forfeit that [musical] birthright? To love music and set out to make it one's own, only to be thwarted by fears, conflicts, tensions, and misconceptions? Ironically, this has been the experience of millions in industrialized societies, especially those who've had formal music lessons (2003 p. 9).

Research has revealed that perceptions of being non-musical often occur following interactions with music tutors or teachers (Ruddock, 2007b). However, as

\textsuperscript{13} See Appendix 4

\textsuperscript{14} Glaucon begins to comprehend the power of dialectic to see what is, rather than shadows of that which appears to be (Plato, The Republic, 1997, Book VII, 532a)
West (2009, p. 213) points out, views of music professionals (as a subset of the population) are diverse and music teachers should not be considered the prime cause of this dysfunction since they are necessarily a part of “unconscious systems” (Foucault, 1972, p. 15) within their society. Further, where the notion of ‘being musical’ is so strongly associated with skilled performance ability, it is inevitable that contemporary school practice caters mainly for those judged to be the ‘talented’; this means that only some individuals experience an opportunity to develop their musical potential. This reality contrasts with the “humanising imperatives” (Nzewi, 2009a, p. 86) enjoyed by indigenous musical arts practices that have a capacity to heal, discover and connect (Nzewi, 2009b). Too often, the Western experience leaves many of us to exist in a way that “diminishes our humanity” (Fielding, 2007, p. 383). Such diminished musical existence is one that is lived by self-perceived non-musical participants in this project; they represent many individuals in Western societies who have ‘learned’, through their everyday experiences or because of exclusive school practices, to doubt their own intrinsic musicality.

As mooted in Chapter One, this project focuses on making transparent the notion of non-musicality, something imposed upon musical beings via ways “too magical a kind to be very amenable to analysis” (Foucault, 1972, p. 24). It is, however, important to articulate our “lack of knowing” (Anonymous, 1983, p. 69) in order to bring to consciousness those unseen directives that influence musicking in our lives. I begin by wondering (Plato, 1997c, Theaetetus, 155d) what it is that can influence us away from acknowledging an intrinsic aspect of our humanity. Here, it is helpful to consult Foucault (1972) who suggests that, despite an influence being manifest, it does not follow that such a phenomenon can be understood through what is so often seen to be an accepted rational “analysis” (p. 24). And yet, a central purpose of this thesis must focus directly upon working toward gaining an understanding, teasing out manifestations of a “collective consciousness” (Foucault, 1972, p. 24), so that it may bring a certain re-cognition that enables us to re-locate our musicality in everyday lived experiences.

Foucault (1972) warns against a limiting and cluttered, methodological way of coming to know the present, where working within a regime with imposed worldviews can actually place a serious limitation on what will be revealed. He also acknowledges

15 Paton (2011, p. 14) refers to the notion of “cultural…myth” to capture unconsidered influences of “a communal belief system [that are] accepted without question by the population at large” (Note 1, p. 14).
that we are part of our world and, despite our advanced rational thinking, we remain part of a mystery (p. 232). So, in an attempt to more deeply understand the phenomenon at the root of this project, while sensing dangers of being directly beholden to a particular method, it is important to acknowledge the debt I owe to the thought and understandings of Gadamer (1975/2004). Noting that “[p]opular consciousness...is still affected by the eighteenth-century cult of genius” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 80), Gadamer questions the notion that perception can be isolated from human experience. He attributes a belief in “pure perception...to an epistemological dogmatism” (1975/2014, p. 78), recognising that experiential knowledge “enables one to see what is there, instead of the imaginings of the instinct fantasy” (p. 78). Further, he understands that how we perceive depends upon our past experiences (p. 79); we understand only insofar as our background makes possible. In accepting the importance of this understanding, I wish to emphasise that I do not know the answer to how it can be that musical beings would deny their intrinsic musicality. So, in this chapter, I further explore lived experience via dialectic processes so that, through authentic interchanges, possible answers can emerge from the engagement itself (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 357).

Who could better offer insights into this phenomenon than participant Harry, whose detailed contributions date back to the pilot interviews for the never picked study (Ruddock, 2007b)? A participant whose contributions capture the essence of the self-perceived non-musical individuals, Harry’s texts speak for those who are denied genuine opportunities to develop as musical beings. Viewed over time, the finely detailed nuances in his reflections reveal his musical and educational perceptions; they open up an enigmatic, unresolved perplexity to highlight how it feels to be ‘non-musical’ in a contemporary consumerist lifeworld. And, for this project, they raise two major questions:

- How can it be that an informed educator would fail to recognise the necessity of being engaged in an activity for skills to develop (especially when this expert clearly acknowledged this to be the case in areas of numeracy and literacy)?
- How was it possible that this educational philosopher continued to give such credence to the narrow perspective of the talent account (Howe et al., 1998a) in relation to human musicality, but then applied broader perspectives to the development of other, non-musical abilities (e.g. mathematical skills)?

Following his initial two hour-long taped and transcribed interviews (as a participant in the never picked (Ruddock, 2007b) study), for this research Harry
contributed email responses to researcher queries, annotated my published papers and engaged in dialectic responses with several participants’ texts. I gratefully acknowledge his input to this thesis where his capacity for expression and integrity (in articulation of views that represent the world as he experiences it) enhances this work toward further understanding of musicking and non-musicking in everyday Western living. His belief, for instance, that individuals were either born with a musical gift or they were not, speaks for many others and presents a dichotomous reality. This may be seen in his response to a query about his grandchildren in relation to being musical:

I wouldn’t think of them as ‘mathematical’ or ‘musical’ etc., but if they did something which showed that they were talented or appreciative – they mean two different things – then I would say, ‘yes ‘mathematically’ talented or appreciative or ‘musically’ talented or appreciative. I haven’t seen ‘mathematically’ or ‘musically’.

Yet, in regard to children displaying ‘talent’ in mathematics, his educational expertise comes to the fore; he considers that all children should have proper access to a developmental learning program. It is important to note that he has no such commitment regarding music.

**Musicality perceived as developed performance ability**

It is in the “play” (Gadamer, 2004) between participant experience and the literature that contradictory perceptions reveal insights that lead toward understanding. For example, Harry presents a ubiquitous yet dichotomous Western conception that we are either born musical or not, remaining steadfast in his view that, if individuals do not appear to learn to sing or to play an instrument “with ease” then they are not musical in the sense of being able to do music. Yet he considers that they may be seen as being musical from an “appreciative” point of view. Given his background in educational philosophy, it has been consistently puzzling to witness his determined persistence in the face of diverse and convincing cross-disciplinary research that clearly indicates his view cannot sustain challenges from contemporary neuroscience (Koelsch et al., 2000; Levitin, 2006) or cultural studies (Chiao, 2009b; Morrison & Demorest, 2009). We may well ask whether Harry’s ‘knowledge’ is based upon understandings that are separate from his wider experiential knowing, or is his ‘knowledge’ caught up in a circular dependency that is a particular result of his ‘social reality’ (Tillson, 2013 p. 869)?

As Harry persists in his argument that it is necessary to accept that we are more predisposed toward success in different areas (and so become properly engaged in those pursuits in which we can ‘shine’), it becomes clear that he perceives musical expression as performance of an action likely to be judged, rather than intrinsic, everyday being:
I think the people are saying ‘they’re not musical’…not that they don’t have the musical appreciation or not that they couldn’t…with a lot of effort become a genuine performer. [After my teenage attempts to fix a car and to learn the trumpet] I wouldn’t say that I was, in that sense, ‘physical’…or ‘mechanical’ or ‘musical’…that use of the sense of the verb…the term is picking out a very specific notion of talented, naturally talented type person. A person who can, with little effort, get to a higher degree of performance…I wasn’t ‘physical’ as I wasn’t ‘musical’……so I was not an athlete, in the same way as I wasn’t a musician. I’m not musical [regarding] one’s inability to be a competent musical performer

When generalising his experience, Harry comments that it is not useful to attempt to do what might not suit our talents. Yet, despite his claim to not being an ‘athlete’, he continued to develop his physicality, even acknowledging the effort and commitment that [he] was willing to invest in playing basketball. His musical involvement, however, was subdued, remaining underdeveloped in a self-perceived role as receiver of music. It is relevant to note that, when referring to his perceived lack of musicality, Harry speaks in the third person. This poignantly highlights his sense of being distanced from an intrinsic part of his being human.

It is clear that Harry’s belief that individuals are either musical or they are not musical continues to colour his perception of human musicality. Despite his rich background of educational philosophy and his experience as a teacher educator, he remains convinced that only talented people can sing or play, leaving the rest of us to be ‘receivers of’ their musicking. Recent research which indicates the universality of human musicality (Peretz, 2003, p. 192) and the crucial part the arts play in learning (Patten, 2011, p. 94) challenges these assumptions. Yet Harry is not convinced; he knows from his personal experience and from his observation as a parent and teacher that his understanding is an accurate representation of music and musicking in western contemporary society. I argue that, when it comes to knowing about musicality, Harry fails to appreciate the “culture-bound” (Cheng, 1997, p. 11) nature of his perception where, steeped in Western values, he lives within a delusional ‘norm’ that his assumptions are “universally valid” (p. 301).

**Creative action against the status quo**

While Harry’s knowing might reflect an everyday cultural reality, two children’s authors (Andreae, 1999; Howe & Walrod, 2002) recognise the deep distress caused by exclusion from opportunities to sing or play: in fictional works, they exquisitely capture this widespread and damaging practice prevalent in western systems of education.
Where the story of ‘Gerald’s’ exclusion and consequent loneliness (Andreae, 1999) is outlined in Chapter One, ‘Dolores’ (Howe & Walrod, 2002) also suffers judgemental exclusion when she attempts to join her friends in the choir (chorus). Howe and Walrod (2002) not only portray the young girl’s distress at not being accepted into her school’s chorus, but they also present her unique determination to challenge the status quo so that she can sing with her friends. Dolores’ impassioned appeal to the chorus director, who accepts only those who can already sing in tune, illustrates the strength of an instinctive desire for active musical inclusion despite elitist Western practice:

"I'm afraid you just don't have an ear for music."
Of course I do!...I have two of them!"
Dolores felt hurt and angry...and...sorry for herself.
"you'll be in the audience. The audience is important too."
"I don't want to be in the audience!
I want to be in the chorus."

Distressed, yet determined, Dolores wrote a plea to the director of the chorus:

Dear Moustro Provolone,
I love to sing more than anything
It makes me feel good inside.
When I'm told I can't sing,
the words really sting –
and my heart hurts as much as my pride.
Who tells a bird she shouldn't be heard?
Singing is just what birds do!
So please take my word –
I'm a lot like a bird
I have to sing out loud and true!
Please, Moustro Provolone, doesn't your chorus have a place for Dolores?
Sincerely,
Dolores (the bird)"

Much to her joy, the choir master recognised the importance of Dolores’ need to sing and offered to help her. By the time of the concert, she had learned to sing ‘almost’ in tune! This fictitious tale captures Welch’s (2005) understanding that it is “insensitive and ill-informed adults” who define individuals as being “unmusical” (2005 p. 118) when the latter simply have not had opportunities to learn musical skills.
The perspectives, reflected in these children’s literary works, are echoed in other domains of teaching and research. In his internationally acclaimed work, for example, Welch has shown that:

...singing skills develop gradually through interaction with a musical environment. Our position at any given moment on the continuum will be dependent on current and previous experiences (e.g. depending on the quality of feedback that we have received as to our pitch accuracy). It will also be dependent on familiarity or novelty with the particular musical situation in which we find ourselves. Suddenly being asked to sing in unfamiliar or stressful contexts may produce a regression along the continuum, characterised by less skilful singing behaviour (1986 p. 297).

Further, he recognises that:

Such negative and harmful comments arise from several false assumptions, such as that people are either ‘musical’ or ‘unmusical’ and/or that singing is a ‘simple’ activity (Welch, 2005 p. 119).

**The Status quo persists**

Harry presents particular beliefs that support an adherence to myths; he rejects any challenge to commonly held Western perception. Firstly, in his comment that *White men ain’t got no rhythm* (Ruddock, 2007b, p. 119), Harry captures a widespread belief that certain people (in this case, ‘African’ people) are inherently musical when compared to most of us in the West; his understanding is that Western people would need to engage in intensive practice if they wish to dance, play or sing in acceptable ways. Yet, Nzewi (2012) explains that such apparent ‘inherent musicality’ is a myth, since, rather than being automatically musically able, individuals develop their musicality within cultural practice. Secondly, Harry pays minimal attention to the significance of recent neurological research regarding innate human musicality (e.g. Koelsch et al., 2000, pp. 520, 529), and is similarly unimpressed by studies that question the position of those who are affected by cultural influences (Morrison & Demorest, 2009, p. 72).

Harry’s view becomes more perplexing when he continues:

**Harry:** …natural talent is part of what a top performer is…but it’s not all there is to it…and so what I think one’s been talking about is this capacity as a person who’s ‘naturally talented’ - it’s the usual phrase for that - ...but then, to get to be a talented performer, everybody has to put the hard yards in. Clearly. Not naturally inclined that way or whatever...
Eve: *not denying that it’s an intrinsic part...an integral part still of their lives...like it is to you...*

Harry: *Oh, I’m musical in other senses. But that’s not the way in which that sort of use of that term is focussed.*

It would appear that, in his role as appreciator, Harry does consider himself to be musical. This raises questions, particularly when we consider his claim that his preference is for “superior” music, not the boring popular “rubbish” that some “lesser” people prefer. His sense of being musical as “participant”, however, remained secondary throughout his involvement in this project, as is clear in his dialectic exchanges with other participants (see Chapter 6).

For Harry, it is a “social fact” (see Regelski, 2013 p. 7) that involvement in music making necessarily implies that players/singers are “talented”. According to Harry, and in the light of Searle’s “collective intentionality” (Regelski, 2013 p. 7), the purpose of music education is to ensure performative outcomes that can be assessed by a successful display of learned skills. Such a view contrasts sharply with the assessment envisioned by Nzewi (2014) where the importance of the assessment process dwells on the “function [as opposed to] surface” performance; for Nzewi, it is the “overall capability” (p. 4) that is in focus. Harry, however, holds a position where it is important that the musicker will make something about which s/he can be proud; that s/he can produce something for others to appreciate. Because his belief system is convincingly associated not only with his own formative background but with his observation as a teacher educator, his views are, from his perspective, both intuitively (Damasio, 2006) and empirically supported “so that any departure from them requires a conscious effort and convincing argument” (Searle in Regelski, 2013 p. 8). His view is far from Csikszentmihalyi’s understanding that the notion of “talent is essentially a social construction” (1998, p. 411).

**Hearing Harry: is the status quo central to the task?**

Could it be that Harry’s failure to both ‘hear’ neurological findings as they relate to human musicality and also to apply his understanding of human learning in this context are connected to his embodied belief that being musical “is a thing one is or one isn’t” (Interview 09/10/02, 2.30 p.m. in office). Yet, as Damasio (1994/2006) understands it, “[p]erceiving is as much about acting on the environment as it is about receiving signals from it” (p. 225). When considering Harry’s beliefs, it is helpful to use the notion of a “somatic-marker [where our] emotions and feelings have been connected, by learning” (Damasio, 1994/2006, p. 174) and form an important part of
I will argue that, rather than feeling connected to his musicality by his brief attempt to play the trumpet, his “education and socialization” (Damasio, 1994/2006, p. 177) led Harry to decide that he was not musical as a performer. He had successfully learned what “Western society” (Damasio, 1994/2006, p. 179) teaches. Notably, such learning contrasts vividly with an indigenous African musical arts education wherein he would have assimilated the “health essence of musicality as a universal endowment” (Nzewi, 2009a, p. 77).

Harry is in sympathy, however, with Fitzsimons and Haynes (1998) where they refer to the dynamics of educational reality in a globalised Western world. The authors report that what happens in a school is justified by skill acquisition that leads to suitable employment, thus giving the economy increased chances of being competitive (1998 p. 98). This means that an adherence to policies advancing the globalised market economy leads to “attacking what is not required and promoting what is” (Fitzsimons and Haynes, 1998, p. 100). Unlike Harry, however, Fitzsimons et al. recognise unfavourable conditions that arise when education is used as an essential cog in the wheel of globalised neo-liberal reality and it is forced to “move...away from notions of equity towards economic considerations” (Fitzsimons and Haynes, 1998, p. 100). Further, Haynes (2002) presents a compelling argument against education that is bound by market forces, declaring that such a view may be rightly seen as “incomprehensible, outrageous or irrelevant” (p. 131, Haynes’ italics). In contrast, Harry's position regarding arts education remains constant; he argues that they are non-essential. His view is that the arts are ‘frills’ to be incorporated if and when appropriate teachers and funds are available. This stance appears to be influenced by the capitalist market system where the educational context supports a view that the important purpose of a school curriculum is to ensure students’ effective learning so that they are equipped for gainful employment. In Harry’s words:

...the real demands central to the task rate language learning, maths and getting a job as more worthy of effort-given limited resources-than aesthetic activity - including music (Ruddock, 2007b, p. 98).

The argument that music is a frill in the curriculum, something to be included only if there happens to be an appropriate staff member who can teach it, means that the resulting education may fail even to deliver satisfactory ‘core’ learning let alone a holistic development of the students. As O’Toole (2009) insists, this “argument makes no sense anyway, even in learning “the basics” because literacy and numeracy are not improved simply by having more literacy and numeracy lessons. Children, especially in
their early years, learn to talk, read, write and add up through having useful, exciting experiences with words, objects and numbers — and that includes, essentially, the arts” (O’Toole, 2009). Indeed, Nelson (2009) perceptively notes that “[h]igh-quality arts programs can contribute to the intellectual, physical, and emotional well-being of children” (p. 15).

Revealingly, Harry displays similar responses to music teachers who are caught up in a system where they necessarily identify talented students before training them to produce performers. This system tends to fail both those judged as musical and those judged as non-musical, since many from both groups play an opposing role while at school before becoming consumers of others’ musicking. Bifurcation continues to occur when, in their role as consumer, they are judged as appreciators, fans, etc. and fail to recognise their place as an integral part of musicking. In Harry’s words:

...to be ‘musical’ could be ‘appreciative’ or ‘talented’
I mean that’s one of two aspects that I’m drawing on when one’s saying ‘musical’. So someone who can’t appreciate music would not be musical…and, the apologetic sense of it usually is that you can’t play an instrument or make music and are therefore not musical. But I take that as being two aspects.
...in each case, doing the car and doing the trumpet - I got to a certain point that the amount of effort involved and level of expertise that was - the result was such that I was not musical and not mechanical
...the possibility is there but it was not something which came easily...in each case.

Dialectical research processes playing towards awareness

In the on-going process of research, Harry’s information presents a powerful, rational defence of the ‘talent account’ view re music and what it means to be musical in Western culture. Yet, as Josselson (2011) explains, it is not about the participant per se, rather, it is about the text itself. Delivered so generously over such a long time span, I thank ‘Harry’ for the invaluable data as I query:

Please let me know if you do not agree with this overview of ‘Harry’s’ position:
Harry: A participant from the never picked study, Harry claims that he is not musical but admits to enjoying his musicality from an appreciative perspective. Not only a reliable contributor for a decade, Harry is valuable to this research project as an articulate representative of the ubiquitous, dichotomous, assumption that dominates musical practice in the ‘West’ where we are held captive by a mythical belief that individuals are either born musical or they are not. Harry argues that music
education is a frill to the important subjects, language and mathematics which are “central to the task” of education.

The immediate reply reads:

I recognise Harry.

Josselson (2011) reminds us that there is never a single ‘truth’; how we see something or understand a phenomenon depends upon how it is that we ‘see’. From a hermeneutic perspective, then, being ‘musical or not’ is open to interpretation. Thus, data from Harry offers valuable insights: firstly, his willingness to continue to contribute to participant data and to respond to my queries; secondly, his rich philosophical and practical background enable him to clearly articulate his position; and thirdly, his reservoir of potent arguments that counter not only other participants’ ideas but also my understandings. Indeed, he presents a cogent and opposing view to my understanding, making his rich data pertinent to the seminal research questions throughout this investigation. Again, his position leads me to wonder: How is it that a human culture would develop in such a way so that musical beings feel that they are non-musical? How is it that intelligent, rational individuals in our Western culture do not question their palpable distancing from an instinctive part of their being?

These questions continue to resonate through participant data, despite an awareness that recognition and fame (Bannan & Woodward, 2009) are particular criteria that affect how musicking actually occurs in the West. Where performance for kudos and commercial potential are widely accepted as the norm, would this not seem to be at odds with recognising and encouraging music involvement for its extrinsic worth and valuing the health-giving effects of musicking (Nzewi, 2014)? Thus, this process of seeking sense within a question, of gaining perspective of the dialectical partners, of coming to grips with the underlying, clear understanding of the reality of not knowing, continues to drive toward an authentic dialectic inquiry, as a way that has the potential to ‘break open’ the cloud of unknowing.

Enriched with participant words and information from the literature, my understandings continue to embrace fresh insights and possible relationships. Iterative revisiting of original data continues to play towards renewed interpretations and layers of meaning. In the words of Gadamer (2004), this play “has no goal that brings it to an end” (p. 104); rather it delivers nuanced, layered patterns that enrich this exploration of views of musicking. It is important to emphasise that what is involved is the play of the data itself, not so much ‘my playing’ and this is so despite the fact that the current
project would not continue to play if I withdrew active involvement (see Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 104). So it is that participant data dance toward understanding, playing between disparate participant experience and emerging psychological, neurological research and philosophical insights. This occurs with “the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 105) where the data plays itself in the depths of the mind beneath conscious awareness, between voices from the literature and voices of other participants, before it provides new insights within my (researcher) consciousness. Although it is important to acknowledge that this process would not occur without my intense involvement, it is necessary to emphasise that, as Gadamer explains, “it happens, as it were, by itself” (1975/2004, p. 105).

So, it remains necessary for this project that I pay constant attention to this play and record nuances towards understanding as they occur “in the absence of strain [where] [t]he structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus frees him (sic) from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 105). The puzzle, created by the phenomenon as experienced, is what drives this research. Perceptions within participant experience continued to play towards understanding.

**Harry’s musical involvement**

As I continue to hear Harry, an educator extraordinaire in precincts other than the ‘arts’, it becomes clear that he can offer a valuable lesson for music teachers. When, as a student teacher, not only did he immerse himself in the sounds of particular jazz music, he brought his honest, physically involved enthusiasm to his practice teaching. At this time, he had not been involved in considerations of musical versus non-musical; rather, he enthusiastically introduced the music he valued to young students as a way of being that engaged with both emotion and mind. He was keenly aware that he had not acquired the skill to play an instrument, did not know official musical terminology and could not read music, yet he intuitively (see Damasio, 2006, p. xix) recognised what was happening in his favourite music.

*Whereas I may not know what the hell Lydian scale is that Miles Davis is using having come out of Julliard Music School...and I may not realize that all the classical music of that period was using similar arrangement, [the lessons would allow students to] hear selected stuff [because I would] provide them with a framework within which they could hear...that part of it also was to let them understand 'n do contagious enthusiasm...not necessarily understanding...just appreciating. Enjoying it!*
His enjoyment and determination to share the power of music as he directed their listening, openly savouring the sound and feel of his favourite jazz, might have led the students to gain more from his improvised lessons than from any formal learning of how to read notes on a staff.

Bresler (quoted in Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008, p. 17), however, warns that such practice might be of little value in regards to enabling the students to access musical knowledge or to gain “emotional, or intellectual” benefit. Two expert teachers and researchers concur; they report on an analogous situation where a generalist teacher presented one of her favourite works as they stress the importance of Bresler’s warning (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008, p. 17).

Harry’s music lesson, on the other hand, may have truly engaged the students as they recognised his deep “personal involvement” (Baroni, 2008); it is possible that it provided them with a chance to engage in human musicality as no mere phenomenon out there in the world, but as an intrinsic part of what it feels to be human and responding to the world through vibrant listening. With his passion to engage with the students, Harry’s lesson had the potential to give the students an opportunity to deeply connect with a rhythmic, emotional force. It is worth considering his classroom example in the light of the following observation from Paton (2011), a musician recognised for his ability to help individuals appreciate musicking, including those who had not realised that they had intrinsic musicality (Tucker, 2011, p. 12). Regarding music in education, Paton explains that:

…it seems lamentable that it is not present in every music syllabus, not as something to be learned about or taught in the schooled way that is the norm in so many classrooms, through analysis, notation, theory and practice, but within a totally fresh paradigm of experiential learning, an approach which is itself improvisatory, spontaneous, flowing and, above all, rooted in the moment, in direct contact with life (Paton, 2011, p. 129).

Harry might not have had the musical jargon or ‘performative’ skills; yet, as he recalls this venture into teaching music, his experience of his music ‘teaching’ could be reflected in Paton’s words, “rooted in the moment [and very much] in direct contact with life” (2011 p. 129). It is the connection that is crucial; Harry explains:

…my inability to tootle so many sharps didn’t stop me from putting a record on and being enthusiastic about the stuff that I was playing and allow students to actually have the opportunity to capture that and to have some of the things that would enable them, if they wanted to, to connect to it.
While he openly acknowledges that his musical knowledge is minimal, Harry makes an effort to ensure that I understand that his appreciation is more than basic; indeed he becomes defensive in his explanation:

Harry: …being a jazz fan was a mark of superior standing.

Eve: Superior...so did you find that, listening to it a lot...you started to understand more how it was structured?

Harry: No

Eve: Jazz musicians generally learn music by listening.

Harry: Mm

Eve: ...and then by doing...?

Harry: Yes, yes. I understand that element of it! Mind you, I haven’t really tried any chords but the complexity of it as a musical piece is still something - I mean...I can’t follow the chord changes. I mean I can hear [upward inflection and what I perceived as defensive irritation] them but I can’t...I don’t...I know that it’s happening but...not necessarily understanding. Just appreciating...I just like it. I enjoy and it is a...for me a significant and enriching part of my life...to listen to music on occasion. On some occasions it is very important and very central and I can go quite for some distance then without engaging in it at all. There are whole lots of areas that I just can’t listen to because it causes me discomfort...and, my musicality does not extend to the capacity to produce music in a satisfying manner.

**Cultural inheritance determines view of music in the classroom**

As mentioned above, being an experienced observer of what actually occurs in the classroom, Harry knows that music very often happens in a way that would not develop worthwhile skills or even have beneficial social benefits for the students. He has witnessed occasions when teachers, ill-prepared to teach music, succumb to detrimental practices that neither inspire nor even lead to effective learning (see Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008). This contributes to his belief that:

...music’s not important. It’s a...it’s a side piece to the whole educational business [where] what you get is a broken down hack of a teacher who can’t teach properly, stuff that’s not important and it’s a chance to riot.

It is important to listen to these words, coming as they do from a person who had little formative exposure to music in his own school experience: singing along with the wireless was the extent of his involvement in primary school – he joined in simply because everyone was doing it. Further, despite enjoying his jazz, his experiential background was no substitute for a developmental musical environment that could have
contributed to his teenage attempt to learn the trumpet. A lack of developmental music learning, together with the reality of living in a social environment dominated by pride of performance, where accolades are preserved for demonstrated musical prowess by the musical person (see Bannan & Woodward, 2009, p. 485), left him vulnerable to false expectations and failure. Given an appropriate music learning background, he would have been aware of the skill acquisition process; he would not have been so quick to succumb to self-judgement of being non-musical because he would have been in a position to recognise a learning phase. However, surrounded by the pervasive Western societal belief in the talent account, a widely held notion that exceptional innate potential is essential for successful performance (Howe, Davidson & Sloboda, 1998a, p. 399), Harry’s trumpet learning experience was undermined even before his first lesson.

While Morrison and Demorest (2009) take care to note that neuroscientific studies on human musicality have only now begun to unravel details of music processing in the brain, they also suggest that early cultural experiences do influence the ability to more reliably respond to culturally familiar music and that “cultural knowledge may influence music processing at a fairly fundamental level” (Morrison & Demorest, 2009, p. 72). They argue that, although recognition of particular “musical information” can influence musical understanding, it is the associative aspect of actual musicking that is more important (p. 70). As Welch (2005) recognizes, “[w]e are all musical: we just need the opportunity for our musicality to be celebrated and developed. Such is the prime purpose of music education” (p. 119). Alas, Harry along with many of his peers had been part of no such musically nurturing environment; all meekly accepted their non-musical state as did the senior decision makers in their schools. Their reality reflected that discussed in Chapter One, where, as de Vries found, “music was simply not valued by…staff when competing with other school based activities, and was often dropped in favour of other activities” (2010, p. 40). Like Harry, these senior staff members of the school considered that the arts were “frills”, not to be given precedent over the essential “‘core curriculum’ of literacy and numeracy” (de Vries, 2010, p. 41).

**Harry vulnerable: holds key to understanding**

In his extended role as reader of published papers concerning this project, Harry clearly expresses his judgement on how he sees the potential for music education. Following his reading of the Societal Judgment Silences Singers paper (see Chapter Two) he writes:
In all this the only thing I can suggest is that you consider the musical as being no different (and therefore as important) from the physical, the mathematical, the artistical, the practical, the critical, etc. We are hardwired to do these things and inappropriate condemnation early on or lack of perceived early success on nominated standards may inhibit subsequent effort, enjoyment, production etc. This inappropriate condemnation happens to all of us in various contexts throughout our lives so ??? Some of us are wired to make some of these activities easier than it is for others or more capable of refined performance.

Here, he clearly expresses my argument with an important exception; he chooses not to query how it is that, in our everyday reality, we select a musical act as something especially performed to undergo critical judgement. Although we might not categorise ourselves as ‘mathematical’, we would still perform certain mathematical acts; for instance we would divide an apple pie into an appropriate number of portions so that all present could enjoy a piece, or we would work out that a proposed event is a particular number of days away so that we could plan to fit it into our schedule; a certain mathematical functioning is not only condoned – it is expected and neatly fits into Harry’s understanding. However, he applies a different scenario to musical functioning.

When it comes to musicking, perceptions of inherent talent (Abril, 2007, p. 2) undermine freedom to engage in singing or attempts to play an instrument (see also Bodkin, 2004; Joyce, 2003; Ruddock, 2007b). Harry illustrates how such debilitating judgement is not so readily applied in areas comprising intrinsic human actions including walking, running and doing mathematics. I submit that it does not necessarily follow that individuals should be discouraged from engaging in activities wherein they do not have a propensity to be ‘successful’ at a professional level. It might appear that Harry agrees that it is worth supporting activities that include physical activities for health and well-being whether or not we might have a propensity to be an expert runner, but when it comes to playing or singing, he argues that this is a different situation. Interestingly, he forwarded a provocative extract from McIntyre (in Dunne, 2003) which was included in the never picked thesis:

Dunne (2003) cites a ‘wicked’ example from the work of MacIntyre, where there is a simultaneous revealing of a separatist disposition regarding human musicality together with a disconnection from his own musical self. In a consideration of what constituted a good teacher, MacIntyre displayed a Western separatist divide when he proclaimed that ‘there are kinds of teaching—the teaching of piano or violin, for example—in which the ruthless exclusion of the talentless from further teaching (a
Chapter 3

mercy to the student as well as to the teacher and to any innocent bystanders) is one of the marks of a good teacher and in which the abilities to identify the talentless and to exclude them are among her or his virtues’. (in Ruddock, 2007b, p. 24)

This mis-taken humour from MacIntyre highlights uninformed societal attitudes toward musicking and brings to mind incidental comments applied to incidental singing (and heard by the researcher). These include: don’t give up your day job; and, doesn’t it hurt your ears? Individuals making these comments may not realise that their comments so often lead to withdrawal from such musical action. Emphasising how it is too easy to dissuade individuals from musicking, Small (1998) recognises such behaviour as a process of “demusicalization” (1998, p. 212).

Not everyone, however, is so ready to rule people out of musical engagement. With his work in community musicking, accomplished musician Rod Paton not only recognises individuals’ musicality but also facilitates their active participation towards communal connection, health and well-being. Tucker not only acknowledges the value of Paton’s contribution but emphasizes this extraordinary musician’s concern that, when individuals are embarrassed away from intrinsic response, they accept commercially available products that can distance inherent connection (Tucker, 2011, p. 12). This contrasts with Harry’s perception that children have opportunities to learn music because, unlike mathematics, music is readily available via a variety of media. Comparing access to becoming skilled in mathematics and music (or, in Harry’s terms, to be ‘mathematical’ or ‘musical’) Harry explains that:

...the reference to ‘not mathematical’ and ‘not musical’ is usually...they have had the opportunity but are unable to demonstrate...usually, not a capacity to...either perform or to appreciate. ...natural talent type notion – that you’re in some sense hard-wired to be able to do things...The baby’s hard-wired, but hasn’t had the opportunity to develop those things. Hasn’t heard, hasn’t experienced...whatever...They’ve certainly had an opportunity to be musical, ah, more so than to be mathematical, outside their school experience, because now mass media is much more pervasive and so they’ve been exposed to these kinds of things. But, to be mathematical, in some sense, in many cases, they would not have actually seen anything they could recognise as being mathematical...prior to formal introduction at school. So there’s a slight difference in that respect.

It seems that, while Harry is familiar with prerequisites for learning mathematics, he does not appreciate “the value of culturally developed musicianship” (Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008, p. 19). Yet, as he continues to contribute to the dialectic exchange in
this investigation, his responses add a comprehensive view not only of musical/educational possibilities as he sees them, they also further clarify how it is to feel ‘non-musical’ in our contemporary consumerist lifeworld. With such a wealth of data, including two hour-long initial interviews, email response to queries, annotations of published papers and responses to other participant contributions it becomes clear that data provided by Harry holds a key to the understanding of musicking and non-musicking in everyday Western living.

Toward knowing beyond conditioned perception and judgement: and a good deal more

Dewey’s ‘organic’ view versus Harry’s dualist perspective

Dewey knew, in 1916, that our individuality was such an integral part of our social reality that how we understood the world was dependent upon actual life experiences. He also emphasised how these experiences could affect particular ways of being and doing even although we might not recognise it: thus our patterns of behaviour, as developed in everyday living, “possess us, rather than we them. They move us; they control us” (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 29). Indeed, such directive dualism lies at the root of our everyday western culture where we fail to recognise the powerful interconnection between what we do and who we are (see Damasio, 2006, p. 247). Harry, for instance, maintained his determination to see little connection between his belief that we are either born musical or not, his minimal musical developmental environment and his negative judgement of his musicality following his attempt to learn the trumpet. Instead of being an “action...that re-establishes the continuity between action and consequence” (Rømer, 2012, p. 143), his music learning experience became a breaking-point which severed potential musical action for Harry. It left him caught in a cultural “habit” so that he could see no other way than to become an “intelligent, superior” appreciator of others’ musicking.

Since musicking is part of our everyday resonance, our cultural rhythm is arrested by the dissonance of non-musicking (see West, 2009). To engage in musicking is to gain another way of expressing ourselves (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008, p. 325); it is to give us access to another way of knowing ourselves and our world. Musicking presents a way of being in time, over time, across time: it makes it possible to become aware of a vibrant existence that just is. I suggest here that Harry does enjoy such knowing, yet in his responses for this thesis his language does not reflect his embodied connection to his favoured music. In his rational determinations, Harry presents a puzzle as to how a
musical person, deeply versed in educational practices, would persist in holding a separatist view of being musical. His persistence leads me to wonder how he sustains such an unnatural dichotomy. A particular instance where he challenges a holistic view of musicality is in the response to my sentence “I wish to assert that false separations like the ‘musical-unmusical’ dichotomy are not useful constructs” (Ruddock, 2008). This comment is decried by Harry with a challenge that it:

...depends what you may wish to use them for – you wish to show that there are harmful consequences of their use by some in particular kinds of situation where doing something else is both feasible and desirable.

**Dewey as catalyst to understanding Harry**

It seemed that the blocks to communicative understanding (between Harry and me) that could lead to a clearer perception of human musicking in our everyday cultural setting were insurmountable. Yet, in his late nineteenth-century paper (1896/2009), it is Dewey who provides a way. In his re-examination of a scenario that appears to be a simple case of cause and effect, Dewey convincingly shows that what might appear to be factually accurate is, instead, a view that is misperceived due to residues of Western dualism. Dewey explains that “…the real beginning is with the act [where] both sensation and movement lie inside, not outside the act” (1896/2009, pp. 358-9). It becomes clear that Dewey’s insight in this case could be helpful not only in understanding how musically untrained Western individuals might engage in a musical act but also how they might experience unexpected repercussions following their actions. Remembering his eighteen-year-old attempt, Harry recalls:

...basically it seemed to me that, having discovered music which was interesting and exciting, a stage to go beyond that would be to see whether I could actually produce any of it myself...Gaining an instrument and trying to see whether I could make it work was pretty much the same sort of stuff as...I mean I had just discovered how it was that it was possible that I could get hold of a car and make that work...as I did with the trumpet. And in that sense it was something that I...hadn’t done and it was a matter of seeing how it went...in each case, doing the car and doing the...the trumpet...I got to a certain point that the amount of effort involved and level of expertise that was...the result was such that I was not musical and not mechanical...the possibility is there but it was not something which came easily...in each case. It would have required much greater effort and commitment than I was willing to invest in that stage...the effort and commitment that I was willing to invest in playing basketball and chasing were women was much more time consuming.
…the willing to commit…now, that may be partly due to the feedback of instantaneous success or the disappointment the results were not as attractive as one might’ve wished…where the emphasis is on ‘I am not musical’ meaning ‘I am not musically talented’ as a performer. Of course all of those appreciative aspects of it are still capable of being carried through to at least a level of fulfilment and understanding without the capacity to either beat the clapping sticks in rhythm or being one man orchestra. I enjoy [music] and it is…for me a significant and enriching part of my life… [Interview, 2002]

In Harry’s case, then, it is this short-lived attempt to learn to play the trumpet that becomes a focused moment, recalled not only for “disappointment” at the time, a but palpable moment after which he holds a life-long belief that he is non-musical. In Figure 6, we see that the “disappointing” attempt to play a musical instrument not only leaves Harry feeling non-musical in a particular way, but that such a dualistic acceptance of being born ‘talented’ or not also illustrates how, generation after generation, individuals could too easily be caught in such a restrictive cycle.

![Diagram explaining the concept of dualistic view](image)

**Figure 6 Dualistic view.**

Notwithstanding a decade of intermittent communication that considered contemporary findings in music education, neuroscience and other pertinent areas, minimal change has occurred in Harry’s worldview regarding human musicking. Indeed, his determined adherence to a view of music as something that is performed by the talented for those not born with inherent musical potential has remained constant. He refrains from considering an intrinsic musicality that can be expressed in everyday actions of communicating, moving, connecting with our environment (Trevarthen, 1999)
Given his steadfast position, it is helpful to make use of Dewey’s discernment to wonder what might be learned from a deeper reflection of Harry’s short-lived attempt to play a musical instrument, where, despite his minimal musical background, he was prepared to judge himself as being ‘musical’ or ‘non-musical’ depending upon his performance ability after a few lessons. As noted above, such a position does not readily fit with his rich educational and philosophical experience; indeed I argue that it is contrary to his experiential knowing. In contrast to the wide intellectual and practical awareness he demonstrated in his professional practice, Harry displays a constricted Western influence when he reflects on his brief trumpet learning; his explanations reveal that he has welded all aspects of his initial instrumental learning into a single entity comprising performance, notion of talent and (self)judgement as inseparable components. This composite belief is then pitted against his culturally inspired knowing that musical performers do the music and that the rest of us become listeners.

In his judgement that he is non musical, I argue that Harry considers only part of the reality – one determined by a peculiarly Western construct that is dominated by a dualistic, separatist account involving talent, judgement and performance (Ruddock, 2007b). This view reveals a perspective that fails to embrace potential musical action and connectivity as part of inclusive human/communal musicking. It is common for many of us who are caught in this particular aspect of the Western view, to fail to recognise the integrated nature of that which is; instead, we perceive particular aspects as separate entities not realising that they are an integral part of a whole. In Dewey’s words, these parts “are not distinctions of existence, but teleological distinctions, that is, distinctions of function, or part played” (1896/2009, p. 365).

**Harry leads to the question**

I argue that part of the reason for this malaise in vibrant musicking is our failure to find questions that truly address what is important beneath the distancing of our everyday musical expression. We too readily replace connected musicking with rehearsed performances of musickers who deliver special performances for receivers. Rømer (2012) quotes Biesta et al. to suggest that true recognition of a problem brings us to a position that provides a way to simultaneously know both the problem and its resolution: “we only know what the problem is at the very moment that we are able to solve it: Problem and solution stand out completely at the same time” (p. 146). These words recall Gadamer’s (1975/2004) view of the importance of the question where, he argued, to find an insightful question about a problem is to be on the path to the solution (p. 356). Understanding, then, occurs only when, after a careful process of playing
toward a question, we find that this process has within it the potential to lead to new knowing.

It is at this point, ‘playing’ with thoughts and experiences delivered by Harry, that it is time to consider his assertion that music is a mere frill to the business of education – and – only some people have a propensity to make music; only some individuals are born with a musical talent. If we accept this contention, especially in the light of Dewey’s insight, it becomes clear that we fail to perceive a musical action as part of a whole (i.e. we fail to see musicality as a part of an “organismic perspective” (Damasio, 1994/2006, p. 252)). Figure 7 represents how Harry, caught up in the notion of music as skilled performance, mis-judged himself and the process of musicking so that he viewed his attempt to learn the trumpet from “outside the act” (Dewey, 1896/2009, p. 359). This view has no tension between intrinsic musicking and freedom to engage in the act; it is contained within a certainty of non-musicality.

More than half a century after Dewey’s insightful work on what actually operates as a stimulus (Dewey, 1896/2009), Slack (1955) continued to work on the problem of finding the “real stimulus”. He argues that, while finding the stimulus is not simple, it “is at least the difference between the desired state and the present state [and] a good deal more” (my italics) (Slack, 1955, p. 267). For Slack, perceived “feedback” need not be mis-taken for linear progression. Instead, his notion comprises an organic process where a desire to change from a current potential to a state exhibiting developed abilities is not controlled by “culture bound” (Cheng, 1997) expectations. Where all aspects of the environment are recognized as part of the whole as is illustrated in Figure 8, constricted views of human musicality dependent upon special talents do not necessarily determine how an individual will respond to attempts at instrumental learning. Here, Slack’s thinking helps to view an act as part of a complete organic reality, not merely as a bifurcated state where a person is ‘musical or not’. This thinking, freed from western elitist dualities, allows “innate…normal human” (Nzewi,
2013b) musicality to manifest so individuals can feel that they are part of their musical culture whether or not they feel that they have sufficient opportunity and background experience that would allow them to readily develop finely honed instrumental skills.

Rather than being separated from the musical act, connective musicking acknowledges the musical participation of all (as players and/or as listeners); all are connected as important and necessary parts of the whole musical experience. This does not indicate that there are no special musicians who contribute their finely honed skills to the public sphere; Nzewi (2013b), for example, notes that “[e]xtraordinary attributes or capabilities beyond commonality…select proactive experts and event-professionals” (paragraph 5) who perform this part of musicking. However, each person is “doing” (de Haan, 1998, p. 245) the music; each person, whether as listener, composer or instrumentalist is an essential part of the musicking.

What is crucial here, when viewing musicking through Harry’s Western separatist view, is that individuals take on dualistic musical/non-musical lens through which they judge themselves as being musical or not. Thus, Harry’s acceptance of a non-musical status is not that his attempt to play an instrument resulted in what he perceived to be an inferior performance, rather, it was an outcome of cultural presuppositions that predisposed him to judge his attempt in the light of the widespread, accepted notions of critical performance, judgement and talent (Ruddock, 2012a; Swain and Bodkin-Allen, 2014). Harry, convinced that he held a rational and correct view, overlooks contradictions within his data, to perceive music as something produced for critical acclaim, not a communicative act involving makers and participants/listeners (de Haan, 1998). I posit that a combination of culturally imposed expectations and a restricted musical background inevitably led to disappointment when Harry attempted to learn to
play the trumpet. Then, caught in the western performative conception, he closed off of the necessary “twofold process of exchange” (Rømer, 2012, p. 135) that is part of the learning experience – essential for change to occur. Crucially, however, despite tensions between intrinsic musicality and lived experiences exposing a mismatch between conditioned perceptions and musical reality, his instinctive musicality continues to survive as an important aspect of everyday living.

And the question is…

Dialectic interplay involving Harry’s lived experiences and the literature, then, uncover an everyday musical reality that is overshadowed by performative notions to lead to the final question underlying this hermeneutic study:

How can everyday musicking be freed from socially evolved constructs that restrict instinctive musical expression?

I posit that such a question is germane for musicians and non-musicians. To engage in a hermeneutic process, based on “the dialogic structure of questioning-answering” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 98) and being aware that “the source of all work is the experiential lifeworld of human beings” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 96), this reflective project has a capacity to open up conversations to play toward an understanding of what is rather than being forever caught in what appears to be. Within his ‘rational’ perspective, Harry judges himself as being non-musical, yet his words and actions contradict this as they reveal an on-going connection with music in his everyday living.
Episode III

Culture bound\textsuperscript{16}

How we are caught in culture’s clasp
Wherein our view is bound
Warp in web leads us astray
Musical voice unfound.

So disallowed and silenced by
Performance notions where
Art as product distracts us;
So play’s not free nor fair.

As spectators\textsuperscript{17} or as makers of
We find identities
Rhythm, words and song connect,
Sharpen abilities.

\textsuperscript{16} Cheng points out that students of psychology work under a delusion that they are addressing “universal laws about human behaviour”. In fact, their understandings are “culture-bound” (Cheng, 1997 p. 11)

\textsuperscript{17} Gadamer considers that “when we experience art...[we are] lifted out of the ongoing course of the ordinary world and so much enclosed in its own autonomous circle of meaning that no one is prompted to seek some other future or reality behind it. The spectator is set at an absolute distance, a distance that precludes practical or goal-oriented participation. But this distance is aesthetic distance in a true sense, for it signifies the distance necessary for seeing, and thus makes possible a genuine and comprehensive participation in what is presented before us. A spectator’s ecstatic self-forgetfulness corresponds to his continuity with himself...it is the truth of our own world...that is presented before us and in which we recognize ourselves” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 124).
Dialectics battle through contradictions\textsuperscript{18}

Armed with the weapon of dialectics

‘which proceeds by the destruction of assumptions’ (Plato, in Rømer, 2015, in p. 261)

...through the presence of contradictions

in a polemic battle

thinking shows itself.

But dialectics cannot be taught.

...thinking is...hidden

...is only observable

as a dialectical and energetic

structure of a text. (p. 268)

(Rømer, 2015)

\textsuperscript{18} All words Dialectics battle through contradictions are taken directly from Rømer (2015, pp. 261, 268) who posits that it is only through dialectical processes that thoughtful understanding “will find its way into social life” (p. 268).
Chapter Four

Dualistic view distorts vibrant musical engagement

To consider Harry’s story, central to Chapter 3, is to reflect on the state of musicking in “everyday” (Roberts, 2006) Western culture. Harry might not have questioned his ability to join in singing with the rest of his class when he was in primary school, yet after his self-perceived failure when attempting to learn the trumpet in his teenage years, he decided that he could “not sing, not even in the shower”. It may be argued that Harry’s musicality, then, was undermined in a short-lived attempt to learn a musical instrument. Drawing on his, and the other participants’ experiences, together with current research which reports on the widespread “deep seated belief in western cultures that the ability to succeed in music is dependent on genetic endowment which only a minority possess” (Young, 2005, p. 292), this thesis considers perspectives in ‘Western’ culture which are dominated by the talent account; I wonder how it can be that instinctively musical individuals develop within a performative culture that works to distance them from connective, unencumbered musicking. In seeking to highlight powerful effects of socio-cultural reality, it is pertinent to recognise that widespread misconceptions continue to influence human action. To recall Pascal’s adage: “[t]wo things teach man (sic) about his whole nature: instinct and experience” (1670/1995, 396, p. 32) – I wonder how it can be that Harry continues to be influenced by the notion that humans are either born musical or not. Recognising flaws in such a belief, Damasio (1994/2006) suggests that to categorise human development by adopting a Cartesian dualistic view is unhelpful in that it undermines “integrated body proper and brain…fully interactive with a physical and social environment” (p. 252).

Here, it is fruitful to return to the community reader’s questions19 from Chapter 3; they highlight the need to further explore conceptions of musicality with their unseen societal directives (Foucault, 1972, p. 232). Reflections based on rich data from Harry

19 Could [this phenomenon of self-perceived non-musicality] be because there’s a socially-agreed (engineered?) concept of what music is? Is it necessary to make a music that’s above a lowest-common-denominator base-line before it’s considered "good"? i.e. should one be able to "appreciate" and/or "perform" with a minimum level of socially-proven/acceptable competence before being considered musical?
suggest that the answers to both of these questions are simply ‘yes’. However, there is nothing simple about the implications raised by either question, or by experienced cultural impositions that distance such individuals as the never picked (Ruddock, 2007a) from their inherent human musicality. Thus, it is pertinent to further consider the effects of the widespread perceptions of music as performance with the associated notion of talent and critical judgement. These notions have the capacity to distance many of us from feeling free to sing, dance or play where we might be seen or heard. It is important to seek a deeper understanding of this phenomenon so that an enhanced awareness could, at the very least, deliver recognition to a restrictive everyday reality. The article reproduced below draws on participants’ experiences from my Masters project (Ruddock, 2007b); it addresses the central question raised in Chapter Three — what might need to happen in order to free individuals from the “sovereignty of collective consciousness” (Foucault, 1972, p. 24) that disallows ‘natural’ expression of human musicality?

With this task in mind, I focussed on the never picked participants’ raw data; re-listening to every sound, allowing all (including the ums, ahs, spaces and emphases) to enter my consciousness. During this process, I recognised a composite understanding that was within their various life experiences; so began an embodied engagement with their voices. It was during this re-emersion with their experiences that their words and perceptions not only played towards poetic/musical interpretation as before, but also directed me to enhanced awareness. As Gadamer wrote, “seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play” (Gadamer, 2004) — and that learning occurs “only if the player loses himself in play” (Gadamer, 2004 p. 103). This playing was to lead me to melodic and rhythmic nuances in the voices of self-perceived non-musical participants that were to provide an understanding that could begin to respond to the reader’s questions.
Paper:- "Sort of in your Blood": Inherent musicality survives cultural judgement

“Sort of in your blood”: Inherent musicality survives cultural judgement

Eve Ruddock
Murdoch University, Australia

Abstract
This article reports on lived experiences of a cohort of 20 self-perceived non-musicians. Their stories reveal culturally based perceptions that humans are inherently “musical” or they are not. While recent inquiries are beginning to investigate this phenomenon, instinctive musicality of self-perceived non-musical individuals remains an under-researched area. Presented in narrative form, participant experiences reveal impositions that thwart developing musicality of individuals growing up in a western cultural tradition. Although they have “learned” that they are not musical, these individuals reveal intrinsic musicality.

Keywords
Cultural restraints, intrinsic musicality, lived experiences, narrative, poetry, stories and their telling (hearing data)

This article is about recognition. It is about recognizing intrinsic musicality and the part it plays in the everyday lives of self-perceived non-musical non-musicians. For this article, human musicality encompasses an intrinsic response to music that evokes the “essence of human nature” (Levitin, 2006, p. 7). Such individuals as the 20 self-perceived non-musical participants who are the focus of this investigation feel that they have no “licence” to do music and that they are not part of the human musical community. They remain an under-investigated group in music education research. A handful of recent studies (e.g., Bodkin, 2004; Knight, 1999; West, 2009; Whidden, 2008), however, now begin to redress this situation: these researchers raise important questions about how we do music in the West. Studies such as those by Bodkin (2004) bring into focus everyday realities accepted by individuals who live with a non-musical self-view. In her research involving early childhood teachers in New Zealand, Bodkin found that teachers from the western tradition felt intimidated by the daily inclusion of music in their work when compared to individuals from non-western backgrounds whose musicking was unconstrained. Then, in relation to the Australian community, West

Corresponding author:
Eve Ruddock, School of Education, Murdoch University, South Street, Murdoch, Western Australia, 6150, Australia.
Email: ruddock@imet.net.au
provocatively refers to those individuals who inhibit instinctive musical responses as suffering from “Selective Mutism for Singing” (West, 2009, p. 214). She argues that they demonstrate “a malfunction of our enculturation processes” (West, 2009, p. 215) and live with unnecessary stress. Further, Knight (1999) and Whidden (2008) uncover unfortunate school experiences where misjudgement by teachers deprived individuals of their sense of being musical. Whidden refers to such acts as a form of “social injustice” (p. 11), where only those judged to have “innate singing ability” (Whidden, 2010, p. 13) feel free to sing. Tellingly, one of her participants says: “Our culture keeps everyone in check” (p. 8).

A limited musical world is a reality for the never-picked—the 20 participants whose experiences form the narrative presented in this article. Selected from an initial cohort of 29 self-perceived non-musicians, the never-picked inhabit a world where it is “common to distinguish between musical and unmusical persons” (Nettl, 2006): they have “learned” that they are not musical. Especially chosen to represent a broad span in age (from 12 to 82 years of age) and educational background (from school students to a historian with a PhD), these individuals tell of an everyday reality where freedom to sing or play is limited to “gifted” children—those individuals perceived to be “born” with musical talent. They reveal a societal undercurrent where the restrictive aspects of performance, judgement, and talent demonstrate debilitating influences on musical participation. In his reflections on what he perceives as a relatively recent phenomenon in our culture, Levitin suggests that music has been restricted to the domain of the expert for about half a century:

The chasm between musical experts and everyday musicians that has grown so wide in our culture makes people feel discouraged, and for some reason this is uniquely so with music. Even though most of us can’t play basketball... or cook... as experts we can still enjoy playing a friendly backyard game of hoops, or cooking... This performance chasm does seem to be cultural, specific to contemporary Western society. (Levitin, 2006, p. 194)

Indeed, it was more than half a century ago when Mursell and Glenn advocated psychological tests to select talented students (1931, p. 335). However, Mursell (1948) himself became concerned at the overemphasis on technical development as he recognized that a “responsiveness to music [was] not a special or limited endowment. It is the person who lacks it who is unusual” (Mursell, 1948, p. 8). His enlightened view was not shared by all. Despite acknowledging that everyone was musical to some extent, the influential psychologist and music educator Seashore (1938, p. 288) claimed that “it has long been recognized that some children are musical and others are not musical” (p. 290); he proposed that “talent testing” (p. 325) be implemented to ensure the best use of limited funds. Similar arguments today mean that many students in Western Australia do not receive an opportunity to experience music learning, despite the fact that research now supports an understanding that music learning occurs through the doing of music (Bannan & Woodward, 2009; Sloboda, 1996; Welch, 2001). With this in mind, the testing of students who have not experienced music learning in a musical environment is correctly perceived as “foolish, and possibly unfair” (Sloboda, 1985, p. 238). Further, it reveals a pathological dis-ease with an instinctive human attribute where “fantasies about excellence abuse and discredit the innate capability and health essence of musicality as a universal endowment” (Nzewi, 2009, p. 77).

It is necessary to limit the focus of this article to the narrative aspect of the research. This aspect traces details of participant transcriptions that, melded together in the form of a ballad, present an opportunity for the reader to feel what it is like to be categorized as a non-musical human. Keeping in mind an understanding that “the difference between a story and its telling
is a significant one" (Bowman, 2008, p. 192), I worked to reveal experiences as they were told, through the actual words and phrases spoken by participants.

**Methodology**

**Finding participants**

For pilot interviews, I sought self-perceived non-musicians. Official permission to engage with participants was granted by a university ethics committee. This preceded the initial interviews with my next-door neighbours, two experienced ballroom dancers, who agreed to an hour-long taped interview. To reflect a broader representation of age and experience, I then approached four potential participants who were aged from 27 years to 60 years and who worked in a variety of careers. Surprise and serendipity elements that were to become part of the process of this project, soon emerged as unexpected details were delivered by conversational partners (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Surprised that all six “pilot” interviewees would perceive themselves as being non-musical, I welcomed an unexpected extra participant (an animal trainer who considered himself as a musical person) as the seventh pilot interviewee. While he declined an offer to take any further part in my research, his material provided a useful contrast to the “non-musical” individuals. Data from pilot interviewees became a valuable resource for the planning of “conversations” with the research cohort, which finally included 29 persons, 20 of whom perceived themselves to be non-musical. It is the life experiences of these self-perceived “non-musical” individuals that form the *Ballad of the Never-Picked*.

It was not necessary to advertise for participants. When asked about my research at meetings or social gatherings, more individuals than a single researcher could properly “use” showed an interest in becoming part of the project. One stark comment that indicated a non-musical self-perception was from a 37-year-old who introduced herself as being “probably the most unmusical person you’ve ever interviewed.” In an attempt to include more participants who felt that they were musical, I accepted offers from individuals who had musical experiences at school or as members of choirs. It was surprising that approximately half of these participants with such experiences saw themselves to be non-musical. Age, gender, occupation, and musical/non-musical self-perception of the entire cohort are included in Table 1.

**A narrative grows**

Qualitative interpretation of participant data involved multi-layered processes that included coding, categorizing, and comparative reflection. In the early stages of listening to lived experiences I appeared to take the role of a musical expert, yet as participant voices echoed in my mind, they began to resonate with their own rhythmic nuances; they seemed to be carrying a message for me. My self-perception of being a comparative expert dissolves and I attempted to free myself from research acts of coding and categorizing to “catch” underlying meaning within participants’ conversations. It soon became apparent that their non-musical self-views were deceptive. Rhythms resonating within stories began to evoke that “innate pleasure in rhythmic narrative that children and adults recognize in one another” (Bannan & Woodward, 2009, p. 466) as examples from the self-perceived non-musical cohort delivered stories that told of mutual knowing. Drawing on Peshkin’s (2000) “counterpoint of problematics,” where he demonstrated a way to reveal inevitable subjective aspects of qualitative decision-making, I perceived an idea wherein I could combine actual words and phrases from individual data to form a sub-narrative: this allowed participants’ voices to hold an authoritative place in the telling of their story and minimize researcher intrusion.
Table 1. Self-perceived non-musician participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Perceive self as musical (M), not musical (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>Public servant</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>University student</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bazza</td>
<td>Retired professional</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caddy</td>
<td>Primary school teacher</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caterina</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chas</td>
<td>University &quot;drop-out&quot;</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>Retired pre-school teacher</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Teacher educator</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>Air-conditioning technician</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice</td>
<td>Primary school teacher</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessic</td>
<td>Retired office worker</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jock</td>
<td>Retired farmer</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliana</td>
<td>Full-time mother</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Full-time mother</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Health professional</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mick</td>
<td>An &quot;occasional&quot; worker</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>High school teacher</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Primary school student</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>High school student</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Exercise physiologist</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonya</td>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Retired primary school principal</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vance</td>
<td>Retired technician</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi</td>
<td>Retired travel representative</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>office manager</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shaded rows indicate key informants

As distinct voices joined in a unique human tale, participant data began to deliver a composite view that exposed rhythmic patterns with intrinsic musical nuance. While re-checking conversations, working to blend insights of participants to present a composite picture of their musical world, I perceived an underlying resonating musicality; this evoked a notion of a united telling in the form of a ballad where combined individual voices would present a brief, accessible narrative.

Participants revealed their own particular ways of knowing and being, yet their combined voices described moving human experiences that resonated with distinctive rhythms. It seemed that the "sonority [and] musicality" (Browning, 1877, p. vi) of their language conflicted with their self-perceptions of being non-musical, so in an attempt to combine composite experiences
and to reduce the mountain of data I "played" (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 102–105) their words and phrases into the haunting melodies of Lord Randal¹ to construct the narratives presented in this article.

Why narrative?
At first these stories appeared to be riddled with contradictions, but ongoing reflection of the material allowed words to play towards a collective meaning. The evolved and constructed ballad is no mere decoration, nor contrivance for affect, but rather a way to demonstrate that participants' instinctive musicality maintained a perceptible reality despite negatively imposed societal persuasions to the contrary. It reveals competing concepts about musicality, the one a socially accepted technical understanding, the other a more organic response of the senses that I have termed 'intrinsic musicality'.

Barrett and Stauffer point out that effective narrative has the power to "turn" (2009, p. 1) accepted perceptions and practices towards a new reality. It is with this in mind that I connected voices in a composite narrative, so that experiences of the never-picked might not only expose the negative effects of exclusion but also offer a catalyst towards change. It was clear that the never-picked participants of my study (Ruddock, 2007), whose experiences demonstrated this "unnatural" phenomenon, did not number among the fortunate few (Pascoe et al., 2005) whose educational experience provided a freedom to develop their innate musical potential.

A ballad in progress
The following excerpts from raw data reveal participant experiences and the constructive process towards the ballad. Words used in the ballad are shown in italics.

"It's kind of primeval"—Nell and Caterina

Nell: When I watch [my son] it gives me a lot of pleasure. I think he’s really getting something from the music. It’s really talking to him ... in some way ...
Eve: Ah huh.
Nell: Like getting pleasure from it ... it makes him feel good. It does.
Eve: ... if you could put into words how he ... what sort of good? ... It’s hard ... it might be ...
Nell: Mm ... I don’t know ... well I think it’s kind of primeval.

Then, talking about her family when she was a child, she refers to one of her sisters:

Nell: ... I think Mum wanted us to um be a bit more musical ... but when I was young they didn’t have enough money for music lessons. My sister who did have music lessons is fourteen years younger ... than me.
Eve: ... was it the sister who wanted to learn ... or did it come ...?
Nell: No. My mother wanted one of us to learn some music.
Eve: Did you ever feel that you wanted to and didn’t?
Nell: No ... oh actually that’s truly (unclear) untrue if I think about it. I had guitar lessons for about um six months. And I really did want to do that ...
... we had a theory lesson and it seemed to me there was no connection between the guitar lesson and theory lesson and I can remember at the time saying it's as if someone hasn't given me the key as in ... a key on a map ... a combination.

...I couldn\'t do it. I didn\'t like it. [Can you remember ...] I just couldn\'t hear it ... hated it.

Eve: ... how old you were?
Nell: ... I was about fourteen or fifteen.
Eve: You couldn\'t hear it?
Nell: Um ... well, guitars with chords and I ... couldn\'t hear the difference between one chord to another ... I think I didn\'t do enough practice and ... I didn\'t understand what a note was ... I just felt it was a foreign language and I just couldn\'t grasp it.
Eve: You felt as if it were a foreign language ...?
Nell: Yes.
Eve: How would you think of them as in thinking of musical ... in regard to your Mum ... or any siblings?
Nell: I wouldn\'t say any one of my family is musical in that respect. I don\'t think um anyone of them has got the tools to analyse music.

Intuitive and well-read, Nell endeavoured to counter her own conviction that musicality depended upon being born into a musical family by ensuring that her children had an opportunity to learn music both at school and with private tuition on an instrument. Caterina also “understood” the importance of the “musical family”:

I don\'t think of my [family] as “musical” “Can we sing?” “Can we play an instrument?” No, but as a family, we were brought up around music ... my father was Russian ... he would play a lot of Russian music, like gypsy violin music and it was very constant. My mother very much liked the musicals, the 1940s\' musicals, so there was a lot of music in our family ... but none of us played instruments. None of us could sing, none of us can ... so I wouldn\'t say any of my family were “musical.”

Pregnant at the time of her interview, Caterina responded to a question about her unborn baby: “I would certainly try an encourage it [music]. But I suppose I would always have this thing in the back of my mind that we\'re not a musical family, so we\'d then struggle ...” As I shared my own musical shortcomings and ways that helped me to become part of the musical world, Caterina showed genuine interest in information about teachers who were not “judgmental,” who could nurture and encourage intrinsic musicality (even for those who had convictions that they were not musical). As a narrative researcher, it was important that I maintained an ongoing responsibility “to protect those who inform” (Josselson, 2011, p. 34). My principal concern, then, was to enable Caterina to question those earlier inappropriate influences that had scarred her musical self-perception so that she might be free to be musical with her family in the future.

“\'I\’m not musical \'cos I can\’t play\’” — Chas and Harry

This notion of giftedness was a determining undercurrent for Chas and Harry; they believed “talent” was a prerequisite for music performance. In his response to questions following our conversation, 19-year-old university drop-out Chas recognized the process of skill development to explain that: “with aptitude I\'m talking about ability and motivation. If I was motivated I could overcome my lack of natural ability.” These thoughts echoed those of 60-year-old participant, teacher educator Harry. Although an experienced researcher, Harry had never before accepted a role as participant; this he found challenging:
Eve: If you speak a little clearer I shall be able to hear this [for the transcription], otherwise I'm going to have big trouble.

Harry: You're going to have big trouble anyway. By that I mean that [my] argument was there that music's just one of the frills.

Then, in a second interview:

Eve: So it interests me why would your friend who was in here says straightaway "you're not musical"?

Harry: Probably because I can't play music ... basically it seemed to me that ... having discovered music which was interesting and exciting ... to go beyond that would be to see whether I could actually produce any of it myself ... well, at that point, I couldn't ... doing the trumpet ... I got to a certain point that the amount of effort involved and level of expertise ... the result was such that I was not musical. The ... possibility is there but it was not something which came easily ... and ... the will to commit. Now, that may be partly due to the feedback or [lack of] instantaneous success or the disappointment [that] the results were not as ... attractive as one might've wished.

Harry: ... in the 13 to 20 age range, one of the things that was significant to me in shaping my direction of myself or my definition of myself was the kinds of music that I enjoyed and the sorts of persons that I associated with ... music was central in that sense ... and there are times where music can be a pleasant accompaniment which [makes] aspects of life somewhat more attractive.

... there've also been times when, feeling particularly 'm down and in a mess ... that I can be very uplifted by and helped by stickin' on some of' favourites that will really ... excite and please. There's more to heaven an' earth Horatio than the troubles that one's currently facing.

Eve: So it actually affects the way you feel?

Harry: Oh yeah. An' helps Humpty Dumptyp put back together again. Can do ... yeah. So there've been some pretty heavy times when [music] can do that. So, in that sense music is significant. But I'm not musical.

You're going to have big trouble anyway.
I'm not musical 'cause I can't play.
But when in a mess, to go beyond that
I can be uplifted by and helped by an ol' favourite [track]. [Harry]:

As an educator with extensive experience of developmental learning, Harry's conviction that he was not musical was puzzling. With Chas, however, I hoped to find a self-perceived "musical" non-musician; his comment early in our communication sustained that hope: "humans are a musical species, as the beating of drums is a very primeval thing: as a rule, all humans are musical and do have a response to music." In this adventurous and thoughtful period of his life, his intermittent involvement with my research occurred over 4 years. In a similar way to Harry, Chas's experiences with music were associated with a developing sense of self. He enjoyed listening and singing along to his favoured music when he was alone and when in company with his friends. It was at the conclusion of our extensive communication that I asked a direct question about his self-perception regarding being musical. His response surprised me:
I would’ve assumed that you, being a piano teacher, would’ve known that I wasn’t very good at music... I didn’t show an interest. If I had a propensity for music I would be playing a musical instrument.

I would’ve assumed that you would’ve known I wasn’t very good. I hardly outshone others in the class... wasn’t good straight away. If I had a propensity for music I would play. [Chas]

“I was never picked”—Sonya

When 6 3-year-old Sonya—a gentle and erudite historian—began to recall her childhood, I was entirely unaware of the passion about to erupt from her. At the beginning of an hour-long interview she presented a neat synthesis of my proposed research; she understood the essence of my quest:

perceptions of what is musical and what is being not musical. I think that one of the really sad things about Australian society and it might be other societies too... is that people grow up with ideas that are implanted at an early age about the fact that they are not talented in this or that direction and if that’s implanted as firmly as it often has been in the past, it’s very hard to change later in life.

I heard gentle yet precise articulation as she recalled several childhood experiences. She remembered feelings of “sheer delight at music... at kindergarten... I was lucky to have an absolutely wonderful kindergarten teacher.” A subtle change in emotion occurred as a later memory took over. At age 8, she had to face an “awful year” at a new school. Rhythms of speech tightened, pace quickened and Sonya delivered pure poetry:

... it was a very prized thing to be
the leader to your class group marching into assembly
and I got to be leader
and I was chucked out of the job
‘cos I was no good!
And the reason was because I was indeed marching on every beat
But they wanted it every second beat
‘cos the music was too fast
And... and I was accused of having
No sense of rhythm
And even at age 8 I knew that to be untrue,
And... and not only... no sense of rhythm
but having no sense of music
and I was bitterly frustrated
absolutely!

Sudden and raw, “‘cos I was no good” jolted tumbling words to a halt. I heard echoes of a hurt not extinguished: both intonation and contour patterns delivered emotional cues that evoked distress (see Patel, Peretz, Tramo, & Labreque, 1998). In an email 3 years after this interview, Sonya wrote thather strong reaction was “just a child’s reaction to injustice,” explaining that she felt “bitter that adults could be so stupid!”—yet, an attendee at a music conference made a point of seeking me out after the presentation to say: “I could hear the hurt in her voice.” Another commented that he “heard” her words as Rap music.

Later, a detailed email revealed her poetic nature alongside a rich musical awareness:
I do consider myself musical if you include enjoyment and a passionate commitment to helping others enjoy it too, within your definition of musical. I love to clap and dance along to the music and I love to listen and enjoy it much more if I don’t have to keep still. I want to move not just with the beat but the emotion that I hear in it. When it swells to an uplifting climax, I want to spread my arms and raise my hands to follow that movement too. (Sonya, personal communication, 28 March, 2005)

Her strong belief in human musicality exacerbates the frustration she had experienced at school where her musical responses had been undermined. She considers the crucial role played by teachers:

> Perceptive teachers can add immeasurably to a child’s capacity to appreciate and/or practise [music]. Conversely, imperceptive, insensitive teachers can do immeasurable damage to a child’s interest in music and capacity to enjoy (let alone perform) it. I first realised that I couldn’t sing when I was never picked for singing at school. (Sonya, personal communication, 28 March 2005)

It is in her emails that Sonya provides more depth to her experiences. They not only confirmed my intuitive awareness of anger and hurt in her voice but also meant that her “trueful” acceptance of non-musicality became even more poignant: “I don’t consider myself musical. I’m a keen appreciator of music.” She expressed a love of “music of birdsong, water gurgling and other environmental sounds” as she revealed herself to be capable of sensitive and informed music appreciation (not only did she enjoy listening to diverse musics, she had also successfully completed a high degree music theory examination).

It was through Sonya’s voice that I intuitively recognized an intrinsic musicality in her language and began to hear a poetic quality in participants’ words and phrases. As Lerdahl has shown, parallels between music and poetry can act as a bridge between language and musical patterns (2003). In an analogous way to the intuitive recognition of an effective setting of lyrics to music (Lerdahl, 2003), I began to recognize musical nuances in interview transcripts and developed short verses from these texts that not only helped in the analytical process but also provided a way to combine multiple voices within a short construction.

Our capacity to engage with and to know comes from our experiences, together with our way of perceiving; our everyday living is affected by our embodied awareness of our world, of others, and of the self. While this cohort of non-musicians participants believed that they were not musical in the way this term is so often socially defined, they acted in a way that revealed instinctive musical responses. Participants’ experiences spelled out confusions between their feelings of being musical and their “knowing” that they were “not musical” (see Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 27). My study became more finely focused on a cultural misunderstanding (Welch, 2001) of the essence of music. Rather than being a universal characteristic of humanity it was being perceived as an inherent gift of the talented few. In the case of Sonya, for example, her interview conversation and emails told a story where intrinsic musicality had been thwarted by negative judgement of others; in her last email she was unequivocal: “and finally, I don’t consider myself ‘musical’ Yes, I enjoy it. No, I can’t do it … but I love dancing.” With these words she articulates the widespread disconnection between intrinsic musicality and an imposed societal rejection of this instinctive aspect of human nature.

This denial of innate musicality conflicted with the participants’ sense of the place of music in their lives. Despite his determination that he was not musical, Harry understood the “central and defining role” that music played as it contributed to his self-knowledge and acted as a conduit for social connections. Both he and Chas illustrate an underlying contradiction. To quote Chas, for example:
You could argue that humans are a musical species. The beating of drums ... is a very primeval thing. As a rule, all humans are musical and do have a response to music ... When you’re listening in a group, you can read responses of others. You can look at someone and think you’re thinking what I’m feeling about this music—this is real cool. I am a musical being ... and have real appreciation. I start to have ‘withdrawals’ if I don’t listen to music. (Follow-up interview, 4 April 2004)

“Sort of in your blood I reckon”—Vic

Other participants also tell of the power of music as it affected their everyday lives. Their stories tell of connections and disconnections. Serendipity led me to include a final participant whose colourful data provides a rich example of the contradictory place of music in our everyday reality. While I was waiting in a shop for his office computer to boot up, I casually asked Vic, a 44-year-old office manager, whether he considered himself to be a musical person. He was friendly but his response was very definite: “Nah. Absolutely not. Can’t stand it to be honest.” However, he made one fleeting reference to his son’s musical skills, the only exception to his negative attitude to music during this first interaction. Six months after this meeting, he granted an official “conversation” for my research. I was surprised when he opened the conversation with an assertion that he liked music. He spoke proudly about his son’s musical ability: “We sing in the car when it [a song] comes on but he’s much better than me. He can hold a tune. No doubt about that.”

When presented with several commonly held societal views (a condensed outline of other participant data) he agreed that “music is part of our primeval heritage.” He assured me that he fitted the “I am not musical mould.” He believed that:

People are born musical or not musical:
I reckon they are.
Like you’re born to play football
Born with a gift.
Sort of in your blood I reckon.
Wasn’t in mine thought!

Such contradictory perceptions (compared to his previous comments) were puzzling, so I asked whether he would mind looking at the brief transcript of our initial conversation. After a quick check of his former negative remarks, he replies: “Yeah. I said those words”:

My Dad took up music with the Merchant Marines.
Can’t stand it to be honest. Don’t play anything.
When my Dad was playing—yeah we used to nick off.
And it probably did affect the way that I felt.

My brother had a crack at the ol’ man’s clarinet,
Dad just got rid of it but my brother found one at the tip.
My son’s right into music, much better than me
He can hold a tune and likes Green Day and AC/DC

My school was big time on music but I’d
Rather do detention and used to refuse.
I ended up getting the strap ... it only hurt
for a little minute. But the music went on forever.
No no no! No regrets. Footy's the thing.
I'm singin' that song only when the Eagles win.
You feel pumped... and jumpin' outta your skin.
I've got my boer and the footy—don't play anything. [Verse 4]

Surprise, serendipity, and contradictions; all are consistent elements of this investigation
that drove me inexorably to explore how, in our western culture, musical beings learn to feel
dislocated from their essential musical selves. Selected stanzas from their Ballad; a composite
exposition of individual experiences, express participants' experiences in their own words and
phrases:

**Ballad of the Never-Picked**
It's kind of primeval but no-one's given me
An affinity with music—I don't have the key
My mother wanted one of us to play
None of my family is musical I would say.

You fear a mistake, don't know what to do
Have no voice to sing an' they're judging you
Such a hopeless voice but I'd love to sing
Look at her! Revolting and it's the worst thing!

You have a good voice? No-one did say!
Not terribly musical. I cannot play.
But I really believe everyone's got music in them
It is part of our lives and our expression.

I know I can't sing, I can't hold the key,
So shocking you know but teacher can't see.
"There's someone over there that's just not quite in tune."
We'd all sing again, but this time I'd just mime.

Then therapy helps to find who I am
I sing in the car but not all the time.
For my thoughts and feelings... it's great to be
Able to sing and I know that I'm free.

And I got to be leader, checked out of the job
Accused of no sense of rhythm ... I was no good!
And no sense of music? Even at age 8 I knew!
I was bitterly frustrated. knew that to be untrue.

Wasn't picked as a dancer which was a great shame,
I first realized that I couldn't sing
When never picked at school, bitter that adults could be
So stupid, not have a better grasp of musical ability.
Discussion

In their ballad, participants' experiences sing of thwarted engagement. They tell of a disconnected longing. It is important to reflect on the lack of encouragement and negative judgement that left these human beings feeling that they had no key to unlock their intrinsic musicality, especially in the light of an increasing recognition of music's value to individual and societal well-being (Levitin, 2006; Nzewi, 2002; Turino, 2008; West, 2009). In his paper “We All Came out of Africa Singing and Dancing and We Have Been Doing it Ever Since,” Walker acknowledges the important part that music plays in a connective, functioning society, and highlights the significant role that music plays in cultural cohesion: he cautions against inappropriate curricula that do not contribute to sociocultural health (Walker, 2005, p. 15). This understanding is supported by the work of Turino, who argues “that musical participation and experience are valuable for the processes of personal and social integration that make us whole” (Turino, 2008, p. 1).

Unfortunately, the never-picked live a reality far distanced from Walker's ideal, where the value of music making “is pragmatically important in maintaining the sociopolitical continuity and ecological validity of the cultural group” (Walker, 2005, p. 7). Rather, their experiences demonstrate a separation from their intrinsic musicality so that music, for them, is far from being "a natural part of everyday living ... performed by anyone and everyone" (Walker, 2005, p. 7). Participant stories expose a cultural reality where individuals "learn" in different ways that they are not "musical." In a world where musical utterances are judged to be "successful" only if they show potential for approved public consumption, then music-making becomes a thing that is performed only by the "gifted"—those worthy of encouragement. Bodkin's (2004) research exposes feelings of inadequacy that develop when such standards of performance dominate musicking. She notes that, for individuals who were brought up in the western tradition, "music can become threatening." Her findings are reflected in the negative self-views of the never-picked.

Drawn directly from spoken narrative, participants' experiences highlight restrictive cultural influences. In spite of their imposed non-musical status, their words and phrases express an inner poetic response that reveals their human musicality. While some individuals are caught up in western ethos and accept that too much effort would be required for them to be able to perform music at a minimal acceptable standard, others continue to feel hurt by the rejection of their musical selves. We would do well to heed Small (1998) when he warns that our "voice is at the center of all musical activity, but it is all too easy to silence and very hard to reanimate, since those who have been silenced in this way have been wounded in a very intimate and crucial part of their being" (p. 212). Participants in my study take care to avoid musicking where someone else might hear them.

Challenge to the status quo

Twenty individuals, each in their own way, offer diverse experiences that cohere under a "non-musical" umbrella to reveal negative effects of judgemental societal persuasion. Their voices
present not only moving human experiences, but they also resonate with a distinctive rhythm that conflicts with their convictions of not being musical. In presenting the reader with a single collection of verses to bring the phenomenon alive, I hope that this constructed narrative can help to provoke a challenge to the status quo. To arrest development of instinctual musical expression restricts an aspect of evolved human behaviour that enhances connection and community (Cross, 2008). How is it, then, that within our educational and social institutions we continue to condone a situation where musical beings “learn” to restrain their intrinsic musicality? Why might they feel the need to accept a role as consumers of others’ musicking?

Where “singing is... both the most basic form of music making and an indicator of the musical health of the individual” (West, 2009, p. 214), it is important to question why individuals believe they take a serious risk if they choose to sing (or play) in public. As Welch explains: “There are... ‘misunderstandings’ concerning music... the limiting conception of humankind as either musical or non-musical is untenable... neuropsychological research evidence indicates that everyone is musical (assuming normal anatomy and physiology)” (2001, p. 22). Participant experiences reported in this article illustrate a perception of bifurcated musicality where a person is either born musical or not. Despite a general belief that music is part of our primeval heritage, these individuals take care to avoid singing where they might be heard—unless drunk or “singin’ that song” when their football team wins! This is in spite of recent research that demonstrates an evolutionary (neurological) link between music and language—a link that may be intuitively perceived in sonorities and rhythmic nuances. While Robert Browning refers to “sonority” in language and to the “musicality” of a particular text (1877, p. vi) and Lerdahl (2003) meticulously analyses two lines of a Robert Frost poem to reveal parallels between music and poetry. I recognized musical qualities of selected phrases from participant data. When placed together to form lyrics for a folk tune, it is possible to recognize “phonological stress, the prosodic hierarchy, and contour” of poetry, aspects that Lerdahl (2003) demonstrates as being musical.

For individuals whose musical experiences reflect those of the *never-picked*, it is my hope that research studies such as this can provide a kind of relief—or even a catalyst toward change whereby we no longer accept such imposed silencing on an individual’s experiential journey. For those of us involved in music education, the *Ballad of the Never-Picked* has a potential to bring an isolating phenomenon to life and to present a challenge to destructive elements of teaching practice. The tension arises from competing conceptions of what it is to be musical, the one arising from social expectations of skill that are built into our language, the other from a more immediate and often tacit response. One is cultural, the other individual. As Flyvbjerg (1998, p. 5) asserts, a narrative can alert us to realities faced by people in their everyday lives and so lead us to “do things differently.” Participant experiences demand a re-thinking of restrictive cultural practice, as they contrast with emerging contemporary understandings from cultural neuroscience that confirm human musicality. Human musicality is not merely “in our blood”—but is also in our brain. The voices of the *never-picked* may not only allow us to question their own non-musical self-perceptions, but also help us to recognize intrinsic musicality in our fellow humans.

**Acknowledgement**

An earlier version of this article was originally presented at the International Conference on Narrative Inquiry in Music Education in Phoenix, Arizona. In April 2006. It is based on material from self-perceived non-musical non-musicians who contributed to my Master’s Research project at The University of Western Australia (Ruddock, 2007) and on understandings from my current research project at Murdoch...
University. I wish to acknowledge the value of reviewers’ comments on this article and to thank Margaret Barrett for her original encouragement of this project.

Funding
This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes
1. See notes 2 and 4 below.
2. Ballad stanzas use participants’ words only, and are italicized throughout this article. Phrases are juxtaposed to enhance meaning and some stanzas include multiple participant contributions. They are written as lyrics to the air. “Lord Randal. No. 12” from the Child collection (reproduced in Trapp, 1973).
3. Sonya’s words “never picked” provided a title to the participants’ composite story: Ballad of the Never-Picked.
4. Vie’s verses refused to resonate with the “No. 12” from the Child collection (see note 2); they reflect a version that may be heard at: http://www.mudcat.org/@displaysong.cfm?SongID=3723

References


Walker, R. (2005). We all came out of Africa singing and dancing and we have been doing it ever since. Research Studies in Music Education, 24, 4–16.


**Author biography**

**Eve Ruddock** taught music in Western Australia and South Australian schools as well as studio piano in Darwin and Perth. Questions about the way that we engage with music and music learning in our community led her to undertake master’s research at The University of Western Australia. She is currently engaged in a PhD study at Murdoch University, Australia.
Intrinsic musicality?

Pertinent to the reader’s questions at the beginning of this chapter, the above paper considers individuals who believe that they are not musical. Indeed, it could be argued that the exclusion of 63-year-old Sonya from being accepted into the musical community occurred (in the words of the reader) because of the ‘socially agreed concept of what music is’. Yet, it was both through her intonation and contour patterns (Patel, Peretz, Tramo, & Labreque, 1998) that this ‘non-musical’ individual, in a ‘musical’ way, led listeners to become aware of her distress (never before expressed until the interview). A comment from a researcher at a conference who heard her transcript excerpt is telling: “I could hear the hurt in her voice.” This was 55 years after the recalled incident! Kept silent for years, it was not until taking part in this investigation that her voice gave away her emotion. This memory of a distant incident might appear to have minimal importance, yet it continued to affect Sonya across the years; she maintained that the teachers had misinterpreted her, judging that she had no sense of rhythm. Later, it was to be her own family who made her aware that they did not appreciate her singing. Could the reader be correct? Could it be that she did not measure up to “a minimum level of socially-proven/acceptable competence [to be] considered musical?” Yet, perhaps Gould (2002) understood? He knew that “[w]e still carry the historical baggage of a Platonic heritage that seeks sharp essences and definite boundaries” (Gould, 2002). As I recorded in the never picked study:

Seashore (1938) legitimised a musical/unmusical Western binary in his influential Psychology of Music with his claim that ‘[i]t has long been recognized that some children are musical and others are not musical’ (p. 290). As early as 1958, however, Farnsworth challenged this emphasis on the dominance of ‘talent’ in regard to the acquisition of musical abilities and he stressed the importance of both ‘nature and nurture’ (p. 179, in Ruddock, 2007b, p. 30)

Yet the dichotomous notion of being musical or not continues to effect opportunities to engage in music learning; it determines whether or not an individual will feel that they are part of the musical community. It is of interest to note that, while Hallam accepts that there is no generally accepted definition of human musicality, she recognises that, frequently, it refers to a ‘musical’ person who, besides having a fondness for music, also possesses particular abilities and talents (Hallam, 2006 p. 93). This position is seen to be central to participants in the Q & A television program considered below.
Episode IV

“like water on a stone”

A Musical Q & A

In an episode of the Australian national television program (McEvoy, 2011), both presenter and panellists expose the issue of unrecognised human musicality; their conversation reveals the extent to which it is entrenched in popular consciousness. Contributors to this public forum, generally referred to as Q & A, include a music educator, a psychiatrist, a public commentator and a high school student. In this Episode, an edited version of a published article (Ruddock, 2012b), I reflect on perspectives revealed in the program to further challenge societal acceptance of music as performance by the talented. I am not alone in my concern over the myth of the music-as-talent. One member of the panel, music educator Richard Gill, speaks for those who understand the crucial value of music for everyone; he continues to work toward widespread music education in face of misunderstanding by many doubters:

*I’ve had to yell and scream from the rooftops,) along with a whole lot of other people who believe it’s important and it’s like water on a stone*

Hearing Gill speak was enlightening — not just to be provoked by his self-acknowledged “militant style” regarding music education but also to witness the audience response. When ‘Host’ Tony Jones invited him to use his skill as a conductor and music educator to prove a point with a sceptical audience member, many in the audience responded with surprise, delight and enthusiastic singing. Gill is passionate about music and music education because he knows that music is important and that, given the opportunity, everyone can appreciate and benefit from musical involvement. However, not every person present at the evening’s Q & A show believed that we are all born musical and can (or should) sing. Tony Jones, for instance, voiced his doubts despite being informed that current neuroscience demonstrates that engaging in musical behaviour has profound effects on the brain:

---

20 Richard Gill, A Musical Q&A 31/10/2011

21 A version of this article was published in The Bulletin of the Orff Association (Ruddock, 2012b).
RICHARD GILL: …if you were to stand up and sing a song and move around, your brain would be saying ‘Thank you very much’.

TONY JONES: But the audience would not!

RICHARD GILL: No, but we don’t know.

TONY JONES: I do.

A question from an audience member appears to support Jones’ view:

PATRICK MCKEON: Mr Gill, I’m fortunate enough to attend a school that has made me try the violin, the flute, the piano, the drums and the guitar in my time there. Do you accept that everyone is not as musical as everyone else and that there should be a way to bring in music to others that want it and not force it upon others that don’t want it?

Neuroscientist Daniel Levitin understands that “Music lessons teach us to listen better, and they accelerate our ability to discern structure and form in music, making it easier for us to tell what music we like and what we don’t like” (2006, p. 194). Levitin’s work shows that Gill is supported by research in his response to Patrick: “That sounds like a comment by a secondary student who was forced to do all these things, right?”

Gill recognises the vital effects that early musical experiences have upon the development of musicality. In 2000, for instance, the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience published an article entitled ‘Brain indices of music processing: “Non-musicians” are musical’, where Stefan Koelsch (Koelsch et al., 2000) and his colleagues present their findings that show “electrophysiological evidence for an implicit musical ability of the human brain”. Their work demonstrates that the non-musician participants had developed an awareness of the structure of the tonal system found in Western music. Along with a growing number of researchers in this field, their studies make it clear that a person does not need to be a trained musician to recognise and appreciate music, nor to have to have finely honed performance skills to be musical. Everyone has an innate capacity to be musical!

In his revelatory book, This Is Your Brain On Music: Understanding a Human Obsession (Levitin, 2006), Levitin not only reveals new understandings about how we experience music, he also raises questions about how we estrange ourselves from active engagement in music making; how we refrain from doing something that, like “breathing and walking”, we just ‘do’ because it is what humans do. He points out that the:

…chasm between musical experts and everyday musicians that has grown so wide in our culture makes people feel discouraged, and for some reason this is...
uniquely so with music. Even though most of us can't play basketball like ... or
cook like ....we can still enjoy playing a friendly backyard game of hoops, or
cooking... This performance chasm does seem to be cultural, specific to
contemporary Western society. And although many people say that music
lessons didn't take, cognitive neuroscientists have found otherwise in their
laboratories. Even just a small exposure to music lessons as a child creates
neural circuits for music processing that are enhanced and more efficient than
for those who lack training. (Levitin, 2006 p. 194)

Everyday experiences in Australia confirm Levitin’s claim (Ruddock, 2012a). Habitual
negative judgement is frequently directed towards attempts at singing or playing
(Ruddock, 2010); it is too common for individuals who have not experienced
developmental music learning to be judged as being non-musical. This is despite
evidence that demonstrates the crucial role played by living in a nurturing musical
environment.

A public example of our mistaken notions about the process of acquiring music-
making skills is also revealed during a brief segment of ABC Life Matters (Armstrong,
2008). In the program, one of the Multiple Choice series, columnist, author and social
commentator Dr. Susan Maushart is an observer at the first violin lesson of a 51 year-
old lawyer. It had not been possible for him to learn the instrument at school because
boys were not allowed to learn the violin! Maushart acknowledges that the experience is
good for him therapeutically but cannot imagine its musical value. Her ‘voice over’ of
his introduction to violin playing is revealing; we hear her say: “You look so happy.
Your eyes are shining...the whole thing was pretty damn heart-warming but I was still
interested in whether [the teacher’s] ‘feel the fear and do it anyway’ approach was as
valid musically as it clearly was therapeutically.” Then, as her last words fade,
presenter Richard Aedy appears to be in sympathy with Maushart: “Yes...I can imagine
giving up the recorder again after listening to that...”

Although this ‘beginner’ had not yet begun to become familiar with the
instrument, Maushart and Aedy unwittingly raise issues of ‘critical performance,
judgement and talent’. They fail to appreciate the neophyte violinist’s immersion in the
physicality of the action itself; of the pulling of the bow, of feeling the vibrations; of
being in the music. Yet, in this case, the instrumental teacher was knowledgeable and
encouraging. Unlike many ‘judges’ in the community, she understood the learning
process; she expected to hear these ‘beginner’ sounds that were a normal aspect of skill
acquisition. Her response was an enlightened contrast to the presenters who reflected a
widespread societal ‘norm.’ With neurological science now providing substantial evidence to challenge such ‘normalised’ negative responses, it is worth considering the credibility of Gill’s position.

We are expected to be ‘beginners’ at language, games and the like, yet, in music, it seems that our friends and family look for innate ‘talent’ – some ‘magically’ preformed and developed ability that is ‘there’ at birth. In my research study of self-perceived non-musicians (Ruddock, 2007b), philosopher and teacher educator Harry saw individuals as being musical only if they happened to do something to indicate that they were musical; others deferred to experts to know whether someone might be musical or not. One grandmother, for instance, explained how she was looking forward to the arrival of a music specialist at the local school so that she could know whether her grandchild was musical or not. Such widespread belief in ‘giftedness’, where only some people are born with inherent musicality, together with Western notions of the ‘expert’, challenge individual freedom to engage in musical behaviour. An increasing body of research now supports an understanding that, individuals who perceive themselves non-musical (because of a range of community/school incidents) consciously refrain from musical action (Ruddock, 2012a). Individuals are now working to redress this reality.

For example, Susan West, musician and researcher from the Australian National University, works tirelessly towards inclusive musical experiencing in her Music Outreach project, making it possible for individuals to recognise and act on their innate musicality.

Tony Jones’ conviction that people would not want to hear him sing places him in a category that West (2009) defines as Selective Mutism for Singing (SMS) (p. 215). Could it be that Jones suffers from this syndrome, one where an individual maintains physiological ability to sing, but for “psychosocial reasons”, feels constrained to remain silent unless alone? It is clear that Jones has little problem talking – yet when it comes to singing, he bows to the notion of the musical ‘expert’ being the talented provider. How can it be that so many individuals in a ‘lucky country’ perceive themselves to be non-musical? In my Master’s research study (Ruddock, 2007b) involving self-perceived non-musicians, 20 participants out of a cohort of 29 were convinced that they were not musical. Their stories echo the understanding shown by West (2009) where individuals lose their ability to sing as they continue through primary school so that, by the time they are in their teens, they have acquired SMS. Many of the participants of the Q & A program expressed a wish that they could sing. How is it that we allow, even encourage, our instinctive musicality to be undermined by false perceptions and social persuasion?
It was in 1899 that the German psychologist, Max Meyer, warned about the way we use the terms ‘musical’ and ‘unmusical’, yet effects of a musical/non-musical binary continue to permeate the fabric of Western society. West (2009) speaks from her well-documented research to reveal the unfortunate malfunctioning of our enculturation process, one wherein we continue to deny music learning to a majority of children in Australia. This might be responsible for questions heard on Q & A such as:

**McKeon:** Yeah, just one more thing, you said that it’s a myth that there’s like a range of musicality. [Yeah]...Surely, it’s not a myth that there’s a range of interest in music. Like some people surely don’t want to learn about it.

McKeon voices a perspective that echoes Harry who, for instance, argues that children are either born musical or they are not and that music is a “a side piece to the whole educational business…just one of the frills…an add on…not essential for the child’s development” (Ruddock, 2007b, p. 104). Another professional educator, a recently retired primary principal, agrees. She is resigned to a pragmatic acceptance that music was necessarily a ‘frill’ in the school program – often seen as a useful way to provide class teachers with their compulsory ‘DOTT (Duties Other Than Teaching) time. Despite accepting that this lowered the importance of music as an integral part of the teaching program, she acknowledges that, with a crowded curriculum, the reality is that subjects like science and music “get a raw deal”.

One panel member on Q & A reflects this view:

**Ahmed:** Yeah, look, I think I’m a good example, where I initially went to a state school to primary school, then suddenly was thrust into an elite private school and they had an extraordinary music department and, really, I didn’t know a crotchet from a crowbar and I came second last in the year in music and it was something I just wasn’t exposed to and I do think there is something to be said - there’s certainly an inequality in the arts in general, who gets to teach it. And I actually think we often have private school/public school debates. I actually think that’s a major reason why parents may choose that...But more broadly I don’t think we should be too militant about music, per se. I think just a broader education...We’re in danger of having too technical and too vocational an education...it’s hard to measure but it’s often what really defines creativity and these parts of our brain that aren’t the rational or the technical side, I think, are undernourished in our current system.

Ahmed clearly appreciates a broad education that can lead to holistic development, but he questions Gill’s militant stance regarding inclusion of music.
education for everyone. Ahmed and McKeon speak honestly when they challenge Gill; they know that their lived experience tells them that music is not for them!

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for individuals to hold negative perceptions of their own musicality because of their experiences with learning music. The beginner violinist mentioned above was fortunate to enjoy an informed teacher but not all would-be initial learners are so lucky. It is too easy to discourage by a patronising look or comment despite effective (and passionate) educators being aware that it is better to focus on the wonder (and challenges) of an individual’s musical engagement. When living in an environment which embraces music as normal human action, children naturally listen, perform and make up their own music, just as they learn to use language. For those who have the opportunity, then, music can be part of their lives and can help them to cope with its many challenges. However, for those who attempt to learn without a background of musical engagement, it is all too easy for them to be silenced – for the term of their natural lives!

To go to a school that offers an effective music education program reduces the dangers of such a reality. Yet, this is not the case for many young Australians. The appropriately named 2005 *National Review of School Music Education Augmenting the diminished: National review of school music education* (Pascoe et al., 2005) revealed that there are less music learning opportunities now than in the past. Further, a *Music Trust* report (Letts, McPherson & Stefanakis, 2014) indicates that the situation was probably worse by 2014, with even less than the 23% (the percentage found by the 2005 *National Review*) of schools providing effective music programs. I posit that Tanveer Ahmed and Patrick McKeon are examples of individuals who learn to deny their instinctive musicality when they lack early developmental music learning.

*We don’t see reality as it is, we see reality as we are* 22

When Senator Bob Brown (Commonwealth of Australia, Senate, 2011, p. 7966), leader of the Australian Greens Party, asked a question about music education in schools in the Federal Australian Parliament on 2nd November, 2011, it seemed that at least two important aspects of knowing prevented a satisfactory reply by the respondent, Senator Evans. Firstly, the Senator failed to recognise how perceptions of his own musicality continued to affect his potential to evaluate music programs offered in schools. However, he did reveal that, along with many Australians (including Ahmed and McKeon), he had not enjoyed an adequate music education. Indeed, if he had

---

22 Participant David Miller (email: 25/11/2011)
experienced an effective music learning environment, I argue that he would not have so readily judged the quality of school music education by especially prepared school performances. Secondly, and more importantly, his claim that school performances reflected “the strong primary school music program” (p. 7966), suggest that he was not at all familiar with findings from the *National Review of School Music Education* (Pascoe et al., 2005) that showed approximately 10% of Australian schools did not have a music program and that the quality of music education provided by the remaining 90% was variable at the very least.

With two more comments, Senator Evans further revealed his lack of essential nurturing musical environment: “I am living proof that the early investment in music education does not necessarily deliver results. If you have ever heard me play the guitar you will understand why.” And: “I am also the only descendent of Welsh people who cannot sing a note” (p. 7967). Here, we can recognise yet another Australian who has learned to doubt his innate musicality because of what West calls a “malfunction of our enculturation processes” (2009). This situation dominates our musical reality, leading to an unnatural separation between those who acknowledge their instinctive musicality and those who do not.

It is too easy to blame politicians and music teachers for this reality; yet it is important to recognise that their perceptions of musicality also develop within a social fabric bound by notions of critical performance, judgement and talent. Many of us are aware of the unspoken rules that stop our voices - as one participant in my research made colourfully clear. She would not sing out in public because people would consider her crazy! She said they would ask: “which mental institution have you just gotten out of?” (Ruddock, 2007b, p. 147)

So many individuals like Senator Evans, Ahmed and McKeon and participant Harry have learned to live within a ‘status quo’ of our Western musical reality; one where they complete their formal years of education persuaded that they are ‘non-musical’ - one where they dare not sing in public unless drunk (Ruddock, 2007b). Despite their ongoing work, passionate advocates like Gill continue to struggle to achieve their dream; an inclusive, effective music education for all Australian children. They challenge an entrenched consumer culture where only a privileged few (very often those who attend private schools) experience a rich music education.
Chapter Five

Misconceptions underplay connection

Where Meyer warned against the use of the terms ‘musical’ and ‘unmusical’ (1899), now, over a century later, this cautionary advice is taken up by ethnomusicologist Daniel Cavicchi (2002). He recognises the damaging effects of academics and educators “using a definition of musicality that favors performance” (p. 10) and advises that “the academic study of music…get out from under the bizarre array of antiquated disciplinary assumptions and territorial contradictions” (p. 12) to perceive what is really happening in the lives of “ordinary people” (p. 11). Noting the disconnection between scholarly examinations of people’s experiences of musicking and the influential effects of everyday musical engagement, he argues that a domination of the notion of performance leads to a failure to appreciate the power of ameliorating musical experiences in “daily lives” (10). Despite this, Cavicchi (2002, p. 2) makes light of an instant where his children beg him “to stop” playing (See Chapter 2 paragraph 2). Strangely, he does not seem to question their non-acceptance of his musicking. By allowing this glimpse into his own life, however, he unwittingly demonstrates that not only the music academics he referred to are swayed by the performative notion, but that his own children also show such cultural learning!

It is pertinent to consider that, in accepting the notion that “[l]istening [is] the only behaviour allowed music consumers” (Cavicchi, 2002, p. 10), we fail to realise a part of the intrinsic nature of human musicality, an understanding supported by Levitin (2006, p. 194) and findings reported in the “Sort of in your blood” paper (Ruddock, 2012a; reproduced in the previous chapter). Indeed, we can learn not only from the children’s request for Cavicchi to stop playing, but also from his acquiescence. What is musicking for them? What is it that leads them to beg their father to stop? Could it be that music is only acceptable when it directly involves professional performances of talented musicians? Bergh and Sloboda (2010, p. 11) claim this to be so, since “[t]he default mode of engagement with music…is that of consumer of recorded music, or spectator at live musical events” (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010, p. 11).

Words taken directly from participant Lily’s final ‘stream of consciousness’ email [18 January 2013] in response to my query: “In what way/s might you categorize yourself as being ‘musical’? – if you only had a couple of sentences…?”, the following poem uses her words precisely as written, presented with line breaks to capture her poetic structure – I inserted the title. She reveals feelings, not only of ‘missing’ a very
special part of potential human being (as witnessed in the Prelude), but of recognition that it is something in our culture that leads to a particular silencing. She commences:

_Hmm tough question Eve hehe i want to give you a response that is useful so i am just cautious...If i was to not think about your question to (sic) deeply and just go with a kind of immediate response (which sometimes works out to be the most truthful response) it would be:

Not musical at all
I wouldn’t categorise myself as 'musical'
at all really
because my interpretation of 'musical'
is essentially a person who has an inherent ability to sing (in tune).

I also associate being 'musical' as being able to perform by playing a musical instrument. So because this is my thought process surrounding the term musical (i believe that that thought process is a societal result and may i say not a good one!!!)

i don't consider myself as a musical person
because i don't have an inherent ability to sing,
albeit i am able to play the piano (well i used to)
i was not a great performer as i was always shy.

Even as i say all that though
it is quite funny
because i have had my music playing
in the background for the last 3 hours while i have been working,
my music taste when it comes to listening to music will range from classical to hip hop, swing to pop, blues to rock etc.

So really
if you strip
the word 'musical'
of all the societal pressures
then i would probably consider myself
an exceptionally musical person
i have an appreciation of all types of music,

i basically have some form of music on whenever i can,
although i might not be a good performer
i have an absolute love of being able to play music

you shouldn't only be
considered musical
if you have what society classifies
as a 'good' voice,

if you feel
you have a connection
with the music
and you enjoy the music
you should be classed as musical

Unlike Lily, the participants whose stories feature in the following paper impose severe self-judgement upon their musical selves. I posit that their self-perceptions developed as a response to the cultural notions (which Lily refers to as “societal pressures”) which undermine general acceptance of instinctive human musicality. As Rorty (2009) argues, from the time of the Greeks, our thinking in the West has been swayed by “self-deceptive” dominance of the rational and the objective which leaves aspects of human perception “less privileged” (Rorty, 2009 p. 11). In the cases considered below, cultural influences are seen to thwart development of musicality.