

A SPACE FOR CONNECTION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY ON  
MUSIC LISTENING AS LEISURE

by

JOSEPH ALFRED PATE IV

(Under the Direction of Corey W. Johnson)

ABSTRACT

This polyvocal text leveraged Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2010) to trouble, open up, and complexify understanding of the lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2006) of connection with and through music listening. Music listening was foregrounded as one horizon within the aural soundscape that affords deeply meaningful and significant experiences for many. Past scholarship within the Leisure Studies literature has primarily attended to the impact and relevancy of music in the lives of adolescents. This study focused on engagement with music of five adults, accessing phenomenology as both a philosophical and methodological lens to look along (Lewis, 1990) this lived-experience. Using multiple voices and styles of representation, this polyvocal work challenged traditional ways of knowing by inviting listening, music, and voice to serve as additional data embedded throughout its discursive representation. Accessing Bachelard's (1990) phenomenology of the resonance-reverberation doublet revealed five partial, fleeting, and tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2010) of this lived leisure experience, which included: Getting Lost: Felt Resonance and Embodiment; I'm Open: Openness, Receptivity, and Enchantment; Serendipitous Moments; The Found Mirror: Oh There You Are; and Cairns and Echoes: The Lustering Potency of Song. Ultimately, music appeared to *speak to* so as to *speak for* participants, providing musical affirmation and sustenance throughout their lives.

INDEX WORDS: Music, Listening, Leisure, Post-Intentional Phenomenology, Polyvocal Text

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Muses, Musicians, *and* Music. For without their Inspiration, Creation, and Song, I would not know, feel, or understand most of my life. Thank you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although one name appears as the author of this text, there are countless additional names that *should*. These names are of those who have graced and gifted me support, encouragement, and the ability to behold the interconnectedness of all things. They have extended moments of their world to be a co-journeyer in mine. I am humbled by their presence and forever indebted for their love.

What *should* appear are the names of those teachers throughout my life who opened my world, pushed me, challenged me, and afforded opportunities to learn and grow. The names of all my students who kept me focused on what is most important – their worlds, their lives, their gifts and talents. The names of all my friends, as they have blessed, fortified, laughed, and cried with me. Especially my brothers – you will never be able to comprehend how much you mean to me. The names of my family and my wife’s family. My office mates. My writing circle. My committee. My chair. And finally, my participants – whose lives, words, and experiences gifted this glimpse of the power and magnitude of music and connection.

Of all the names that *should* appear, there are three that are truly missing. These are the names of my co-authors: Jennifer “Bou,” Abigail Birch, and Westin Ash. You are my life. For your sacrifices, love, enduring support, dances, singing, hugs, notes, laughter, and unending faith. I may have put words on a page, but you nurtured the love and life of my soul. Thank you for bringing me roses when I didn’t have none.

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## PRELUDE

### THERE'S A SECRET INSIDE AND A WHIRLPOOL OF EMOTIONS:

#### AN OPEN INVITATION TO THE READER-AS-LISTENER

*For me it's huge - If I'm going to make a collection of music for someone, I'm going to be intentional about it. I'm not just going to randomly pull stuff, especially with something like this. I put thought into it and it's a part of me, it's a piece of who I am – each song has impacted me in some way. It might sound weird, but it's almost like every time I share it with someone else, I'm giving them a part of myself. I'm exposing myself a little bit more; I'm letting them have that insight into another layer of who I am. There's that trust and also that vulnerability at the same time - like are they going to think this is lame or are they going to be like that was just "ok?" It's a sharing of a part of your soul with someone else, especially with pieces that have resonated with you in a deep way, in a lasting way.*

Zoë<sup>1</sup>, Participant

#### An Open Invitation

There is an “art” to the creation of a good compilation<sup>2</sup> of music. It is a subtle art, which like many creative endeavors, arises from making intentional structural decisions to inform the larger, broader backdrop of purposeful and playful engagement with ideas and music through the expression and creation of diverse and varied aurally emotive experiences. Just as Nick Hornby indicated in *High Fidelity* (1995), “making a tape is like writing a letter – there’s a lot of erasing and rethinking and starting again. A good compilation tape is hard to do. You've got to kick off with a corker, to hold the attention. Then . . . up it a notch, or cool it a notch...oh, there are loads of rules” (pp. 88 – 89). Creating compilations afford opportunities for a sonic collection of connection: connection to self, connection to lived-experiences, connection to others, and

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<sup>1</sup> Each participant suggested a pseudonym for use in analysis and presentation of the data. All participant “talk” was edited for readability. For example, “filler words” were removed, grammar corrected for discursive representation, and pronouns changed to be in agreement with the constructed text. I elected to block quote and italicize the majority of participant talk in consideration of constructing a polyvocal text (described more fully below). Further, in certain circumstances I included specific exchanges from the interviews that more fully revealed and opened up the phenomenon or demonstrated the evolving and iterative nature of understanding which emerged by including my presence and questions as part of the lifted text. Finally, in consideration of my authorial presence, I attempted to remain true to my participant’s words, thoughts, *and* the presentation of those words and thoughts.

<sup>2</sup> Compilations are and were created through many different forms: audio cassette tapes, CDs, playlists. Compilations are also known as mix/mixes. Please read “compilations” broadly and interchangeably.

connection to the world. Here, music is leveraged to communicate these deeply felt connections and significant resonations, accessing others' words and music to reverberate and speak forth.

Ultimately, compilations serve as both connectors and communicators.

I have engaged in the creation of many compilations throughout my life. When I began in earnest, they represented the accumulation of specific songs which spoke to me, striking something deep inside, hauntingly echoing in the marrowed depths of my being. The internally resonating words and melodies whispered and hummed, serving as a subtle aural backdrop as I navigated *through*, and attempted to make sense *of*, the world. In the beginning, I created these compilations solely for me, only for behind closed door listening, serving as a reminder and comforter as I engaged in the complexity and confusion I confronted through my experiences within this world. Soon, however, this act evolved into the creation of compilations for others: specifically dear friends and romantic interests. The compilations served as a medium to communicate and express deeply felt and significant emotions and experiences with another. The tracks were purposefully chosen, with each selection contributing as an essential part to the grander whole, helping to achieve an overarching message or theme<sup>3</sup>. Gifted, these compilations were able to be accessed, digested, felt, and experienced over and over again, in public or private, loudly, softly, superficially as an auditory backdrop or atmosphereing experience; or deeply and purposefully as the listener engaged with the music, words, feelings, and expressions of the songs. For me, as well as those in this study, compilations are, at their core, gifts. They serve as extensions of one soul to another, in the hope to communicate, extend, and share certain thoughts, ideas, feelings, emotions, and experiences.

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<sup>3</sup> Appendices "A" through "H" contain examples of participant and researcher created compilations. Four were created by two of the study's participants, Naomi (Appendices "A" & "B") and Aimeé (Appendices "D" & "E"), as gifts during high school and our first year in college. Included are scanned images of these artifacts, as well as text lifted from their transcripts (Appendix "C" for Naomi and "F" for Aimeé) talking about these compilations. The final two artifacts (Appendices "G" & "H") were compilations I made to honor the births of both my children. Also included are liner notes created to accompany each compilation. Compilations are referred to throughout the dissertation, and these examples are offered at this time to elucidate the purpose, art, creation, and expression captured in these works to further contextualize and situate the construction *and* gifting of compilations.

As I contemplated ways to create a concordant structure, format, and presentation of a dissertation on deeply felt and significantly meaningful lived-experiences with and through music listening, I mused over how best to represent this phenomenon through the crafting of an elucidatory text to illuminate it and its varied and partial manifestations (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b). Ultimately, I resolved to craft a polyvocal phenomenology as a metaphorical compilation, or a work which asked and attempted to answer the question: what is the nature and meaning of this particular phenomenon as experienced and lived (van Manen, 1990). I resisted producing a traditional text constructed of merely empirical or theoretical observations and accounts. Instead, by forwarding this as a compilation *and* polyvocal phenomenology, I desired to offer a representation comprised of diverse and varied pieces that would account for “experienced space, time, body, and human relations as [one lives] them,” so as to create a textualized experience that could be put into conversation with similar work from across philosophical, theoretical, and methodological perspectives and approaches (van Manen, 1990, p. 184). Influenced by Ihde’s (2007) caution leveled against dominant and traditional knowledge<sup>4</sup> dissemination accessed solely through sight alone, I desired a format which would access multiple senses and purposefully engage the reader-as-listener experientially and aurally. Attention to the interplay between all the senses with regard to aspects of meaning making, knowing, and understanding, revealed an opportunity to create a polyvocal<sup>5</sup> text. Purposefully disrupting established linear, rational prose, or what Lather (2001) called “comfort texts,” (p. 201) polyvocal texts invite multiple actors, including non-human agents (i.e., songs, lyrics, documents, videos), to contribute as co-producers and influencers of knowledge (Barrett, 2009).

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<sup>4</sup> Ihde (2007) referenced the scientific revolution’s privileging of vision through the discovery and use of optics and instruments, usurping the original, more foundational ways of knowing through multiple senses. He asserted this ultimately led to the construction of truth, knowledge, and meaning within “essentially a *silent world*” (p. 6).

<sup>5</sup> Defined as “many voiced” or “multiple voices.”

Polyvocal texts<sup>6</sup> work across multiple senses and ways of knowing to influence and facilitate a polyphonic (Fox, 2011), contra-puntal (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003), and multi-layered understanding (for additional examples see: Barbary, 2008; Hughes, 2011; Nollaig, Holt, Shineborne, Esin, Nolas, Mehdizadeh, & Brooks-Gordon, 2011; Thorp, 2003).

Through this polyvocal phenomenology, I created both a discursive and accompanying aural experience to more fully illuminate this specific phenomenon. As constructed, I leveraged both the words and music of the participants and myself to assist the reader and listener<sup>7</sup> to engage *with* this phenomenon to complement and augment my writing *about* it. You see, when I go to write, especially the kind of writing linked to academics and situated in what I consider a critical orientation focused on explication, contestation, and the work of exegesis, I do exactly what I am doing here. I grasp for big words. I painstakingly work over sentences, refining them down to forayed exercises of semantics mantled in complexity, abstract referencing, and movements away from clarity and simplicity. I fester on and hover over ideas, turning them over and over to a point where I abstract them so much I begin to squeeze out their mirroring of reality, their plenum (Husserl, 1970), and leave them as verbose, heady husks of their original spirit. But through structuring this work as a compilation and accessing music<sup>8</sup> as an accompaniment to my participant's words, I attempted to share and gift explicit and implicit emotions, feelings, ideas, and thoughts by creating a complementary aural and emotive experience. Here, my intent was to be soulfully expressive by communicating deeply meaningful and significantly felt experiences woven throughout each piece of the grander whole. Thus, this work humbly seeks an empathetic reading *and* listening, most poignantly demonstrated through

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<sup>6</sup> Polyvocal texts are historically grounded in the Platonic dialogues and an Aristotelian emphasis on the creation of an ethos to assist in an argument's effectiveness (Bolter, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> As aspects of this dissertation are to be read and/or listened to, I will refer to my audience throughout the work by the title reader-as-listener.

<sup>8</sup> As a compilation, the songs forwarded are a combination of music gifted by my participants and their associated meaning, and songs that came to represent aspects of my dissertation process.

the invitation for you to engage with the associated compilation and liner notes<sup>9</sup>, further demonstrating the beauty of gifting music to help create, inform, and illuminate this experience and phenomenon.

Through the presentation of this dissertation as a polyvocal phenomenology, I attempted an embodied discursive and auditory exploration of *how one finds her/himself connected with music*. I invite the reader-as-listener to empathically *look along* the phenomenon, a result of my phenomenological *looking at*<sup>10</sup> (Lewis, 1970). As a discursive and auditory representation *and* scholarly explication, the research processes are forwarded, fast-forwarded, rewound, and replayed throughout to elucidate my engagement with the data, theory, philosophy, and guiding methodology informing this work (Vagle, 2010a; van Manen, 1990). As a result of the iterative nature of analysis and representation<sup>11</sup>, I ultimately concluded the phenomenon needed to be presented in a discursive and aural manner and through polyvocal mediums in concert with it as a lived-experience.

This polyvocal phenomenology serves two purposes. First, it serves as a representation in concert with the significance, power, depth, and meaning of engaging with music listening as lived through, experienced, and described by the participants. These experiences appeared as embodied resonance (music going within and *speaking to*) and reverberation (music being

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<sup>9</sup> Liner notes are the text which often accompanies albums as inserts. The liner notes for the compilation *Cairns & Echoes of Musical Sustenance* are located in Appendix I. There are many options with how to engage with the CD and liner notes. One is to first read the text in its entirety and then engage with the notes. Another is to have these notes easily accessible throughout your reading and listening experience. Or, you could do both. There is no “right” way to engage with the compilation. I encourage you, the reader-as-listener, to work across the associated parts of the polyvocal whole. Further, a list of the songs on the compilation are also included. If interested in listening to the music accompanying this work, you will need to purchase these recordings. I have included citational referencing to assist in you locating these songs.

<sup>10</sup> C.S. Lewis (1970), in an essay entitled *Meditations in a Tool Shed*, forwarded the image of a light beam shining through top of a door into a darkened shed. This image represented how science traditionally *looks at* experiences (i.e., love, religion, and mortality in terms of biology, anthropology and psychology), instead of *looking along* them. He noted that through our elevation of science as the purveyor of “true” and “valid” understanding, one typically looks *at*, not *along*, an experience. Lewis pointed out when solely looking *at* the beam of light, all you see is the beam, but are not seeing by it. When one looks *along* it, there no longer exists a view only *of* the beam, but a vision of the world as opened up and seen *along* it. These are two very different events, and both afford important perspectives when inquiring about experiences as lived. I am indebted to Josh Trey Barnett and Dr. Corey Johnson for providing this pivotal piece for my work.

<sup>11</sup> My process for creating the dissertation in this format is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

leveraged as *speaking for*), resulting in episodic “encounters that temporarily transformed [one’s] connection with the social/natural world” (Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009, p. 63). Second, it implicitly invites the troubling of traditional ways of knowing and their associated methods of knowledge transmission (Feyerabend, 2010; Ihde, 2007; Richardson, 2002), inviting the reader-as-listener to engage with the research and findings experientially. I encourage you to empathetically engage in this work – grounded in the hope that you too may find resonance, meaning, and reverberation with those things that may strike a chord, or, conversely, that may afford insight and understanding into that which you may not experience.

As you engage with this work, there hopefully will be some moments where you gain insight, understanding, and connection. There may be moments, however, where this does not occur. Similarly, when gifting a compilation certain musicians, songs, or styles of music may resonate more than others. On the other hand there may be other pieces which are foreign, inaccessible, confusing, inharmonious, and/or out of tune with your listening experience and preferences. Comparably, when forwarding a scholarly work, there may be certain theoretical, philosophical, and/or methodological decisions others resonate or connected with and those they do not. What is exciting is that the reader-as-listener may even have his/her own stories and experiences with music, approaches to research, or scholarly insights that can further transform, highlight, and/or accentuate this specific phenomenon and the current work. In all of these moments, I invite you to consider two things: First that as an attempted phenomenology, this is a Gestalted experience, like that of a symphony, with each chapter and track serving as a part of the total movement of the entire piece, and thus to understand the whole, you must work across the parts as they relate and give voice to the entire work. Second, I again invite you to engage with this work empathetically<sup>12</sup> – to consider looking, reading, and listening *along* rather than solely

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<sup>12</sup> One way of doing this is by attempting to restrain your natural attitude, reactions, or inclinations as you engage this work, thus potentially disrupting your lived orientation within the lifeworld by considering the *other*. Other as a person, song, explanation, theory, philosophy, methodology, or assertion.



*looking at* (Lewis, 1970) these experiences. Or, as Naomi instructed on her mix tape *This is a Whirlpool of Feelings (mix)*, “Listen, with an open mind and heart.”<sup>13</sup>

This dissertation was created, written, soundtracked, and gifted as a polyvocal text on the deeply meaningful and significant lived leisure experience of music listening. Inevitably, as soon as one creates something and gifts it away, one lets it go. Knowingly, what one releases is how the gift will be received, its effectiveness, and whether or not you have honored and upheld your responsibility in communicating those things for which you have been entrusted. Throughout this work, I remained committed to the phenomenon *and* the participant’s words, experiences, and gifts of expression concerning the role and impact of music in their lives. Further, this polyvocal phenomenology and accompanying compilation also served as an expression of my own experiences with music, both through this dissertation and throughout my life. I can only hope that my work affords poignant and salient glimpses of this significant, meaningful, and deeply felt lived-experience.

### **Chapters, Tracks, and Liner Notes Within**

This polyvocal phenomenology is composed of five chapters, or pieces, contributing to the total movement of the entire whole. In addition, purposefully chosen musical tracks are linked with each chapter and its associated content. Some tracks were gifted by the participants through their selected playlists for the study. Other tracks emerged as salient aural representations from my own musical experiences to help atmosphere and accentuate my scholarly journey and processes, serving as additional embodied examples of connection with music. Additionally, I have included liner notes<sup>14</sup> to serve as a companion text to the compilation *and* dissertation affording an additional voice to this polyvocal experience.

Moving forward, I first situate how I came to find myself engaged in a phenomenology on music listening. Specifically, I reveal and foreground music’s presence and inescapability

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A, specifically Naomi’s instructions to me contained on the labels for Sides A & B in the images of the scanned cassette tapes for how to engage with her mix.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix I.

within the lifeworld, and how a phenomenological understanding and exploration into those who experience deeply felt and significantly meaningful experiences with and through music listening, is an important undertaking within human science research. Next, a phenomenological tracing is undertaken to evince why phenomenology is an appropriate philosophical and methodological approach in addressing *this* inquiry. Then I leveraged the metaphor of improvisational-infused jam band music to reveal, disrupt, and trouble my own *taking up* of phenomenology, in particular Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b), which methodologically guided this study. Accessing Gadamer's (2002) horizon's of meaning and van Manen's (1990) four lifeworld existentials, I then foreground depth and significance of connection as a specific lived-experience of those who engaged with music as part of the aural soundscape. Finally, five tentative manifestations of the phenomenon of deeply felt and significantly meaningful experiences of music listening were forwarded. I grounded these manifestations in music's ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for* the participants. The five tentative manifestations are: Getting Lost: Felt Resonance and Embodiment; I'm Open: Openness, Receptivity, and Enchantment; Serendipitous Moments; The Found Mirror: Oh, There You Are; and Cairns and Echoes: The Lustering Potency of Song. Each manifestation was forwarded with an associated musical track and was further elucidated methodologically, philosophically, or theoretically. Finally, I extended a discursive and aural Coda to discuss implications which arose from the current study, concluding with the notion of musical sustenance.

Here, I end this open invitation to you, the reader-as-listener. There are secrets within and a whirlpool of emotions<sup>15</sup>. I leave you with Aimeé's words:

*Part of a relationship with music is that you can feel things, and when you have those moments, they're real. [They] are your own secret moments.*

So hit play<sup>16</sup>, and settle in as the first track sings forth . . . come, come in for a little while.

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<sup>15</sup> Refer to Appendix D and A.

<sup>16</sup> Please begin the compilation with Track 1. Please note, if you have purchased *Spoon* (Matthews, 1998), please fast forward to the 6 minute mark to the "hidden track" at the end of the song.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE INESCAPABILITY OF MUSIC<sup>17</sup>

*To stop the flow of music would be like the stopping of time itself,  
incredible and inconceivable*

Aaron Copland ~ American Composer

*Music, it's everywhere. I find it everywhere*

Ron, Participant

The scene begins in blackness: stark and silent. Delicately, lifting from the darkness, words emanate from the beckoning voice of a young child, August, on the wings of a subtly swishing, stirring wind:

*Listen. Can you hear it? The music. I can hear it everywhere. In the wind. In the air. In the light. It's all around us. All you have to do is open yourself up. All you have to do is . . . listen.*<sup>18</sup> (Lewis & Sherridan, *August Rush*, 2007).

Visually woven through these words are a myriad of images, complementing the diaphanous dialogue and the auditory build up of strings, enmeshed with the chirping of birds, the call of cicadas, and guttural, bass-laden undertones seemingly rising from the earth itself. The feathery tips of wheat, hazily focused, dance with a cautioned eagerness, animated by the breeze. A single hand ethereally moves, arcing back and forth, at times haloed when eclipsing the sun, as it orchestrates the delicate advancement of the ethereal music. Wooshing, a sea of grain moving in great rhythmic waves rushes up, through, and past the child whose words have blended with the natural music of the land, singing and lifting him to an embodied pose emanating joy, affirmation, security, and fullness. August is complete and whole, at home and connected.

#### The Aural Soundscape

Today, one<sup>19</sup> is hard pressed to find or experience quietness. The recent documentary, *Soundtracker* (Sherman, 2010), followed Gorden Hempton, an Emmy-Award winning nature

<sup>17</sup> Track 2, *Shoe Dog* by John Scofield (2007) is associated with Chapter 1.

<sup>18</sup> Visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyDwYmYpDwE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyDwYmYpDwE) to view this scene.

sound recordist, on his quest for landscapes and environments un-trammeled by human noise pollution. As a modern day auditory Jacques Cousteau, Hempton accumulated the natural sounds of the aural world, capturing, revealing, and foregrounding their importance and presence before their recession into the annals of extinction. Through his work and the inviting, beckoning words of August (Lewis & Sherridan, 2007), we are challenged and prodded to listen and open ourselves up to sound: its presence, influence, and meaning. Sounds range from the natural, subtle and barely noticeable as our breath, to noise, defined as unwanted sound arising from the world and human action. Ihde (2007), in his exegesis *In Praise of Sound*, linked sound to breath, breath to life, life to soul, and soul to spirit, tracing and revealing “spirit” as the etymological root of words such as inspire, or “to take in spirit,” and expire, or “spirit [leaving] us without life” (p. 3). As auditory adjudicators, humans engage with the aural soundscape through sonic experiences and exchanges, impacting and influencing actions, reactions, and interactions as we navigate through the world. Through our engagement with sound, we negotiate and find meaning, purpose, connection, and relations, or simply put: life.

Sounds, in their broadest sense, are voices: “voices of things, of others, of the gods, and of [oneself],” and it is through consideration of sounds and voices in such a way where opportunities arise for “full significance, toward a listening to the *voiced* character of the sounds of the World” (Ihde, 2007, p. 147). These sounds of the World, and their entry into the body through the auditory canals of the ears are paradoxically “opposite at every point. Sounds *come* from outside the body, but sound itself is near, intimate,” facilitating an embodied and felt change (Dewey, 2005, p. 246). Further, sounds simultaneously convey both what is happening and the anticipation of things yet to come. Sound itself arises from agitation and commotion, resulting in the creation of spaces which stir and evoke a range of emotions. The aural soundscape is

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<sup>19</sup> As an author, I recognize and appreciate that there are those who have compromised auditory capacities and functioning. By no means am I asserting that engagement with sound through hearing and listening are the only ways in which communication, relationships, connection, meaning, or purpose are established and fostered. Nor am I suggesting those with compromised auditory capacities do not or cannot engage with music, noise, and sound in meaningful ways.

comprised of many sonic experiences. Music is one such experience and space where sound specifically draws attention to itself, creating opportunities for the felt resonance *within* and voicing *forth* of personal, collective, and metaphorical meaning and relevance. Thus music exists as “a dense embodied presence” comprised of “pregnancies of meaning” engaged in and understood through the listening act (Ihde, 2007, p. 155). As one voice of the aural soundscape, music evokes, validates, and echoes the human condition; its ethos, mythos, and psyche (Dewey, 2005). Music is both a presence-ing and permeate-ing part of our existence.

Music’s presence and metaphorically imbued relevance suggests, reveals, and provides insight into larger metaphysical and existential aspects and qualities of who we are and how we engage *with* and navigate *through* the lifeworld<sup>20</sup>. To ground this assertion in archaeological findings, musicologists and anthropologists have yet to discover a human culture without its own expression and form of music (Blacking, 1995; Campell, Connell, & Beegle, 2007; Merriam, 1964; McDermott, 2009; Russell, 2009; and Zimmer, 2010). Artifacts unearthed from every known and discovered human culture have revealed three common practices: language, tools, and *music*. Music, debatably, is as ancient as we are. Rousseau (1998) even goes so far as to suggest that the origins of language may have actually arisen from music, thus situating music as the precursor to language. He posited the original use of language was situated relationally, linked to music’s ability to stir and provoke emotions, and thus create and mitigate human interactions. He contrasted this to the current, western, dominant, and evolved uses of language void of many of its emotional and passionate qualities, where rationality, not relation, is leveraged and reinforced in order to argue and persuade. Additionally, scientists noted the inadvertent accessing and use of

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20 Lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) is a concept within phenomenology to designate the pre-given, pre-theoretical world of lived-experiences (Husserl, 1970). The lifeworld is phenomenologically understood as the world of one’s immediate experience(s) as given and lived through, and is seen as always, already there (van Manen, 1990). More important may be the distinction of how one lives *in* and *through* the lifeworld for those who are engaged in empirically based and theoretically driven science and research: the lifeworld is viewed as pre-theoretical, or experienced by individuals and groups “naturally,” and that the orientation of the modern and western empirical and theoretical attitude “tends to turn us into non-participating spectators, surveyors *of* the world,” removing our being-ness *in* the world (p. 182, italics added). This is explained more fully in Chapter 2.

*motherese*, or the cooing talk intuitively performed between mother and child or adults and infants, in support of music's original evolutionary presence for creating bonding opportunities, as well as laying the precursory foundations to speech and language (Zimmer, 2010).

Humans have used, and continue to access, music through a variety of activities, including performing, chanting, singing, dancing, praying, lamenting, celebrating, and *listening*<sup>21</sup>. Music, at times, serves as an auditory counterpart or aural soundtrack, creating transformational potentialities within the lifeworld. These experiential transformations may either be purposefully accessed or imposed on one through proximity and context. As *you* navigate the next twenty-four hours, I offer a challenge: take notice of the countless spaces, times, experiences and activities influenced by music. Observe the numbers of individuals donning small ear-buds connected to their digital music players as they work, exercise, or commute from one location to another. Appreciate the car stopped next to you at the light and the person singing at the top of her lungs, lost in her riveting Madison Square Garden performance of the latest Lady Gaga or Kenny Chesney chart-topper. Take note of the musical soundtrack and its emotive manipulation as you watch that touching insurance commercial, your favorite drama when someone gets the news of cancer, or the climatic moment etched in dramatic characterization, image, and sound, pulling something inside of you in the most recent blockbuster. Notice the crescendoing buildup and type of songs selected as the athletes take the field, court, or pitch and begin to do battle. Even as you navigate shopping experiences at the grocery store or mall, ride on public transportation, casually visit or dine in restaurants or bars, or make your way down city streets, notice music's aural presence in most of our daily life. Arguably, just as Hemptom (Sherman, 2010) sought natural environments devoid of noise pollution, music's presence within our lifeworld is as inescapable.

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21 Here, I purposefully use the term listening, as opposed to hearing. Hearing designates a physiological registering response to noise and sound. This is a physiological experience, not primarily associated with perceived emotion or cognitive investment. I use the term listening to indicate intentional emotional and cognitive investment beyond the sensory act of hearing, which transitions it to a position of potentiality for meaning, purpose, enjoyment, and/or fulfillment. When I begin an examination of the phenomenon through the participant's words and experiences, I further disrupt and unravel this distinction, see Chapter Four.

### **The Inescapability of Music in My Lifeworld**

Music's presence is all around. It is inescapable. The recognition of it, however, is often folded into our periphery and backgrounded to other experiences. As a result of my focused attention on a study of the phenomenon of significant experiences of connection with and through music listening, I found myself attentive and actively (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2008) "noticing" (Ray, 2010) how music appeared to be a communicator and meaningful connector for others as well, foregrounding its presence within my lifeworld. For example, one night when watching *The Cosby Show* with my family, "Cliff" Huxtable (Bill Cosby) turned to his wife Claire (Phylicia Rashād) and began talking about music (Cosby & Markus, 1986). Cliff's father, Russell, was reconnecting with his old band buddies and the whole Huxtable family were to attend a concert that evening filled with jazz music and black aural history. In this particular scene, Cliff reminisced on music's ability to transport one to other times and places, invigorate emotions, and reawaken thoughts and feelings of others and times past, specifically he and Clair's courtship. As we were watching, my wife turned to me and said, "Oh my god, they are talking about your study."

Other examples of my "noticing" were in *Top Gun* (Badalato & Scott, 1986) where Maverick (Tom Cruise) shared with Charlie (Kelly McGillis) the poignant and pregnant memory of his mother, and about sitting in his house growing up and being asked to repeatedly drop the record needle and replay Otis Reddings' "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay." Sharing this memory of his mother, Maverick appeared to stare into nothingness, seemingly letting the music transport him like a time machine, reminding him of those essential moments and that foundational relationship. In *Australia* (Luhrmann, Knapman, & Brown, 2008) Nullah, the mixed-race grandson of an aboriginal medicine man, used song to "sing people to him." He lifted songs calling forth on the wind and "singing to him" those spirits and others who would help him, his family, and loved ones. Or the movie *Glory*, (Herbeck & Burt, 1989) about the first black civil war regimen, where Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman, and others sit around a campfire the

night before they are to march into certain death storming South Carolina's seemingly impregnable Fort Wagner. The group is depicted creating solidarity and brotherhood through an old Negro spiritual and its soulful lyrics, "Oh my lord, lord, lord, lord." Different soldiers step forward to inspire, affirm, express love, and create deep, entrenched moments of connection to fortify and instill courage in anticipation of the coming dawn. And then there was Michelle Pfeiffer's use of Bob Dylan's poetry and lyrics in *Dangerous Minds* (Simpson, & Smith, 1995) to trouble traditional, didactic practices to inspire, speak to, and offer new ways to speak for those students in a classroom written off and forgotten by their school, its administration, and community.

Beyond movies, I cached a number of news and popular articles reporting stories specifically focused on music and its presence in our cultural, political, and societal landscape. Reminiscent of Pfeiffer's leveraging of Bob Dylan to open the world of poetry and literature in *Dangerous Minds*, Nick Smart, a professor and English department chairman at the College of New Rochelle was featured for his decade long use of Dylan and his work as a pedagogical tool within the classroom (LoHud, 2010). The New York Times ran a piece on scientists who are trying to unlock the specific components of music which result in the feelings of one's heart strings being plucked or tugged, creating "musical experiments" (Belluck, 2011). MSNBC (2010) featured a piece linking how those who get chills from music, what some scientists refer to as skin orgasms, tend to exhibit the personality trait of "openness to experience." A student of my wife's saw a piece on the seven must read books on music, emotions, and the brain that "bridge music, emotions and cognition, peeling away at that tender intersection of where your brain ends and your soul begins" (Popova, 2011). CNN (2010) featured a TED talk entitled "10 things you didn't know about sound" linking sound to our overall health and offering observations such as: we are each a chord, health could be understood as chords in harmony, and how sounds, especially natural sounds and silence, can heal and are good for you.



I also began “noticing” the use of music to address a number of populations in need. *60 Minutes*, for example ran a piece entitled “Gospel for Teens” which followed a Harlem music program, instilling confidence and character for inner-city youth in New York through music, while providing a positive alternative for inner city youth to participate in, instead of gangs and other socially destructive activities (Finkelstein, 2011). ABC News featured Music Kitchen which provides music in a New York Upper West Side homeless shelter as an accompaniment for the men who come in for the night to get out of the cold. Hall-Tompkin, the director, argued that those who find themselves homeless are not only lacking food and shelter, but are missing opportunities for beauty as well, and used music as an accompaniment to afford physical, emotional, and even spiritual nourishment (Cole, 2010). Members of the Suncoast Hospice Teen Music Group in Florida perform music for those in hospice care. Milan Pilan, the now grant funded teen who created and directed the project, got the idea when he noticed his own family member’s reaction to his playing while under hospice care (“Teen uses,” 2011). Music, as part of hospice and palliative aid and support, created opportunities for volunteers to spend time with the aging and dying, and to offer songs in the hope of creating a sanctuary and moments of reprieve from their pain and struggles. Finally, across the United States, Girls’ Rock Camps offer summer camp programs for young and middle school girls to facilitate the building of self esteem and address body issues. Girls come together for a band camp where they learn to play a variety of musical instruments, write songs, and find expression through music to confront negative body perceptions and issues of low self esteem.

Finally, I received numerous emails sent from those who know my work, reflecting on their own and other’s experiences with music. After presenting on my research to a class of graduate students, one student sent me the following email:

*This morning, I was having one of those days. You know the ones where you ask yourself why are you doing this and will you ever actually accomplish your goals? Anyway, as usual, I decided I needed to listen to music and have a sing-along. But for some reason it wasn’t until this morning that I realized this is a habit I have...listening to music in extreme emotional places (hi or low) in order to “work through” things. There is*

*something about the act of singing along with highly charged lyrics that really helps me center. This made me think of your research so I thought I would share*

Another email came from a colleague at a small, private, liberal arts college who invited me to present on my research to his class of undergraduates. I had asked him and the students to come to class with songs and lyrics of music which they loved and moved them. His tongue-in-cheek, yet simple and poignant response for his selection was entitled “I found the Truth”:

*I'm showing this clip to my class during your visit on Thursday. At the conclusion of the video, class will be dismissed.*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULitGKV3pJ8&feature=related>

Suddenly, it appeared as if music and its presence in a variety of venues in life began to be foregrounded in other's lived-experiences as well, introducing connections and crossovers arising from disparate and divergent sources. This email came from a dear friend whose wife has been a Girl Scout leader for over 15 years:

*Linda was going through some of her old scouting materials and found a songbook with the following song (German folk song I think). She said that it made her think of you and asked me to send it to you:*

Music Shall Live (*sung as a three part round*)

All things shall perish

From under the sky.

Music alone shall live.

Music alone shall live.

Music alone shall live.

Never to die.

*So, what is first in Middle Earth<sup>22</sup>, Narnia<sup>23</sup>, and our own world (...where were you ...when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:4) is also last.*

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<sup>22</sup> In Tolkien's (1977) *The Silmarillion*, creation of Middle Earth was *sung* into existence. Ilúvatar, formed the Ainur from which the world and all creation were made. The Ainur were themes of music, at first isolated and separate, but which were called to “make in harmony together a Great Music. . . and be glad that through you great beauty has been awakened in song” (p. 15). This harmony and Great Music went into the Void, filling and calling forth all creation, giving rise to the world and its inhabitants. For Tolkien, it was music's presence in the germ of creation which results in this Great Music still being heard in the singing of churning and bubbling brooks, the call of the wind through leaves, or the chorus of tree frogs by a pond at mid-summer.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis (1955), a contemporary of Tolkien's, employed a similar metaphor in his creation myth of his world: Narnia. In the first book, *The Magician's Nephew*, of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the main characters find themselves in utter and absolute darkness. Slowly, on the back of a subtle and stirring breeze, music and singing is heard. Aslan, a significant and important character of each of the books, *sang forth* into existence all of creation during the birth of Narnia. Aslan was depicted, “pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. . . a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew. . . spreading out from the Lion like a pool” (p. 92).

One final example was a video sent to me showing that it is not only humans who seem to be interested in engaging with music and those who perform it. Entitled *Jazz for Cows*<sup>24</sup> this viral video sensation featured the New Hot 5, an American based jazz band, playing *When the Saints Go Marching In* for a heard of cows in France. At the time of writing this chapter, this video had over 5 million views. Music animates, touches, permeates, and circles throughout the lifeworld.

### **Scholarly Leveraging of Music within the Lifeworld**

The impact, relevancy, and study of music are not new endeavors within the human sciences. Application of music in a variety of settings was found to be firmly entrenched or gaining traction. In the fields of psychology (MacDonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002; North & Hargreaves, 2008; Tan & Harré, 2010) and music therapy (Aigen, 2008; Kenny, 2006; 1995; 1982), music was explored as a positive, and significant human experience and expression, as well as a powerful resource for intervention and mediating a cadre of illnesses, conditions, and disorders. Medical researchers studied the impact and influence of music on a variety of conditions including alleviating pain, anxiety, and stress levels, as well as its presence in assisting relaxation for cardiovascular patients (Nilsson, 2009), for patients undergoing colonoscopies (Bechtold, Puli, Othman, Bartalos, Marshall, & Roy, 2009), the improvement of quality of life indicators for those undergoing brain surgery (Walworth, Rumana, Nguyen, & Jarred, 2008), and through the promotion of creative uses of music for those with physical and sensory disabilities to enhance social relationships (Magee & Bowen, 2008). Music was found to influence literacy in educational settings, assisted in learning, provided a portal into culture and cultural expressions, as well as afforded a centralizing activity for self-esteem enhancement in adolescents (Campbell, Connell, & Beegle, 2007). Methodologically, through the creation, performance, and practice of “musicking,” Wood, Duffy, and Smith (2007) challenged the field of geography to leverage music as ways to better understand the culture, context, and history of diverse geographies.

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<sup>24</sup> To access video, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXKDu6cdXLI>

Finally, studies both within and useful to the field of gerontology focused on music's ability to influence the quality of life in older adults and its ability to contribute positively to self-esteem, help people feel autonomous and competent, and to increase socializing experiences which mitigate feelings of isolation and loneliness (de Vries, 2011; Hays & Minichiello, 2005).

### **Leisure Studies and Partial Review of the Literature<sup>25</sup>**

Music's historical, social, political, and cultural relevance to human groups and the human condition created an opportunity for me as a budding leisure scholar to engage in research to further our understanding of music listening as a leisure activity and experience, and to contribute to the cannon of research on music and those who experience music. Leisure Studies has mostly overlooked music listening, specifically as a valued activity and experience in which numerous *adults* engage. The only noted exceptions leveraged music and its attachment to memories and to map and characterize popular urban locales and spaces (Cohen, Schofield, & Lashua, 2010; Lashua, B. D., 2011; Lashua, Cohen, & Schofield, 2010). Beyond these few studies, the Leisure Studies literature contains little addressing explicitly why adults engage in this activity. The current study sought to forward further insight in order to open up and complexify the phenomenon of music listening as leisure through a phenomenologically descriptive and poignant textual expression (van Manen, 1990) of this as a significant, meaningful, and positive leisure choice.

Leisure is intricately intertwined with individuals' and groups' daily lived-experiences. Often cast in opposition to work, leisure affords the "means through which cultural, political, ethical and spiritual existence can be enhanced and refined for the betterment of life in general" (Rojek, Shaw, & Veal, 2006, p. 19). Leisure is thought to afford opportunities for individuals and groups to restore, rejuvenate, reinvigorate, and even re-create. Beyond these potentials, Pieper (1952) posited philosophically that leisure is, in fact, the *basis* of culture where, as a foundational

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<sup>25</sup> See Chapter Three with regard to conducting a "partial review of the literature" as part of Vagle's (2010) Post-Intentional Research Approach.

principle, leisure is seen to create space and structural undergirding for the development, evolution, and refinement of what makes human groups unique and identifiable (Rojek, 2006). Pieper's elucidation of the nature of leisure is often critiqued and easily dismissible by the post-modern ethos (Rojek, 2006), and thus a contemporary and pragmatic lens was forwarded as necessary to understand leisure, leisure choice, and leisure pursuits through leveraging science and scientific methods (Parr & Lashua, 2004).

Within the Leisure Studies' and ancillary field's literature, a large finding posited music's influence in the construction and formation of identity development within adolescents (Baker, 2001; Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006; and Campell, et al, 2007). Music was also found to be used as a coping mechanism to mitigate extreme negative emotions and emotional states (Campell, et al 2007), as well as to motivate young athletes as part of their preperformance strategy (Bishop, Karageorghis, & Loizou, 2007). The construction and negotiation of space, specifically with regard to adolescents' bedrooms (Lincoln, 2005), was significantly impacted by music and musical artifacts such as posters, band/group paraphernalia, and created collages. Considered as auditory "wallpaper," music allowed for both reflexivity and creativity as adolescents tested aspects of acceptance, inclusion, separation, distinction, and independence with family, immediate social circles, and the larger, evolving world (Baker, 2001; Larson, 1995; Lincoln, 2005; and Campell, et al, 2007). Additionally, studies found that ancillary growth and development of individuals occurred through engagement with music with regard to character-building, life skills, and performance and achievement outcomes in school and beyond (Campell, et al, 2007) and participation in music activities was experienced and viewed as a healthy leisure choice (Grieves, 1989). Finally, music was found to afford means to enhance positive feelings within younger populations (Lincoln, 2005; Schwartz, 2004).

As is apparent in many of the studies, emphasis is placed on music's significance in adolescents. Developmental tasks and stages, specifically with regards to identity formation and development, are well documented within the psychology literature during adolescents (Erikson,

1976). Music's use, influence, and impact on identity formation and assertion were found to be tantamount within the adolescent years, which are marked by the developmental stage or task of identity versus role confusion. Individuals did not only assert and express their individual identity, but also used music as a "vehicle for the expression and contestation of cultural identities at both a collective and personal level" (Baker, 2001, p. 359). Bakagiannis and Tarrant (2006) found music's use to not only create differences between groups, but could also potentially promote improvements in intergroup relationships. As a result of recent research focused on adolescents' engagement and experiences with music, leisure scholars are also accessing these lived leisure experiences (Parry & Johnson, 2006) to challenge established or privileged theoretical frameworks concerning leisure choice and expression (Lashua & Fox, 2006, 2007).

Although most of the current *science* on leisure operates from a post-industrial, pragmatic, utilitarian, and functional context, the relationship between leisure, self, and culture (Pieper, 1952) via myth, metaphor, cultural creation, group cohesion, development of self, and indigenous ways of knowing (Kenny, 2006), should not be abandoned. When asking deeper, metaphysical questions, the ineffable, tacit, and intuitive "knowledge" afforded through leisure may provide insight into how individuals and groups make meaning, understand existence, and engage in deeply and personally significant lived-experiences. This harkens back to the original intent of leisure as a space for contemplation and the consideration of right action, virtuous ideals and the attainment of the good life (Russel, 2009), as well as Pieper's (1952) assertion that through leisure one is able to "dwell for a while upon the reality of Creation, affirm the basic meaningfulness of the universe, [and] experience the world in an aspect other than an everyday one" (p. 43). Further, music as both a mechanism and product of leisure choice appears in its multifaceted nature to provide significant, sought after, and revered experiences for a variety of individuals and groups, not just adolescents. The depth desired for a study of individual's lived-experiences with and through music insists a methodological approach oriented towards exploring this subject more fully. Beyond merely and empirically testing hypotheses,

phenomenology as a philosophy *and* methodology<sup>26</sup> afforded an approach, orientation, and process grounded in contemplation, openness, and dwelling. Such an approach offered a means to archeologically explore this phenomenon, revealing glimpses of individual's experiences to provide tentative manifestations of what it is to find oneself connected with music.

### **Purpose of the Study and the Guiding Research Question**

A study on the significance of music within the lives of those who experience these moments afforded glimpses of how they came to know and understand the world, and lead to an awareness and appreciation of meaningful aspects of their experiences *in* it. There are many expressions or actions associated with music (creating, performing, and listening), but for the purpose of this research, listening to music was foregrounded for scholarly focus to garner a deeper understanding of this experience, and to glean a rich, textual expression (van Manen, 1990) of this sought after and desired lived-experience. A phenomenological inquiry into the leisure of music listening created an opportunity to better understand how personally relevant and deeper knowledge, as well as a more individually and socially engaged and meaningful existence, may correlate with, and be accentuated by, lived leisure experiences (Parry & Johnson, 2006).

Music is inescapable. As August stated, music is all around, ALL around. As my cache of research, T.V. shows, movies, news articles, stories, emails, and conversations continues to grow, the relevancy of a study on music is almost an afterthought due to how present music already is in the lifeworld and the lived-experiences of many. Reflecting on how I have come to be in this place, in this moment, and interested in things important to me, I sense binding threads woven through my history and lived-experiences. Music is one of these threads. I love music. I experience music. Or, more accurately, I relate to music. No, I relate with music. I connect to music. I connect with music. I lose myself and find myself simultaneously in music. I laugh, cry, scream, and beat my hands against whatever is in front of me. I sway, dance, move, open myself

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<sup>26</sup> In Chapter Two, I situate, philosophically, phenomenology as both a lived orientation and methodology for studying lived-experiences within the lifeworld.

up, letting it all wash over and through me. I thirst for it, surround myself in it, give it to others, seek it in others, and connect with others through it. I *love* music. Within these swirling emotions, experiences, and relationships I found myself poised to launch into an inquiry on music to address the phenomenological question: what is it to find oneself connected with music? What is it like? I am drawn to a study of music, and I seek others' sharing of their lived-experiences with music.

In closing this chapter, I wanted to share one of this study's participant's, Philip, description of what music means and does to him. For your listening and reading pleasure, begin Scofield's (2007) *Shoe Dog* to accompany these words<sup>27</sup>. Close your eyes and give the music space to seep in. When you feel compelled, engage with the following words:

*I think it's, like in general, I think music just disrupts our world that's generally pretty ugly and reminds us of everything that's beautiful and right and that's enjoyable about it all, you know? Like nobody can be this expressive in the working world, you'd get fired. We have to have this or we'd go insane. You need it to cut through all that shit of our world to remind us what it means to be human. And like feeling the Who resonate in your balls or feeling this honey molasses guitar drip over you, it's the beauty of being human, you know, without the four white walls of fluorescent lighting. There's something just really critical about, you gotta have it, you can't live without it you know, otherwise you're just a stiff, you're dead, you're not human.*

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<sup>27</sup> This is Track 2 on the accompanying compilation. Fascinatingly, in the audio of the interviews, this track actually was playing in the background as Philip shared these words and thoughts. It was unscripted, unplanned, and serendipitously represented a poignant moment of both a description of music's relevancy in one's life and an accompanying soundtrack to accentuate this moment and these feelings.



## CHAPTER 2

### PHILOSOPHY AS METHODOLOGY:

#### TRACINGS OF ONE'S TAKING UP OF PHENOMENOLOGY<sup>28</sup>

*Phenomenology challenges and extends scientific scholarship by prying open the otherwise unquestioned underlying presuppositions that form the basis of the claim to universality in science. Confronting the predominance of theory and science, phenomenology offers otherwise forgotten or overlooked possibilities for increasing understandings in contemporary human sciences.*

Nancy Diekelmann

#### A Researcher's Lived-Orientation and Subsequent Methodological Undertakings

A personally significant and wise mentor<sup>29</sup> once quipped: “scratch a study and find an autobiography.” Enlightened by this assertion, I sense there exists, especially in qualitative inquiries, personal connections between what one studies and salient aspects of the researcher’s own life stories. My own scholarly interests reinforce this. Reflexively, as I engaged in deeper epistemological and ontological ponderings, which served as the foundations of my research, I would expand the above observation by proffering the following: “scratch one’s philosophical commitments and methodological approach, and find a lived orientation in the world.” With phenomenology, suddenly ideas, orientations, nudges, and inclinations which were dormant, tacit, and ineffable, awakened and found light, words, philosophies, philosophers, co-journeymen, and methods which resonated with my being and being-in the world. Simply put, phenomenology just made sense to me. This does not mean I fully understand phenomenology<sup>30</sup>. What it does mean is when I engage with the world through aspects of being-in (ontology), knowing (epistemology),

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<sup>28</sup> Track 3, *Ten Thousand Words* by The Avett Brothers (Avett & Avett, 2009) is associated with Chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> I would like to acknowledge and thank Kathleen deMarrais, Ph.D. for her presence and impact on my learning and growth as a novice scholar and researcher.

<sup>30</sup> In a personal communication with Mark Vagle, Ph.D., he shared his desire to make phenomenology plural. In saying this, he troubled the resolved operationalizing, reductionistic, and definitional attempts at “pinning down” phenomenology as one thing, instead of reveling in its multiple ways of “being” taken up through philosophical and methodological work (Vagle, 2011a, 2011b).

and conceptualizing research and which questions to ask (methodology), phenomenology as a philosophy *and* methodology serves as a ‘giving voice to’ salient and essential aspects of who I am, where I am, and how I am oriented in my research and scholarship.

Housed within me as a scholar, and informing my guiding question for this dissertation, was an earnest desire to seek communion and counsel with others to explore their deeply meaningful and significant lived-experiences with music. Phenomenology provided both a philosophical foundation and methodological lens to address this question. Simply stated, phenomenology, as both an ontological orientation (Heidegger 1998, Vagle, 2010a) and disruptive methodology (Husserl, 1970), troubles our natural attitude and the taken-for-grantedness of lived-experiences through the pursuit of tentative, contextual, and fleeting glimpses and illuminations of an underlying and specific phenomenon of interest. As a phenomenologist, I desired to accentuate, highlight, and loosely provide a peripheral structure to the lived-experiences of my identified phenomenon. Troubling what we think we *know* concerning a particular lived-experience, phenomenological methods excavate and interrogate researchers’ and participants’ thoughts, perspectives and assumptions to trouble and question one’s lived, intentional relationship and experiences of a particular phenomenon. As a result, an ongoing and continual honing of the experienced phenomenon and one’s intentional relationship with it resides within a perpetual process of *coming to understanding*.

In this chapter, my intent is not to provide an exhaustive historical and philosophical exegesis of phenomenology as both a significant philosophy and methodology for researching lived-experiences, but instead to trace my own contextual *taking up* of phenomenology as it has come to inform this research and my scholarship. I believe this undertaking is essential and important for *any* researcher and scholar in order to specifically situate and ground one’s philosophical, theoretical, and methodological decisions within larger approaches to research and scholarly discourse. Through this explicative work, I hoped to exemplify my attempts to do more as a researcher than just “following along” entrenched and rigid methods and their guiding

philosophical assumptions. Instead, I proffered and illuminated the influencing and informing philosophies, tenets, concepts, and underpinnings of approaches, as well as how I as a researcher navigated through the research endeavor in relation to these understandings. First, I explain what is meant by phenomenology being both an ontological orientation and a disruptive methodology. I begin with the assertion that phenomenology is first and foremost a philosophy, and address its genesis within a larger, historical context. Then I define both epistemology and ontology, situate phenomenology as both a “knowing” and “being” approach to lived-experience, and illuminate how phenomenological practice is a disruptive social science research methodology. Finally, I forward “disruption” as my way of taking up phenomenology through various lived methodological decisions. Many of the methodological “acts,” or methods, undertaken in this dissertation will be more fully expanded upon in Chapter Three.

### **Phenomenology as Philosophy**

Phenomenology is first and foremost a philosophy (Husserl, 1970; Moran & Mooney, 2002; Sokolowski, 2000). As a philosophy, it attends to larger metaphysical questions, and was originally forwarded to establish a foundational philosophy for all science (Husserl, 1970). Phenomenology’s entry into scholarship and research is situated in an orientation of openness, reflexivity, exploration, and a desire for possibility (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2008; Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b; van Manen, 1990). As a qualitative research strategy, phenomenology offers an organizing methodology for researching lived-experiences (Crotty, 2003; van Manen, 1990). However, solely defining or categorizing phenomenology as a methodological application, strategy, or approach severs it “as practiced” from its informing philosophical underpinnings. Commitment to phenomenological research insists competence of methods to equal parts philosophical exploration, scholarship, and understanding (Vagle, 2010a). Beyond van Manen’s (1990) simple definition of phenomenology as “the science of phenomenon,” phenomenology burst forth (Sartre, 2002; Vagle, 2009) from the Husserlian rallying cry *zu den Sachen selbst*, or “to the things themselves” (van Manen, 1990, p. 183-184).

This cry, lodged at the turn of the twentieth century against the dominant forms of naturalism, reductionism, objectivism, and positivism<sup>31</sup>, directly confronted what Sokolowski (2000) termed the egocentric predicament,<sup>32</sup> and proffered a science that took up the study of the lifeworld, its inhabitants, and their lived-experiences (Dahlberg et al., 2008). As noted earlier, the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) is the phenomenological concept which designates the pre-given, pre-theoretical world of lived-experiences (Husserl, 1970). The lifeworld is phenomenologically understood as the world of one's immediate experience(s) as given and lived through, which are always, already there (van Manen, 1990). Arguably, the goals, philosophy, and methods of phenomenology are as applicable and needed today as they were at the turn of the century, and finds purchase and relevance as a broader qualitative methodological approach.

Phenomenology, as an empirical approach within human science research, did not originate in Husserl (Moran, 2002). Husserl, however, is responsible for transforming the earlier ideas of Brentano and others into a major philosophical tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is important to historically situate and contextualize (Gadamer, 2002) Husserl, his philosophical assertions, and how phenomenology directly challenged the dogma of scientific thought at the time (Vagle, 2011b). Characterized as a *way of seeing* (Moran, 2002) rather than any specific set of doctrines, Husserl (1970) was concerned with how the “merely fact-minded sciences [made] merely fact-minded people” (p. 6). He leveled that the current science was embedded in positivistic, naturalistic, and mathematical praxis based in exactness only attainable through methods solely focused on abstraction and theorizing *of* and *from* lived-experiences. These endeavors resulted in a world of idealities, which was not the real world or, “the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experientiable – our everyday life-

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<sup>31</sup> Husserl (1970) noted these origins arose from Cartesian thought based in a mind/body dualism, which was dogmatically accepted and privileged during the enlightenment's elevation of the scientific method.

<sup>32</sup> The egocentric predicament is the notion of “all we can really be sure of at the start is our own conscious existence and the states of that consciousness,” which directly arises from Descarte's assertion of universal doubt, the mind/body spilt, and his declaration *cogito ergo sum* – “I think, therefore I am” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 9).

world” (p. 49). Husserl worried about the “garb of ideas,” or objectively scientific truths, which he felt inaccurately represented the lifeworld and dressed it up as “objectively actual and true” nature (p. 51). What positivistic science removed was the *plenum*, or the sensible content which “fills in” our experiences, concepts, and objects of our world. Therefore, phenomenology would take up “the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experiences” (Sokolowski, 2000 p. 2). These very assertions were radical, critical, and disruptive to many of the epistemological philosophies, assertions, and methods of the early twentieth century, and arguably even still today.

### **Phenomenology as Epistemology**

Arising from Husserl’s (1970) disruptive and radical critiques, he sought to establish a philosophy of science to directly confront natural science’s (Kuhn, 1996) unendingly hypothetical and verifiable methods, the world of idealities and abstractions, and the separation of what is experienced and lived from what is studied. Here, his original intent was epistemological. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy which studies human knowledge (Christian, 1994; Crotty, 2003). Husserl sought an undisputable basis for all human knowledge by purposefully revisiting conscious experiences and the opening of oneself to new meanings or the authentication of our present meanings (Barkway, 2001; Dahlberg et al., 2008; Vagle, 2010a). Through its elevation of method, positivistic and objectivistic science distanced itself from the world through sterile, removed, and elitist approaches and methods as a means to ‘arrive at Truth’ and knowledge through exactness, rigor, and objectivity. Phenomenology, at its core, did not seek to eliminate the positivistic agenda within science, but was proffered as an approach to science and philosophy which was intimately *connected to and part of* the world and everyday existence, not severed, detached or removed from it. Arguably the phenomenological approach to lived-experiences is itself *more* rigorous because it takes in to account consciousness rather than just merely ignoring it (Giorgi, 1997). This elevation and reliance on consciousness (Vagle, 2010a), and the focus on epistemological questions of how we know what we know based in and on

relationships and lived-experiences of the life-world, formed the transcendental and descriptive foundations of phenomenology (Dahlberg et al., 2008). From these beginnings, future scholars expanded phenomenology's elevation of consciousness to address issues such as history and context (Gadamer, 2002), our bodies in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), orientations (Ahmed, 2006), and being (Heidegger, 2002a; 2002b; 2002c), all which moved phenomenology beyond solely epistemological questions into other arenas, such as ones based in ontology, as well as troubling phenomenology as a purely descriptive undertaking to one of interpretation (Heidegger, 1998; Vagle, 2011b).

### **Phenomenology as Ontology**

Ontology, as another branch of philosophy, takes up the study of being (Crotty, 2003), or how we are oriented *in* and *to* the world (Vagle, 2010a), and seeks to understand how this world is experienced *in* and *through* our existence. Within phenomenology, Heidegger (1998) turned to the Greek word *phainomnon* and its etymological roots in *phainesthai*, understood as “to show itself,” to suggest phenomena are what Dahlberg et al. (2008) defined as “‘that which shows itself,’ or, that which manifests itself to us” (p. 32). Here the philosophical orientation is situated ontologically (Vagle, 2010a), with the task (Heidegger, 2002b) of explaining “*Being* itself and to make the *Being* of entities stand out in full relief” (p.278). Thus, we do not just epistemological *know* phenomenon,<sup>33</sup> we experience them. Heidegger (2002c) used the word *Dasein* to signify our existence as one of *Being-in-the-world*, or an ontological orientation, not solely as one of a knowing or epistemological orientation. Arguably, it is this ontological orientation which reacquaints philosophy and science with the lifeworld and lived-experience by going back “to the things themselves” through our immediate experiences *of* and *with* them. When we experience the world, we experience it as something. Even when we are conscious, we are conscious of something (Sokolowski, 2000). These ontological assertions are essential to the understanding of

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<sup>33</sup> Dahlberg et al (2008) defined phenomenon as “an object, a matter, a ‘thing’ or a ‘part’ of the world, as it presents itself to, or, as it is experienced by, a subject” (p. 33).

phenomenology and serve as the basis of the foundational tenet of phenomenological philosophy: intentionality.

### **Intentionality**

Intentionality, as one of the core philosophical doctrines of phenomenology, situates phenomenology both epistemologically and ontologically. Simply stated, intentionality illuminates “the inseparable connectedness of the human being to the world” (van Manen, 1990, p. 181). Husserl (2002) described intentionality as the embodied experience that occurs as a conscious subject becomes conscious of an intended object. What is highlighted is not the experiencing subject *nor* the experienced object, but the intentional relationship that occurs between the two. The often used word “intention,” defined as the purpose we have in mind when we act, is different from the phenomenological concept of intentionality (Sokolowski, 2000), and it is this confusion that, arguably, has led to misunderstandings concerning the philosophical concept of intentionality with regard to phenomenology (Vagle, 2011b). Intentionality, instead, “is the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially ‘consciousness of’ or an ‘experience of’ something” (p. 8). Van Manen (1990) echoed these sentiments when he noted *intentionality* describes that, “all human activity is always *oriented* activity, directed by that which orients it” (pp.181). Through focusing on intentionality and studying intentional relationships as manifested within the lifeworld, phenomenologists seek the phenomenological meanings of lived-experiences. These “meanings” are always contextualized and fleeting, affording only glimpses and tentative understanding of any particular phenomenon of interest (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b). A phenomenon may be glimpsed and discursively represented, but can never be fully understood or resolved. Any understanding is contextually and historically situated (Gadamer, 2002), grounded in an orientation of openness, dwelling, and active waiting so as not make definite what is indefinite (Dahlberg, et al., 2008), always unfinished (Vagle, 2010a), and requires continual troubling and seeking, not passive and conclusive defining. It is in this orientation and approach of openness (Dahlberg, et al. 2008) and

active seeking (Vagle, 2010a), as opposed to conclusive defining, where phenomenology affords a critical and disruptive practice for the illumination of lived-experiences within the lifeworld<sup>34</sup>.

### **Lived-Disruption: From the “Natural” to the “Phenomenological” Attitude**

When we experience the world, Husserl (2002) contended, we normally experience it through the perspective of the “natural attitude.” This pre-reflexive, original, and “accepted as given” state is what Sokolowski (2000) described as the “default perspective” of being and knowing. Dahlberg et. al (2008) defined the natural attitude as “the everyday immersion in one’s existence and experience in which we take for granted that the world is as we perceive it, and that others experience the world as we do” (p. 33). In the natural attitude, we do not critically confront, challenge, or disrupt our thoughts, actions, reactions, or responses to the world. This is how we live. This is how we are. This is how we find ourselves “in” the world. Intentionality and our intentional relationship with things, situations, ideas, feelings, concepts, facts, and objects of the world typify and embody our lived-in-ness<sup>35</sup> within the lifeworld via the natural attitude. As Sokolowski (2000) noted, the lifeworld is always, already there and reveals itself to us through a multiplicity of presentations. The I, self, or ego is the agent of the natural attitude, and phenomenology illuminates our inextricable connection to the lifeworld, observing that the egocentric self is “the one to whom the world and its things are given, who is both part of the world and yet in intentional possession of it” (p. 47). It is the natural attitude, and one’s intentional relationship with phenomenon of the lifeworld<sup>36</sup>, which phenomenology seeks to engage with and study, through the adoption of the phenomenological attitude.

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<sup>34</sup> Appendix J is an “Intentionality Brief” that further elucidates my understanding of this concept.

<sup>35</sup> I find hyphens (-) are extremely important grammatical tools for phenomenology. In linking words, hyphens represent something of the concept of intentionality and something of complexifying the relationship between ideas and their discursive representation to assist in more completely communicating these thoughts and ideas to those who are reading or accessing texts.

<sup>36</sup> Here is where phenomenology radically differentiates itself with science, moving into the realm of philosophy (Sokolowski, 2000). Science, within the natural attitude, deals in abstraction, theory, and conceptualizations which are removed from lived-experiences, the lifeworld. These are embedded assumptions that underlie one’s world beliefs and that typically go unchallenged.



Within phenomenology the attempts at adopting the phenomenological attitude are purposeful, denoting a ‘shift’ in perspective (Sokolowski, 2000). Arguably you, as the reader of this text, have already engaged in aspects of the phenomenological attitude.<sup>37</sup> One does not typically read about, trouble, or attempt to understand phenomenology, epistemology, ontology, and the natural attitude from within the natural attitude. One may adopt certain points of view on things, but in attempting to explain or understand concepts, ideas, philosophies (all phenomenological phenomena), one must undertake a shift, or make a move “that disengages completely from the natural attitude and focuses, in a reflective way, on everything in the natural attitude, including the underlying world belief” (p. 47). Here, one is not merely a proprietor or specialist of any one form of knowledge, philosophy, or theory. Instead, one becomes a philosopher (Sokolowski, 2000) where he/she resides within reflexive and reflective contemplation (Vagle, 2010b). Everything is up for grabs, nothing is accepted, unchallengeable, certain, except the given-ness of one’s lived-experiences and the intentional relationships within the lifeworld. It is here, in this moment, where this act becomes completely and radically disruptive, both ontologically and epistemologically. It simultaneously seeks to trouble *and* to ask the questions of how we know what we know, and how we experience and are *beings-in* (Heidegger, 2002b and 2002c) the lifeworld through our natural attitude and our intentional relationship with phenomenon. Sokolowski (2000) noted when one is within the phenomenological attitude, “we [attempt to]<sup>38</sup> suspend all the intentionalities that we are examining. We [attempt to] neutralize them. We [attempt to] contemplate them. We [attempt to] become onlookers. We [attempt to] contemplate the world in its human involvement” (p. 48). In

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<sup>37</sup> I adopted this idea from Sokolowski (2000) and his description of the phenomenological attitude (p. 47).

<sup>38</sup> I have added “attempt to” in each of these sentences. My reading of phenomenology is one of active attempting, not finalized doing. Or, I am not trying to make definite what is indefinite (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Yes, we bring all of our experiences to bear in everything we engage with in the world. For me, phenomenology affords a platform to “attempt to” hold back, bridle, bracket, restrain, and/or “give pause” so that one may be open to, see, and understand something empathetically and more broadly than just from any one agentic perspective. To me, this is at the core of ALL qualitative research strategies, highlighted in concepts such as reflexivity.

essence, we become philosophers, contemplators, explorers, and wonderers. We do not stand in judgment of the world or attempt to abstract from lived-experiences any idealities or pure concepts (Husserl, 1970) void of their plenum, or *lived-in* or *as-experienced* substance matter. We go to the things themselves, troubling our own epistemological and ontological understanding of what it is to find oneself ‘in-love,’ ‘in-hate,’ or ‘in-connection.’ Instead of accepting experienced phenomenon-as-given, or as it is presented to us in our natural attitude within the world, we attempt to understand a phenomenon as it is lived, known, and experienced by others, and reveal its ‘glimpses’ as tentative and fleeting manifestations (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b). These moments can texture, complexify, and illuminate understanding of phenomenon and the lifeworld, affording a richer, deeper, more nuanced appreciation of lived-experiences.

### **Disruption as a Lived-Methodology**

As previously forwarded, any attempt to understand or engage in a qualitative research methodology grounded in phenomenology arguably must begin in an explication, exploration and understanding of its guiding philosophical edicts and foundational underpinnings. My current discussion on phenomenology’s origins, historically situated assertions, epistemological and ontological commitments, and concepts such as intentionality and the natural and phenomenological attitude, expeditiously and cursorily addressed only some of the essential tenets of phenomenology. A full discussion and explication of phenomenology is beyond the scope of this work. However, in my assertion of phenomenology as both an ontological orientation (Vagle, 2010b) and disruptive methodology (Husserl, 1970), my intent was to reveal how phenomenology troubles both our natural attitude and the taken-for-grantedness of lived-experiences. As a result, in phenomenology one undertakes a study to describe and illuminate a particular lived-experience (e.g., connection with music) within the lifeworld. A study whose genesis resides in exploration, understanding, revelation, and complexification through direct contact with those who engage and experience a particular phenomenon moves beyond verification of existing theories, bounded operationalization of definitions, and the abstracted

conceptualization prevalent in the majority of social science research. This claim is not leveled as a critique of post-positivistic approaches, or any other methodological approach for that matter, to research. Instead, it is a request for space: space to disrupt our understanding, my understanding, your understanding, or science's understanding of what it is to find oneself in an intentional relationship with a particular phenomenon. It is through phenomenology's approach *of* and *towards* openness, and its response to science's propensity towards theorizing, where radical disruption resides.

### **Disruption through an Orientation *of* and *towards* Openness**

Within the guiding phenomenological approach *of* and *towards*<sup>39</sup> openness (Dahlberg et al., 2008), a phenomenological researcher challenges rigid adherence to theory *and* method (Husserl, 1970; Gadamer, 2002), and attempts to bracket (Husserl, 1970; Sokolowski, 2000), bridle (Dahlberg, 2006; Dahlberg et al., 2008), or give pause to how we “know” or see our and others lived-experiences of “being” in the world. Husserl (1970) introduced the concept of bracketing as a way to shift from the natural attitude to the phenomenological in an attempt to arrive at the *epoche*.<sup>40</sup> Sokolowski noted through bracketing, “we [attempt to]<sup>41</sup> enter into the phenomenological attitude, we [attempt to] suspend our beliefs, and we [attempt to] *bracket* the world and all the things in the world” (p. 49). One is not “bracketing out” so much as “bracketing in” what is being studied as it is intended through intentionality within the natural attitude. In essence through bracketing, one “retains exactly the modality and the mode of manifestation that the object has for the subject in the natural attitude” (p. 50). We “give pause” in an attempt to see how something is lived *through* and *in* the world, troubling our natural understandings,

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<sup>39</sup> Troubling and use of multiple prepositions within phenomenology is essential to get at the textured and discursively varied representations of how we live in and through the world.

<sup>40</sup> Sokolowski (2000) defined the *epoche* in phenomenology as “simply the neutralizing of natural intentions (attitudes) that must occur when we contemplate those intentions (attitudes)” (p. 49).

<sup>41</sup> Again, I have added “attempt to” to each of these sentences to designate an active approach towards bracketing, researching, and studying lived-experiences.

assumptions, theories, and assertions as they normally are experienced and lived out through our natural attitude.

In agreement with existing critiques (Dahlberg, 2006; Dahlberg et al., 2008; Vagle, 2009) of bracketing as something which is absolutely attainable or even momentarily possible, I am more inclined to the notion of bridling forwarded by Dahlberg (2006; Dahlberg, et al., 2008), to reflect the disruptive stance and on-going open orientation adopted by phenomenological researchers. Bridling is an approach situated in an ongoing openness to the phenomenon and its multiplicity of expressions, while the researcher simultaneously acknowledges, confronts, restrains, and discursively writes through his own ideas, opinions, thoughts and assertions. Simply put, through a bridled approach to studying a phenomenon, a phenomenologist seeks not to make definite what is, itself, indefinite (Dahlberg, et al., 2008). Arguably similar to other strategies within qualitative inquiry such as reflexivity (Finlay, 2002), bridling is not a state or stance which is “achieved.” Instead, it *is* an orientation or approach which is constantly interrogated, confronted, challenged, and assessed. Or, “when bridling, the researcher tries to cull his or her own agency so that the researcher’s agency alone does not determine the phenomenon” (Vagle, 2009, p. 592). Further, through bridling, a phenomenologist’s attempts to remain attentive and watchful, “characterized by a kind of active passivity in which the phenomenon should be allowed to show itself in its own pace and its own way” (Dahlberg, et al., 2008, p.122). In phenomenology and through an orientation towards openness, one constantly turns a critical lens back on himself both epistemologically and ontologically, troubling and disrupting what is studied and how it is understood and presented.

### **Disruption through Resistance and Restraint to Theory**

A final opportunity for disruption within phenomenological inquiry resides in one’s approach and use of theory. Although theories offer organizing structure to better understand a multitude of issues, experiences, and inquiries, phenomenology ultimately attempts to bracket (Husserl, 1970) or bridle (Dahlberg et al., 2008) theory, as well as assumptions arising from both

theoretical work and our natural attitude, so that as one enters into an inquiry, he/she may openly engage with the intentional relationship between a subject and object to better understand a specific phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

It is important to note that phenomenology is not *against* theorizing. Nor does it deter personal scholarship to more fully understand current theories. In fact, it provides space for both. However, phenomenology does ask one to *begin* any inquiry with the purpose of better understanding others' lived-experiences through a bridled acknowledgment of theory in an attempt to not *see* or *read* others' experiences through the lens of hypothesis testing, or as a space to confirm or disprove theory (van Manen, 1990). As one approaches his study, he must adopt what I refer to as an *archeological agenda*, where he attempts to adopt the phenomenological attitude as he pieces together shards, fragments, and artifacts from participant's words, experiences, and narratives in order to be afforded glimpses or tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2010a). In the beginning, the intent is not necessarily to theorize, but to be open and present, and to ultimately evince a description and fuller understanding of the multiple ways in which a phenomenon is experienced, understood, and lived<sup>42</sup>.

## Conclusion

Through this chapter I have attempted to ground my work phenomenologically. This was done primarily through the tracing of my understanding of the philosophical foundations of phenomenology in order to illuminate my *taking it up* as both an informing philosophy and

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<sup>42</sup> This reminds me of the Buddhist parable concerning the elephant. The parable goes: A group of blind men were asked by the king to touch an object (an elephant) to figure out and describe what was there. After each had felt their part of the elephant, the king asked each the simple question: "Tell me, what sort of thing is this elephant?" The men shared the elephant was like a pot (from the one who felt the elephants' head), a winnowing basket (he who touched the ear), a plowshare (he who touched the tusk), a plow (he who touched the trunk), a granary (he who touched the body), a pillar (he who touched the foot), a mortar (he who touched the back), a pestle (he who touched the tail) or a brush (he who touched the tip of the tail). Arguments ensued as the men could not agree with one another, eventually resulting in a violent exchange. The Buddha ends his story by comparing the blind men to preachers and scholars – those who are blind and ignorant as they hold *only* their view. The Buddha is said to have spoken this verse:  
 O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim  
 For preacher and scholar the honored name!  
 For, quarreling, each to his view they cling.  
 Such folk see only one side of a thing.

guiding methodology. To me, phenomenology represents more than just a methodological strategy; it resonates with my lived-orientation within the world. Through accessing and leveraging phenomenological philosophy and methodology, I was able to study a specific phenomenon, what is it to finding oneself connected with music, to excavate, illuminate, and explicate this meaningful and significant lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2006). As the Avett's (2009) captured in their song: ten thousand words have I read. Ten million more have been written, many of them in the countless books I have stacked next to, and under, my bed. I revel and search in their swarms of words, ideas, and thoughts, seeking how to phenomenologically hold my hands, hone my methods, and continue a philosophical, methodological, and scholarly approach to studying meaningful and significant lived leisure experiences.

### CHAPTER 3

#### ON METHODS: AN IMPROVISATIONAL-INFUSED PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODOLOGICAL JAM<sup>43</sup>

*There are always meaningful songs for somebody. People are doing the courting, people are finding their wives (sic), people are making babies, people are washing their dishes, people are getting through the day, with songs that we may find insignificant. But their significance is affirmed by others. There's always someone affirming the significance of a song by taking a woman into his arms or by getting through the night. That's what dignifies the song. Songs don't dignify human activity. Human activity dignifies the song.*

Quote by Leonard Cohen, in Zollo (2003, p. 331)

Entering into this chapter, I would like to forward a metaphor to illuminate my decisions concerning my use of methodological processes and methods with regard to this study. In reflecting on both the methodology and methods undertaken to guide, trouble, and reveal this phenomenon, I likened this experience to the style of music I find deep and significant connection with: cross-genre, blues-based, emotively infused, improvisational<sup>44</sup> Jam bands. The associated track for this chapter, the Grateful Dead's triptych of *Help on the Way / Slipknot / Franklin's Tower* (Garcia, Hunter, Godchaux, Kreutzmann, Lesh, & Weir, 1975), served as both an anchor to and soundtrack for the methodological processes surrounding my entire study: from inception to development, implementation, and it's eventual birthing<sup>45</sup>. In this chapter I briefly describe the genre, style, and structure of the type of music associated with Jam Bands, link this to my

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<sup>43</sup> Track 4, *Help on the Way/Slipknot/Franklin's Tower* by The Grateful Dead (Garcia, Hunter, Godchaux, Kreutzmann, Lesh, & Weir, 1975) is associated with Chapter 3.

<sup>44</sup> Improvisation should not be read here as randomness or detached endeavoring void of guiding or informing theory, methods, or practice. My use of improvisation, as to be explained, is possible and afforded only in and through structures (and methods) that provided a canvas for which impromptu explorations could arise from, and be eventually grounded in. These forays and flourishes were often navigated intuitively, revealing the iterative, messy, and complex nature of "doing" qualitative research.

<sup>45</sup> My final "analysis" weekend in Ellijay, GA resulted in a myriad of tragedies, including the perceived death of my computer and the realization I was not ready to begin writing and subsequent immersion in the data yet again. Through that experience, I had a visceral, embodied moment during one of my "Processing Walks" in which I likened this whole process to the experiences around my daughter's birth. It was in this moment where the idea of creating the dissertation as a compilation with an accompanying mix was solidified. Compilations signified and marked the births of both my children, and now this dissertation.

methodological taking up of and experiential living through phenomenology, and forward my use of Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Approach (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) to open up, complexify, and seek a fuller understanding of the lived-experiences of those who expressed deep and significant connections with and through music listening.

### **What are Jam Bands?**

“Jams bands<sup>46</sup>” is a moniker used to label specific artists, musical groups, and a particular genre or style of music. Prominent groups who fall under this label include the Grateful Dead, Phish, Widespread Panic, Moe, and the Allman Brothers Band. As a phenomenon in their own right, musical experiences arising from these groups highlight the intersection of artist(s), band(s), music, performances and festivals, and their accompanying subculture followings (Hunt, 2008 & 2010)<sup>47</sup>. In setting up a metaphorical link between this genre of music and my methodological taking up of and experiential living through phenomenology, I focused specifically on the aural style and sonic structure of the music associated with these bands.

Simply put, Jam Bands fuse multiple and diverse musical influences (rhythm and blues, bluegrass, country, rock, jazz, reggae, folk, soul, and funk) to create divergent, complex, and fully embodied musical and sonic experiences. Critiques of this genre of music often note repulsed reactions to the cacophonous noise originating from perceived overly indulgent and mind numbing forays that appear theoretically and compositionally ungrounded, or worse, musical fluff

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<sup>46</sup> Also known as “jambands.”

<sup>47</sup> Musical influences in my past ranged from diverse artists and genres such as the Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, Simon and Garfunkel, the soundtracks for *Porgy and Bess*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Yentl*, native music from Trinidad and Tobago. Through my pre-teen and teenage years, I began listening to rap, grunge, progressive, and alternative rock. However, soon all of this began to be backgrounded and gave way to Dylan and eventually Widespread Panic, Phish, and the Grateful Dead, opening up my world to Jam Band and psychedelic rock. As a result of this, I participated in the social experiences provided through concerts and festivals, and the wandering, nomadic “following” of a band as part of its scene and culture. Over the course of 6 years, spanning my undergraduate and first employment experience after graduation, I saw over 100 shows from a variety of bands (mainly Widespread Panic, Phish, the Allman Brothers Band, Dave Matthews Band and local, regional smaller bands), and participated in going on “tour” with the nomadic fanbase, seeing shows practically every night in different cities throughout the Southeast.



that is difficult to pin down or replicate<sup>48</sup>. As with *any* type of music, Jam Bands have a dedicated and passionate fan base and following, as well as those who are disinterested or even nauseated by their music, performances, and associated subculture; to each his/her own. However, at the center of the created musical forays, or jams, emanating from these artists and their music is the interplay and the exchange between a foundational song structure, grounded firmly in an established musical tradition (i.e., rhythm and blues) and multi-genre inspired and infused explorations fueled by improvisations and experimentations. The result is a playful complexification and modification of more traditional and standard musical forms. The foundation of each piece arises from a particular tone, rhythm, or sequence of chords, which provides the backdrop for explorational and improvisational playing<sup>49</sup>. For example, sometimes jams originate from an established sequence of chord changes, such as the I-IV-V<sup>50</sup> pattern from rhythm and blues, folk, and country music traditions. At other times, jams are based on a particular rhythm, which then leads to various improvisations. Contrary to being chaotic, unorganized, or confused, musicians engaged in this type of improvisational jamming are often significantly informed by music theory. These artists not only intuitively “hear” what sounds right to their musical ears as they foray into improvisational explorations, they also understand what should and ought to work theoretically as they play with, complexify, and modify their chosen musical forms and structures. In using familiar forms as a launching off point for experimentation

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<sup>48</sup> I have been victim to and confronted by many of these critiques through fan cultures within the music world itself, and not from scholarly sources. For one such example, see: <http://ehaw.blogspot.com/2008/04/why-i-hate-jambands-or-why-i-think.html>. Pay particular attention to the discussion thread at the bottom of this blog post to see the diversity of opinions on this type of music.

<sup>49</sup> Often the foundational musical structures “sound right” to a listener because they are culturally familiar, well established, and are reinforced sonic constructions. Naomi and I spoke about this in one of our interviews. She lived in Turkey for a number of years, and learned to play the saz, or a traditional Indian hollow body stringed instrument. Admittedly not knowing the correct musical term, she shared that there are different tonal scales depending upon where you are in world. She noted that the “western tonal scale” (what she used to describe do re me fa so la ti do) was different from “non-western tonal scales,” and that hearing music from a different country may “sound off” based upon the tradition and music one grew up hearing that is perceived to be sonically “on” or “right.”

<sup>50</sup> The I-IV-V (1-4-5) pattern corresponds to the tonic, fourth, and fifth tones of a key signature with one example being G (I) C (IV) D (V).

(jamming), jam bands alter, expand, and extend common musical ideas and traditions to enhance a diverse musical soundscape<sup>51</sup>.

Although grounded in an established structure, jamming ultimately resists *rigid* adherence to that structure at the expense of following tacit and intuitive feelings emanating from the intersection of context, players, audience reaction, and intangible unknowns. Through jamming, artists search for and express diverse and multi-layered sounds and sonic experiences. Musicians open up spaces and begin engaging in communicative interactions guided by the unfolding and evolving music<sup>52</sup>. This “dialogue” often happens spontaneously, unpredictably, and results in any number of divergent explorations. As to be expected, some of these forays work. Others do not. And, some work only for certain actors (artist, musician, performer, or listener) within a given context, noting more the unique interplay and intersections of their own experiences, orientations, needs, interests and desired sounds and tones. Arguably what happens is musicians “tap into” a given moment, experience, or sense of embodied “felt-ness<sup>53</sup>,” and run with it, seeing where it will take them and what other possibilities and potentialities it may open up. In this act of opening up possibilities and potentialities, musicians are free to play and explore. Notes and tones that potentially “should not” be played together may be used to create intentional dissonance: chords belonging to another key may be borrowed to create unusual dynamics and tensions within the piece, as well as to modulate into new sonic territory; or artists may employ polyrhythms<sup>54</sup> to further complexify music. What is created and emanated calls for the musicians to be present and in the moment of what “feels right,” trusting their tacit and

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<sup>51</sup> I would like to thank Mr. Brian Kumm for his patient guidance in helping me theoretically and compositionally understand the “ear candy” which I love about jam bands and their musical explorations.

<sup>52</sup> For example, one such Jam Band, Phish, is known for their “Hey Exercise” in which the four musicians spend time immersed in deep listening to the musical forays of a particular member. Seeking the core melody, chord progression, or riff, once members find and sync into it, all the members yell “Hey,” signaling for another member to improvise off that core structure, and thus create a new musical foray for others to join and follow along. See: <http://www.nubar.com/booksprints/wheremusic/PHISHPAGE.HTM>

<sup>53</sup> Philip shared a story of playing with another musician who would tell him, “turn off your brain.” When Philip asked him what he meant, he said, “Whenever I start to play anything, it all starts with a feeling.” For Philip, he noted this, however, is not a binary. Instead it is a negotiation; it’s dynamic, it’s trial and error; but it’s always a feeling.

<sup>54</sup> Polyrhythm is a rhythm that makes use of two or more different rhythms simultaneously.

intuitive nudgings in relation to larger theoretical and compositional traditions and knowledge as the sonic soundscape is opened up, troubled, and explored.

Typically, after these divergent forays, the jamming and music transitions back to the original piece's structure and sequence, re-grounding itself into the base chord progression of the root song. This results in a holistic sonic complexification of the initial, and now more rudimentary, piece. Arguably, through jamming, something is created that more fully explored and fully revealed what was originally there. Jam Bands also highlight and demonstrate the ability to seamlessly transition between and circle back to particular songs. As the triptych forwarded here by the Dead reveals, transitions between three separate pieces of music become seamless, connected, and blurred. Song, musicians, and audience flow and move through the sonic experience, without jarring and absolute shifts, changes, and transitions. At other times, songs meld, fuse, and merge through jams to different pieces of music, but ultimately circle back to the original song after a particular forayed sonic exploration. Often associated with these experiences is the notion of "getting lost" in the music, grounded in a willingness on the listener's part to let go and aurally experience what the artists, song, and moment may open up and reveal.

### **An Improvisational Phenomenological Methodological Jam**

As I reflectively and reflexively engaged with this research, I found tremendous metaphorical purchase between the nature of jam band music with that of my own taking up and experientially living through the phenomenological methodology and methods guiding this particular study. As Jam Bands and their music demonstrated through the interplay and intersection of musician, song, and audience, I similarly noted how my research arose from the interplay and intersection of researcher, phenomenon, and participants as music listeners. Further, like the diverse traditional and theoretical influences on Jam Bands, I as a researcher have also been influenced by diverse genres, styles, and methods of inquiry. The traditions of transcendental, constructionist, constructivist, interpretivist, and postmodern epistemologies, as well as phenomenology's simultaneous ontological and epistemological orientation, impacted the

underlying assumptions and presuppositions informing my understanding of the lifeworld and experiences within it. Methodologically, I explored diverse phenomenological practices based in both the descriptive and interpretive phenomenological traditions, as well as narrative inquiry, ethnography, creative analytical practices, and arts based approaches to research. Ultimately, I used Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) as my methodological approach and foundational structure for this study.

Demonstrated throughout the chapter, the Post-Intentional Phenomenological Approach (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) to studying lived-experiences allowed for my own methodological “jamming” as I experimented with a diverse repertoire of methods and perspectives to open up and complexify this particular phenomenon. Working across the participants, the phenomenon, and myself as a researcher-and-participant<sup>55</sup>, I found myself methodologically jamming<sup>56</sup> and foraying into a number of divergent and explorative landscapes. Sometimes, these particular explorations arose from a structured, sequential, and established methodological progression. Other times these moments arose in true improvisational fashion, originating from a tacit and intuitive curiosity or inclination. Sometimes, these improvisations lead to earth shattering dead ends, resulting in a personal sense of lost-ness, confusion, and despair<sup>57</sup>. Ultimately, these improvisational forays and jams opened up new worlds, new perspectives, and new opportunities to look at, complexify, trouble, and represent the phenomenon.

Post-Intentional Phenomenology’s orientation (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) as an experiential and lived-through research approach opened up spaces and opportunities for studying the complexity of music listening as a lived leisure experience within the lifeworld. My own methodological jamming and improvisation afforded opportunities for weaving in and out of the

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<sup>55</sup> As been revealed throughout this work, I too experience this phenomenon.

<sup>56</sup> I thank all of my committee members for “jamming” with me as part of this process.

<sup>57</sup> It was in these moments where my own guiding improvisational “band mates”<sup>57</sup> would harken me back to the music, back to the phenomenon, balming my confusion with the directive to “just listen to the music play” and listen to your participants talk about the music. Thank you to Ben Haywood, Hilary Hughes, Brian Kumm, and Sarah Clarke.

foundational structure of this approach as I endeavored to more fully understand this particular phenomenon. I found myself entering into its five stages complexly, resulting in tangential forays fueled by curiosity and playful explorations. As you engage the rest of this chapter, keep this metaphorical image of “jamming” forefronted as I describe my methods and processes. As any reflective capturing of the sequential steps taken in a given study may wrongly forward or suggest, these methods were experientially lived through, not “followed.” It is only in the rendering of it on paper which gives it a feel of purposeful sequencing. Like jamming, my experience is more accurately portrayed in exploration and improvisation, grounded in a base structure and form, but more open and free to see what was out there and how it was lived, revealed, and expressed.

### **Situating Phenomenological Methods**

Phenomenological methods within qualitative research are well documented (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 2003; Dahlberg, et al., 2008; Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi, 2009; Roulston, 2010; Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b; van Manen, 1990). The selection or use of different methods is grounded in one’s specific phenomenological orientation (van Manen, 2002), what questions one is asking (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b), what data is decided upon as important in accessing a phenomenon (van Manen, 1990), and an ongoing openness to how a phenomenon is experienced or “lived” in the world (Dahlberg, et al. 2008). Finally, reflection on one’s theoretical and methodological commitments and orientation, and where a researcher situates him/herself within phenomenological philosophy and practice, are also essential (van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenological methods are situated within two simultaneous approaches (Dahlberg, et al. 2008). The first is the commitment to a specific phenomenon or lived-experience, often extolled in the phenomenological decree ‘turning to the things themselves’ (Dahlberg, et al., 2008; Husserl, 1970). The second is an orientation and sensitivity to openness. It is this orientation towards openness which challenges much of positivistic science (Husserl, 1970) and finds resonance with other qualitative methodologies. Openness within phenomenology is

understood as an attitude, approach, or “way of being” which is marked by a “true willingness to listen, see, and understand” phenomena and the multiplicity of ways they present themselves (Dahlberg, et al., 2008, p. 98). This approach to research (Vagle, 2010a), grounded in openness, actually challenges traditional notions of *method* as a ‘marked trail’ of prescriptive and rigid procedures which, by definition, potentially compromise openness (Dahlberg, et al., 2008; Feyerabrand, 2010; Gadamer, 1995). Ultimately, this orientation towards openness aspires to move “beyond initial assumptions and preconceptions so that the phenomenon and its meaning can show itself in a way that we do not expect it to<sup>58</sup>” (Dahlberg, et al., 2008, p. 112). The goal of research situated within phenomenological inquiry is a discursive illumination and representation of a phenomenon which is “both holistic and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and sensitive” sharing many qualities of an artistic endeavor, while still maintaining a philosophical and methodological commitment to researching and understanding human experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 39).

### **Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Approach**

The Post-Intentional Research Approach (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) leverages Heidegger’s understanding of the manifestation of phenomena<sup>59</sup>, the essential philosophical tenet within phenomenology of intentionality, and a commitment of knowledge always and already being tentative, partial, and never complete. Further, it combines van Manen’s (1990) six research activities for hermeneutic phenomenological research and Dahlberg et al’s (2008) four research activities for descriptive phenomenological research. This approach to phenomenological inquiry is based in a 5-component process. This process *should not be* viewed as linear, or a lock-stepped

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<sup>58</sup> It is this commitment to openness that prompted Husserl to proffer the concept of “bracketing” (see Sokolowski, 2000, p. 49-50 for what I feel is the best description of bracketing I have read), which later Dahlberg et al. (2000) evolved into “bridling” (see Chapter 3), addressing the essential tenet and orientation towards openness within phenomenological research.

<sup>59</sup> I liken phenomenology to an archaeological endeavor where one pieces together an understanding of a phenomenon from the shards and splintered remnants of calcified, hidden, and covered up phenomenon (Heidegger, 2002b). Heidegger noted many lived-experiences go unnoticed (Ihde, 2007), dissolving into our experiences of being in the world, void of attention or study. They also may become calcified, or collectively theorized or operationalized as something understood and resolved, without attention being placed on continually troubling what is “known” about what is actually there and experienced.

sequential approach, but as one in which each activity is continually re-accessed and revisited throughout. The result of a Post-Intentional research project is a crafted textualization of a particular phenomenon, revealing its tentative manifestations through various and diverse representations so as to illuminate and elucidate the phenomenon as lived and experienced within the lifeworld.

1. Identify a phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts
2. Devise a clear, yet flexible process for collecting data appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation
3. Make a bridling plan
4. Read and write your way through your data in a systematic, responsive manner
5. Craft a text that captures tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts

The remainder of this chapter elucidates my taking up and experiential living through of my methods for this research, as well as more fully explicating each research component.

### **Identify a Phenomenon in its Multiple, Partial, & Varied Contexts**

**Statement of the Problem** For the first research component, I began by forming a *statement of the problem*, situating my particular study as part of a larger discourse within human social science research and my specific field, and addressed the question: Why is this important? Informed by my pilot study<sup>60</sup>, ongoing conversations, and thinking through and writing about the phenomenon of connection with music, I forwarded the following purpose statement<sup>61</sup>: The

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<sup>60</sup> My pilot study, *Leisure and Music: A Space for Connection*, took place during the Fall of 2010. Three interviews were conducted, transcribed, and preliminary analysis occurred. The pilot study afforded advancements in my thinking about and through this phenomenon, specifically helping to narrow the phenomenon or topic to music listening and my selection of the preposition “with,” instead of “to” with regard to connection. Further, I decided to increase the age threshold of participants from 18 to 21, to further refine the dissertation study to focus on adults’ experiences and connection with music.

<sup>61</sup> This appears also at the end of Chapter One. One aspect I attempted to accomplish there was to situate this specific study empirically, theoretically, personally, and practically (Vagle, 2010a). It is important to note that the current chapter serves as a methodological “clearing house,” stating, and in some cases re-stating, the specific methods and decisions made throughout this research enterprise. As you read this

purpose of my dissertation was to phenomenologically explore adults' engagement and connection with music.

The guiding research questions were:

1. What is it to find oneself connected/connecting with music?
2. What does it mean for one to connect with music?
3. What does a connection with music afford, or make possible, for individuals?

I contend Leisure Studies has mostly overlooked music listening as a valued activity and experience in which numerous adults engage. Little is known in the Leisure Studies literature concerning why adults engage in this activity, and the present study was undertaken to learn more about music listening as a deeply significant and meaningful lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2006), and to proffer a phenomenologically descriptive and poignant textual expression (van Manen, 1990).

**Partial Review of the Literature** Next, I engaged in a *partial review of the literature*<sup>62</sup>.

Through this I simultaneously positioned my research within both larger and more narrowly defined scholarly discourses, and began gleaning manifestations of how the phenomenon is reported as lived, operationalized, and theorized. As subsequent chapters will reveal, past literature, theory, and philosophy are continually accessed, leveraged, and/or troubled as findings are forwarded, conceptualized, and crafted. Here, it is sufficient to restate that music's historical and cultural relevance to human groups and the human condition created an opportunity for myself as a leisure scholar to engage in continuing research to further our understanding of music listening as a leisure activity and experience, as well as contribute to the canon of research on music and those who experience music. Further, participating in a recent conference held at

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chapter, note that the presence and more fully accomplished tasks forwarded here are present throughout the entire piece as a whole, which was purposeful in its crafting.

<sup>62</sup> An ongoing review of the literature (covering leisure, music, informing theories, and phenomenology) is woven throughout the entire work. However, a partial review of the literature appears in Chapter One.



Duquesne University<sup>63</sup> that brought together scholars from the fields of philosophy, comparative literature, music history and theory, and architecture, noted potential scholarly opportunities for expanding the frontiers of music *and* phenomenology. Specifically, phenomenological philosophy was challenged to move from the visual to the aural to accentuate and elevate the embodied sonic events and aural lived-experiences of individuals and groups. Leisure studies and leisure scholars *should be and are* (Kumm, 2011; Kumm & Johnson, 2012; Pate, 2011; Pate & Johnson, 2012; Pate, Kumm, Vagle, & Johnson, 2012) contributing to these conversations, and can further provide invaluable insights which transcend disciplinary, methodological, and philosophical boundaries, challenging all researchers against only speaking to those within their siloed discipline (Samdahl & Kelly, 1999).

**Philosophical Claim** My *philosophical claim*<sup>64</sup> highlighted my taking of phenomenology as both a philosophy and methodology for troubling, disrupting, and complexifying a particular phenomenon within the lifeworld. As forwarded, it was important for me as both a researcher and scholar to demonstrate a thorough understanding of phenomenology as it is situated within, and arises from, foundational and guiding philosophical orientations and practices. Through my philosophical claim, I grounded and substantiated my methodological decisions and actions to illustrate how my processes were more than just a “following along” of entrenched, rigid methods. Further, I illuminated divergent philosophies, tenets, concepts, and underpinnings of diverse phenomenological approaches<sup>65</sup>, as well as how I navigated throughout the research endeavor in relation to these understandings.

**Statement of Phenomenon** Through the phenomenological concept of intentionality, researchers and scholars seek to illuminate the fleeting, tentative, and situated phenomenological meanings of lived-experiences. Intentionality suggests our inescapable relational connectedness

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<sup>63</sup> Music and Phenomenology, <http://www.duq.edu/phenomenology>, 2011

<sup>64</sup> This claim is mainly forwarded in Chapter Two, but is demonstrated throughout this entire work.

<sup>65</sup> In conversations with Dr. Mark Vagle, he shared his desire to “make phenomenology plural,” denoting the multiple ways phenomenology has been understood and practiced, so as to confront simplified, reduced, and cursory definitions of phenomenology.

as experiencing subjects of experienced objects, and the associated collaborative meaning that arises. In the current study, individuals' intentional relationship created through the act of listening to music was foregrounded, seeking understanding and descriptive textual expression of this lived leisure experience. For this study, what is it like to find oneself connected with music, served as the intentionality statement<sup>66</sup> or *statement of the phenomenon* and secondary research questions<sup>67</sup> were crafted to help inform data collection. Through the research enterprise and its iterative, unfolding, and dynamic nature, additional questions arose, which afforded divergent and improvised explorations. These included, what is it to find oneself experiencing deeply significant and meaningful experiences with and through connection via music listening; how is connection manifested, lived, and understood; and what is afforded or made possible through deeply significant and meaningful experiences with and through music listening?

**Contexts** Further, I considered *contexts*, or where and how this phenomenon manifested itself within the life-world. The identification of contexts informed where I sought data. Throughout the research enterprise, an orientation towards openness was reflexively and continually confronted so as to further trouble and extend my perceived contextual understanding, allowing for new contexts to emerge. I did this through bridling my own perceptions and understandings both discursively and verbally through audio-journaling. I first situated the phenomenon within the listening act itself, which for the participants occurred in a multitude and myriad of contexts and spaces including residential dwellings, vehicles, shows, and festivals, as well as experienced through digital players, and overheard or confronted in restaurants, bars, shopping centers, places of employment, and even nature.

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<sup>66</sup> Defined as “a clear and direct statement of the phenomenon under investigation” (Vagle, 2010, p. 11).

<sup>67</sup> These are located in the section, *statement of the problem*, located above.

Prior to participating in the interviews, participants were asked to identify and select songs which were “important to them” so that we could listen to specific pieces together.<sup>68</sup> For each participant, at least three songs were played during our interview time together. During or immediately following the listening of the particular piece of music, we would engage in a conversation opening up this experience, why the song was selected and forwarded and associated descriptions revealing participant’s embodied intentional relationship with the given piece of music. For the study, Ron selected 10 songs (although during and after the study, he has continued to send me songs and videos, totaling over 50 at the time of writing this); Zoë selected 11; Aimeé 10; Philip brought his entire digital music catalogue in which we accessed 5 songs over the course of our interviews; and Naomi selected 42 songs.

Further, participants were asked to journal throughout the study. Each participant was provided a journal<sup>69</sup> to write about moments in which they were experiencing connecting with music over the time of the study. Three of these journals were returned for analysis. Instead of writing in a journal, Ron elected to make digital voice recordings<sup>70</sup>. Finally, I decided to access various media resources (youtube.com and other video sharing sites) and documents (lyrics, album/band/song reviews, message boards) as additional contexts to further explore public commentary and thoughts on music and its impact. It is important to note, however, that due to copyright issues concerning music, especially the use and referencing of lyrics, I have elected to avoid using lyrics in the final dissertation<sup>71</sup>, except in the instances where my participants have

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<sup>68</sup> In my pilot study, I asked participants to comprise of playlist of songs “they loved.” Both of these directives, songs which were important or that they loved, were purposefully left open-ended and not overly descriptive to allow for personal interpretation and agency in their song selection.

<sup>69</sup> For the dissertation, I was awarded the University of Georgia, College of Education’s Glickman Award. Through the financial gift accompanying the award, I purchased journals and pens for each of the participants, as well as a \$30 iTunes gift card for their participation in the study.

<sup>70</sup> Both Ron and Philip expressed frustration in “losing the feeling” of the moment in when they went to write in their journals. For Ron, he shared that the digital voice recordings acted as an immediate way to chronicle his thoughts and feelings. At the time of writing this dissertation, I have received over 73 emails of voice recordings, videos, or small snippets of thoughts arising from his engagement and experiences listening to music. These exchanges continued, even after the conclusion of our interview time together.

<sup>71</sup> An exception to this is contained within the liner notes of the created accompanying compilation mix.

forwarded their understanding and interpretation of lyrics through our interviews and interactions together.

**Participant Selection** Participants were selected based on implicit and specific criteria. According to phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), participants should meet two essential requirements: they must have experienced the specific phenomenon of interest, and are able afford descriptive and rich accounts of lived-experiences with the phenomenon in its varied, multiple, and partial contexts. For my particular study, the specific criteria each participant needed to meet were that they must be over 21 years of age and self-report to have meaningful experiences listening to music. During a pre-screening selection process, participants were asked the following three questions: Do you enjoy listening to music; do you feel you connect with music; and have you had meaningful experiences with music? Although I originally intended to recruit participation through flyers, posting to available list-serves, and through network sampling, I ultimately selected to invite and screen those who formed my participant pool based more upon convenience<sup>72</sup>. I did, however, identify and gain contact information of four more potential individuals referred to me through networking to serve as additional participants if needed. After all the interviews (15 total) were transcribed and initial analysis was undertaken, I informed both my committee chair and advising methodologist that I felt I had enough data to move forward<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Noted in my IRB form, "Interest will be garnered through flyers, in available list serves (student, faculty, staff, etc.), purposive sampling (with respect to gender, age, socio-cultural background and musical experience), and/or network sampling." A recent discussion (Roulston, January, 27, 2011, personal communication) challenged my understanding of criterion and purposive based sampling, suggesting the participants I accessed in both my pilot study and dissertation were selected using convenience sampling, or the inclusion of "participants in studies on the basis of ease of access or ready availability" (Roulston, 2010, p. 81). Convenience sampling is arguably not a true form of sampling, and issues of quality arise through the use of convenience sampling (see Roulston, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> As Post-Intentional Phenomenology situates findings as tentative, partial, and fleeting, I argued I had enough "data" from the 15 sessions, journals, documents, and previous work from the pilot study for the study. I shared that in talking with other potential participants, I would most assuredly get new, different, and diverse descriptions, but as I was not forwarding truth claims through my findings, I sufficient data to work with so as to illuminate and forward glimpses and tentative manifestations of the phenomenon.

At the time of the study, the youngest participant was 24, and the two oldest were 35. Three identified as female, two as male, and all identified as white<sup>74</sup>. Two participants were students (one was an undergraduate, the other a Master's student), one was in marketing, one a teacher, and one an art consultant. When asked what their relationship to music was, participants reported the following: *Only foreign language I understand, only universal language besides math; performer and listener; involved, prolific, dynamic; enjoyment; and lover of and avid consumer of music, worked for two record companies and radio station as DJ, music director, program director*. Philip was the only participant invited from the original pilot study. Ultimately his selection came down to established rapport, and wanting to bring only one participant from the pilot study forward into the dissertation so as to engage with others who experience connection with music. Ron approached me after I presented to a research methods class on my pilot study, sharing how much this research resonated with his musical experiences. From that conversation I elected to follow up with him to see if he would be interested in participating in the dissertation study. Naomi, Aimeé, and Zoë all were close acquaintances from my past, which influenced my invitation to participate in the study due to my knowing of the importance of music in each of their lives. Like Philip, this relational history with all four afforded a level of rapport (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002) which I felt resulted in our ability to delve into more personal and intimate moments and feelings concerning their experiences with music<sup>75</sup>. However, I did work to maintain neutrality (Patton, 1987) and an open, bridled approach (Dahlberg, et al., 2008) in light of my past relationships. I did this through discursive bridling in my research journal, making audio dictations when I feared I was using past memories to influence my present listening of

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<sup>74</sup> As I am white as well, this created a homogenous sample of participants based upon race. This, arguably, is a potential limitation of this study. I have included all of this personal, historical, and demographic information on my participants to be completely transparent, and thus attempt to establish credibility as a researcher with regard to trustworthiness. Phenomenology does not focus on demographic or personal information of the participants, as the focus in phenomenology is not on the subject (nor the object), but on the intentional relationship between a subject and object through the lived-experience of a particular phenomenon.

<sup>75</sup> Further, due to my past relationship with both Naomi and Aimee, I was able to access the forwarded mix tapes they created for me in high school (see Appendices A, B, D, & E).

participants, and talking through any and all issues felt throughout the research endeavor with my dissertation chair, advising methodologist, and other researchers.

### **Devise a Clear, yet Flexible Process for Collecting Data**

It is important to note, phenomenologists study phenomena, not individual participants or the objects of their lived-experiences (Vagle, 2010a). Therefore, data is collected and accessed to reveal and elucidate a particular phenomenon; in this case this was situated in finding oneself connected with music. For the current study, phenomenologically based interviewing served as the primary data source. Each participant took part in three, 1 to 1.5 long interview sessions. All sessions were audio recorded and fully transcribed prior to our next meeting together. At each meeting, the transcripts from the previous meetings were present to be accessed or referenced if needed. This was never selected. The entire study spanned three months (first interview was conducted at the end of May, 2011 and the last was at the end of July, 2011). There was at least one week between each individual's interview sessions, with the most time in between a single participant's sessions being 21 days.

At the beginning of the first interview, what I later termed in my bridling/research journals<sup>76</sup> as the "foundation setting interview"<sup>77</sup>, each participant was reminded of what the specific phenomenon of interest was: Finding oneself connected with music. Next, I asked the participant to, "Think of a time in which you experienced a connection with music and tell me about it." The structure of the interview was semi-structured, open-ended and conversational, grounded in this overarching research question. I used follow up probes and prompts, such as "You mentioned (blank). Tell me more about that; what was that like for you; and/or Can you give me a specific example of that," to further clarify, open up, trouble, and/or complexify what

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<sup>76</sup> I more fully discuss my bridling/research journal in the next section of this chapter: Research component # 3: Make a Bridling Plan.

<sup>77</sup> After the first two interviews (which occurred back to back on the same day), I made the decision to no longer worry about getting into music in the first interview. As the pilot study only had one interview session, I felt rushed to get through establishing a foundation of connection and the musical experiences within the participant's lifeworld in order to get to the actually "listening" of music. With multiple interviews, I was able to spend ample time doing both: talking about and listening to.

was shared by participants. A major focus of these questions was to encourage thick, rich descriptions from the participants on their experiences with music.

At the beginning of each subsequent second and third interview session, each participant was informed of the transcripts and provided the choice of how and where they would specifically like to enter into *this* conversation<sup>78</sup>. For some, the openness at first appeared disconcerting<sup>79</sup>, but methodologically, I chose to orient our entry into talking about the phenomenon in a manner that would, hopefully, allow for however the phenomenon was manifesting itself in relation to each participant at that moment to be accessed and followed. Options were provided, such as addressing things which had arisen through their journaling or from thinking about our last time together, posing the original question again to see where it would lead, or accessing their selected music and talking through their experiences of selection and listening to the particular song in this moment.

During the third session, each interview became more conversational with time being spent in dialogue with the participant. Also, during the third session, I specifically asked each participant what I termed “my two academic questions<sup>80</sup>.” This idea arose after my first two interviews and was noted in my audio bridling journal. As noted, the pilot study was used to help refine my phenomenon and research question through “resolving” the prepositional quandary of whether one is connected “to” music or “with” music. During the first two interviews, participants used both words. This afforded an improvisational foray that I sought to follow, explore, and open up. My second “academic” question was prompted from my initial bridling/bracketing interview (Roulston, 2010). Specifically, I was challenged with whether or not one connects with the music or does the music connect one with something else, and if so,

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<sup>78</sup> This is another example of where I just went with “feeling” and tacit, intuitive nudging.

<sup>79</sup> Three participants asked specifically, “What have others talked about in their (second/third) interview” or “What have others done?”

<sup>80</sup> Findings from these specific questions are found in Chapter Four, specifically in the sections entitled To/With, and Music as Medium/Music as the Thing. The questions I asked were: Is your experience connection “to” or “with” music? Are you connected with music, or does music connect you with something else? And if it is something else, what is that?

what? I elected to ask both questions in the final interviews as we had already spent time talking, reflecting, and revealing experiences, as well as listening to music together and talking through that, so I felt we had a strong base to work off of to further open up and explore the phenomenon and these questions. Arguably, through these questions I was moving participants out of being in the natural attitude<sup>81</sup> and asking them to engage in the phenomenological attitude concerning their experiences. However, at this point I felt that our extended time talking about the phenomenon had already shifted them out of directly experiencing it, and more reporting on, interpreting, and describing these experiences, more akin to adopting the phenomenological attitude. In essence, I was inviting them to help create, reveal, complexify, disrupt, and trouble this lived-experience along with me.

Other data sources included the creation of a playlist of songs by each of the participants. Prior to participation, I asked each participant to compile a playlist of songs that were important and bring these on a CD to each interview session. As discussed above, each participant brought at least 10 songs. No songs were listened to during the first session. At least three songs were listened to with each of the participants. The selected songs were chosen by the participant, often following my request for them to play “what ever is speaking to you at this moment.” During the analysis and final write up of the dissertation, I accessed the various playlists, listening to them as I read individual transcripts, typed, thought, and worked on this project. These were “atmospherizing” moves that I engaged in with the participant selected music to see what feelings and experiences would emerge. Six of the twelve songs on the accompanying compilation are from the participants’ song selections.

In anticipation of our listening to music together, I created a loosely structured observation protocol (van Manen, 1990). This protocol was guided by following questions: What type/genre of music was being listened to (asking the participant for their answer to this question); what facial expression, body motions, or other kinesthetic actions were occurring

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<sup>81</sup> The natural attitude is, by definition, attention not attending to itself.



during the listening (what physiological responses are occurring that can be seen by an observer); and how are participants responding to different parts and aspects of the song (through singing, dancing, or moving). As in the pilot study, this was a very uncomfortable task, one which admittedly I abandoned because of feeling awkward, as well as troubling and challenging what I could really glean as an outside observer through this experience. I did ask each what it was like listening to something so meaningful to them with someone else around. This resulted in a mixture of responses with some saying it did nothing, while others spoke on the vulnerability of sharing something so personally meaningful with someone else who may not experience it in the same way<sup>82</sup>.

I also asked each participant to keep a journal throughout the duration of the study. Within this journal, I asked participants to write down experiences they had, thought about, or reflected upon concerning music. Specifically, I asked for them to note different songs and musical experiences they had in-between our times together and encouraged them to record descriptions as thick and rich as possible of these experiences. Although the primary function of the journal was discursive in nature, I also encouraged them to represent their thoughts, feelings, and ideas on music through other means as well (drawing, collaging of words and images, painting, videos, etc.), or to access quotes and others' ideas, thoughts, or images which they found salient and meaningful in describing their engagement and connection with music. Three participants returned their journals, two did not. Ron chose to do digital audio recordings instead of discursive journaling, emailing each entry in addition to specific videos or songs. Of the three who returned their journals, two were kept in the journals I provided and the other was kept as a word document that she printed out. Three of the five participants expressed resistance and frustration with the discursive nature of journaling, admitting they did not give it the time or attention in between sessions. Journals did serve as good snap shots or moments in time of

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<sup>82</sup> Moving forward, if I were to extend this study or do a similar study, I would not elect to focus on this as a data source based on its "forced" feeling and the expressed uncomfortableness shared by myself and some of the participants.

experiences salient and immediate to the participants, providing a lived moment for us to further open up and explore during our interview sessions together.

Finally, unique and specific data sources were accessed for four of the five participants. These emerged during the course of the study, and were not fully intentional or planned. As Philip was a participant in the pilot study, I elected to access his transcripts from that session, as well as a found poem<sup>83</sup> I constructed as part of my pilot study analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010). For Zoë, I accessed email exchanges that occurred before and after the three interview sessions<sup>84</sup>. She and I had also exchanged compilations in the past, and this was accessed and listened to as I worked across her journals and transcripts. Finally, as forwarded in the prelude and serving as the representational structure of the accompanying compilation, I accessed the mix tapes Aimeé and Naomi had crafted for me<sup>85</sup>. All of these additional data sources were seen as potential documents, and subsequently analyzed with the other data, to further elucidate the particular phenomenon. Document Analysis, as praxis, created spaces to interrogate the documents' contextual meanings to reveal both their effects and functions (Prior, 2003).<sup>86</sup> The interrogation of documents enriched both the breadth and depth of this study through the reflexive analysis of their content, use, and action.

### **Make a Bridling Plan**

Addressed within my bridling plan was how I *created a bridling journal*, wrote an *“Initial Bridling Statement,”* and how I *bridled as I collected and analyze data*. As addressed in the previous chapter, phenomenology is guided by an orientation towards openness (Dahlberg et al., 2008) through bridling. Bridling is the attempt by a phenomenologist to express,

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<sup>83</sup> This poem is referenced in Chapter 4 and can be found as Appendix R.

<sup>84</sup> Zoe gave permission for my use of these exchanges, one being a poem entitled “Music is Life in Bloom” which is to be found at the end of Chapter 4.

<sup>85</sup> Fascinatingly, these tapes were given to me in the middle of the study as my parents were cleaning out my old bedroom and my box of old cassette tapes was returned to me where I found these four mixes.

<sup>86</sup> Documents are never fixed or static, requiring “being read” by acting and active agents, and “are constructed in accordance with rules [to] express a structure. . . nestled within a specific discourse, and their presence in the world depends on collective, organized, action” (Prior, 2003, p. 12-13).

acknowledge, and then suspend his own pre-understandings, beliefs, assumptions, and opinions concerning a lived-experience so that he may listen and be present to participant's lived-experiences first. As practiced, bridling is always a process to be working at, allowing for continual troubling and reflexively challenging the researcher's presence and understanding throughout the entire study. Access and use of my own thoughts, expressions, and musings throughout this entire process afforded an invaluable resource as I engaged with the data, as well as making explicit my own subjective presence within my research. It is important to forward both transparency and accessibility to this data and my relationship to the phenomenon in order to address issues of quality, especially important within qualitative inquiry. I forward the work below as an embodied textualization of my bridled engagement with this particular phenomenon of interest in the hope of demonstrated quality (Vagle, 2009).

**Bridling Journal** Although data collection for this study officially began in May of 2011, I began my bridling of the phenomenon, and subsequently a bridling journal, in the Fall of 2009. I have maintained this journal<sup>87</sup> (in different forms and locations, and addressing different aspects of the entire research enterprise) up to the present. Although discursive in nature leading up to data analysis, I began shifting to digital audio recordings in addition to writing, as my dominant source of bridling for the remainder of the study. For me, I have realized through this research experience that I am more of a verbal processor, and talking through ideas, even to myself, helped me confront, trouble, disrupt, and wrestle with my thinking through of the phenomenon and how to represent it. Currently, I have close to 100 different digital recordings ranging from 15 seconds to over 2 hours. Over 60 of these recordings have been indexed and titled<sup>88</sup>. Both styles of journals comprised thoughts, reflections, ideas, notions, nudges, and frustrations as I engaged with phenomenology, my topic of interest, and the development and actualization of the entire study, from pilot to the dissertation. Coupled with these journals are

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<sup>87</sup> An excerpt from my bridling journal during my first analysis weekend can be seen in Appendix K.

<sup>88</sup> An index of these voice recordings can be seen in Appendix L.

documents containing dictionary entries<sup>89</sup> from the research, readings, and work I have done for phenomenology.

**Write an “Initial Bridling Statement”** I composed my “Initial Bridling Statement” in the Fall of 2009. At this point, I had already identified my phenomenon of interest and elected this activity as part of a course assignment. Similar to a Subjectivities Statement typical in qualitative research, my bridled subjectivity has been unique in the sense that it has been woven throughout the fabric of this entire document up to this point, and continues on in the remainder of the document<sup>90</sup>.

**Bridling as I Collected and Analyzed Data** Prior to beginning both my pilot study and collecting data for the dissertation, I participated in a bridling interview (adapted from Roulston’s use of bracketing interview, 2011, p. 123-124) with my advising methodologist. In each interview, I was asked to talk about my own experiences with music, my conceptions of connection, and discussed issues and concerns I had going into both studies<sup>91</sup>. I spent significant time in both interviews challenging and troubling my openness to the phenomenon and participants’ experiences, specifically because of my experiences of connection with music, something which I attempted to bridle throughout this research enterprise. This very issue is one reason some phenomenologists (van Manen, 1990) caution against studying a phenomenon one is close to. Through the interviews, Dr. Vagle encouraged me to name my thoughts, perceptions, meanings, and understandings with regard to the phenomenon, own them, and then when moments would happen where I thought I “knew” what my participants were saying and sharing, to specifically pull back and ask them to tell me more about that experience<sup>92</sup>. Further, and as

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<sup>89</sup> This served to capture quick, concise definitions or statements concerning philosophy, tenets of phenomenology, theories, or ideas forwarded by various researchers.

<sup>90</sup> I have included my original Bridling Statement as Appendix M.

<sup>91</sup> I have included the found poem (Butler-Kisber, 2010) I created from my first bridling interview as Appendix N. The text on the left is my “lifted” talk from the transcripts, the text on the right is Vagle’s.

<sup>92</sup> There are a few moments in the interviews where I perceived the participants were getting frustrated by my continual asking for them to tell me more about a particular experience or something they had shared. It

stated earlier, at the completion of each interview session (including the bridling interviews), I engaged in what I called digital auditory debriefs. Each recording afforded me a space to trouble, talk through, and reflect on ideas, concepts, and initial feelings that arose from the interview session, as well as provide a platform to critique my skills and competencies as a qualitative researcher.

My primary analysis occurred over a 4 month period with 5 trips to a house in the North Georgia Mountains. The shortest session was three days, and the longest was six. During each of these sessions, I kept either a written journal or made audio recordings throughout the experience. Examples of each were referred to in the *Bridling Journal* section above. Finally, I engaged in numerous conversations with various colleagues as I collected, analyzed, and began crafting representations of the data. These included my committee chair and advising methodologist, but also were other researchers who had just concluded conducting phenomenological research, as well as fellow graduate students who were engaging in their own studies.

### **Read and Write Your Way Through Your Data Systematically and Responsively**

Analysis of my data began during the first interview<sup>93</sup>. Although not formalized, as soon as I found myself engaged in this study, I had already begun thinking “analytically” about the phenomenon, how it was manifesting itself, and how to access salient, rich, and full descriptions of it. During the interview sessions, I would choose to follow up with certain phrases or statements, and not engage with others. Frustratingly, I am not certain how to describe why or how this occurred. Here the metaphor of jamming resonates exceptionally well. Sometimes, it was nothing more than a feeling: a tacit and intuitive nudging to follow a certain path, idea or conversation. This was always grounded in the form and structure of conducting a phenomenological study, and in particular doing one based on Post-Intentional Phenomenology,

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was exactly in these moments where I was “actively bridling” my own understanding and feelings, mining their experiences for salient words and poignant descriptions.

<sup>93</sup> Arguably, it began with identifying the phenomenon and the construction of questions I would ask to seek an understanding of that phenomenon.

but as this specific approach viewed knowledge as contested, historically situated, partial, and incomplete, I felt free to see how the phenomenon was manifesting itself in each moment arising from the participant's forwarded description and in these particular ways (Vagle, 2010a). In essence, I felt we (the researcher, participant, and phenomenon) were jamming: exploring what was to be revealed and similar to what happens between musician, music, and audience.

Further, as I immediately began transcribing the interviews after the first sessions, the actual process of transcription<sup>94</sup> resulted in additional analytical thought concerning the study. These initial forays into analysis influenced subsequent interviews. I would remember and choose to bring up ideas discussed in previous sessions, or from other participant's interviews, to see if these ideas were still resonated, made sense, or were viewed differently now. Metaphorically, I would introduce various notes (words), riffs (previous statements or ideas), or chord sequences (larger conceptualizations shared) and see where they would lead. Sometimes this worked. Sometimes it did not. But always the focus was to open up, trouble, and complexify connection with and through music listening.

**“Prior To” Analysis Strategies Undertaken** Prior to this study, I surveyed a variety of different phenomenological analysis strategies. One approach focused on the production of meaning units and meaning structures as the essential aspect of data analysis (Giorgi, 1997; Dahlberg, et al., 2008). The concept of *meaning units* originated in Husserlian (1970/1954) transcendental phenomenology, and was further elaborated through Girogi's (1997) descriptive phenomenological method and Dahlberg, et al. (2008) whole-parts-whole analytic process for data analysis and synthesis for lifeworld research. As a strategy of analysis, one considers the whole experience as captured within the data sources and colored by the researcher's tacit experiences, looking for smaller segmented units of the text (the “parts,” or *meaning units*), and then clusters those meaning units into *structures* resulting in a “pattern that describes the

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<sup>94</sup> Much of this was captured in handwritten notes which I kept next to the computer as I transcribed. Here I would scribble down ideas, often illegible, as they arose during transcription.

phenomenon in focus” (Dahlberg, et al., 2008, p. 245). The ultimate goal is both a depiction of a contextualized, individuated meaning and/or ideally the production of “invariant or essential meanings” (Giorgi, 1997, p. 249).

I also looked at thematic analysis (van Manen, 1990), arising from Heideggerian interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology. *Thematic analysis* is an approach to analysis aimed at understanding the structures of a lived-experience, or the “experiential structures that make up that experience” (p. 79). The goal of thematic analysis is to “effect a more direct contact with the experience as lived,” and to reveal the multi-dimensional and multi-layered meanings, or themes, of a specific phenomenon (p. 78). Here, a theme or meaning is never simple or one-dimensional. Themes are to be understood as a means or way to get at a notion (i.e., phenomenon of interest), and although they are created to describe the content of this notion, they are always a reduction of it; attempting to give “shape to the shapeless,” but forever falling short of unearthing or revealing the deep meaning or enigmatic and ineffable aspects of this notion (p. 88).

As I continued to explore phenomenological strategies for analysis at the conclusion of the pilot study and prior to the dissertation, I found resonance in Vagle’s (2009) resistance to the giving-finding meaning dualism which underlies many of the assumptive underpinnings of interpretive and descriptive approaches to phenomenology. During the analysis of my pilot study data, where I began identifying initial and cursory themes and meaning units, I struggled with the impact these “findings” would have on my future inquiry. As already discussed, the pilot study afforded resolution (supposedly) and direction for the logistical and foundational queries, which were the nexus of its undertaking. I revised my research question, narrowed my focus to music listening and those who express significant experiences with music, and was able to think through the number and structure of interviews needed, as well as my inclusion of journaling as an additional data source. Desiring an open and bridled approach going into my dissertation, I continued looking for a strategy of analysis and representation which would provide “loose” yet poignant representation and understanding of my phenomenon of interest.

I continued my surveying of phenomenological approaches to data analysis by electing to creatively engage and adapt Moustakas' analytical strategy of phenomenological reduction. Roulston (2010) described Moustakas' phenomenological reduction as an approach which "[reduces] the data to its essential meaning elements – by identifying 'meaning statements' relevant to the object of analysis" (p. 161). From the original data, a researcher lifts the participant's talk, and in a new document, this data is 'reduced' by "eliminating repetitive statements and data that are irrelevant to the study. . . and [focuses] on statements that reflect the 'horizons' of meaning relevant to the phenomenon" (p. 161). At this point in the analysis, I had yet to *find*, access, or fully conceptualize my eventual use of poetry, although whispering suggestions of lyrical representation of my findings arose as a potential strategy congruent with the topic of my study, and which could arguably capture an artistic rendering of 'meaning statements' *and* reflect a 'horizon of meaning.'

In concert with Vagle's (2010) Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Approach's method of analysis, where one reads and writes his/her way through data in a systematic and responsive manner, I elected to focus on each data source independently as a whole. Instead of looking across accounts, I elected to write a *memo* on each participant, followed by a brief summary of what I learned from the session. I began with each transcript in its totality. Frustrated by previous analysis experiences tethered to my perceptions of voiceless, sterile, and spiritless transcripts, I elected to conduct my analysis as I read *and* listened to the interview in its totality. This approach, informed by Ihde (2007), challenges dominant ways of knowing embedded in traditional acts of only *seeing* and *reading* to incorporate *hearing* and *listening* while gleaning meaning and understanding. Retrospectively, I termed this approach 'Participant Centered Memoing' where I began winnowing or reducing descriptions of experiences and engagements with music expressed by the participants after listening and marking the original transcripts. Memos were constructed using my words and interpretations, as well as the participant's words and phrases. Leveraging the use of footnotes, I read back through the entire piece and continued



to build, footnote, reference, and construct ideas generated throughout the interview and my analysis. Each memo served as a wholistic ‘idea holder’ and collective summary of the participants’ and my experiences with music, discursively represented in short, terse, and phlegmatic statements. It was here where my *looking for* found purchase in lyrical or poetic representation.

Following the completion of my first memo, I still felt stifled and frustrated by the analysis and recorded ‘findings.’ The experiences shared by my participants were pregnant with meaning, poetic, and lyrically beautiful, which felt far removed from my produced understanding of the data recorded in the memo. Looking back over the memo, I found myself inspired by the short phrases and wording, a result of the data reduction. It was at this moment where I *found* the idea of creating a poem from the data. My reasons for isolating this process to poetry, as opposed to writing lyrics, represents my own acknowledged shortcomings with regard to the creation, production, and lyrical skills necessary for songwriting. As a disclaimer, I claim no expertise or skill in writing poetry either, but have participated in the writing and creation of poems as a personal form of expression throughout my life. I began the construction of each poem by immediately accessing salient words and phrases which *felt* more than what was said or discursively captured in the transcripts or memo. The poems emerged as either a representation of the ineffable, tacit, and intuitive total felt sense expressed throughout the session, or a honing and gleaning representation of a specific moment or experience lifted from the experience. My finding of the data poems (Butler-Kisber, 2010) afforded analytical representation, while simultaneously honoring the participant’s words and phrases, *and* my resistance to producing conclusive and definitive findings. Through each poem, I committed to adhering to the participant’s own words, wording, and phrasing. I resisted contributing my own words, and when I included my words for grammatical or stylistic reasons, I bracketed those phrases to mark my entry into the poem and text.

**The Ellijay Sessions: Analysis for the Dissertation** Each of the above

phenomenological approaches to analysis and subsequent representation, like the diverse genres influencing the musical improvised explorations of jam bands, informed, influenced, and guided my process of analysis for the dissertation. Combining both the residual influences arising from analysis of my pilot study with the preliminary analysis undertaken throughout the interviews and transcription of the dissertation data, I began thinking through how this data could be represented through the crafting of the final text. This, ultimately, presented a continual problem throughout all my analysis: focusing on the “product” and *not* the “process”<sup>95</sup>. At this point, I had strongly considered doing a manuscript style dissertation and representation. All of these analytical approaches, methodological processes, and experiences were swirling in and through me as I entered into my first official “analysis” retreat in Ellijay Georgia. I scheduled five retreats over the Fall 2011 semester. As already noted, each of these sessions lasted at least three days, with the longest lasting six. During each session, I completely immersed myself in the data through reading, writing, listening, journaling, talking, walking, and thinking through and about the phenomenon. Even though I had specific ideas or tasks for each session (i.e., listen to and read all of the transcripts, completely outline and write the abstracts for the three manuscript ideas I have for the final dissertation, write my understanding of the emerging tentative manifestations, or cut and paste participant “talk” which represents different tentative manifestations), I was forced to, at times, do things or engage with the research process in ways not anticipated<sup>96</sup>. Although

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<sup>95</sup> As “unscientific” as this might sound, and definitely contested from a postmodern and post-structural ethos, but I truly felt that at anytime I overly focused on the product, the phenomenon would revolt, run away, and hide. Through this process, I was forced to “return to the data” continually. Fascinatingly, although I had forwarded the Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research in my prospectus, I did not access it as a “guide” as I began my analysis. Being completely transparent, I experientially lived through my analysis, which now through the gift of hindsight I can see how my eventual process of analysis is similar to the approach forwarded by Vagle (2010a). I am not proud of this fact, and would have probably been saved from a tremendous amount of stress, but it is here where I feel some of the most salient connecting points to jamming and improvisational music. I explored based upon knowing the tradition and landscape of phenomenology, as well as tacit and intuitive nudgings and feelings.

<sup>96</sup> The most poignant example of this was during the final retreat when I had intended to write up my “findings,” but instead was thwarted due to one of my computers crashing. Fascinatingly, this session resulted in me going “back to the data” for a third time, fully immersing myself in reading every transcript,

extremely uncomfortable during these experiences, reflectively this resulted in some of the most fruitful, poignant, and profound moments of playing with my ideas, engaging with the phenomenon, and improvisationally exploring various ideas and avenues. Time in between the sessions ranged from two to four weeks. Often in between these sessions I would do little to no further purposeful analysis, although these periods allowed for dwelling (Dahlberg, et al., 2008; Heidegger, 2002b) and resting with the phenomenon and my emerging and evolving thoughts. Ongoing digital audio recording and talking with colleagues would occur during these “times-between” my sessions in Ellijay.

As forwarded by Vagle (1010a), during my first Ellijay session I approached the data holistically, or as a whole, with my first reading to include all available data to re-familiarize myself with what was collected. At this point, I focused mainly on the interviews and their transcripts, not accessing the journals at this time. Similar to my analysis of the pilot study data, I not only read the transcripts, but I listened to each interview again in its entirety. Although the main emphasis here was to get re-attuned and reacquainted with the data through reading and listening, I began highlighting and writing down ideas in the margins of the transcripts<sup>97</sup>. Further, I listened to the music from each participant’s play lists at various times (i.e. making meals, walking my dog, riding in the car), noting which songs they forwarded during their interviews and what aspects of the phenomenon these songs might potentially represent. Throughout this first session, I maintained a daily bridling journal that daily addressed each of the following categories: *Plan for the day*; *Methoding*; *What has become clearer*; *Tentative Manifestations*; *Itchings*; *Bridling*; and *Total Frustrations*<sup>98</sup>. At the conclusion of this session I had listened to

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and creating the opportunity to glean the participant talk and locate it under each tentative manifestation. As a result, when I actually began writing my findings one month later, I was more prepared, and thus better able to represent the phenomenon.

<sup>97</sup> All the transcripts contained line numbers, a header indicating participant, date, and session number, as well as a large right margin to allow for “jot notes” of ideas next to particular lines within the text.

<sup>98</sup> You can see a sample of this in Appendix K.

each interview and read all the transcripts. Further, I began forming ideas of initial findings, or tentative manifestations, and subsequent potential discursive representations of the phenomenon.

At my next “analysis retreat” I focused solely on outlining and preparing four separate manuscripts to serve as my dissertation, completely abandoning any further analysis. My thought was, once I knew what I wanted each manuscript to do, I could re-engage my analysis looking for those things which would help me achieve the goal of each. Ashamedly, completely lost on me at the time was how this approach might sacrifice and compromise my “openness” (Dahlberg, et al., 2008; Vagle, 2010a), and thus ultimately lead me away from phenomenology, and more towards post-positivistic research (Husserl, 1970). The ideas for each manuscript arose during the data collection phase of the study, and were forwarded to my committee chair at a meeting during the summer<sup>99</sup>. Specifically, they were to focus on four separate issues: a piece on creative analytical practices with regard to leisure studies to be submitted to the *Leisure Sciences*; a piece on the use of found poetry in relation to phenomenology for *Qualitative Inquiry*; a piece on how Post-Intentional Phenomenology opens up the complexity of lived-experiences through holding in suspended tension discordant data to be potentially used as an appendix within Vagle’s forthcoming book on *Post-Intentional Phenomenology*; and a piece using Josef Pieper (1952), the psychology of enjoyment, and Post-Intentional Phenomenology to highlight the presence and use of music in individual’s lives as an existentializing endeavor for *Leisure/Loisir*.<sup>100</sup> However, during this session, I felt everything “fall apart.” Things no longer made sense. My initial ideas around the tentative manifestations started losing purchase in my theorizing and conceptualizing. Then I began worrying about my openness to the phenomenon and the “bridled” approach I was supposedly undertaking. I got lost, very lost. I realized, through identifying what each manuscript

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<sup>99</sup> Again, these manuscript ideas were forwarded even before I had finished collecting all of the data. My only justification of this is that through the pilot study and the first initial interviews, I was already beginning to have a sense of what this study could address within larger scholarly discourses, even though I did not have the actual findings yet.

<sup>100</sup> Each manuscript idea, complete with abstract, journal parameters, and projected completion dates are contained in Appendix O.

“would say,” I moved away from what the phenomenon was revealing. This was not analysis, but report writing. I began to think that through focusing on the “product,” or more accurately “my” product, I had pre-maturely left the “process,” ultimately turning my back on both the phenomenon and participants. This was one of many moments throughout my whole process of analysis where I felt I had strayed down a wrong trail. Or, in terms of the forwarded metaphor here, I had introduced an out of tune note, a wrong chord, or a discordant movement to the overall jam. Although I knew this and ultimately resolved to use my next session to get back into the data, I remained committed to finalizing my thoughts for the four manuscripts, as well as fully outlining my ideas for each.

During the third “analysis session”<sup>101</sup>, I completely re-immersed myself in the data, again listening to each interview in its entirety, as well as reading along on a fresh set of transcripts<sup>102</sup>. This, combined with my first reading of and listening to the interviews, resulted in a more engaged and thorough line-by-line reading. Here further note taking and identification of “initial meanings” (Vagle, 2010a) of the phenomenon occurred. During the first Ellijay session, I had brought a partial ream of old dot matrix accountant ledger paper. Something about the numbered lines, the large size, the wholes on the side, and the off setting colors called to me. I began working across these large note pads, using multiple sheets for each participant. These became a proverbial “Where’s Waldo” of notes, ideas, line numbers, and salient phrases. I began drawing lines connecting different words and ideas, as well as circling and starring those things that “felt” important, significant, and salient. At the end of engaging with all the interviews, I had five sheets

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<sup>101</sup> Prior to this weekend I was asked to present on my research at a small North Georgia College. Here I presented a slide containing a list of initial ideas I had of the various tentative manifestations identified up to that point. As part of the class, I had asked the students to come with a song which meant something to them. Through the subsequent discussions on their song choices, interests, and questions concerning some of the tentative manifestations I had presented, I was gifted with the opportunity to speak about and publicly wrestle with my ongoing and emerging ideas of the phenomenon. Although not pretty or refined, this did help to focus me as I entered into my third analysis session.

<sup>102</sup> This was a purposeful decision so that I could see how my notes would change or remain consistent, and to avoid previous highlighting and notes to influence the way I engaged with the material this time.

of my “Where’s Waldo” dot matrix notes, one for each participant, which I would lay out and just look at over the next three weeks back at home.

I also began thinking through other representational strategies for the final text itself. I considered exploring the use of the metaphor of an opus or symphony to organize the dissertation<sup>103</sup>. Not fully formed, this metaphor or image was considered as it suggested movements and separate pieces, serving as parts to a full symphony or opus<sup>104</sup>. Here I began seeing different chapters or parts of the dissertation as different movements, pieces, or compositions, combined together to be presented as a full work. Also, I spent one morning crafting an invitation, instructing readers on “how” to read my work. This arose from feeling tremendous anxiety concerning how my work would be engaged with and read, feeling that I needed to implore others to read my piece empathetically (Dahlberg et al., 2008), not critically, to “get” this phenomenon. This piece eventually informed the Prelude contained as part of this dissertation. Further, I continued to engage with the various initial meanings and under-formed tentative manifestations that had emerged and been identified from the data. I critically interrogated these emerging meanings and understandings through my bridled audio voice recordings and conversations with others. Specifically, I asked of the data, “what does this actually say about my particular phenomenon?”

One area in which I continued to struggle was how to begin “writing” the phenomenon. Through my thinking, analyzing, talking, and making notes about it, it became so big, so complex, so multi-faceted, and so rich, I became overwhelmed. One of the tentative manifestation ideas I had been playing around with, existentializing, spurred me to look to van Manen (1990) with regard to his concept of existential phenomenology. Although I did not find anything on existentialism, I did re-acquaint myself with his four existentials of the lifeworld. Providentially,

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<sup>103</sup> The resultant outline for this idea is presented as Appendix L

<sup>104</sup> My lack of knowledge and skill with regard to music theory and composition created apprehension concerning formatting the dissertation in this way. Further, I ultimately realized that my engagement with music was not from a creative/performance standpoint, but one of receptivity and listening.

these afforded a way for me to begin organizing and enter into a potential textualization of my tentative manifestations<sup>105</sup>. Finally, I continued to listen to the participants' songs, further making associations between specific pieces of music, their expressed experiences through the interviews, and my evolving understanding of the phenomenon.

During my fourth Ellijay session, I again mistakenly overly focused on what the product would look like. From the dot matrix "Waldo" notes, I pulled out all of the initial findings from the previous Ellijay Sessions with the data. From that list, I began writing up all of my ideas on the different tentative manifestations. This totaled over 26 single-spaced pages of *just* my thoughts and ideas. I left place-holders where I knew participants had spoken about the different manifestations, but ultimately this document revealed more *my* experiences with the phenomenon and how it had been manifested and understood across the research<sup>106</sup>. Further, using the four lifeworld existentials (van Manen, 1990) of spatiality, temporality, corporeality, and relationality, I theoretically grounded what each existential meant and began organizing the representation of the phenomenon based on these four categories. However, in doing this, I began to see how it was an impossibility to separate out, capture, discursively illuminate, or neatly inventory any of my findings as they were amazingly complex and crossed over, were influenced by, and shared salient qualities and aspects with one another<sup>107</sup>. Further, as soon as I began writing about one thing, twelve other things would arise, leaving me in a tangled mess of ideas. I compared it to fractal geometry, where one focuses in on a specific piece of a geometric fractal, only to have a universe within that section open up, where you focus on a specific piece, and another world

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<sup>105</sup> The four existentials (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality) are further illuminated at the beginning of Chapter 4.

<sup>106</sup> I would particular like to thank Dr. Hilar Hughes-Decatur here for *kindly* calling me out for, yet again, forwarding my experiences at the expense of my participants, and re-acquainting me, yet again, with bridling and the openness a phenomenologist is supposed to embody and attempt to undertake *throughout* the research enterprise.

<sup>107</sup> Again, I would like to note that all of these difficulties were presented to me through multiple avenues, the main being Vagle's work on Post-Intentional Phenomenology (2010a). I had also participated in a Qualitative Analysis course, where all of this was discussed. Somehow I selectively forgot all of this, and the resources afforded to me, and resulted in me "experientially" figuring all of this out. I was just jamming, not well, but jamming.

would open up, ad infinitum. I became obsessed with how I was going to write it *right*, again moving away from just being with the data, playing with ideas, and further troubling my own understandings. I felt lost again, and dejected. I felt I had failed phenomenology, my participants, and leisure studies<sup>108</sup>. However, voices of mentors kept swirling around in my head, in particular my advisor Dr. Johnson's, "just put words on the page." So I kept typing. From this I outlined emerging ideas concerning the chapters for the eventual dissertation<sup>109</sup>. Revisions of this document actually became the outline for the current format of this dissertation, although the concept of using a compilation as a metaphor was still not fully formed.

My fifth and final Ellijay Session was set to be the last. Although the work accomplished during these times in Ellijay was important, allowing for total immersion and requiring my complete attention, being away from my family and alone by myself in the woods was beginning to take its toll. Entering into this session I intended, again, to write up my findings. I had received positive feedback from both my advisor and members of my writing group, and was guided to go back to the data, specifically my participant's words, and begin crafting my representations of the phenomenon. I intended to begin writing each phenomenon up by combining my notes on the tentative manifestations and using the search feature in my word processor to access excerpts from the transcripts from the salient phrases of my participants I had marked and noted on my "Where's Waldo" dot matrix notes. I was going to work across two computers to increase my efficiency. On the first morning, my laptop did not turn on. This moment, eventually, was moved beyond, but not after completely ruining any plans for what I had hoped to accomplish. After talking<sup>110</sup> with Hilary Hughes-Decatur, another phenomenologist and researcher, I reluctantly went back to the data again, for my third full immersion into the transcripts. This time, I did not

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<sup>108</sup> Although this could be seen as overly dramatic sharing, what I experienced was visceral, embodied, and real. What I felt during these times was absolute despair. All I knew was what people kept telling me: Trust the process. Listen to the music. Listen to your participants. Trust. Play with the data. Trust. Put words on the page. Trust.

<sup>109</sup> This document is contained as Appendix Q

<sup>110</sup> And by "talking" I mean her speaking to me as I was a slobbering, bumbling mess, curled up in a fetal position on the floor.



listen to the interviews; instead I read them on the computer and began making documents for each participant using the different tentative manifestations as headings. I cut and pasted associated and salient text under each heading, including session number and beginning line number for referencing. I completed this for each of the participants, and then worked across the five documents, copying and lifting the text from each participant, and pasting it into a separate word document devoted solely to that manifestation. Abandoning the four lifeworld existentials (van Manen, 1990), I elected to use a concept from Bachelard (1990) and Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner (2009) on resonance and reverberation, or what I termed Speaking to so as to Speak for. I created two folders, one for Speaking to and one for Speaking for, and began organizing the combined tentative manifestations across the five participants into each of the folders.

Now, reflectively, I see how the total analysis experience embodied the final steps of Vagle's (2010a) suggestions for analysis. Specifically, at the completion of engaging with each data source from a holistic re-familiarizing and initial line-by-line reading in which notes and markings occurred, I lifted the salient meanings gleaned from the data. I created new documents that represented various "parts" of the "whole" to be referenced for a phenomenological description. These sections and pieces were then re-visited and re-accessed for the final writing of the dissertation. Further, each tentative manifestation was continually interrogated through combined analytical notes and bridled audio recordings, and only certain manifestations were selected to be included. These selections were dictated by scope and time, with the most prominent and salient findings being forwarded in the final dissertation. Particularly, I paid close attention to contexts, discrepant cases or assertions, similarities, and those things that stood out, and those that did not. Through titling these manifestations and organizing all of my analysis documents, journals, and indexing of my voice recordings, I created an audit trail of my analytical thoughts and processes. As exemplified through this presentation here, this entire experience was fluid and dynamic, improvisational and exploratory, or one of methodological jamming, resulting

in my ability to move in and out of the analysis and releasing rigid adherence of understandings or manifestations as being absolute, complete, or resolved.

On a final note, it was during this last Ellijay Session where the format for the dissertation was finally solidified. As I was out walking and reflecting on all the difficulties I experienced during these four months of analysis and comprising the last two years of the total research enterprise, a sudden “felt” similarity arose between this experience and what transpired around the birth of my daughter. Both of these births, my daughter’s as well as this dissertation’s, did not “come” when I wanted them to, how I wanted them to, or in the way I wanted them to. But, both eventually came, in their own way, in their own time, and exactly how they needed to. This moment of realization gifted me two things. First, although there was stress, frustration, and tremendous anxiety surrounding her birth, she arrived and was perfect and beautiful. No, it was not how I “wanted it” but it was exactly how it needed to be. So too would the dissertation come. And it too would be perfect and beautiful as long as I continued to honor and focus on the phenomenon and continued to dwell and open up to how it could be presented. Second, at the birth of my daughter, I was compelled to create a cd, a compilation, to sing forth her presence in this world. I had not made a compilation prior to that since my first year as an undergraduate. However, in marking her birth, there was only one thing I could access to “capture” all of those feelings: music. So too came the idea for this of the metaphor and its accompanying compilation.

### **Craft a Text that Captures Tentative Manifestations of the Phenomenon**

This entire dissertation, including the accompanying compilation, represents the actualization of the fifth research component of the Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Approach (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b). As forwarded in the prelude, and hopefully embodied throughout this work, the process of discursively rendering the phenomenon of deep and significant connections with and through music listening is akin to artistic craftsmanship. My goal is to descriptively impart a poignant textual expression of the tentative manifestations of this particular phenomenon. As the text is seen as polyvocal, multiple representations are accessed

throughout, including poetry, narratives, vignettes, journal entries, and, of course, music<sup>111</sup>. This final textual expression is the result of a various thoughts, struggles, and challenges that arose from pursuing or attempting the different forms outlined above. Moving forward, the remaining chapters continue to illuminate this phenomenon by bringing to bear a variety of discourses, thoughts, and expressions that intersect and help give structure and form to this textual representation. As shared in the prelude and its opening invitation, this piece must read coherently, holistically, and be seen to represent the tentative manifestations identified within the analysis throughout its entirety, both explicitly and implicitly.

### **On Trustworthiness**

Issues of trustworthiness and quality are central to the conducting and production of all human social science research, and in particular qualitative inquiry (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Roulston, 2010; Tracy, 2010; Vagle, 2009). Terms such as rigor, validity, reliability, credibility, trustworthiness, transferability, and plausibility (Roulston, 2010) are often associated with criteria to judge or assess the overall quality of one's work. Tracy (2010) forwarded eight "Big-Tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence (p. 840). Dahlberg et al. (2008) leveraged the terms objectivity, which she noted is separate from ontological/epistemological objectivism, and validity as essential to phenomenological reflective lifeworld research, ultimately requiring researchers to be "open, susceptible, and sensitive to the phenomenon in focus" (p. 337). Vagle (2009) challenged the potential of a "de-centered" validity, noting that "validity cannot be separated from the contexts in which a researcher finds himself . . . because validity will always move with and through [one's] intentional relationship with the phenomenon" (p. 601 & 603). Further, issues such as member checking (Roulston, 2010) are seen

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<sup>111</sup> As noted, due to copyright issues, lyrics have been avoided. As I began constructing the final representation, I found out that copyright issues surrounding lyrics are complex and stringent, resulting in potential lawsuits due to copyright infringement. When I discovered this, it became almost comedic that I would not be able to use something which is such a part of one's engagement with music. A future methodological piece is already being planned to directly address this ironic outcome.

to be appropriate for some methodologies, but are challenged philosophically when used in conjunction with other methodological approaches (Giorgi, 2008). Any researcher, especially a qualitative researcher, has much to consider.

Although not overtly addressed, it is through my forwarded transparency concerning my methodological forays and improvisational jamming where I hope to have demonstrated methodological decisions towards trustworthiness, credibility, and adherence to quality within qualitative research. With regard to rich rigor (Tracy, 2010) and time spent developing the study, conducting data collection, and analyzing (Roulston, 2010), this research project spanned a two year period, including an informing pilot study which further refined my topic and afforded experiential honing of my interview skills and techniques, and significant time in the field collecting the data and analyzing. I have bridled my thoughts, assumptions, and pre-understandings (Dahlberg, et al., 2008; Vagle, 2010a) in an attempt to remain open and susceptible to the phenomenon through audio and discursive journaling, participating in two bridling interviews (Roulston, 2010), and continually discussing and receiving feedback from fellow phenomenological researchers. I read, studied, thought about, and struggled through understanding phenomenology, both philosophically and methodologically, to inform and guide this research. I sought multiple data sources (Roulston, 2010) to help better understand and illuminate this particular phenomenon. Finally, I forward this work in its entirety as an expansive audit trail (Roulston, 2010) where I have exhaustively shared my thoughts, struggles, challenges, and processes as I engaged with the phenomenon. As shared earlier in this chapter, I have held two commitments to serve as my foundational metrics for conducting trustworthy phenomenological research: a commitment to my particular phenomenon and to being open and sensitive to how it manifested itself and was experienced in the lives of my participants (Dahlberg, et al, 2008; Vagle, 2010a). This entire work, as an embodied representation of my attempts at adhering to these commitments through the presentation of a meaningful, coherent whole (Tracy, 2010), serves to elucidate and illuminate what I found.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE EXPERIENTIAL SOUNDSCAPE OF MUSIC LISTENING:

#### AURAL HORIZONS AND THE FOREGROUNDING OF DEPTH AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CONNECTION<sup>112</sup>

*A lot of folks, people close to me, they'll say, "You know I've heard that song a million times and I never knew what the words were. I never thought about it." I'm like, how do you not think about the words? What do you do? Is it like a hum or whistle to you? And they're like, "No, I mean I guess I could recite the words, but if you [asked] me, 'Hey, write down really quickly what you think this song is about?' I'd say I have no idea." I don't understand that. I don't understand that, I don't understand that! I guess it's the same thing, [that] a note taker could ask me what the lecture is about, and I would go, I don't know. I guess it would be that way for me. So yeah, [I'm] in-tune with what's going on. In-tune on every level: emotionally, mentally, spiritually.*

Ron, Participant

#### Horizons of Meaning and the Experiential Turn

Phenomena, as lived and experienced *within* and *through* the lifeworld, are a complex intricate latticework of interconnections. Leveraging Hughes (2011) use of a Celtic Knot to create a representational image of a phenomenon, I extend an image I have termed "Phenomenological Knot" (Figure 1), to represent my understanding of the webbed, gossamer nature of phenomena.

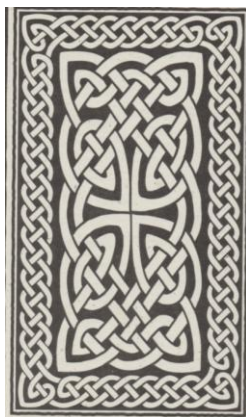


Figure 1: Phenomenological Knot

<sup>112</sup> Track 5, *Nonfiction* by the Black Crowes (Robinson & Robinson, 1994) is associated with Chapter 4.

Every phenomenon is a combination of contextually situated particulars and a Gestalted total (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2008). Within this figure, the particulars are the specific fibers, woven interconnectedly, creating the “phenomenal” whole. What is sought within phenomenology is the meaning of a given phenomenon, but this meaning “cannot be revealed to us in another way than in its totality and its relationships with its particulars . . . always understood against its horizons, [its] inner and outer horizons” (p. 250-251). Gadamer (2002) defined the phenomenological concept of horizons as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (p. 334). These horizons influence and create understanding and meaning. Horizons of meaning originate and extend from a particular vantage point, often subjectively situated within an individual and his/her perspective. Proffering multiple horizons and their subsequent meanings allow for an empathic “taking up” and fusion of horizons, increasing opportunities for understanding. A larger and more expansive horizon of meaning creates the backdrop in which particular meanings may be foregrounded and situated. The goal of phenomenology, then, is to linguistically forward newly emergent and gleaned horizons to *integrate* what is unfamiliar and strange with that which is familiar and known, complexifying understanding and opening up the potential of revealing new meaning(s). These horizons are always situated contextually and historically. As they are historically and contextually situated, any knowledge<sup>113</sup> gained is always partial, temporary, and incomplete. By forwarding new horizons through the representational crafting of a phenomenon within a written text, manifestations of the phenomenon are foregrounded against a horizontal backdrop to reveal aspects of a phenomenon’s essence<sup>114</sup>, and this “essence as a figure [is] seen to stand out against its background, the particulars (Dahlberg et. al, 2008, p. 250).

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113 Or as Breunig (2005) noted of Freire’s perspective on knowledge: “there is no final act of knowing. Knowledge has historicity; it is always in the process of being. If absolute knowledge could be attained, the possibility of knowing would disappear for there would no longer be any questions to ask or problems to solve” (p. 111).

<sup>114</sup> I have purposefully and knowingly “kicked up a hornet’s nest” by choosing to forward the word “essence.” Many philosophical debates, mostly lodged by postmodern and poststructural thought, equate

I purposeful set up the above to denote and demarcate a distinctive “turn” within this work. Up to this point, horizons of the specific phenomenon of interest have been both explicitly and implicitly advanced through my role as the author and architect of this scholarly endeavor. Prior to this juncture, I situated the phenomenon of connection with and through music listening within a larger scholarly discourse, as well as forwarded my philosophical and methodological approaches informing the study. To briefly review, the prelude was proffered as an invitation to the reader-as-listener as a strategy to *look along* (Lewis, 1970) the phenomenon within this work, a result of my scholarly and phenomenological *looking at*. Simultaneously, the metaphor of a compilation tape was extended as a structural accompaniment to the written text to open up polyvocal potentialities as one engages with a study on the phenomenon of music listening. The songs selected and identified as part of the compilation, and the accompanying liner notes, served as a tacit, intuitive, visceral, and embodied representation of those who experience deep and significant connections with music. Music’s presence within the lifeworld, and its inescapability within my lived-experiences, was synced with both scholarly work and popular press exemplars to ground the current inquiry within academic contexts and their resultant horizons of meanings or vantage points. Finally phenomenology, as both a guiding philosophy and foundational methodology, was leveraged to animate this approach to inquiry and to designate the specific goals and intentions of the current scholarship.

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the phenomenological notion of essences with “essentializing,” which reeks of positivism and reductionist tendencies, and thus seemingly carries the mantel and reaction of a four letter word within qualitative human science research. I feel much of this misunderstanding is due to complex philosophical notions and concepts which get “lost in translation” and reflect a cursory understanding not grounded in actual phenomenological thought or ideas, as well as those phenomenologists who forward an incorrect conceptualization (in my opinion) of the concept of phenomenological essences. Essences, like other phenomenological concepts such as intentionality and bracketing, are often misrepresented, misspoken about, misused, and therefore ultimately misunderstood.

I would like to forward van Manen’s (1990) conception of essence here to signify my use of the word. According to van Manen, essence is to be understood as “a linguistic construction, a description of a phenomenon,” not “some kind of mysterious entity or discovery, [or] some ultimate core or residue of meaning.” He likens the presentation and representation of the essence of a phenomenon to an artistic endeavor, or the “creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life in a linguistic description that is both holistic and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and sensitive” in which one is now “able to grasp [and extend] the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way” (p. 39). If I can do any part of this in the present inquiry, I will feel accomplished.

Moving forward, the horizons of meaning will now begin shifting away from explicit scholarly situating and academic grounding<sup>115</sup>, to begin to reveal aspects of the experiential soundscape of music listening by addressing differing aural horizons arising from participant's lived-experiences. The result is the foregrounding of the specific phenomenon of interest in this inquiry: connection, depth, and significance *through* and *with* music listening. First, I briefly extend and address van Manen's (1990) four lifeworld existentials to reveal transcendent and foundational thematics of lived-experiences to create a lens for phenomenologically *looking at* what others naturally *look along*<sup>116</sup> (Lewis, 1970). Then music listening is purposefully identified and forwarded as one horizon of the aural soundscape in relation to music and experiences with music. Accessing salient, rich, and descriptive vignettes from participants' transcripts, journals, poetry, and music, I begin to identify and work across experiential qualities of the phenomenon, addressing both the particulars and the whole. Specifically, the foregrounding of sensitivity and the relationality between hearing and listening opened up a *move from* enjoyment *towards* appreciation, ultimately resulting in the deepening experience that emerged from participants' connection with music. Foregrounding these outer and preliminary horizons of meaning introduce, extend, and demarcate these vantage points in an effort to fuse and further evolve an understanding of this phenomenon. The chapter ends with my troubling of the concept of *connection* by holding in suspended tension, potentially dischordant qualities which emerged from the findings. Through this chapter, deep and significant connection with music as a lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2006) reveals music's presence as a significant experience within the lifeworld through its resonance and reverberation (Bachelard, 1994; Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009), or its ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for*.

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<sup>115</sup> This is not to "say" that the work will be neither scholarly nor academic. Far from it. What this does denote is the foregrounding and horizon's of meaning extended within this chapter will arise from the study's participants, and their pre-theoretical, primordial engagement with their lived leisure experiences of music listening within the lifeworld.

<sup>116</sup> I note this transition from "looking along" to "looking at" as the dance and interplay between engaging with this material from the phenomenological attitude and the natural attitude.



### **Lifeworld Existentials**

To reemphasize, “all phenomenological human science research efforts are really explorations into the structure of the human lifeworld, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations” (van Manen, 1990, p. 101). Phenomenology endeavors to explore the lifeworld through accessing and making the focus of inquiry individuals’ lived-experiences. These experiences are lived *in* and *through* one’s intentional relationships via the natural attitude within the lifeworld. The lifeworld manifests itself to us (Heidegger, 1998) as a dance between the objective, empirical, physical world of objects or the inner world of ideas, concepts, feelings, and emotions, *and* one’s intentional relationships and interactions with these experiences. Van Manen’s (1990) proffered four lifeworld existentials as thematics to organize the partial, fleeting, and tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a) of a particular phenomenon of interest. These lifeworld existentials provide conceptual and thematic clusterings of lived-experiences. Existentials, in relation to phenomenon within the lifeworld, are not to be read or understood as compartmentalized, siloed experiences, but as reflexive orderings of ways in which we live *through* and *in* the world complexly. These existentials are positioned sensitive to, yet transcendent of, historical, cultural, and social situatedness. Transcendent, foundational, and fundamental, the four lifeworld existentials are: *lived space* (spatiality), *lived body* (corporeality), *lived time* (temporality), and *lived human relation* (relationality or communality). I forward these “vantage points” as ways to consider the horizons and particulars of the revealed, partial, and tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a) of this current line of inquiry, extending webbing interconnections between how the participants found themselves connected with music through space, body, time, and relations. Although I may not explicitly organize my findings as such, these existentials created an original entry into, and influenced my interrogation of, the data.

Organizing manifestations in this reflexive, analytical, and discursive way is problematic if one reads these lived-experiences compartmentally. These experiences were lived complexly, blurring boundaries and demarcations, resulting in quandaries concerning the “how” around the

presentation of representational “messiness” of the lifeworld and experiences of the study’s participants. This is a limitation of human science research and must be continually disrupted, confronted, and addressed. My goal was not to refine, reduce, or abstract. I, myself, do not want to fall victim to Husserl’s (1970) critique of science’s abstraction and mathematization of nature and lived-experiences by proffering limit-shapes and organizational categorization void of the plenum or substance matter of what it is to live and experience the world. Consequently, it is important for me to extend to you, the reader-as-listener, the loosening of the reins (Dahlberg, et. al, 2008) of theorization, conceptualization, and organization of these tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a), and instead invite you to read and listen across them, *looking along* them as you are simultaneously *looking at* them, witnessing the complexity in which the phenomenon of connection with music is expressed and understood by those who live in and through the world in this way<sup>117</sup>.

### **Horizons and the Aural Soundscape**

In his work, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, Ihde (2007) conducted a multiyear research program aimed to explore and reveal, phenomenologically, the vast scope of auditory experiences. In endeavoring to “do an original phenomenology,” Ihde accessed multiple disciplines and entry points into auditory perception, including “studying acoustic, psychological, linguistic and speech, musicological, and a whole range of interdisciplinary contributions to audition” (p. xi-xii). The result was a linguistic and descriptive mapping of sound and auditory experiences as they are engaged in via the lifeworld. Ihde forwarded the concept of the auditory field, what I have termed here the aural soundscape, to denote “what is present, but present as implicit, as fringe that situates and ‘surrounds’ what is explicit and focal” (p. 73). This constitutes outer horizons in which inner horizons are contextually and relationally situated. Ihde noted when

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<sup>117</sup> In reference to the Phenomenological Knot (Figure 1) at the beginning of this chapter, what I found in the analyzing of and the writing about this phenomenon was an impossibility of stating anything definitively and absolutely as identifiable parts of a phenomenological whole. As soon as I “teased out” one strand of the knot, other parts would move, re-order, and come forward with this understanding. Just as any webbed, symbiotic system, one may not understand any part void of its relationality to the entire whole.

we listen, our first listening is to that of things, as these things capture our attention through their voices<sup>118</sup>. For phenomenology, however, one does not just “simply take the thing<sup>119</sup> alone without raising the wider question of how things present themselves<sup>120</sup> in terms of a situated context. . . the thing never occurs simply alone but within a field, a limited and bounded context” (p. 73). It is through an understanding of this “field” or soundscape, where a narrowed focus on particulars may be foregrounded against their horizontal backdrop to reveal how they are experienced spatially, corporeally, temporally, and relationally (van Manen, 1990).

This aural soundscape is vast. There exists a multitude of “voices” within the lifeworld, and an exhaustive phenomenology of these horizons is beyond the scope of this specific inquiry<sup>121</sup>. For the current research, the aural soundscape was narrowed to focus specifically on music and its associated horizons of meaning. Music, simply defined, is sound organized into meaningful patterns that express human emotion and meaning. Etymological roots of the word music associate this experience with the art of the Muses, or the Greek goddesses who presided over the arts and sciences. Arguably, music is a universal human experience (Zimmer, 2010) which affords opportunities for unique cultural and individual expression. Experiences with music are diverse. There are those who create music, write music, study music and music theory, perform, produce music, and those who engage with music through listening, dancing, chanting, and singing, or a combination of all the above. In further narrowing the scope of this inquiry, music listening was selected as one experiential horizon within the aural soundscape to create a purposeful, scholarly focus on a specific lived leisure experience accessible to many (Parry & Johnson, 2006). Music listening refers to the experience of engaging with music, whether through purposeful choice, or as a result of proximity and context. Music listening was further honed to

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<sup>118</sup> By voices, Ihde means the aural sounding of a thing(s), not just human speech.

<sup>119</sup> You may read “thing” here as “object,” thus troubling the results of the Cartesian split and the subject / object divide.

<sup>120</sup> You may read “how things present themselves” as “intentionality,” denoting our intentional relationships as manifested within the lifeworld.

<sup>121</sup> See Ihde’s (2007) book if interested in a more thorough phenomenology of the aural soundscape.

focus specifically on adults who expressed significant and deep experiences through music listening with the intent to open up, complexify, and trouble our scholarly understanding. In what follows, I elucidate sensitivity, trouble the difference between listening and hearing, and forward the experiences of enjoyment, appreciation, and connection as aspects to music listening.

### **Sensitivity**

*Joseph: What is that?*

*Naomi: Maybe some people are more sensitive to it than others. This is probably what you're starting to get at with your research, is that there's a sensitivity to it, like there's a sensitivity to anything, you know. Some people are more sensitive to drugs and alcohol than others; some people are more sensitive to allergens in the air than others. And yeah, I mean you can't have such a sensitivity level to music and not be spurred by it to do things. You can't, it would be like you know, having an allergy to pollen but then saying, well today I'm just not going to sneeze every time I'm near pollen, I'm just not going to do it.*

*Joseph: Yeah, just on Tuesdays and Thursdays I'll be allergic, but the rest of the week I'll be fine*

*Naomi: Yeah, I'll sneeze tomorrow, but I'm just not going to sneeze today. I mean it doesn't work that way.*

Naomi and Ron gifted the word: sensitivity into this project. A *sensitivity* to music.

Possibly even a hyper-*sensitivity* to music. This sensitivity captured a seemingly consistent orientation to music from the study's participants within the lifeworld. Music's presence was not just "empirically" registered and "objectively" there. There was a sensitivity to music, and this created a situation in which music was often<sup>122</sup> noticed, acknowledged, and actively attended to. Fascinatingly, this sensitivity did not just result in an awareness, but translated awareness into action, much like Naomi's observation that when one is allergic to a specific allergen, one does not just note its presence, but actually sneezes as a result. She goes on to note how this sensitivity manifested itself in relation to others:

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<sup>122</sup> "Often" is an important word in this sentence. As I move into and through my findings, I am foregrounding certain tentative, fleeting, and partial manifestations (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a) as they emerged from the data and findings. These are never to be read as absolute, static, universal, or forever more. These experiences do not happen "all the time" or universally around all songs, or even all the time with a specific song. These manifestations are glimpses, foregrounded intentionally to open up aspects of this phenomenon. Without these continual disclaimers, I feel I am misrepresenting both the phenomenon and my participants' experiences.

*I haven't even thought about it, but it also explains to me how there have been occasions in my life that I have just been so preoccupied with music in an environment and it doesn't seem to be bothering anyone else. I cannot escape it. I cannot. It's so present in my mind, and yet everyone around me is sort of ok. It's making me realize that there's a reason behind that, I'm not really sure what the reason is, but it's the way I interact with music that has made that happen. Instead of it being something kind of, not wrong with me, I don't know, it's just my relationship with music is different, I guess than others.*

In another poignant example of this sensitivity, Naomi spoke about her young son who, when riding in the backseat of the car and a song came on which he liked, he literally lunged forward, pointing and grasping at the air in front of the radio and said, “Mommy, what is that?” Naomi shared she does this all the time with music as well saying<sup>123</sup>,

*It's so interesting because it happens to me all the time and it happens within like the first couple bars of a song. I was thinking about this the other day because literally I turned on the radio, and like three or four notes of the song played and I was like, what? What is that? I got, I have to know what that is. It doesn't happen to me all the time [but] whatever the sound was . . . I've been thinking about what it is and how I relate to music and I was like God, why did that [happen?] I was like, God, what is it that I can immediately, like immediately. . . We'll be out to dinner, lunch, brunch, or anywhere and if I hear a song - (snaps) [just] like that, connects. I can't even listen to what's going on at the table until I figure out what it is, or can ask somebody in the restaurant to tell me what they're playing.*

These images and moments reveal how this sensitivity created *almost* an impulsive, reactive, and spontaneous action rising from an embodied response to music.

Almost. Each participant still operated within a larger world with its social norms and expectations. When asked if it was as uncontrollable as a sneeze, Naomi shared,

*I mean that's probably a bit of a stretch, I mean I think certainly we can all control our behaviors. I'm an adult. I can definitely control myself, but definitely, the impulse, it's there. It's whether or not you act on it. I mean there's certainly a lot of times when I don't act on it, this sort of sensitivity.*

*Joseph: But it's still there? The feeling's still there?*

*Naomi: Yeah, the impulse is there for sure. Then it's whether or not you act on it or not.*

This horizon of sensitivity is one of embodied, corporeal reaction to music's presence in a specific context or space, but ultimately it is mitigated by a larger social awareness of how to

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<sup>123</sup> As you read many of these passages of participants, their thoughts often trail off, leaving grammatically fragmented sentences. When reading this dialogue, I invite you empathically look along these participant's descriptions to expose the ineffability of how to truly “capture” and talk about this thing which is lived through and not often thought about.

interact relationally with one's environment and others. When socially present with others, or within certain contexts, those who have this sensitivity are aware of how to navigate those contexts appropriately, as defined by social norms, although internally they may be surveilling their reactions so as to maintain a certain presence and image. This is why I loved the image of Naomi's son lunging for the sounds emanating from the radio, as if to grasp and hold them because of a visceral, embodied desiring reaction towards the music. Children, unaware (or unconcerned) of many social "norms," provide images of unrestrained and unbridled impulsive reactions arising from and situated within lived-experiences, affording glimpses into things which are often socially hidden. Phillip hinted at the social surveillance we all are under, but which music seems to challenge and confront through its invoking corporeal and visceral reactions, lamenting,

*Nobody can be this expressive in the working world, you'd get fired. We have to have [music] or we'd go insane. You need it to cut through all the shit of our world to remind us what it means to be human.*

Further, this "lunging towards"<sup>124</sup> finds purchase in Vagle's (2009) use of Sartre's "bursting forth towards" with regard to intentionality and how one finds her/himself, relationally, in the world<sup>125</sup>.

This sensitivity, however, appeared to also present a challenge to many of the participants as they navigated their worlds. A sensitivity and connection to music is not always positive, or even desired. Naomi noted when songs in public spaces (i.e., malls, restaurants, bars, or even in the car), were incongruent with the specific contexts and her subjective moods and feelings, this sensitivity created a visceral reaction within her, manifested as a desire to get away from the music or replace it with some other music. Sometimes the ability to change the music to "fit" a

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<sup>124</sup> Naomi, as well as others, shared one manifestation of this "lunging towards" when she would be in different environments in which she would actively seek out managers or those in control of the music playing to find out the name of a specific song in which she found herself "lunging towards." She and Ron both praised a new mobile app device for smart phones called Shazam® (<http://www.shazam.com>), which "listens" to music which is playing in a specific context, and then provides the "user" with complete information about the song, such as the name, artist, album, and videos. We all three jokingly said that this product was made for "people like us" by "people like us."

<sup>125</sup> This comparison is more fully explored and elucidated in Chapter Five and the tentative manifestation *Getting Lost: Felt Resonance and Embodiment*

context and environment was possible. For example, Naomi spoke of being agitated when certain music was incongruent with a specific context and her subjective experiences within that context, resulting in her desire to change the music<sup>126</sup>:

*[When music is not right] I feel sort of agitated I guess. It really makes [feel] like, I got to get out of here. Agitated to the point where it's not worth it. I feel that way sometimes about some concerts, or restaurants. I mean it's very difficult for me, and I am adult so I can definitely deal with most situations, but if I can, I make the choice not to be in a situation where the music is bothering [me]. This is a good example. Last Sunday morning, when we were in California, [my husband] and I got up crazy early to continue looking at neighborhood. It was a foggy morning, and we were driving over the Bay Bridge, and we had been out late the night before celebrating our friend's 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. We had tons of wine so we were both feeling completely hung-over and we knew we had to accomplish all this stuff. So we get in our rental car, we're driving over the bridge, and [my husband] wants to turn on satellite radio in the car and there's a station called Lithium, and it's like super high powered rock, you know, high energy, like 90s and 2000s kind of rock band rock. And it just . . . that was discordant for me. I was definitely hung over and needed something a little quieter (laughing), but it was also kind of like, we're in this foggy, cool city and the world hasn't woken up yet because it's really early, and the sun hasn't even come up and it's foggy and in my mind, there needed to be another kind of music playing to make that moment complete. So I told [my husband], we can't listen to this. This is not working, this is definitely not working. So we put on an acoustic, Coffee House channel. If I had my own music collection, I would have probably picked something else, maybe classical or even jazz, something a little more obtuse, but, you know, we had to make due with what we had in the car (laughing). But for [my husband], there was absolutely nothing wrong with turning on that [other] music in the morning to get himself revved up. And I get that. For him, his experience was not the whole experience of what we were seeing, where we are, where we're driving. I think for him it was just like, I'm tired and I just need to boost my energy so I'm going to put on some music to do that. It was just different. And once I turned on the acoustic stuff, he was fine with that. He was absolutely fine with that. But for me I couldn't stand having the other station playing. It just was like, this is wrong. This is like having the wrong soundtrack in a movie. You know when it's a love story and they're playing heavy metal, just feels like the two situations aren't matching up.*

Naomi highlighted a sensitivity to the soundtracking or atmospherizing potentiality of music to accentuate and contextualize specific situations and experiences. Interestingly, it appeared for some there is an ability to entertain multiple, diverse soundtracks or aural atmospheres,

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<sup>126</sup> I have purposefully chosen to keep some vignettes long and mostly intact, as I feel my participants' voices, personal vignettes, and stories "communicate better" aspects of these manifestations. Further, these foregrounded particulars reveal a more ineffable and tacit structuring of specific manifestations or horizons, compared to authorial theorizing and summarization. I find myself resonating with van Manen (1990) of how "anecdotes can be understood as a methodological device in human science to make comprehensible some notion which easily eludes us" (p. 116). I recognize as I move forward towards potential publication, editing and winnowing of these vignettes (and these footnotes) will be required to meet journal publication parameters.

depending upon one's motivation for choosing or leveraging music. Naomi's husband, as an example of this, wanted to be energized and thus he selected more upbeat and up tempo music to facilitate this. However, Naomi's sensitivity to music created such an experience of dissonance and discordance in this specific context, it compelled in her a need to change the station. What is interesting to note is her husband's *ability* to be fine with perceived musically divergent experiences with one's context and spatial environment, whereas Naomi's sensitivity viscerally would not allow this.

Conversely, there are other times where it is not possible to change the music, and this sensitivity resulted in extremely uncomfortable situations. Aimeé shared a story about walking into a service station to pay for gas. While inside, she had an embodied and corporeal reaction to the music playing on the radio:

*I was in line waiting. I had to wait for probably 6 minutes. The music playing was driving me bananas. It was the worst, crappiest music I'd ever heard. It was just really awful music.<sup>127</sup> I mean like it was bad. It was just stupid: whatever they were saying was stupid and the beat was bad. I found it really annoying that I had to sit in that gas station and listen to it. I was like, this [music] is stupid, and anybody that likes this is stupid (laughing). That's how I felt.*

Another example of a negative embodied reaction was provided by Ron. After our first interview, Ron began noting and journaling on experiences specifically when his sensitivity created reactions to music which were not pleasurable or sought after, but resulted in his impulse to change the music or get away from it. In one poignant story, Ron shared an exchange he had with his manager at his place of employment where the store radio played, on a repeating loop, only one station:

*I was at work the other day; I work in a liquor store. [My shift] is about 9 hours and we have the music on this radio station that plays the top 40. So there's 40 songs that are on a loop and it's 9 hours, so I hear these same songs about 6 or 7 times every day. So 40*

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<sup>127</sup> I have purposefully removed the "genre" of music here. I do not see phenomenology's intent to objectively "value" or "judge" music genres or musical choices. I was and am not interested in "valuing" or "judging" music to identify a universal genre, artist, or song with which "everyone" connects. In my opinion, these particulars are not important to a phenomenological study. As in the above vignette of Naomi and the California foggy morning, the artist, song, genre, or type of music is inconsequential, phenomenologically. What is important is how "sensitivity" manifested itself in a given lived moment.



songs, 6 or 7 times, everyday. It would be like being on a road trip going from Atlanta to St. Louis in a car without being able to change the radio. And you can't turn it off, can't. I mean Stanley Kubrick even did this when he did "A Clockwork Orange." The guy's torture was to listen to Beethoven over and over and over and over, and even though Beethoven is freaking amazing, it'll make you want to kill yourself if you listen to it on a loop and can't have any control of turning it off. You will go nuts. So after about a month, I finally changed the radio station. The owner comes hauling ass over and goes, "Who changed the radio station?" I said, "I did." He goes, "You?" And lost his shit, I mean bent - out - of - shape! I said, "Whoa, I'm so sorry, I didn't know that I couldn't do this. Do you know that we listen to the same thing over and over?" He goes, "I'm going to tell you something, you are here to provide customers satisfactory service and go the fuck home." He said, "You're not here to listen to music, you're here to do work and then go home." And I said, "I'm not listening to the music, it's not about the music, its not that I don't like this type of music or do like this type, its somebody constantly poking you in the shoulder and you not being able to turn around and tell them to stop. All I wanted to do was to change it to something that I haven't heard for the past month". And he said, "don't listen to it, just go about your job." I was like, how can you not listen to music. If it's on, how can you not listen? When we first started talking I told you I hear things in music that most people just turn off, and I can't turn it off. I listen to every lyric of everyone of these horrible songs. A lot of them are really sad about broken hearts and how people treat each other like shit and it's . . . I just hear it over and over and over and I just, I want to change it. Well, I hit the scan on the [radio in the store], and I said this in the journal, but it was like if you're about to drown and you're looking up at the surface of the water, trying to get there as fast as you can but you don't know if you're going to make it, and you finally break that surface and take that one breath, that's how it felt when I changed that freaking station, after a month of trying to reach that surface, I finally heard a different song. . .

Joseph: So you cannot, not listen?

Ron: I have to. Its not something that I try and do or try not to do, its so dimensional that its almost like if I couldn't even hear it, it would still find a way to touch me. It's like all 5 senses, it somehow gets in. Even if I were deaf I could guarantee you I could still hear it. I don't know how to describe that but I laughed when he was like, just don't listen. I was like, if you only knew, dude. I don't know, it's like autistic children, it's hyper sensitive, it's hyper awareness. You know when you have an autistic child, [how] a ceiling fan drives them up a wall because it's moving, and they can't handle that hyper sensitivity. I feel like sometimes that's how it is with music, I can't ignore that. I wish I could, but I can't.

Both Ron and Aimeé revealed the visceral and corporeally negative reactions emanating from this sensitivity. These experiences were raw, noted, felt, and provide a stark contrast to perceptions of music listening as only a pleasurable or desired experience. Ron's metaphor was exceptionally poignant about breaking through the surface of water, and the associated feeling of taking in that first moment of life giving breath after agonizing through the torture of music which had long gone past a point of desiring or appreciation to that of suffocation and drowning. It is important to keep in mind that all of these examples, both the positive and negative, reveal

how these participants *found themselves* in these experiences, and this sensitivity compelled them to have a diversity of embodied reactions in these moments.

Although the above examples provided extreme and poignant images, both good and bad, of this sensitivity, all participants spoke more generally of a sensitivity to and an awareness of music and its presence within and throughout their lifeworld. Many spoke at length on their awareness of the prevalence of music in movies, TV shows, and even commercials, as the accompanying soundtrack used to purposefully manipulate and pull at the heart strings of the viewer. Zoë forwarded the following challenge,

*I was thinking about this the other day: Think of a movie, whether it's happy, sad, funny, whatever. A movie that maybe you've really enjoyed. Take out all the score, take out all the background music, does it lose any of the effect, does it lose how you've reacted to it or how you connect to it? I would have to say absolutely yes. The impact they're wanting you to get, or the connection they're wanting you to get, or the sympathy would be there maybe a little bit, but not even anywhere close to what they're anticipating if that music wasn't present. A lot of times with movies and stuff like that, you don't even realize it's there because it's one of those key elements put in, but they don't want [it] to stand out and overpower everything else. It's that essential supporting element.*

Further, Zoë spoke on hearing music in the natural world, listening to it in the wind and when she was in nature. Ron provided story after story of how music's presence was not just in song, but would intersect his world in diverse ways including editorials and news programs on music. He dedicated a whole journal entry to a feature he saw on the Kentucky State Penitentiary System which followed a small group of inmates who had formed a band in prison, and how this was the only place they felt safe in their world, because "music does not know hate." All of these examples seem to indicate the overpowering presence of music in these participant's lives, potentially as a result of an embodied sensitivity.

A natural question which may arise from this horizon of sensitivity to music is where or how did this originate, and/or has it always been this way?<sup>128</sup> Naomi and I spoke at length on this

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<sup>128</sup> With regard to phenomenology, identifying empirically deterministic and positivistic variables which may or may not lead to current manifestations of phenomenon are less (or not at all) relevant than attending to how a phenomenon is lived through and in the world. In following this line of inquiry concerning the origins and prevalence of music in the participants' worlds is not being forwarded to create a hypothesis of

topic concerning issues of nature versus nurture with regard to this sensitivity and the origins of music's presence in her life. In response to my opening question prompting her to think of a time in which she felt connected with music, Naomi talked about how music was something shared between she and her mother. Naomi's mom would play the guitar at night as Naomi went to bed, and these moments with music became what she called "connecting points." Now as a mother herself, music's presence is important to her forging and nurturing relationships with her own children.

Similarly, Aimeé spoke of shared musical experiences with her mother through their listening to music together; music which was enjoyable to her mom as she was growing up in the 1950s. Aimeé expressed how these experiences created an opportunity for the two of them to connect with one another and strengthen their relationship. Further, she noted how her mother and father always had music playing in the house, typically opera. Phillip had connections with family and music as well growing up. He and his father would spend time together listening to old albums and radio stations in their old barn. Zoë admitted how, at a young age, she did not fully engage with music as she does now. Although music was present, it was not until later; near the end of high school and beyond, when she said she began making meaning of the world through music. Each of these examples indicated music's presence within social and relational contexts in the participant's lives, specifically their histories. However, Ron indicated there may be more than just a relational socialization to music. When I asked him what music listening "did for him", he stated,

*It's not like that. It's not that it does something for me. I don't know how else to be. You asking me that question is throwing me off because what the hell would you do if you didn't do that?*

*Joseph: So you're not consciously choosing to do it. It's not like I'm going to do x to get y*

*Ron: No! It's how would you not?*

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deterministic cause and effect concerning factors which *need* to be present to *create* someone who has significant experiences with music. It is being offered to further contextualize and situate both sensitivity and those who experienced significant and deeply felt experiences through music listening.

Ron knew no other way of being. He, like the other participants, recognized music's presence in his world. However, this presence is not simplistically understood as a leveraged activity or a straightforward choice. Music, and this sensitivity to it, is already there, embodied and real.

### **Listening and Hearing**

Another horizon of understanding of the aural soundscape of music listening, which marks a shift from but not an abandonment of the vantage point of sensitivity, opened up an opportunity to trouble the words listening and hearing. As is typical with many of the words we choose, similar words are often associated and used synonymously as part of every day speech. Taking time to slow down (Vagle, 2011a) and to think through experiences and their related words, specifically with the intent to reflect on a word's connected experiential qualities and aspects, creates opportunities for nuanced heuristics to elucidate subtle differences of lived-experiences. Although all participants interchangeably leveraged both hearing and listening as they shared experiences of music listening, Zoë spotlighted a distinction early on to signify what happened to her when she moved toward deeper and more significant experiences with music. For Zoë, there arose a cognitive and corporeal distinction between hearing and listening. Listening denoted "an understanding, a retention [for] the listener, [and] this retention sticks with you, you remember it." However, in hearing, "one [only] acknowledges a change of the elements," but these changes are temporary and superficial, if noted at all. Hearing results in occurrences more physiological in nature, similar to what Dewey (2005) observed in hearing's origins in sound disruptions understood through the world of physics, frequencies, and the resulting impacts on our main auditory sense organ, the ear.

Revealing the simple complexity of this idea, Zoë stated, "right now it's quiet. And I hear something and it changes that quiet." This is hearing, not necessarily listening. I am hearing the keys click on my keyboard. You are hearing the cars on the road outside your house or the air moving through vents in the surrounding duct work. This hearing, like many experiential qualities of the aural lifeworld, may or may not be directly attended to, although you are, at some level,

“hearing” them. Empirically, these sounds, noises, disruptions, and frequencies are being created, broadcasted, and physiologically received. Our attention to or focus on them, as opposed to letting them diffuse into attentive nonexistence much like blinking<sup>129</sup> and breathing, is not predicated on whether or not they are actually there. Empirically, they are. Whether we hear them or listen to them is dependent upon whether we are finding ourselves attending to them, either through purposeful and disruptive reflection, or through merely finding ourselves focused on them for whatever reason<sup>130</sup>.

Zoë joked about when she was a child, how she would “hear the sound of my mother’s voice [telling] me to do something, you know you’re told to do something, you hear it, I heard her, I hear what she’s saying, but did you actually do it?” Zoë associated action and understanding of what is heard to that of listening. This is a subtle but important shift: “Yeah, [I said] I’ll put away my laundry. But [I] didn’t put away [my] laundry, [I] didn’t listen. [I] *heard* [you], but [I] didn’t *listen* to [you].” For Zoë, when “listening comes on to the playing field, an action almost needs to be taken in response to that,” revealing an aurally organizing complexity and the symbiotic quality of the “double part that happens: you hear and *then* you listen.” Of course, this distinction is not clean. Nor is it this easily conceptualized, but it does denote an organizing manifestation concerning experiences of music listening with regard to a potential distinction between hearing and listening. Those who attend to music, seek music, engage and derive meaning and understanding from music, do more than just hear or auditorally register changes in frequencies in the surrounding air and their associated origins. One, it appears, listens. From this perspective and vantage point, one could use the term hearing to solely represent a physiological response to noise and sound. This is a sterile experience, not associated with perceived emotion or cognitive investment. However, the term listening indicated both intentional emotional *and* cognitive investment beyond the sensory act of hearing, which transitions it to a

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<sup>129</sup> It is interesting to note that we blink, on average, 36,000 times a day. As you read this, this may be the only time you “attend to” this blinking today.

<sup>130</sup> This is an example of the phenomenological concept of intentionality, or the finding oneself \_\_\_\_\_ .

position of potentials such as meaning, purpose, enjoyment, and fulfillment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Operating from this horizontal vantage point, the study's participants moved complexly across the aural spectrum of hearing and listening. Philip captured this move when he shared a particularly resonating experience with a specific song which created a deeper understanding and afforded a balming experience as he was working through some relational difficulties with others,

*Yeah, I have no idea what he was singing or anything. Nothing, no clue (laughing) and honestly a lot of that music on that tape sounds the same. It's like one continuous song, but it does get louder and it's like I hear it more. [First] it's just kind of there in the background, but now it's something I'm really hearing, that I'm listening to and that's really penetrating my space and my mind and emotions and stuff. I mean the music itself doesn't actually get louder but I hear it more. I become more interested in listening to what it says but [at first] I really wasn't listening, it was [just] there.*

Zoë shared a similar experience,

*So I listened to that [song] for months. For months I would listen to it. I think I listened to it for so long because . . . I'm going to correct myself here, I heard it for so long because I was waiting to listen to it, going back to what we were talking about before. I was hearing it but I kept playing those tracks until the moment when I actually listened. Joseph: And what happened in that moment? I got that understanding.*

Ron captured this in another way,

*I listened to every last lyric and that guitar, the guitar was what threw my breaker on. And all of a sudden, just like always, I started listening. I had tunnel vision and listened.*

Each of these examples indicates this move from just merely registered hearing, to that of listening. These moves to listening, as Zoë mentioned earlier, do something, change something, there is an internal resonating, a throwing on of an emotional breaker, or a purchase in one's being that occurs and is noted. Another fascinating quality to this is one's seeming inability to create deeply significant listening experiences. As many of the participants shared, they were not able to just simply "call up" a song and have a moment of significance. These moments were gifted, sporadic, unplanned, and even potentially serendipitous. As Naomi shared, it is exactly these moments which created a need within those who experienced significant and deep

connections with music, to continually access music so as to open up potentials where one moves from superficial hearing to a profound listening.

Arguably, we all hear music. Potentially we all may even move to a deeper hearing, as Philip shared, or a focused listening to music. But as these examples demonstrated, and for participants in this study, engagement with music appeared to be situated within deeper, more significant experiences through music listening. They would find themselves in moments “going into” and paying attention to what they were hearing, and really listen. Maybe this was due to an innate or fostered sensitivity; maybe not. Regardless, this listening, located at the intersection of song, context, lyrics, music, person, experiences, feelings, and thoughts resulted in a move beyond mere enjoyment and appreciation of music to that of a potential deeper experience.

### **From Enjoyment and Appreciation to Connection**

To proffer a third aural horizon for those who experienced significant and deep connections with music, there needs to be a troubling of the implicit continuum suggested here of enjoyment, appreciation, and connection. As already revealed, for those who experienced deep and meaningful moments with music, music is not merely accessed or heard. What occurred through a heightened sensitivity and a proclivity toward listening and meaningful engagement with music resulted in a movement beyond simple enjoyment or mere appreciation to that of deep and significant connection. This connection resulted in individuals who made sense and meaning of their world through music, or what will be covered in chapter five: music’s ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for*. In this section, I briefly traced horizontal understandings of enjoyment and appreciation so as to set up the phenomenon of connection.

**Enjoyment** With regard to enjoyment, it is important to first note that these participants did not enjoy all music and, as already proffered, they did not enjoy music all the time. As to be expected, their musical tastes oriented them towards certain artists, songs, types, styles, or genres

of music<sup>131</sup>. As much as there was music they enjoyed, they all expressed an astute introspective awareness of genres and types of music they did not care for. Phillip did not care for music which embodied an overly hyped and over the top sense of “earnestness,” or music which he felt was produced to over sell emotions, resulting in his seeing it as being in-authentic<sup>132</sup>. Aimeé spoke about her distaste for music she considered “una-dimensional,” and expressed her desire to find music which was multi-dimensional, or that which expressed a variety of emotions and spoke for a diversity of experiences. Ron echoed this need for a diverse catalogue of music for him to access, which ultimately reflected the complexity and multiplicity of life’s experiences. All five participants forwarded different genres of music, such as techno/house music, death/speed metal, reggae, rap, and classical, as styles of music they were disinclined towards listening to and enjoying. Thus, music’s presence in their world came through certain venues and channels, and knowing the types of music they were inclined to liking, and those they were not, created aural corridors for enjoyment, appreciation, and potential connection. Naomi pointed out how she constantly look for, searched, sought, and was open to diverse varieties of music, noting just because something had not spoken to her in the past, this did not mean that it *could not* impact her in the future.

Enjoyment of music appeared as a consistent experience across the participants. They enjoyed a variety of music, in a variety of contexts, streamed through a variety of mediums (i.e., car radio, compact discs, audio tapes, vinyl records, digital players, internet radio stations, live concerts, videos). All participants spoke on music’s presence, and their accessing it, as they navigated their lifeworlds. In particular, each spoke on music’s accompaniment to everyday,

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<sup>131</sup> As a continual disclaimer, this section should not be read as a valuing or judging of specific music, musicians, genres or styles. The focus, again, is not to identify a universally identifiable piece of music, musician, genre or style of music, but to illuminate and elucidate one’s intentional relationship with music manifested through deep and significant connection.

<sup>132</sup> A fascinating side note and a point of bridled discordant tension which arose from these conversations with Philip was his identification of a particular band as an example of “overly hyped earnestness” which resulted in his perception of their in-authenticity. Personally, I experience deeply significant and meaningful connections with this band’s music. What I hope to illuminate here is my focus on the intentional relationship manifested as connection through music listening, not on the specific song/artist(s)/music or one’s subjective orientation to a specific song, artist(s), or music.



menial tasks such as working around the house/office, walking their animals, running errands, exercising, and just hanging out. In these moments, music was accessed either directly, through the selection of particular albums, artists, and playlists, or indirectly, through satellite radio stations, music playing through speakers in public areas, or internet music websites. In these experiences, music could be considered backgrounded, whether intentionally, for example, through volume level, or unintentionally as their attention was directed elsewhere. It could be argued they were hearing the music, but were not actively listening or attending to it. These moments created superficial enjoyment with passing flourishes into the acknowledgement of music's presence and impact. Again, it was backgrounded, acting as an accompaniment, blending into their context and environment as part of the aural soundscape. Naomi compared it to "breathing," saying it is "so second nature to me that I [don't] even [think] about it."

In these contexts, music was seen as "cool," "good," "really good," or they "dug it." I would assert, it was enjoyable, or more specifically, was a source of cursory and temporary enjoyment. To illuminate this cursorily nature of enjoyment, Aimeé spoke at length on her use of the word "pop" in relation to music. She considered "pop" music to be the popular music of a given moment in time. This music was fun to listen to, could get you motivated or moving, and offered musical atmospherizing or soundtracking accompaniment to specific contexts or situations. She spoke about accessing particular artists when she was in Los Angeles with her best friend, riding around in a convertible, because it was fun and "fit" the scene and context. However, for Aimeé, great music, more meaningful music, was music which lasted the test of time or music that would not be forgotten within six months to a year as new "pop" music arrived on the scene. Similarly, Zoë spoke on the entertainment value of music, indicating some music was merely,

*Kind of a quick fix, reminds me of like a band aid fix. I want to escape so I'm just going to pay attention to this alternate reality I would like to be a part of because it looks fun or it's exciting or it's where I would like to be or something like that, but it's not what's real. It's not what sticks with you.*

Arguably, this is one of the major draws of music, and what supports the worldwide multi-billion dollar music industry (Recording Industry Association of America, 2009). Music is entertaining, enjoyable, and easily accessible. These musical experiences are part of the fabric of the lifeworld for many. In this study, participants engaged with music in this way, but also engaged with, accessed, and leveraged music beyond cursory needs of enjoyment or entertainment.

**Appreciation** An appreciation of music noted a move beyond enjoyment as it appeared to indicate a more substantial level of investment. These participants enjoyed music, but each invested significant time and attention into further developing and fostering their experiences with music. Naomi expressed,

*I love music. I've always loved it. I've spent a lot of my life exploring it. Call it a hobby or call it an extra-curricular whatever, but it's just something I really fuel, I foster, I spend time developing, cultivating it. It's not just a passive interest, it's a main interest.*

It was such a central part of Naomi's experiences that she even attempted a career in music,

*I tried to make a career out of music, working in the music industry. People always ask me, 'Why did you get out of the music industry?' And the reason I got out of the music industry is because I didn't feel like working in [it anymore], [there are] things that are really kind of ugly and hard about the music industry, [and this] took away from my passion for music.*

This investment was also demonstrated by participants' willingness to explore musical influences and histories of given songs, artists, and genres. Ron's interviews and journals were full of historical narratives concerning the influence and stories behind specific songs and musicians, including fascinating anecdotes about stubborn cows, college roommates, and debts repaid by the playing of an up and coming artist's song by musical legends in repayment of his car being burned down in a Fourth of July concert festival. This historical knowledge of both songs and artists revealed substantial attention to learning and engaging with their back-stories, moving beyond superficial or temporary enjoyment.

Aimeé, along with two friends in college, actually created and introduced a groundbreaking regional radio show steeped in their love for soul music and a desire to trace featured artists' musical influences. This arose out of her,

*Interests in the evolution of music. How did this whole genre of music become what it became? It was so powerful and it's so identifiable, I mean there's nothing like it, there never was before and there really hasn't been sense. It's this really amazing time of American music, so it's interesting to explore why and how that was happening here and figure out what [influenced] these [artists]. What do all these [artists] have in common?*

Appreciation and its corollary of investment also involved significant amounts of money and time. Music appreciation, when contrasted with other potentially sought after lived-experiences, further revealed how central music was in the participants' lives. Philip shared,

*I don't really get into a lot of other stuff. I've never really gotten into anything as much as I've gotten into music. I have more money invested in instruments than I do in my car (laughing,) you know. And it's always been that way. I tried to have other interests, but nothing really interests me as much, and my music collection is really vast. Between [my fiancée] and I, we both have this un-godly amount of music. I'm constantly on iTunes and just listening to new stuff and checking things out, literally mining for music.*

Appreciation, thus, moves beyond mere enjoyment or accessing music for entertainment through introducing intentional and purposeful investment of time, attention, research, and money. I have briefly addressed aspects of enjoyment and appreciation with regard to music listening, each a potential phenomenon in their own right, so as to set up connection as the particular phenomenon of focus for this study.

**Connection** Connection provided the last horizontal vantage point to *look along* to reveal the interconnected, gossamer nature of deep and significantly meaningful experiences of music listening. As it is manifested and lived in and through the lifeworld, a Post-Intentional Phenomenological understanding of connection eludes and resists a final, abstracted, and resolved conceptualization (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a). Connection is experienced complexly, and thus must be allowed a complex representation, one which is inevitably tentative, partial, and incomplete. As already forwarded, a number of inner and outer horizons intersect in a knotted interconnection creating this specific lived-experience.

As discussed, through experiences with music, participants revealed deeper, more significant moments of engagement with music. As a result of my own bridling interviews and experiences, and for lack of a better word as I entered into this specific inquiry, I forwarded the

word “connection.” However, the ineffability of these moments troubled many of the participants, especially as they attempted to describe and share these experiences. Each participant, at some point during the interviews, expressed frustration for not knowing how to explain or describe these deeper experiences. Ron even challenged the use of the word connection, revealing the difficulty of capturing the significance of these experiences, when he said,

*I used connected because you did. You see I don't even think that there's a word. There's a few situations in my life where there is no word for how I feel. One is my parents. I mean how do you say how you feel about your parents? There is no word for that, you know. One was for the girl that I almost married. I don't know how to tell you how much I love her. Like she and I would talk about how “love” don't cut it. We would try to think of a word like adoration or something, [because] there's so much more when you get to that level of affection. And then there's music. I don't know how to . . . Every thing I could say about music would be an understatement because there is just no word for it. There is no word about how I feel about it. I am so impressed with it all. It just makes me giddy, it just gets me going. It's crazy. Just like that girl did. She made me feel alive, got me going, there's just no word for adoring someone that much. I mean connected. Yeah of course, like saying that I'm connected to music would need a lot of explanation and examples because it is such an understatement. It'd be like saying, “yeah, you know breathing is pretty cool.” But, you gotta have it. It's so much a part of everything you know, without oxygen, not only can you not breathe, but you can't start a fire, you can't have water, you can't do a lot of stuff. I mean without music I wouldn't feel, or know half the things I feel or know [them] as intensely, and I'm a pretty intense person. I'm passionate about things, good and bad. I'm passionate, but without music I wouldn't have that depth that I feel like I do.*

As shared earlier, Naomi also compared her need for music to that of breathing. She echoed many of Ron's sentiments about the centrality of music in her lifeworld,

*I could never go six months without listening to music or some of my favorite music*  
*Joseph: Could you go a day?*  
*Ron: No, I don't even know how, I mean it's just not possible, there's always music in my life, there's always something. Whether it's in my head just singing, there's always music. There's not a day that goes by that I don't have a song in my head.*

Further, she expressed why she felt the word connection is so poignant to describe these centralizing experiences with music, and how this understanding has been fostered and developed through participating in this study,

*I find that my connectedness to music is really what is becoming very obvious to me and in a way that I kind of have always known, but hadn't really ever tried to pinpoint why or to what depth. Connectedness, I think it's a great word. Because I feel like listening to certain songs makes me feel more connected to myself and makes me feel more connected to the past, to people, to experiences, memories, things like that. That's a huge*

*component of music in my life. What it is, is a sense of me feeling connected to who I am, at my core. It's evoking emotion and that in and of itself is a beautiful thing. It's not just leaving you blank, it's making you feel something and I think that's a phenomenal thing.*

Music appeared central to the participants' worlds, opening up opportunities for deep and intense feelings. Music also served as a connector or connecting point. When following up with Zoë about how long she could go without music, or what would happen if her ability to listen was taken away, she shared that although it would be difficult, she would hope she would be able to find something else which "did" for her what music did. It is in exploring some of what music is "doing" for these participants, specifically from a horizontal vantage point of connection and the lens of music *speaking to* so as to *speak for*, which will comprise the entirety of Chapter Five. Here, however, it is important to note this shift of lived-experiences of music listening as movement beyond enjoyment and appreciation, to one of something deeper: connection.

One way of considering how connection manifests itself is in specifically focusing on the moments and occurrences when and how it occurs. Philip shared a poignant example,

*I'm looking for something that's going to just, you know, click. Just like, whoa, what is that? I need that. Man it's exciting, it's like a rush. God there's an old song where this guy, and I don't remember who it was, but he basically wrote a song to Brian Wilson<sup>133</sup> and he said, "Every note from you is like a letter from home."*

With Zoë, I introduced a cynical and critical perspective on the concept of connection and her experiences, and she used this image of "clicking" as well to describe the moment of connection,

*It's one of those really frustrating things that if you're approaching me with a critical perspective, I would say it's one of those things that I just feel it.*

*Joseph: How do you feel it?*

*Zoë: It just clicks, and I know I'm using even more and more obscure vocabulary, but it's like putting together a puzzle and you find that, oh wow, these two pieces fit together. Wasn't even really trying to get the puzzle together, your just fiddling around with the pieces while you're doing something else, almost like mindless chatter or background noise, your just kind of doing it and then all of a sudden you're like oh, that fit, wasn't even looking for two matching pieces, but they just happened to match up. That's what it's like.*

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<sup>133</sup> Brian Wilson is a revered and respected American songwriter and musician. He is mainly known for being the leader of, and arguably creative genius behind, the Beach Boys.

These descriptions, with similar visceral trappings of Naomi's son lunging at the air, pointing and grasping at the noise emanating from the speakers, created an image of latching on to that thing which "clicks," finds purchase, and creates an embodied resonance within. Interestingly through these descriptions, connection appeared at times to be action oriented outwardly within the lunging towards example, yet the visceral experience of this puzzle-piece-clicking and "Every note from you is like a letter from home" seemed to have feelings more associated with settling in and a space of rest. Both appeared to emanate from a deeper place of connection, affording a textured complexity to this notion and horizon of understanding.

Another way of *looking along* connection is through the concepts of *kismet* or *sympathetic chords* and *sympathetic strings*. Naomi forwarded *kismet* to describe the immediate connection which occurs when you first meet someone and you have feelings of already knowing that person, being cut from the same cloth, and/or an intuitive sense of kindred old soulness.

Specifically, she said,

*There's an immediate . . . you know I want to use the word kismet. Kismet is used to describe . . . So [one] usually says, "I have kismet with that person." It's like you immediately, upon meeting that person, you just feel something, like there's an immediate attraction, kind of a like-mindedness. You know, you just feel like you're cut from the same cloth and you don't really know why, you just are. Sometimes I just feel that with a song, a type of music, or whatever it might be that's a component of music. It's just an immediate sense of, "I get that music and that music makes me feel something." It's an immediate sense, it's unexplainable, it just happens and it's just there.*

As shared above, Zoë mentioned the feeling of a piece of music "striking a chord." Philip further elucidated this image when he forwarded the concept of *sympathetic strings* or *chords* to capture this experience. As he explained, the traditional Indian stringed instrument, the sitar, is comprised of external strings, fretted and tuned<sup>134</sup>, much like the western guitar or bass guitar. The sitar, however, has internal strings as well. These internal strings, or what Phillip shared are referred to as *sympathetic strings*, are tuned so that when the external strings played certain

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<sup>134</sup> This is what creates specific notes for a stringed instrument: the combination of tension on strings, location of pressure along the strings of the instrument, and an external source plucking, striking, strumming or bowing.

frequencies as notes and chords<sup>135</sup>, the internal strings were excited and animated by that external frequency, creating a resonating, fuller, embodied sound *within*. Arguably, this is where the phrases, “tugging at one’s heart strings,” “playing on one’s heart strings,” or “striking a chord” comes from. Leveraging these images, certain sounds, music, genre, artists, and styles create an internal resonance within these participants causing them, as Philip shared, to,

*Search and dig and plough through all the vast stuff out there looking for certain things that hit those strings inside of me, you know, and some things do and some things don’t.*

This is not an experience one seemingly creates or necessarily wills into being. Possibly due to an innate sensitivity and/or an impulsion for deeper listening, these moments arise at the intersection of person, song, and moment to create an internally resonating experience. Further, there seems to be an orientation towards receptivity and openness in these moments. As a result, these experiences are profound, and fuel continual engagement with music in the hope and desire to come upon just the right song at just the right moment. Philip went on to say,

*I’m just looking for sounds that click, that hit those strings inside of me. It’s almost instantaneous, it’s like I’ve never done crack, but (laughing) I heard a guy tell a story about doing crack where he drew in the smoke and like it just floated right through his skull into his brain and [was] like sudden euphoria for him. Well for me, some of this stuff, it’s like the music goes right into the ear, through the skull, [and] into in my soul, somewhere all inside of me. It’s like almost that instant connection, do you know what I mean? Like when I was talking about breaking through that film. [It] happens almost instantly and it’s like wow. I feel connected. It’s almost like if you were to walk around for several years never having a mirror and then suddenly seeing your face in a mirror. It’s like just meeting people who are like you. Let’s say if you’re left handed and you’ve never known any other left handed people in your life and suddenly you see there’s a left handed store right (laughing) its like you don’t feel alone, you feel connected. And suddenly [I] feel right, feel at ease with myself, like this is what I like, this works for me.<sup>136</sup>*

Zoë described similar experiences like these, stating,

*All of a sudden it grabs me. Whether it’s a lyric or a line or an emotion or a melody, all of a sudden, it’s like striking that chord that you were looking [for], you were wanting to*

<sup>135</sup> Typically, a chord in music is when two or three notes of music are played simultaneously.

<sup>136</sup> Philip was the only participant who also participated in the original pilot study. As discussed in Chapter 3, I leveraged the use of Found Poetry as I found myself “in-between” the pilot study and embarking on my dissertation. I have included in the Appendices, (Appendix R) the poem created from Philip’s pilot study data. In reflecting on this specific passage, the poem, entitled “I’m just a tree,” has residual echoings of the experience of connection reflected here by Philip.

*hear that certain chord, and you just could not figure out how to make it, you didn't know how to do it, you kept trying to force it but it just wouldn't happen. They were always out of tune, it wasn't the right song, it wasn't the right line, and then you just kind of let it happen naturally and it happens, and you weren't looking for it, it just kind of brought itself about, and that doesn't always happen, which I think is why those moments are really beautiful because more times than not they don't happen. But when they do, I try to hold on to them, I try to remember them. Because it's something that you could never anticipate, something that you could never really expect.*

Connection, this connection with and through music listening, comes with the suddenness of a broken shoe lace. In these moments, one is seemingly frozen, captured, held, validated, cradled, and connected. There, at times, is clarity. There, at times, is understanding. There, at times, is meaning, whether purposefully and cognitively processed or just emotively experienced. There is felt embodied resonance and the potential for re-enchantment (Bacherld, 1994; Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009). Further, there is potential for external and active reverberation through gifting, giving, sharing, expressing. One simultaneously loses and finds him/herself in these moments. They are real, authentic, lived, visceral, and significant. They transcend genre, artists, and song. They float in and out of contexts and moments, relationships and engagement, and create a number of diverse and different outcomes. Arguably, they are always, already there (Heidegger, 1998), circulating and pulsating throughout the lifeworld, waiting, patiently, for one to get locked in their stream, gaze, and aural web, to release to their current and let go enough so as to find oneself connected.

### **The Harmonious Dischordancy of Connection<sup>137</sup>**

As the specific focus of the present inquiry was on *connection*, or an illumination and answering of the original research question: “What is it to find oneself *connected* with music,” I felt it essential to trouble a few final salient and revealed aspects of connection *prior to* embarking upon the forthcoming textualizations of the partial, tentative, and fleeting

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<sup>137</sup> During my experiential wrestling with how to ultimately represent this study through a specific format for the dissertation, I had early on considered a manuscript style dissertation. This section is largely informed by a specific manuscript which arose as a result of this process entitled, *Harmonious Dischord: Post-Intentional Phenomenology as Understanding through Suspension*. The abstract for this piece is found in Appendix O.



manifestations of the phenomenon. Connection, as the foundational underpinning and root of the current research, was continually troubled throughout the study's inception, development, implementation, and representation. Up to this point, I have crafted this text to bring the reader-as-listener to the specific vantage point of connection, through grounding the phenomenon in participants' lived-experiences and overlaying the gossamer and knotted particulars manifested through this inquiry. In doing so, and as a result of my own bridled (Vagle, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) engagement throughout this work, I continued to struggle with methodological processes, reductionistic compulsions, and wrestling with seemingly dischordant<sup>138</sup> data and findings. Specifically, I continued and continue to be challenged by whether or not it is the lyrics or the music which create these meaningful experiences of connection; is it more accurate to state one connects "to" or "with" music; and finally is music the thing to/with which one connects, or does music connect one to/with something else?

As is typical in much of empirically based, scientific research, researchers engage in analytical and methodological work to forward findings in an attempt to theorize, reveal, or illuminate a specific phenomenon or focus of inquiry. Kuhn (1996), in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and Feyerabend (2010) in *Against Method*, cautioned research grounded in the scientific method's post-positivistic tendencies towards refinement, reduction, and finalized operationalization or defining of experiences as abstracted, distant, and removed from experiences as they are lived. Both, in essence, call for *some* science to actually proceed counterinductively, and even anarchistically to resist rationalism's hold on narrowing, isolating, distilling, and acts of wrapping or mopping up. Arguably, this is exactly what Husserl (1970)

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<sup>138</sup> I am purposefully playing with the word "discordant" here by manipulating the root word "cord" to be chord, or the simultaneous sounding of, typically, two or three notes. This is a semantic move. Further, I was playing across definitions of the following words: *Concord*, or music which is in harmony; *Harmony*, or two or more tones sounded together; *Discord*, or the lack of harmony between notes sounding together resulting from a chord that is regarded as displeasing or requiring resolution by another or a single note dissonant with another; *Suspension*, or the dissonance produced by holding over a tone from one chord to a new chord. Through my own natural compulsions for abstraction, refinement, and resolution of potential dissonance producing dichotomies, I have purposefully elected to hold potentially or seemingly dischordant notions in suspended tension to further see what may be revealed.

claimed through his informing rallying cry for phenomenology of “back to the things themselves,” by re-plenumating the limit-shapes. Leveraging Post-Intentional phenomenology (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) with its implicit orientation not to resolve or finalize, but instead to open up and complexify, the following perceptually and potentially dischordant dichotomies are purposefully suspended or held in tension to further reveal nuanced experiences of connection via music listening. Each quandary resulted in more of a “yes, both” as opposed to a one or the other, revealing and mirroring how we all experience the world complexly.

Covertly woven throughout this chapter, experiences with music resulting in connection have resulted from engagement with and through both lyrics and the music itself. However, explication of the specific medium and channel, either through lyrics or music, creating these meaningful experiences of connection has been purposefully avoided until now. Also, as discussed specifically in the previous chapter, the original pilot study sought to determine which preposition to leverage within the research question: either “to” or “with.” A careful reading of the forwarded transcripts reveals that although a preposition was forwarded as the guiding question for the study (my use of “with”), many participants used both prepositions interchangeably, opening up an opportunity for troubling each preposition’s use and impact concerning this phenomenon. Further, seeded by my informing methodologist during my initial bridling interview, I was challenged with the question of whether music was the “thing” to which one connected with, or whether music served as a “medium” to connect one with something else. In the following sections, I briefly trouble each of these forwarded binaries and potential dichotomies. Again, these are Lyrics/Music; To/With; and Music as Medium/Music as the Thing.

### **Lyrics/Music**

*Zoë: A lot of times when I hear a song, you know I listen and do a literal translation of the lyrics, line by line. Then I start peeling back those layers and seeing, you know, how that [meaning] might change or how that might connect with me.*

*Naomi: I’m drawn to music that has [a certain] kind of harmony in it. I was thinking about this, when I hear some thing that I like, that I really like, I have to know immediately what it is, and then I sort of like store that away. I think there’s definitely*

*types of music, from a sound perspective, that I definitely find [that I like]. I don't know a lot about music, I certainly know less about music theory now than I ever did, but there's certain harmonies that I like to hear, and there's certain tonal qualities that I like to hear, and I think when those things come together in a song or a band, it just triggers in me something that I like and that I'm drawn to.*

To be bold, I would venture that the majority of the participants<sup>139</sup> in this study, implicating myself here as well, would agree with Naomi's self assessment of knowing little to nothing concerning music theory, or claiming to have any sophisticated compositional or theoretical knowledge concerning the creation, performance, or critique of music. We are not musicologists or ethnomusicologists. We are not aesthetically trained philosophers. Most participants admitted to not knowing the first thing about music theory, terms, or expressions. We, simply put, are music lovers. We love music. We seek out music. We crave music. We surround ourselves with music. We have meaningful experiences with music. We make meaning through music. And when talking about their entry into and experiences with music, they, like me, tended to break down musical ingresses into two parts: lyrics and the music itself. Focusing in<sup>140</sup> on these two avenues of access, connection and meaning manifested itself along the knotted and interwoven polyphonic interplays between words and the music.

With regard to how meaning is manifested through experiences of connection with and through music listening, a natural entry point would be to look at lyrics. Lyrics, or the words used in conjunction with music to complete the construction of a piece or a song, are typically crafted and created from a songwriter or artist to convey a particular idea, experience, moment, or

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<sup>139</sup> The one participant who I would venture to say is an exception of this observation was Philip, who is a singer/songwriter himself and demonstrated a more advanced theoretical and compositional understanding of music. I would venture that many music listeners engage in and with meaningful and significant experiences with music without feeling the need to be able to identify the parts of a song from a compositional, theoretical, or analytical perspective. They ontologically live through these experiences prior to any need to epistemologically think or know about them.

<sup>140</sup> I would like to again forward Sokolowski's (2000) notion of phenomenological "bracketing" here to demonstrate and exemplify a focusing in on a specific intentional relationship and how it is manifested via a lived orientation in the lifeworld.

feeling<sup>141</sup>. In traditional discursive texts, words are used to convey meaning and understanding.

Words “say” something, and thus, in music, lyrics “sing” something. Ron stated it this way,

*Music is a way of communicating, so whether they're getting the message across with the lyrics where there's somebody literally singing to somebody out there with those words - Eminem does it all the time with his daughter, with his mom, with Kim, literally singing to them - that could be a message he wants to tell them, to tell his audience which is the world.*

Here, lyrics contain a specific message and that message is communicated through the song to say specific things, expressing a particular meaning. It is while listening to music that lyrics provide the experiencer, at times, with a felt sense of understanding through being spoken to as Philip noted when he shared,

*I listened to this [one song] so much, just kind of over and over and over. It was just really speaking to me, just on a deep level, the lyrics. I mean the music is good, you know I could critique it in a lot of ways, but there was just something about [the lyrics] that just really spoke to me where I was in my life.*

This sense of being “spoken to” appeared to hold much of the deeply intimate and profoundly relational nature of meaning manifesting itself through lyrics. Lyrics typically have an inherent melodious musicality, moving them beyond being merely spartan and unembellished spoken word. Ron shared why lyrics actually do more for him than poetry noting,

*Lyrics, the reasons it's beyond poetry to me is because you can hear the different pitches, tunes, inflections and they get the message across with more than just words.*

Lyrics emotively sing more than what is discursively and sterilely written down, adding diverse, salient, and poignant flourishes to get at nuanced complexities of lived-experiences within the lifeworld. However, it is not so simple to solely focus on the lyrics without concern for the yoked and tethered music associated with them. Aimeé troubled these experiences by observing,

*I would say definitely music with lyrics is what resonates with me, and it usually is the lyrics that I get really fixated on. [But] it's the music too. You know, I can't have really good lyrics and crappy music. For example there are some Bob Dylan songs that I think are really well crafted, well written, and as a poem on a piece of paper, I think its really*

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<sup>141</sup> A result of this inquiry is my deeper appreciation of all aesthetic undertakings (music, novels, poetry, sculpturing, painting, dance, etc.). In my opinion, all aesthetic acts are phenomenologically embodied endeavors, or to use van Manen's (1990) words, they attempt a primal and incantative telling of the world and our shared and resonating experiences within it.

*cool, but then as a song and as something to listen to and to enjoy, I don't because I don't like the music that goes along with it. If you look at [the lyrics only] it's kind of interesting, but when he sings about it, he's kind of talking it, there's no kind of melody and I don't like it. It doesn't appeal to me at all.*

Well crafted lyrics, full of latent meaning and accompanied by music which is incongruent, dischordant, or emotively and aesthetically displeasing may actually move one away from, or lessen, any potentiality for connection or meaning contained within the lyrics.

All aesthetic acts require at least some degree of interpretation on the part of the experiencer. Connection and meaning can be found to manifest itself at the intersection of artist, song, lyric, listener, and context. Fascinatingly, this meaning may be contested, incongruent, or uniquely manifested and embodied within a specific listener in comparison to other listeners, or even the presenting and performing artist through their lyrics and work. These potentials were directly troubled and reflected on, introducing larger philosophical and reflexive musings concerning art, aesthetics, and interpretation of meaning. When Ron was asked about the potential multiplicities of interpretation and meaning from a given song and its associated lyrics, he leveraged a story he heard about one of his favorite artists and shared,

*No it doesn't matter because, like for instance Dave Matthews in an interview once said a lot of times his fans would come up to him when they had the opportunity and say, "Hey, what is this song about? I'm having a debate with my friend, he thinks it means this and I think it means this." And Dave [would] never tell him, ever. He said that would just stomp on the whole purpose of what he's doing.*

*Joseph: What do you think he's doing?*

*I think it means something to him . . . I think Dave's in it for the people. If he delivers a song to a crowd and you connect with it and it means something to you, it doesn't matter to him that it's not maybe what he is intending to sing about. But because he just lit your fire, he gets off on that, you know, he wants people to take him [down] all different avenues. Like if you were to look at art work, you know, of course the artist had an intention. But if your sitting there saying, well this is what I think this means, I'm sure the artist goes wow, I haven't even thought about that and it's my own stuff. It doesn't matter to me if what I get from a song [is what the artist intended or others get], because it's real to me. It's not like I'm trying to figure out a crossword puzzle and I'm miss spelling words on purpose to make them fit, you know, it doesn't matter. It's real to me, so to have that freedom, to be able to . . . there's no boundaries, none at all, and whatever I make of it is real, so how cool is that, there's no wrong answer.*

I specifically asked Zoë what would happen if someone felt her meaning was incorrect or derived a different meaning from a particular song and was critical of her interpretation. Her response was,

*Then I would respond, “that’s my connection.” I’m not trying to impose that connection on anybody else. I understand how it can be frustrating and irritating for an outside source to be like, that doesn’t make sense, or I don’t agree with that because they’re not feeling what I’m feeling. They don’t have all the background experiences and influences that might be playing a part in me making that connection. I don’t get mad, it doesn’t frustrate me. It saddens me more than anything because I know how important [these] experiences are for me and how much they’ve played a part in my life. They can be life changing for people, these moments in time, and it makes me sad if someone were to be really critical in a negative sense, because it makes me think that they haven’t had that. They have no reference point and because they don’t have that reference point, it doesn’t make sense to them.*

Naomi’s response to this same line of inquiry, specifically focused on what would happen if she interpreted a given song to mean a particular thing only to find out later from the artist it was meant to convey something completely different, was,

*[With] a song that gets me thinking about the lyrics and the words, I’m definitely interested in what the song writer intended when they were writing it, but it’s not something I seek out necessarily because I believe interpretation is an important part of it. And I think that any artist who’s creating art, whether its music or painting, I think that they, let me put it this way, if an artist does not think that their art is going to be interpreted in numbers of different ways by numbers of different people, then they’re very, very mistaken. Because it will be. It always will be, everything we do is interpreted different ways by everybody, and I think that is kind of the beauty of being an artist: you’re putting something out there and you’re taking that risk of having all these people out there in the world interpret what you’ve created. And some might interpret it the way you intended and some might not. Maybe you want them to interpret it in different ways. Maybe it’s an open for interpretation kind of thing, I think if you expect people to, as an artist, take everything you’ve done very literally, and force people to think about it in a way that you want them to think about it, then it’s not really art, it’s propaganda.*

Words say something and lyrics sing something. Meanings derived from the relational intersection of lyrics and music created potentials for connection and meaning. What is important here is not a literal “reading of” or an essentializing of that meaning, whether intended or interpreted, but it is the lived-experience and situated meanings manifested when one finds him or herself connected with music through their engagement with both the lyrics and the music.

Transitioning, lyrics are not the only thing which creates connection or meaning for those who experience deep and significant engagement with and through music listening. Sometimes it's the melodies and harmonies created through the singing of words which become a resonating and meaningful experience, separate from listening for a literal understanding or interpretation.

Zoë shared,

*I love hearing harmonies that are done a cappella, like without music. When I hear songs that are sung in that manner, I don't hear the words, I'm hearing how their voices create melodies, and that's so cool.*

Naomi and I spoke at length about how with some music and musical groups, the voices and words almost become an additional instrument. One no longer even pays attention to the words, their associated meaning, or what they are trying to express or convey. Naomi noted,

*It's the voice and the music and not necessarily what the voice is saying . . . there are a lot of bands that I like in particular that I don't think the words matter and what they're singing about it's just the sound of the voice with the music [that] I'm most interested in and it's not at all what they're saying.*

Ron further troubled the need for a literal understanding of a song's lyrics and its association with manifested and embodied meaning when he brought up a specific example of the opera song *Nessun Dorma* and a performance of it on a popular TV show<sup>142</sup>.

*Nobody probably understood what he was singing, unless they knew Italian or had known the song previously, but everybody felt it, there wasn't a person in that audience that didn't feel that. And they don't know Italian. They don't even probably know the song, period.*

*Joseph: What did they feel?*

*Ron: They felt something. They were moved. They felt like somebody was making a statement.*

*Joseph: What do you feel when you hear it?*

*Ron: I always get teary eyed, just because I've felt that passionately about things before. And to know that somebody else out there, I mean I think this song was written in like the 1600s or something, but to know that somebody else out there has put their foot down and said, "I'm not moving and I'm not going anywhere, this is what I want, and I'm letting everybody know I'm not changing my mind." I think it's awesome to have somebody feel that passionately about something, [it] just moves me.*

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<sup>142</sup> A link of this performance can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1k08yxu57NA>. At the writing of this dissertation this particular video had 88,809,456 views. This was one of the songs Ron chose as part of his constructed playlist for the interviews.

Connection and meaning, as manifested, embodied, visceral, and poignant, escape shackled confinement of literal or siloed understanding or interpretation a song's lyrics. Music, itself, can move people, sans lyrics or, at times, in spite of the lyrics. Both Zoë and Aimeé spoke about particular music they enjoyed, which when they really listened to the lyrics, they realized how "nasty," "vulgar," and "horrible" the lyrics and the song's meaning was.

Music itself also stirs emotions. Music, arguably, creates meaning. Further, music appeared to give expression to and validation of the multiplicity of emotions and experiences one engages with through the lifeworld. Philip wrestled with these very ideas reflecting on a particular instrumental song he forwarded as part of the study and shared,

*It's just very angular, disruptive. Sort of clashing, you know. There's no words, but it's so expressive and there's so much happening. To me it's like all these different facets of life. The raw emotion of it all. The anger, the love, the peace, the hate. All that stuff just kind of, it can come together and work, there's tensions, there's release, there's harmony and dissonance. It's like if you were to look around your world, you have all this shit happening everywhere, but people want to focus on one thing or another. But to me good music brings it all. You know, it's all there. It's like all these different voices having a conversation. And I don't know what these guys are thinking who wrote it, I mean they're probably thinking that it's just pretty cool, but to me, I mean this is like the landscape of my world in a lot of ways. But they're making it right. They're making it feel ok because they're kind of breathing life into it, you know.*

Looking across both lyrics and music revealed a complexity to the interactions of those who express deep and significant experiences with and through music listening. Further, it is essential not to read any of the participants' experiencing of connection in only one way. Here is the beauty arising from the suspension of apparent dichotomies, and the potential harmony resulting from the complexification of seemingly dischordant tensions. Naomi, who continually troubled this tension between experiences she accessed either through lyrics or music, noted,

*One of the things we talked about in our first interview was the concept that there are a lot of bands that I like in particular that I don't think the words matter [or] what they're singing about. It's just the sound of the voice with the music is what I'm most interested in, it's not at all what they're saying. I've been thinking about it a lot because I've found that there are definitely bands that, 100% it matters what they're saying, but it's a combination of the voice and the song and the words. So it's interesting, there are some bands that I really could care less what the words mean. In my mind some of those bands actually feel the same way, it's not really what's being said, it's the voice with the music. And then the opposite is [true as well], the bands that, the words are absolutely a part of*



*what makes the music so great. I've always thought it's somewhat peculiar that I don't really pay attention to words in songs a lot, whereas it seems like that is what most people do pay attention to. For me I always thought well, that is just bizarre or weird or, am I missing something because I often times just get lost in the sound and not so much the words. But I understand that there are bands and types of music that the lyrics do matter, and then there's those that don't. I've never really actually thought about it in this way, but now I know that those two things exist, so it's kind of cool to be able to sort to classify now whether or not a band falls into one of those categories.*

What is important to note rising from this suspended tension between lyrics and music is that within any given musical moment, those who engage with music through deep and meaningful experiences entered into songs either through the music, the lyrics, or at the intersection between the two. Does connection manifest itself through the intentional relationship between the experiencer and the lyrics? Yes. Does connection manifest itself through the intentional relationship between the experiencer and the music? Yes. Does connection manifest itself through the intentional relationship between the experiencer and at the convergence and divergence of music and lyrics? Yes. So, what is it? Is the phenomenon of connection manifested through the lyrics *or* through the music? Yes, both.

### **To/With**

The pilot study was “supposed to resolve” this issue. In an effort to clarify the confusion of my original research question, what is it to find oneself connected to/with music, I used the pilot study to open up this prepositional quandary of whether to use “to” or “with” for my research question for the dissertation. I ultimately selected “with” based upon generative conversations with the pilot study participants. Personally, I had always found more of a resonance with “with,” yet in my own bridled reflections there were aspects and times where I heard myself, (pre-reflexive and in the natural attitude) using the word “to.” This may seem to just be an issue of semantics, but phenomenology tends to trouble prepositional use, as prepositions function as integral indications and yoked oral reflections of how we are in the world. Grammatically defined, prepositions usually indicate the temporal, spatial, or logical relationship of an object in a sentence (oneself connected) to the rest of the sentence or idea

(music). Or, phenomenologically, it could be said prepositions reveal aspects of how phenomenon are experienced through one's intentional relationships within the lifeworld. This original quandary, the affordances of the pilot study, and phenomenology's prepositional interests and orientation of bridled openness, intersected to reveal opportunities to foreground and background each word, "to" or "with," so as to further trouble the complexity of deep and significant experiences with music listening.

But, it was supposed to be resolved. I moved into the dissertation and within the first minute of the first interview, even though I had set up the question to contain "with," had sent participants before the first interview the specific question, "think of a time in which you found yourself connected with music and tell me about it" to reflect on in preparation, and prefaced my question with a disclaimer of what my research was looking to study: "when one finds him/herself connected with music," my first participant responded almost immediately by using the word "to"<sup>143</sup>. That day I had back to back interviews, and sure enough, in the second interview the same thing happened. Further, "to" continued to be leveraged throughout all fifteen interviews, seemingly being used interchangeably and synonymously with the word "with." However, in *that* moment, an internal reckoning occurred.<sup>144</sup> I resolved that although I had thought an authorial and empowered researcher's simple deciding upon which word to use would somehow clarify and neatly align my question and its intended direction, the phenomenon would not allow this. Those who experienced the phenomenon would not allow this. And by not allowing this, I do not mean there was purposeful or even conscious use of the word "to." Participants were just sharing and reflecting, and were thinking about prepositional word choice

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<sup>143</sup> I have come to call these moments "Buddhist blessings." These moments are gifts as they un-resolve, complexify, and open up those things which we have attempted to make resolvable, simple, and closed.

<sup>144</sup> As my bridling voice recording of that specific interview discussed, this issue was not settled nor was that problematic. It was in this moment where I decided that within the third interviews with each participant, I would directly ask them the question concerning the use of "to" or "with," *and* to ask them about music being the thing one connects with or the medium or mechanism to connect them with something else.

about as much as any normal person would<sup>145</sup>. No one was purposefully taking back the reigns and saying, “Hey! Mr. Scientist. You think you’re so smart with such a neat and tidy research question. Hah! You’re not and you don’t have it settled or resolved. And to prove it, I am going to prepositionally mess with you.” However, what this did reveal was that this prepositional quandary was/is not resolved, and through these interviews I would be able to purposefully hold these two words in dischordant suspension to animate and complexify this specific phenomenon and it’s manifestations through intentional lived-experiences within the lifeworld.

The question of “to” or “with” basically comes down to issues of relationality. How does one see him/herself relationally with music? Does one connect with music or does one connect to music? As discussed, one’s intentional relationships within the lifeworld are often complex, as we are complex beings and thus live complexly. Any understanding of this relationship, and its subsequent expression, only reveals a partial, tentative, and fleeting perspective. As was discovered throughout the interviews and across all five participants, both words were used extensively, interchangeably, and potentially synonymously, and any theorizing or attempting to understand how it may have been used differently in different contexts would only act as an appearance of resolving the issue. Potential ideas or concepts could be forwarded such as, “I noticed they used ‘to’ when talking about a song, but ‘with’ when talking about a genre,” or “the guys seemed to use ‘to’ more, the girls ‘with,’ this must have something to do gendered differences with regard to issues of relationality,” or “‘To’ must be the word of choice for Tuesdays and Thursdays, and ‘with’ all other days because according to my frequency counts and statistics, the correlations for this are statistically significant.”<sup>146</sup> Although all these are potentially worthwhile endeavors depending upon one’s theoretical perspectives or methodological approaches, for me it was more important to “go to the participants and their

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<sup>145</sup> Unfortunately, I have now entered into the ranks of many phenomenologists who will sit around for hours debating the nuanced differences of prepositions.

<sup>146</sup> I made up all these relationships to create a point. They are not based on any noticed correlations between uses of ‘to’ or ‘with.’

intentional relationship with the phenomenon themselves” and ask the question: Which is it, “to” or “with?” This is what I found.

Of all five participants, when directly asked which word better captured their experiences with music, only Aimeé forwarded “to.” She shared,

*To. Because I see music as its own entity and I'm my own entity and it's like there's a string between us. I don't think it's like the music and I become one. Like we're not with each other in a pod or something. I see that we're two different things, so that's why I would say to. I guess for some reason [with] just seems so intimate. I mean yes, I think sometimes I feel the with, but I guess for some reason it's making me think of all these production things. I'm thinking of the artist and their part of making the music and going into it and laying it down and having it recorded, and I guess for some reason I feel like I couldn't quite say I was really with them. I still have to let it be its own thing because in the end they're the original owners and then I get to share in it and experience it.*

Although Aimeé had used “with” and “to” interchangeably over the course of the interviews, when asked directly about which word better illuminates her experiences, she forwarded “to,” although she did express moments of feeling “with.” For Aimeé, artists, as the original creators of the work, appeared to still hold ultimate ownership of a song, and as a listener, one gets to share in it and experience it, but there is still some distance. She and the music do not “become one.” Opening up this concept of felt distance in relation to “to” and “with” further Aimeé expressed,

*I think there's a little distance, yeah. Because it can be anybody's too, that's the thing. Maybe if I had written the song or something, then it would be more that I was with it. But it's something for everybody, so I'm connected to that. [For example, the song I played last time] I connect to it. I think it's a very personal song for the artist. I mean obviously she recorded it twice, I mean she's put it out there for the whole world. I think I would feel a little goofy, like if I talked to her about it and told her, I totally get it. I know exactly what you're talking about and how you feel. I mean in some ways, I feel that way, but that's kind of my personal thing with the music. But then when you kind of take it outside of my own experience with it, it's still its own thing, you know, so it's also something that I can sit around and listen to with friends and they can all have their own different experiences to that music.*

There appeared to be an undercurrent of reverence and respect for both the artist(s) and the original motivations inspiring the creation of the work and others who may engage with the music and have their own experiences. This perspective created a felt distance for Aimeé as she was

reflecting on and talking about her experiences. What also may be occurring is the friction<sup>147</sup> and tension which arises when one moves from the natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude as they reflect on, interpret, and speak about their experiences with a given phenomenon. In this, one moves away from an orientation of “living through” and enters into one of “talking about.” Ultimately, Aimeé qualified her response by stating, “I don’t know. If you ask me tomorrow I might have a different opinion, it’s just kind of what pops out in my head.”

Philip was the only pilot study participant who took part in the dissertation. He and I spent considerable time troubling this distinction between “to” and “with,” specifically because during our first meeting he used “to” almost exclusively, even though he forwarded “with” during the pilot study. He conjectured,

*As you were saying that, I was thinking well maybe it’s because I feel removed from it and I have to get to it, whereas maybe the last time we talked I didn’t feel so removed. I think where I am right now, I am under a lot of strain and a lot of pressure and a lot of general anxiety (laughs), you know. I just feel further and further removed. I feel removed from it [all]. Maybe when I say connect to, I want to be there, but I’m not. I feel like I need to get there.*

Thus during different phases or seasons of one’s life, the experiences one immediately accesses, references, or reflects upon are different than what may be more salient and poignant at other points. Maybe in these moments, one must first connect to in order to eventually connect with?

As noted, four of the five participants forwarded the word “with” when directly asked which one better captured their experiences with music. Ron<sup>148</sup> did not even allow the question to be fully voiced before he answered commandingly with “with.” He grappled with how to describe it, again revealing the ineffability of many of these experiences, and shared why he thought it was a good question,

*Because it’s not . . . How do I describe this? This is nuts because it’s so easy. I don’t know how. . . How do you describe something that’s a given . . . I don’t know. . . Connect*

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<sup>147</sup> I would like to thank Ms. Rachel Monette from my Phenomenology and Pedagogy class who shared this concept of generated “friction” as one moves from the natural to the phenomenological attitude.

<sup>148</sup> To again note the complexity of this lived-experience, Ron was my first participant who in our first interview used “to.” In my voice recorded bridling of that experience, I laughed about how I think I noted his use of “with” only one time in the first interview.

*“to” something, you’re removed from it. You’re not really with it. See I can’t even use it without saying with. If you’re connected to something, I could be connected to something by handcuffs. You’re just connected to it, but if you’re connected with it, you’re with it. It’s all in one. There’s no dividing line. You’re one with it. It’s all one thing. Connected to something . . . it’s superficial*

*Joseph: At times do you connect to music and not with music, or is it always with?*

*Ron: I guess when I don’t want to hear something or, no. No. It’s always with, cause even if it’s something I don’t want to hear at that moment, or even if it’s a bad experience, I’m with it, its not something that I’m connected to. I can’t turn the light switch on and off. It’s always with.*

*Joseph: Is this a petty academic distinction that I’m trying to make between to or with or do you think it’s worth making?*

*Ron: No, I think it’s worth making because you asked me such a simple, what seemed to be a simple question, and as soon as I started to try and describe it, I couldn’t. I’ve never had to think of it like that. And I’m surprised right now that I couldn’t come up with something . . . like right away.*

Zoë echoed much of the same intimate nature of a connection “with,” hinting at the distance created through a connection “to” music, thus resulting in moments experienced as less deep. She expressed,

*I see the word connection with music to be more of an intimate relationship and connection to music to be more of, I mean there’s still a relationship there, but I would say it’s not as intimate, not as deep. When I think of the word with, you’re with it, you’re present and something is happening not only to you, but to something else at the same time. There’s more than one element happening in that mix. It’s two sided. Whereas when I think of connection to, it’s just me going to the music. When I connect with it, it’s when we come together, it’s almost like the music comes to me and I go to the music and it just kind of happens, you’re in step. For me most of the music that I listen to, especially for long periods of times, it’s that connection with music. I have songs that I enjoy, but it’s just merely that. It’s just an enjoyment, so [that’s to]. It’s just my side going “to.”*

Similarly, Naomi noted,

*I connect with music. I would say if you’re connected with something there’s more of a symbiotic kind of thing versus connected to something is just sort of like glombed on to it. I think of it more as a relationship. I think about the fact [that] I could say, yeah I’m really connected to my kids, but I would probably, generally say I’m really connected with my kids or I’m really connected with my husband. Connected to kind of feels like you’re just linked, not necessarily inner-meshed.*

In connecting “with,” images of intimacy, symbiotic experiences, and deeply felt relationships provide metaphorical contextualizing of what is experienced as one engages with music.

Each participant forwarded their perception and reflection of whether “with” or “to” better depicted and described their experiences of connection and music. Although assured

assertions were made, every participant used the words both “with” and “to” throughout their interviews. Through opening up the prepositional quandary, holding responses and reflections in suspended tension, more of the complexity of this lived-experience was exposed. It is not my place to “judge” participant responses or forward some theory to simplify or tidy up the discrepancies, but to hold up how this phenomenon is lived and reflected on, turning these descriptions around and upside down so as to view them from a variety of angles to afford for the reader-as-listener a *looking along* of this particular phenomenon. Here exists a salient and cautionary tale of challenging my own reductionist tendencies as I engaged in empirical research. Post-Intentional Phenomenology afforded an approach to research which is reflective and congruent of how we live through the world complexly and, at times, even incongruently and contradictorily. So, which is it, “with” or “to?” Again, my answer is, “Yes. Both.”

### **Music as Medium/Music as the Thing**

During my first bridling interview prior to embarking on my pilot study, my guiding methodologist, Dr. Mark Vagle, posed this question:

*Are you connecting with the music as the referent? Or are you connecting with something else? This comes back to your thing about the music being a medium. So, if music is the medium, who, what, and how? What are you connecting with? What’s the music bring you in connection with? I’d continue to be thinking about that.*

Bumfuzzled, I proceeded to give a tangent filled, divergent, and awkwardly bumbling and stumbling response. From a phenomenological orientation of openness and bridling, it did not need to be resolved in that moment. Arguably it actually does not need to be resolved even now, but this line of inquiry haunted me, poking at my admitted reductionistic desirings throughout this endeavor. His question revealed another potential dichotomy by asking, when one connects with<sup>149</sup> music, is it the music he or she is connecting with, or does the music connect him/her with something else? And if it is something else, what is it that one is connected with? Simply stated,

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<sup>149</sup> I am purposefully using “with” here as it was the word forwarded as in my research question. However, as the previous section on the use of “to” and “with” revealed, there may be other prepositional choices which better help to illuminate this dischordant tension.

this is a question of whether I and others connect with music, or if music connects us with something else. As I got more comfortable opening up, as opposed to refining and simplifying down, this dischordant tension was suspended and played with throughout the research endeavor as well. This question, like the one focused on the prepositional use of “with” or “to” was directly asked of each of the participants. What follows is the reflexive opening up and troubling of this quandary.

For Zoë, music was a vehicle, a medium, a mechanism for her to connect with something else. When pushed on what music was connecting her with, she responded,

*Fill in the blank. Whatever. It becomes that vehicle of learning for you, or understanding, or experiencing.*

A particular piece of music appeared to simultaneously move you and connect you with something else. Turning the concept on its head, she continued by noting,

*Maybe that's why I find so much comfort and enjoyment in music is because it's another's, it's not my means, it's someone else's means in communicating towards me or to me. Maybe that's why I have that connection and it hits me so deep*  
*Joseph: You said a second ago, "it hits me to the core."*  
*Zoë : Yeah, I mean I don't know how else to explain it. It's one of those, you just feel yourself just filling up. It's not a head feeling, it's a heart feeling. It's one of those things, you sit back, you listen to something, and you're like, well why? Why did I start crying during that or why did that make me smile or why is that one part really just sticking with me? It's not just a surface level thing; it's to the core, part of who I am. Music is a spiritual connection that, for all intensive purposes we'll say God's using as a means to communicate to me, and then I do with it what I will, whether I'm hearing it, whether I'm listening to it.*

Here, music was no longer seen as a medium to which she actively or purposefully connected with something else, but music was leveraged by, in this scenario God, to connect with her, marrowing deep in her being and core.

For Philip, whether music was the medium or the thing changed. Similar to his troubling of “to” and “with,” Philip qualified his situated response, grounding it in his present moment within the interview, revealing both contextual and temporal qualities, sharing,

*Right now, where I am today, it's the vehicle to get there. I don't know of any other real vehicle that does that for me really. I mean even when we're talking about being in*



*meditation, prayer, and song writing, those are different things. It has a different place in my life than the listening to music.*

Similarly, Ron likened music to a time machine, a DeLorean to be specific, manifesting itself as a medium as well. For him, it transported him through space and time, observing,

*I think it's the medium. It's like a time machine. It takes you to places you can't go anymore, because they've already happened, or you might think they're going to happen. And music lets you feel what it would be like to be there again, or to be there someday. I remember listening to Van Halen back in high school when I knew that I was going to be on the United States Olympic team. I knew it, [but] it was just going to take some work. I was listening to Van Halen and [there] was a song called, Right Now. I watched so many of my friends just barely miss making the team or just barely miss breaking a world record. I'm talking about by hundredths of a second. Maybe one or two hundreds of a second. If they hadn't cut their finger nails, they would've got the world record. It was that close when they hit those Omega pads and looked back at the clock. And Van Halen, he says in those lyrics: only missed by a fraction. You just slipped a moment off your pace, and I was wondering like there's no way he's a swimming fan. But what he's talking about, you know, any athlete can connect with that, those lyrics. Every top notch athlete can connect with that. Whether it's a fighter that weighed in one pound over and now the fight isn't sanctioned. You train four months and it comes down to a weigh in two days before your fight, it's not sanctioned anymore, you're one pound over weight. Only missed by a fraction. You start thinking, damn, what was it that one chicken wing that I tried? Was it that ice cream I shouldn't of had on that last date I went on? So I feel it takes a song, listening to that song takes me back and a lot of times I'm not ready for it. It's not something you plan. You just hear it on the radio and, Boom, it's like you just jumped into the DeLorean and went right back. You're living it for just that moment and its real. Like you can smell it, taste it, feel it, you can hear the crowd disappear when you go under water, everything. When I was with Team USA in 1997 I was at 160 meters of a 200 butterfly in gold medal contention for the United States and this Israeli next to me touched me out and I got a silver medal. I could have had a gold medal for the United States. I got a silver in the 200 butterfly in 1997. Just missed it by a fraction. I don't know if my hips went down or what. I mean my training was there but I slipped off my pace for just that moment and I missed it by a fraction, and Van Halen wrote that song and sang it five, six years before that even happened to me. Whoever wrote the song, somebody's been there. Somebody has felt that exact same way. I watched my friends go through it and I went through it. It can take me back in a heartbeat. I think it's pretty cool. I've never thought about this. I guess it is a medium. Yeah.*

The image of music transporting someone somewhere, transcending time and space, appeared to be a salient feature arising from casual conversations beyond the scope of this current study. As a medium, music can take one back to wedding dances, concerts, moments with loved ones or by yourself. For those who experienced deep and significant connections with music, this quality created an echoing like experience, reverberating past resonations with a particular song.

As I continued to discuss this question with all the participants, I began revealing how the implicit nature of the question naturally prompting a reductionistic either/or response, and shared what I felt phenomenology afforded in opening up and troubling the distinction. Specifically with Ron, I offered,

*I'm finding the beauty of phenomenology, at least for me, is that sometimes it can be, sometimes it can't be, sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't, but it's not really black or white, there may be more tendencies one way as opposed to the other but, it can be both. And there's nothing wrong with it being both. So when you're [answering, you're helping] me understand your experience, so I was really excited to get your perspective.*

In that moment, Ron offered a poignant response, again revealing our tendencies and nature to overly simplify that which is complex, and troubling the approach I took to even ask the questions,

*God there's 500 things going through my head right now. You said it doesn't have to be one way or another; it's not black and white. But you asked me the question a minute ago as if it was something black or white, so I forced myself to choose. Now what you're saying makes a lot of sense that sometimes it could be the medium or sometimes it is the thing, and now I'm all confused (laughing). I'm all messed up now because I thought I was so sure of something and then you break out the other thing, and I'm like oh wait, that makes a lot of sense too. I don't know. You want to listen to some music or something<sup>150</sup>.*

Finally, Aimeé and Naomi responded with “both,” not identifying it as either solely the medium or the thing. Aimeé offered that it was both, but then we focused on a particular experience highlighting connection's ability to serve as a medium. She mused,

*I think it's both. Like if I think about church music for example, I think that the main point of a lot of church music and choirs is to connect you to God, and I have had a few experiences in my life where I have felt that. I mean what can you say, was I connecting to the music? Yes, but it was also connecting me to something beyond the music, like outside the music.*

Naomi echoed this troubling, again using the concept of kismet to help explain these experiences,

*My guess is that it's probably somewhere in between both of those because I think there is a certain quality about music, and some music in particular that there's an immediate kismet [with the song]. It's just an immediate sense of I get that music and that music*

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<sup>150</sup> I purposefully left this last line in this section of the transcript. I contemplated whether or not to bring attention to it, and have decided it is important enough to warrant a footnote. The fascinating thing which happened in this moment was, when confused, overwhelmed, and uncertain, Ron, at least like me, went to the one place where it would balm that: music.

*makes me feel something. It's just an immediate sense. It's unexplainable, it just happens and it's just there. [Here], I think the connection is with the music. But I also do think that music is the vehicle by which I connect with, call it spirituality or deeper emotions, more powerful moments. I think its both. I can't really say it would be one or the other, and maybe that makes it something totally different, all together?*

As Naomi pointed out, this both/and may create a felt, embodied experience which was completely different from it merely being one or the other.

As revealed, the answer to the question never found purchase in one or the other, resulting in my final “yes, both.” In talking with participants through this question, we were able to philosophize and postulate these experiences, forwarding examples of connecting directly to a given song or piece of music, and other instances where the music appeared to connect participants with other things, deeper things. To essentialize connection down to some side of a dichotomous choice would be incorrect, irresponsible, and ultimately non-reflective of these lived-experiences. By suspending these dichotomous binaries in tension, we collectively were able to circle around this phenomenon, viewing it from a myriad of perspectives and angles so as to open up and complexify it in an attempt to illuminate more of the tentative, partial, and fleeting qualities of a complexly lived-experience.

### **Conclusion as *Looking At***

Through this chapter, and as a result of my phenomenological *looking at*, I presented various horizons of understandings and vantage points to *look along* the phenomenon of connection with and through music listening. I forwarded the concepts of sensitivity, hearing, listening, enjoyment, and appreciation, finally grounding the current study in the horizontal vantage point of connection. Within connection, I troubled the potentially dischordant tensions of whether one connects with the lyrics or music, is it connection “to” or “with” music, and is music the thing one connects with, or the medium to which one connects with something else, to further complexify and illuminate how those who express deeply significant and meaningful moments with music listening describe these experiences. These moments of connection were visceral, real, profound, and meaningful, or as Ron stated, “a real shot in the arm.” Moving forward, I

leverage this deeper and more significantly meaningful concept of connection and the concepts of resonance and reverberation (Bachelard, 1990) to discuss other partial, tentative, and fleeting manifestations of the phenomenon situated in music's seeming ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for* the participants. Specifically, I discuss the felt resonance and embodiment of what music listening does, further trouble the concept of sensitivity through forwarding orientations towards openness and receptivity, reveal serendipitous moments at the profoundly meaningful existential intersections of music and context, leverage the image of music as the "found mirror" to affirm and reflect aspects of identity and self, and use two specific musical listening moments to discuss cairning and the echoing impact of music through the lustering potency of song. It was essential to begin here, to offer these horizons and vantage points.

However, to more appropriately transition from these forwarded horizontal vantage points, which provided the reader-as-listener multiple ways to engage with this phenomenon, I end<sup>151</sup> this chapter with an ancillary conclusion, and possibly a more poignant vantage point, to *look along* these experiences: a poem and picture created and sent by Zoë after the completion of our time together in this study. It is entitled, *Music is Life in Bloom*.

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<sup>151</sup> Van Manen (1990) likened phenomenological inquiry to a poetizing project. As one reads or engages in a phenomenological study it is inappropriate to expect a conclusion, summary, or results "severed from the means by which the results are obtained" (p. 13). Poetry attempts to access "language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking *of* it" (p. 13). Arguably, what is produced in both phenomenology and poetry is forever a relational, dialogic, entrenched, and enmeshed depiction of specific, salient, fleeting, tentative, and intentional experiences *lived-in* the lifeworld. Phenomenological understanding, like poetry, resists abstraction or summation, or simply put, "to summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing" (p. 13). Therefore, this poem stands independently and without explication. Poems attempt an incantative, evocative, and primal singing of the world. Thus, I end with the poem as the thing, not my summary or theorizing of this poem.

## Conclusion as *Looking Along*



Figure 2: *Music Blooms*

Music is life in bloom

Music blooms...

The melodies in my mind are like that of a flower taking shape and bringing beauty out of dirt. There is a connection that blossoms from the miracle of a moment; becoming a tune that can outlast the day. This is my soul's muse.

Music is a gift...

Listen to a sound that brings a smile in darkness, draws a tear in joy, and gives hope when surrounded by defeat.

Music speaks...

It is the voice of God that commands all to fall silent but that of the melody and message.

Music uncovers...

Listening reveals a truth in song. Strumming the strings of your heart, a chord is struck that bares a piece of your soul--creating a connection with another and an understanding of self.

Music plays...

A melody is heard throughout a silent world, becoming the rhythm of the river as it flows through chaos.

Music replenishes...

Once experienced, it can never be forgotten. It gives encouragement no other can provide. It becomes common ground in the moment of a shared tear.

Music connects...

It is a collaboration of melodies from different sounds that tell a story of who you are, who you have been, and who you one day hope to become.

Music reminds...

We are all fragile like that flower, waiting to bloom in the rhythm of the wind; to grow and mature into something beautiful.

Music is life in bloom.

**CHAPTER 5**

**FROM RESONATION TO REVERBERATION: MANIFESTATIONS**

**OF MUSICAL CONNECTION *SPEAKING TO SO AS TO SPEAK FOR*<sup>152</sup>**

*I feel like music is so sacred that it can't be wrapped up or dumbbed down to anything.  
It's its own thing.*

Ron, participant

Thus far through this polyvocal crafted textualization, music listening as a phenomenon has purposefully been complexified and opened up, forwarding it as a deeply meaningful and significantly sought after experience for many. Leveraging Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b), the present inquiry has empirically grounded, philosophically situated, methodologically troubled and disrupted, and polyvocally represented this lived leisure experience (Parry, & Johnson, 2007) to further illuminate and elucidate nuanced particulars in relation to a Gestalted whole (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2008). Or, as invited, the reader-as-listener has been afforded diverse and myriad openings to *look along* this lived-experience as a result of my phenomenological *looking at* (Lewis, 1970). In this chapter, I forward five tentative manifestations<sup>153</sup> as partial and fleeting accounts of this experience as lived. Each manifestation is empirically grounded, accompanied by an associated track(s), and elucidated further either methodologically, philosophically, *or* theoretically. I introduce Bachelard's (1994) phenomenology of *resonation* and *reverberation* as an organizing structure and concept to situate and ground the five partial and tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2010a) of the phenomenon of

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<sup>152</sup> Tracks 6 *Drift Away* by Dobie Gray (Williams, 1972), 7 *I'm Open* by Pearl Jam (Irons & Vedder, 1996), 8 *Do You Realize?* by the Flaming Lips (Drozdz, 2002), 9 *Rolling in the Deep* by Adele (2010), 10 *Long Journey*, and 11 *Edge of a Dream* by Sarah Jarosz (2009b & 2009a) are associated with each of the tentative manifestations forwarded in Chapter 5.

<sup>153</sup> In Post-Intentional Phenomenology, tentative manifestations are those things which come into being (i.e., manifested) through intentional relationships as lived and experienced in the lifeworld. These meanings and understandings are "multiple, partial, and endlessly deferred," and thus directly resist a final and complete centering, or essentialization, of meaning (Vagle, 2010a, p. 6).

connection with and through music listening. Further, I elucidate my translation of Bachelard's *resonation* and *reverberation* into the concept of music's ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for* those who experience this deeply meaningful and significant connection. I proffer three tentative manifestations to situate the phenomenon of music listening as *speaking to*: Getting Lost: Felt Resonation and Embodiment; I'm Open: Openness, Receptivity, and Enchantment; and Serendipitous Moments, and two additional manifestations as music *speaking for*: The Found Mirror: Oh There You Are; and Cairns and Echoes: The Lustering Potency of Song<sup>154</sup>. Discussing each tentative manifestation through the adoption of varied theoretical, philosophical, and methodological lenses, a multiplicity of understandings and voices assisted to open up and complexify this lived leisure experience.

### **From Resonation to Reverberation**

Bachelard (1994), in *The Poetics of Space*, forwarded the concepts of resonation and reverberation to access and address the transsubjectivity of poetry as an aesthetic experience. Through Bachelard's (1994) phenomenology, or what has been conceptualized as an "aesthetic rethinking of ontology"<sup>155</sup> which foregrounds creativity and affect" (Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009, p. 65), understanding of lived-experiences that arise from the arts<sup>156</sup> reveal moments of the resonance-reverberation doublet and resist the use of traditional reductionistic scientific methods based in deterministic causality for understanding aesthetic experiences.

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<sup>154</sup> As discussed throughout this work, each manifestation is *not* to be read as the only, exclusive, or complete way of understanding this phenomenon. These manifestations are *one way* (my way) of looking along this phenomenon and its associated experiences and descriptions, and represent only an initial and partial foray into representing the phenomenon. As you engage with the text and accompanying music, I further invite you as the reader-as-listener to read across the manifestations, their associated theories, philosophies, and/or methodologies, other concepts and understandings explicitly or implicitly contained within the text, as well as your own background, experiences, knowledge, and thoughts.

<sup>155</sup> Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, (2009) suggested this ontology forwards new avenues of descriptions for these experiences based in notions or concepts such as sound waves, sonority, vibration, echoes, and motion (p. 65).

<sup>156</sup> For Bachelard (1994), he is focused specifically on poetry.

According to Bachelard<sup>157</sup>, “In resonance we hear<sup>158</sup> the poem, in the reverberation we speak it, it is our own” (1994, p. xxii). These deeply felt and meaningful aesthetic moments move beyond a mere sentimental, surface, or superficial enjoyment or appreciation of the activity. As lived and experienced, “the resonances are dispersed on the different planes of our life in the world<sup>159</sup>, while the repercussions invite us to give greater depth to our own existence” (p. xxii). For this project, I likened *resonation* to music’s ability of *speaking to*, revealing glimpses of connection as embodied.

Once an aesthetic experience is felt and embodied via resonation, the tethered doublet of reverberation is animated through the creation of a change in *being* within the experiencer (Bachelard, 1994; Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009). Through resonation and engagement with an aesthetic experience, the felt, embodied meaning and understanding takes hold, rooting and finding purchase within us, and ultimately becoming our own. In “becoming our own,” things internally begin to shift, change, and find reverberating purchase, now understood through and expressed by the aesthetic experience and its deeply felt and significant meaning. It is at this point where one begins *creating anew* through continual engagement with and the leveraging of the work, or its aesthetic particularities, so as to *speak for* experiences and expressions of those experiences. Through this essentially existential and creative act, reverberations are sounded forth, affording opportunities for subsequent felt resonation and reverberation within the self and relationally with others. It is through Bachelard’s (1994) phenomenological concepts of resonation and reverberation where this specific study on connection with and through music listening finds purchase in music’s ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for*.

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<sup>157</sup> Although Bachelard focused solely on poetry, I would forward music here as well, due to its universality as a human endeavor and aesthetic enterprise.

<sup>158</sup> I would trouble the use of hearing here in reference to the listening/hearing discussion within Chapter 4.

<sup>159</sup> As discussed in the previous Chapter, van Manen’s (1990) four lifeworld existentials (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality) offer various vantage points for opening up and complexifying this resonation.



### ***Speaking To so as to Speak For***

*When something speaks to you, it's like the idea has been living in you for a long time, but finally it's been articulated audibly. And those two things, an outside source and your inside source connect, and it's like lighting striking. It's electric.*

Philip, participant

*You know, I don't know. What does music ever really do for you at a certain time? I guess it does what you're looking for it to do. You really need to gain perspective so you listen to that, whatever that is. And you might not gain total perspective, but you've taken the next step. Or you really want understanding, or you want to be calm, so you listen to whatever it may be and it calms you down. Or, I'm on my third mile and I really don't want to take another step because I hate running, but I make myself do it, I listen to whatever that is and it keeps my feet going, putting one in front of the other and doing it faster and faster. So your sound is tuning in to where you are at that time.*

Zoë, participant

So it goes<sup>160</sup>. Of course it had to come down to an issue of preposition – *to* and *for*. After all, this is arguably where it all began: questioning the prepositional quandary of connection as *with* or *to* music. As a result from dwelling with the phenomenon and steeping myself in the stories and experiences of the participants, I elected to enter into my tentative understandings via music's ability to speak *to*, and thus speak *for*, those who engage in deeply significant and meaningful connections with and through music. This prepositional dichotomy became an entry point to open up, trouble, and explore this lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2007).

It should be noted, however, that to say music speaks *to* you or music speaks *for* you are complexly simple ideas. What is simple and seemingly universal is that music communicates emotions, feelings, and meanings, or it “speaks” in a manner which one appears to listen, understand what is being said, and leverages these meanings to express him/herself. Where it becomes complex is in attempting to describe these deeply felt and significantly meaningful lived-experiences and their tacit, intuitive, and thus ineffable, nature. Further, it would appear and make logical sense that from an experience of music speaking *to*, that it then becomes a

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<sup>160</sup> Much love and respect to Kurt Vonnegut (1969), in particular *Slaughter House Five*, where he introduced his phrase, “So it goes.”

mechanism to speak *for* that person<sup>161</sup>. What arises is the proverbial chicken and egg quandary, or does music first have to speak *to* in order for it to speak *for*? Although a justifiable and worthy line of inquiry, I caution both you and me to resist resolving or rationally forwarding an absolute sequential understanding of these “processes” and experiences. Common sense may suggest this, but it is in holding these moments of “of-course-ness” in purposeful and acknowledged tension where nuanced and furtive aspects of the phenomenon may be further troubled and considered to afford moments of illumination, elucidation, and partial understanding<sup>162</sup>. Further, as one begins *looking along* the forwarded tentative manifestations, engagement and understanding must arise from accessing the multiple horizons or vantage points from the previous chapter (sensitivity, listening, hearing, enjoyment, appreciation, connection, and the dischordant tensions of with/to, lyrics/music, and music as the medium or the thing itself). In addition, we must also consider van Manen’s (1990) four transcendent lifeworld existentials (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, relationality), as we look across music’s seeming ability to speak *to* so as to speak *for*.

In what follows, I ground each manifestation empirically by accessing participants’ salient, rich, and poignant descriptions, as well as situate the manifestation contextually to reveal tentative, partial, and fleeting qualities of this lived leisure experience. An associated track(s) augments each manifestation<sup>163</sup> to create both an aural soundscape and afford an accompanying experiential and meaning imbued sonic representation. Also, I forward *either*<sup>164</sup> a specific

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<sup>161</sup> Even as I have worded this section and yoked these concepts to Bachelard’s (1994) resonance and reverberation, there is an implicit sequential aspect to this broader conceptualization and structure.

<sup>162</sup> Even for Bachelard (1994) the power of poetry may first rise from within, disrupting scientific, philosophical, and rational notions of causality, noting that through poetry, “the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface” (p. xxiii).

<sup>163</sup> Four of these six tracks were accessed from and forwarded by the participants as they described their experiences with music listening. Two of the tracks were selected from my experiences of connection with and through music listening, and the accompanying meaning I found myself understanding as I thought through and conceptualized these manifestations.

<sup>164</sup> To reiterate, as I discuss each tentative manifestation, I have elected to adopt a different theoretical, philosophical, or methodological lens to further elucidate potential understandings. The overarching phenomenology of resonance and reverberation (Bachelard, 1994) and the concept of music *speaking* to so as to *speak for* served as an organizing structure for this chapter. However, I resisted using only *one* theoretical, philosophical, or methodological approach to help in the discursive illumination of each

scholarly theory or concept (i.e. vital engagement, non-activity, relaxation, and/or re-enchantment), philosophy (i.e. Pieperian leisure, existentialism, and/or transcendence), *or* methodology (i.e. Creative Analytical Practices and/or phenomenological intentionality as “bursting forth towards”) to further illuminate, explicate, and *look along* the particular manifestation. Holistically, the polyvocal representation of the various tentative manifestations, its accompanying track, and the forwarded guiding theory, philosophy, *or* methodology, opened up spaces and opportunities for intersectionality of the ways in which this particular phenomenon is felt, experienced, understood, and lived.

### ***Speaking To***

#### **Getting Lost: Felt Resonation and Embodiment<sup>165</sup>**

*Aimée: What do I mean by resonance? I think I mean when it kind of, it infiltrates different parts of my being. I can feel it in my heart and maybe in my brain. It captures me. It has some kind of meaning or feeling, you know.*

*Joseph: What does it feel like? In your heart, in your mind?*

*Aimée: Well it depends on what the music is. You know if it's something that just sounds awesome, like a really good beat, then it might resonate with me and I want to start dancing or something. Or if it's something that reminds me of my childhood, it resonates in my memory, it fills up different parts of my memory, or it pulls them out, different memories, different feelings.*

For those who experienced deeply meaningful and significant experiences with music, there was a felt and embodied resonance (Bachelard, 1994; Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009). Music resonated within, seemingly animating and exciting internal and sympathetic chords or strings. Although there were cognitive aspects and qualities to this resonance, it was embodied and understood as it was lived and felt, not just cognitive or rationally known. These are issues of ontology, not *just* epistemology. Embodied felt-ness is an issue of being (Heidegger, 1998; Sartre, 2002; Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b) and for these participants, this sense of “being,” emerged through, and was excited and animated by,

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manifestation as I desired to forward more “voices” to assist in opening up and complexifying this phenomenon.

<sup>165</sup> Track 6 *Drift Away* by Dobie Gray (Williams, 1972), is associated with this tentative manifestation.

engagement with music. These experiences were shared as being revered, sought after, and desired.

Vagle (2009), addressing issues of validity and bridling within his own research, accessed and leveraged Sartre's conception of intentionality as "bursting forth towards" (p. 256). For Sartre (2002), our being-in-the-world is marked by bursts, or moments "which tear us out of ourselves" and that being-in and our intentional relationships within the world are understood as a movement. Or, "to be is to fly out into the world, to spring from the nothingness of the world and of consciousness in order suddenly to burst out as consciousness-in-the-world" (p. 383). This concept of intentionality, based on Husserl's notion that "All consciousness is consciousness *of* something," provided one way to engage with and think through this tentative manifestation of resonance and bodily felt-ness described by the participants (p. 383). In what follows, notice the whispered images of movement as the participants found themselves resonating with music. These moments were embodied and experienced *present-ness*, and were marked by the relational intersectionality between the experiencing subject (participant) and the experienced object (music). These moments *are* "phenomenological data," experienced within the lifeworld and understood through the phenomenological concept of intentionality. These moments were lived, not merely abstractly known or thought about. These moments are moments of both being and being-in-the-world.

As lived, felt resonance and embodiment revealed partial glimpses of the phenomenon of connection with and through music listening. On these feelings, Philip described it as,

*I would say enraptured you know. I mean it is intense. You just get lost in that, you have these amazing experiences.*

*Joseph: If someone was with you, what would they see?*

*Probably just moving back and forth. My head kind of more back versus forward. Just kind of listening to the music and being just really into it. Not really looking at [anything], just kind of looking off, kind of in the distance, kind of glazed over. I would be more emotional, even crying at certain points. There's this intense emotion with it that's probably unsettling (laughing) for people.*

At times, one got lost<sup>166</sup> listening to music, which, in this example, was marked by external bodily manifestations of glazed looks and staring off into the distance. Further elucidating this embodied felt-ness, Zoë associated resonance with feelings of connection with one's soul, her relationality with others and the natural world, and feelings of peace:

*As far as the emotional part, it's anything that, this might sound weird and it's kind of an abstract idea, but anything that connects with my soul. A funny song I listened to growing up and it makes me laugh cause it was me hanging out with my girlfriends, or the song last night that made me cry cause it brought back joyful and bittersweet emotions, or a song that it's not necessarily the lyrics that touched me, but more times it's the melodies that can make me more connected with my environment around me, more in-tune with the natural music. Emotions that can bring peace. I can be absolutely anxious and kind of on edge and a song can come about and it can just calm my soul, it can just make almost like an inner understanding, one that I can't describe by words, one that I can't write down and I can't talk about, but it's something that just happens inside. I think it's that connection to whatever is being played. And then of course I also have you know my get me pumped up, A-game, here we go, music adrenaline rush. I have found that music even more so than conversations or experiences with people, can bring out stronger and more relevant emotions.*

As described, these emotions and this resonating felt-ness existed along a spectrum of feelings, depicted by what Aimeé referred to as the multi-dimensionality of life. We live in and through the world complexly, and thus those who find connection with and through music listening desired music which represented this lived complexity. Attempting to identify this resonating felt-ness as a single emotion or experience is problematic and moves one away from a fuller understanding of this tentative manifestation as lived and experienced. Zoë, describing the different feelings she experiences through music listening, explained it as,

*It kind of becomes this baffling, obscure thing. You know is it this or is it this? Yes, it is. I think this is one of the dynamics that makes it so complex yet simple at the same time, which is pretty cool because we're not always in that same state of mind. We're not always feeling the same emotion. We're not always in the same physical state. It changes, so why wouldn't it change depending on what you're listening to [or feeling] at the time.*

Further for Ron, this felt resonance and the sense that a song spoke to him, resulted in feeling comforted and sharing in some seemingly universal emotive experience. He asked,

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<sup>166</sup> Fascinatingly, this “getting lost” simultaneously produced feelings of “being found.” Finding oneself in music is further elaborated on in the tentative manifestation entitled: *The Found Mirror: Oh, there you are.*

*You ever been distressed and somebody just understands? It's that comfort where you're so exhausted that you don't want to talk anymore, but you don't have to because somebody goes "I get it." It's like that. It's a completion. It's like taking a nap from your emotions (deep sigh). At least I'm not the only one, you know? At least I'm not the only one that knows what I'm feeling. There's something about that I am not the only one who has ever felt this. He felt it too, and made it through it.*

Aimeé shared that although not every song creates these resonating and embodied feelings, her identification with a particular song and its associated emotions reveals why certain music may resonate more compared to other. Aimeé mused,

*I guess there's some kind of identification. And I guess thinking more about the word resonate, I use that word as something that's the way I like it. You know, this resonates with me, I like it. And I like it because it makes me feel good or it makes me feel sad, I mean there's a lot of music that I love because it just makes me feel so sad.*

*Joseph: Tell me about that*

*Aimeé: Well there's a song I put on the cd that I made that is just so bitter sweet, it's sad and it's just so pretty to me because it's so sad. I don't even really know what it's about. It's not even the lyrics of that song. It's just, the tune. There's some pain in the singer's voice and I can feel it. That resonates to me.*

*Joseph: And that's a good feeling?*

*Aimeé: I don't know if feeling sad is really good, but I guess it is. Yeah. I find meaning in it. It can really put me in that, I just can feel the pain and I guess, that is good. I like that. I like feeling sad (laughing). It makes me alive. I like the ups and the down. I like that, I mean I'm ok feeling sad. And that song that I have just kind of puts me in touch with that. It's a very emotional sadness. It's a very full feeling that I feel when I feel sad.*

Here even sadness may be accentuated and amplified by music. Beyond sadness, other participants used words such as pensiveness, brooding, and even despondency to highlight resonating qualities of music to speak to these emotions and feelings, again demonstrating the diverse embodied feelings of resonance with and through music listening. Naomi described this complexity of feelings and emotions as,

*A sense of me feeling connected to who I am, at my core, and it's just such a good feeling, you know, to listen to a song and just be like, yeah this song just makes me feel alive, and great, and just happy, content. Even if the feeling, the specific emotion is a little bit negative or sad, it's still ok because the feeling of having that range of emotion is what is fulfilling. That's what is important, and that's what I think is so great about music in my life. It can kind of be like medicine, so even if it's making you feel something kind of sad or negative or maybe angry or, you know, bitter, it's still medicinal because it makes you feel, and it's helping you feel emotion, which I think is awesome. It's evoking emotion and that in and of itself is a beautiful thing. It's not just leaving you blank, it's making you feel something and I just think that's a phenomenal thing.*

Another quality that emerged from this felt resonance is that of accentuating or punctuating a given moment or experience, making that moment *more* real, and creating opportunities for the deepening of a given emotion, feeling, thought, or idea. What appeared to be desired was a fullness of feeling, a perceived arrival at something profound and real, feeling authentically and having moments in which this feeling was recognized and accentuated, resulting in a person finding validation, affirmation, and potentially even rest in those emotive moments. As noted, these feelings and emotions could, at times, be difficult and not necessarily “positive,” but it is a living through the moments, accentuated and highlighted in song, where a person can find resonance and purchase with a given experience of being-in-the-world. Naomi reflected in her journal,

*I've been thinking a lot about the role music plays in my life, what I keep coming back to is that music is something that effects me in a very visceral way, in a way that nourishes me much the same way that food and water do. Music can lift me out of a depressed mood, or calm me down in the midst of a rage. Music can make a moment feel more real and just the opposite, the absence of music can make a moment feel empty. Maybe that is why music plays such an important role in film. A good soundtrack can transform a moment into something more powerful, beautiful, painful, joyful or even scary. It makes me think about the soundtrack of my life. How has music punctuated the moments I've lived?*

Felt resonance and embodiment manifests itself in a myriad of ways, both corporally and relationally, transcending space and time. A further collection of the most salient phrases and words forwarded by the participants were: “it rips you; feels as if the song were being sung specifically to you and for you; feelings of comfort, peacefulness, and happiness; music is essential to life just like breathing; if music were taken from me, my soul would be taken away; at times it is something so deeply personal it makes me feel vulnerable; the sense of clicking puzzle pieces fitting together; I feel pinched or poked; it helps me feel really real emotions; enraptured; teary; in a trance; zoned; other worldly; lost; clarity; emotional catharsis; things begin making sense; ecstasy; despondency; letting go and not needing to be in control; straddling the line between losing yourself and collecting yourself; no intention, just plugging in; being more in the present; clears away the film of life; not clouded by life’s mundaneness; re-sensitized; senses

heightened; becoming more in touch with something foundational, more bedrock; who I am at my core; revived; senses sharper; cuts against the rest of life; euphoria; do not feel alone; comforted; feel right; feel at ease; speaks to me on a deep level, speaks to me where I am; and I can feel it in my balls.”

As forwarded above, one tentative manifestation of connection with and through music listening was an embodied and felt resonance. This experience, as illuminated, is lived. These moments are embodied, and mark an intersectionality between the experiencing subject and the experienced object. Through elucidating various ways in which this manifestation comes to be, Sartre’s (2002) concept of intentionality as “bursting forth towards” (Vagle, 2009) provided a way of engaging with these lived-experiences as felt and embodied resonance.

Phenomenologically, what is centered is this felt and embodied resonance, in all of its manifested forms and ways in which it was lived in and through participant’s experiences with music. As Zoë noted, we are in the world complexly, and thus resonance as embodied and felt, is experienced complexly. Across the participants and their descriptions, music resonated, moving them from within themselves, out. Or, as Sartre noted, they were thrown “under a dazzling light . . . to fly out into the world, to spring from nothingness, to burst out as consciousness-in-the-world” (p. 383).

### **I’m Open: Openness, Receptivity, and Enchantment<sup>167</sup>**

*A philosopher who has evolved his entire thinking from the fundamental themes of the philosophy of science, and followed the main line of the active, growing rationalism of contemporary science as closely as he could, must forget his learning and break with all his habits of philosophical research, if he wants to study the problem posed by the poetic imagination. For here, the cultural past doesn’t count. The long day-in, day-out effort of putting together and constructing his thoughts is ineffectual. One must be receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears: if there be a philosophy of poetry, it must appear and re-appear through a significant verse, in total adherence to an isolated image; to be exact, in the very ecstasy of the newness of the image.*

Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

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<sup>167</sup> Track 7, *I’m Open* by Pearl Jam (Irons & Vedder, 1996), is associated with this tentative manifestation.



For those who experienced deeply significant and meaningful connections with and through music, there appeared to be access to both fields and stretches of openness<sup>168</sup>, met with a postured receptivity to music, context, relationships, emotions, and thoughts. In these musical moments, participants' experiences were described as having the ability to seemingly slow down time itself, re-orienting participants and fostering a capacity of present and focused awareness<sup>169</sup>. In Chapter Four, I forwarded the notion of sensitivity as one horizon of the aural soundscape. For participants in this study, there appeared to be a sensitivity to music, likened to that of an allergy, and this sensitivity was one of an embodied and corporeal reaction to music's presence in a specific context or space<sup>170</sup>. This openness<sup>171</sup>, receptivity, and sensitivity afforded a present-ing<sup>172</sup>, or slowing down experience, which allowed one to engage more fully with what they were feeling in a moment.

One glimpse of this orientation was described by Zoë as she shared experiences where she focused on being open and receptive and resulted in her moving beyond hearing to that of really listening, as well as how she began noticing things which she was not aware before:

*It's funny if you can listen to how things start to flow and come in-tune with another, even a steady constant beat of a water drip. Then you pick up on another element of the trees blowing, and they all kind of come together. All these different rhythms, and there's a melody, there's a balance. I guess if I said this to some people they'd probably look at me and think I'm crazy because they just don't get that, but it's something that I've tuned in to where it's not just random, it becomes synchronized. If you really allow yourself to listen to it and forget that your listening to a bird, forget that it's the wind, and just close your eyes and realize, what can seemingly be just sounds or noises come together to create something pretty cool and pretty phenomenal. And it's not just nature but you could even add the human element in there where you're in a crowded room and all the muffled noise of all the conversations, or when you're in a restaurant, or the walking of people's feet down the street, you know things are constantly creating those rhythms. And*

<sup>168</sup> I am playing off the opening scene in *August Rush*, as forwarded in Chapter One.

<sup>169</sup> Although not directly explicated here, there were aspects to these experiences which further supported theories such as *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and *savoring* (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) from the positive psychology literature.

<sup>170</sup> As a reminder, this reaction was often mitigated by a larger social awareness of how to interact relationally with one's environment and others.

<sup>171</sup> According to Rentfrow & Gosling (2003), there appeared to be a relationship between personality and musical preferences, citing how those who prefer artistic and intricate music were seen to be more open to new experiences.

<sup>172</sup> By present-ing I mean to describe when one is present, attuned, or fully immersed within a given moment. Notions of the Latin phrase *carpe diem*, or seize the day, are associated with this present-ing.

*yeah, most the time we see it as just noise, but it can create its own kind of life that comes up out of it. I guess it's a lot about your perspective, whether you see it as just noise or whether you can take a step back and see it as, you know, something that's pretty cool. Pretty cool to listen to and to even acknowledge.*

Philip, in another instance, noted his typical orientation when listening to music:

*With listening to music, there's no intention. There's no, I have no purpose. I'm not bringing to the table a desire to, fill in the blank, it's just kind of like, ok, I'm going to plug-in (laughing). I'm just kind of a blank slate, versus trying to focus in on something and target myself at a specific objective. Like focusing my mind, or wrting something, or expressing myself. For me I feel like it's a place where you can just come and be and check all of that stuff. You don't really have to think. You don't really have to engage in any particular way, but you end up engaged, you end up doing a lot of thinking, but you're not really directed in it. At least I'm not so much.*

Connection with and through music listening was further described as having associated feelings of sublimity, transcendence and transformational differencing, and how these feelings then lead to transformational change in the participant. Naomi forwarded the word sublime as she spoke on her most revered experiences with music.

*So I wrote a little about this too. I've been thinking about what that feeling is, you know, when you are just so . . . when a song is so connected with you, or you feel so connected, or you feel so moved by something that powerful. I heard a bit of an interview last week on CNN, I think it might have been Pierce Morgan interviewing Andrew Lloyd Weber. And the guy interviewing him was asking him, "who are some of your, in the past century, who are some of the songwriters who you think are the best in the world?" And he named a couple of people that I think that I have heard of, but he said I think probably the best songwriter of our generation is Paul McCartney. He said his melodies and harmonies are sublime. And I thought, God that word is so great to describe that feeling. Sublime, it's that feeling of everything is just elevated above the earthly. It's a feeling of being elevated into a more perfect place, and that's what sublime kind of means and alludes to. And I did get that sense from listening to certain music. I just feel like, God that's just . . . the sound of it is sublime. It's just perfect and it makes me feel just I'm elevated above the earthliness of most things that we deal with in our lives. And I think that is a really, really powerful way music can move people. I love that word sublime. You know, I wouldn't put a lot of music in that category, but when it is in that category, that's good stuff (laughs), that is good stuff. And that's the stuff you kind of, you're always searching for it, you know. Where is that music that just when I listen to it I can be like, oh, God, I love it? And not in a sense of I love it for like it's awesome, it's rocking, or it's [being] so cool or whatever. That's the stuff, that's it right there I think, those are the moments of perfection in music. When you feel really real emotion and it's great. That song is so meaningful.*

Furthering this concept, Ron described these experiences in this way,

*With songs that are connected to memories and specific emotions, it touches more than my ears. It touches things that aren't tangible, like your emotions, your soul. My whole*

*spirit of being is just like a light bulb that goes on. It's an intense feeling man. Like it's emotional for me, and that's not emotional like you're sad or crying, sometimes it's emotional like you are excited.*

These moments, arguably, are moments of leisure. For Pieper (1952), leisure afforded spaces where one might “dwell for a while upon the reality of the Creation, affirm the basic meaningfulness of the universe, [and] experience the world in an aspect other than the everyday one” (Pieper, 1952, p. 43). Kleiber (2000) noted Pieper’s definitional orientation of leisure as one of “non-activity” and receptivity, citing his assertion that “leisure is not the attitude of the mind of those who actively intervene but of those who are open to everything; not of those who grab and grab hold, but of those who leave the reins loose and who are free and easy themselves” (Pieper, 1952, p. 41, cited in Kleiber, 2000, p. 83). This conception of leisure has received heavy critique through the post-modern ethos (Rojeck, 2006), and is directly challenged through the western world’s work-centric society inclined towards productivity which elevates and celebrates effort, merely viewing leisure as a concept yoked to work (leisure-work dichotomy). In these conceptions, leisure is understood, experienced, studied, and defined merely as a means to recharge individuals to reconvene in that effort (Kleiber, 2000). However, leisure as dwelling, steeping, and openness forwards, ultimately, a regressive understanding of the concept, harkening back to early Greek ideals of leisure as both an activity and experience affording receptive and deepening possibilities with the potential to create larger meaning making opportunities for individuals and groups.

Through the participants’ descriptions of connection with music, I contend music listening opened up moments in which one was immersed *by* leisure within an activity, which in turn relationally and experientially deepened the experience. Pieper (1952) addressed this potential for immersion and deepening afforded by leisure, and stated, “leisure is a receptive attitude of mind, a contemplative attitude, and it is not only the occasion but also the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation” (p. 41). There are paradoxical forces here, mired in the complexity of when one finds him/herself “letting go,” and thus experiencing the present-ing,

receptive qualities of non-activity (Kleiber, 2000). Further, Pieper spoke on the capacity of leisure to create a state in which one may perceive the reality of the world, which has transcendental qualities grounded in feelings of fullness, completeness, validation, and rest.

These moments, possibly as a result of one's open receptivity, may also be viewed as experiences of enchantment (Bachelard, 1994; Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009; Dickerson & O'Hara, 2008). Enchantment, here, is to be understood as an encounter "that temporarily transforms our connection with the social/natural world," and one "provoked by a surprise, by an encounter with something that one did not expect . . . an energizing feeling of fullness or plentitude (Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009, p. 63). These enchanting encounters meet at the intersection of felt resonance and associated reverberation, "which become for a moment the centre of the entire universe, the evidence of a cosmic situation" in which subjective particularities and perceived universalities combine (p. 66). Through openness and receptivity, participants appeared to experience deeply meaningful and significant moments, potentially understood as that of leisure and/or enchantment.

### **Serendipitous Moments<sup>173</sup>**

Potentially created through spaces of openness and receptivity, participants expressed deeply meaningful and significant experiences manifested in moments of understanding and meaning. Fascinatingly, there appeared serendipitous qualities to these experiences, marking the intersection of song, feelings, context, receptivity, and understanding. Particular songs, which may have been listened to hundreds of times, were suddenly foregrounded and propelled participants towards deeper meaning and understanding, often about profoundly existential and metaphysical questions and notions. Or, a specific song served to highlight or foreground a particular relationship in a particular moment, and this moment was experienced as deeply imbued and pregnant with meaning. There appeared to be something about a particular song

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<sup>173</sup> Track 8, *Do You Realize?* by the Flaming Lips (Drozd, 2002), is associated with this tentative manifestation.

coming at the right time, speaking the right thing, in that right moment, that serendipitously gifted the participants in moments of connection.

Serendipity, at its etymological root, came from a 1754 fairytale entitled *The Three Princes of Serendip* by Horace Walpole in which the heroes “were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of.” These happy and fateful occurrences were not planned, created, or purposeful. When they did occur, everything seemed to have come together perfectly, with meaning and importance being received as a gift and apparently emerging from, and only possible within, a specific, given moment. For participants, it appeared in certain moments of connection, songs gave voice and spoke forth things which participants were not explicitly looking for, and when received, addressed larger metaphysical and existential issues or revealed opportunities for growth, healing and/or transformation. These serendipitous moments of connection with and through music listening at times served as a pressure valve release, an existentializing epiphany concerning life, relationships, and meaning, or a validating gesture or nod from something greater than one’s self. These experiences gifted deeply profound feelings and emotions, as well as created “felt-nudges” that assisted one in achieving a deeper existential or metaphysical understanding.

For this manifestation, I chose to access a particular moment and poignant description to help give voice and expression to this notion of serendipity-ness. Naomi shared one such experience while listening to the Flaming Lips song, “Do you Realize?”<sup>174</sup>:

*I’ve had what I would call transcendent moments at concerts and at home just listening to music. I had a transcendent moment, a very transcendent moment, probably about a year ago. [My son] was about 6 to 8 months old and I had picked him up from school and we were coming home and the song, “Do you realize” by the Flaming Lips came on. I had to pull the car over because all of sudden, I mean I’m getting teary just thinking about it now, I just . . . I was listening to the words of the song, and I’ve heard that song for years, I mean that song is a classic, and I had literally heard a million times, but for*

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<sup>174</sup> This same song was chosen by one of my Pilot Study participants. Her experience, which could also be viewed along this tentative manifestation of serendipity-ness, occurred at a concert in which this song was played. Early that day, Abby (pseudonym) had found out one of her close friends had committed suicide. She shared that through this song, she felt her friend was “speaking to” her, letting her know he was alright. I have included the found poem I crafted from Abby’s pilot study transcripts as Appendix S.

*some reason, I was listening to the words and thinking about [my son] and it just. . . I just had a moment. I had a moment. I had to stop the car, I was just crying. And I was like, this song is phenomenal and I was just moved and so now ever since then, whenever I hear that song I just, you know, sort of lose myself a little.*

*Joseph: Can you say more about what you were feeling when you pulled the car over. Tell me more about that.*

*Naomi: This particular song is about, it's about, to me it feels like a very parental, it's describing a very parental sort of love. Where it's like you're the most beautiful person in the world and some day I'm not going to be here and you'll be ok. We're all going to go somewhere, we're all going to be gone some day, and that's ok. And it's just . . . it's amazing. It's like, god, such an important and, real message that we aren't permanent, we are all transient beings in this world, you know. I could just see how you could tell your child like you are the most important thing in the world, and you are. You are the most beautiful thing in the world, and you are. And some day you're going to have to say goodbye to me and I'm going to have to say goodbye to you and that's horrible, but this . . . the joy of all of this is that you are beautiful. And it's just . . . I love that song so much for that reason. It just made me feel like, you know, when you think about your child, that's just what you feel and it's so sad to think about not ever being with that child, that would be horrible. Maybe it like a momma bear moment, (laughing), momma bear getting a little protective of her child and feeling a little emotional, but it was powerful, it was moving. And this experience that I had was in the car, and that song was just on the radio. I didn't pop that cd in with the intention of hearing that song, in fact, I hadn't heard that song in some time, but I definitely heard it a number of times before, so it just so happened at that particular moment in time.*

What is fascinating about this tentative manifestation is that it is temporally bound, situationally unique, and primarily validated or acknowledged subjectively through deep experiences of felt authenticity and genuineness concerning deeply profound metaphysical and existential thoughts and feelings. It is something which is so personal, that to attempt to share it with others often results in trailing off expressions or the resolution that it is in-describable, inexplicable, and acknowledgingly “kooky” sounding<sup>175</sup>.

For Naomi, although the specific song was heard numerous times before, it was something about *this* moment in time that provided a deeply profound and felt sense of meaning.

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<sup>175</sup> The tentative manifestation of Serendipitous Moments was the most profound, but hard to get at descriptively, of the tentative manifestations. Lewis (1967) warned of rousing *watchful dragons*, or science's scholarly proclivity towards rationality and logic that moves one away from enchanting moments of marrowed, cored, and profoundly felt experiences. Further, in a call for the courage to be leisured, Wilson (1981) noted three traps many adults fall into, moving them away from childhood wonder, fantasy, and enchantment, and possibly “seeing” or experiencing moments considered serendipitous. A loss of playfulness, true leisure, and creative possibilities occurred through adults falling into the rational linguistic trap, the protestant ethical trap, and the time trap. Arguably, each trap moves one away from enchanting, serendipitous, and/or leisured experiences.

The uniqueness of a specific, given moment signaled the core quality of serendipity-ness by highlighting the intersectionality of emergent thoughts and experiences, a particular song, and receptivity that provided a deeply profound and felt sense of meaning. Naomi owned the album and reported liking this particular song listening to it many times, but it was not until this moment, this very moment, where this song foregrounded some dormant and deeply profound meaning, causing her to pull the car over, experiencing an extremely personal moment, lost in words, expressions, and communication, but ripe in feeling, deep in emotion, and profound in its impact and messaging. She shared further that when listening to the song again, it did not produce as intense or complete feelings of that moment, although there appeared to be remembered and residual echoings of the felt experience. These aspects of this particular manifestation only adds to its un-graspability, resistance to predictability, and making it more akin to the oriented posture of openness and receptivity which appeared seemingly consistent across the personal orientations to the world reported by the study's participant's.

Through the tentative manifestation of Serendipitous Moments, there appeared to arise through the vortexing intersectionality of external lifeworld occurrences a connection to a potentially dormant internal lived-meaning and understanding, resulting in a piece of music animating, resolving, addressing, or vocalizing and speaking forth deeply felt and significant meanings. Arguably through these serendipitous moments, experiences expressed by participants could be seen to be “creative acts of whatever order, [calling] for a willingness to play, to follow the flight of hazardous processes, to surrender the self to forces beyond one's entire control” (Wilson, 1981, p. 302). Conjectured and arising from my own experiences with music, it is through the serendipitous nature and quality of connection with music which keeps it as a centralizing, essential, and deeply significant and sought after experience. These moments were sacred, revered, deeply profound, and simultaneously energizing and humbling.

### *Speaking For*

#### **The Found Mirror: Oh, There You Are<sup>176</sup>**

*Well for me, music goes right into the ear, through the skull, into in my soul, somewhere all inside of me. It's instant connection. It's like if you were to walk around for several years never having a mirror, and then suddenly seeing your face in a mirror. You don't feel alone, you feel connected. And I feel connected to, yes the music and the artist who made it, but also to this world where they drew their inspiration, and people, their fan base, and there's a lot of stuff that I feel connected to suddenly. And [I] feel at ease with myself. I'm like, I like this, this works for me. So much music out there is very bland, you know. Or not even bland, it's just not made for you: it's made for 13 year old girls or 75 year old men. But every once in a while, almost like after a storm, when the rain's beaten the earth to pieces and all the pollen is washed out of the air and the pollution has been dumped out and the clouds part and things are clearer and things smell better and they look brighter, you feel good about life, you feel this surge of life, you know. Like for me, with that one cd, standing in that record store with the headphones on and listening to [it] completely, feeling. . . I don't know. It's hard for me to put into words, it's like suddenly I wasn't just a guy in a record store; I was bigger than that. I felt like my identity was restored to me. That sounds really weird but you're sitting there, all these people around you, just some guy in the mall at a record store listening to a cd. But suddenly my world is very crisp and clear. There's a vibrancy to everything around me, and it's like knowing who I am so much clearer than before, in-tune with myself, in-tune with those things around me.*

Philip, participant

A significant emphasis of research on music in Leisure Studies and ancillary fields is focused on adolescents, specifically with regard to issues of identity formation and/or expression (Baker, 2001; Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006; Campell, Connell, & Beegle, 2007; Lashua & Fox, 2006, 2007; Lincoln, 2005, Schwartz, 2004). In particular, music is found to play a role in identity construction for some adolescents through the simultaneous contestation and negotiation between an evolving sense of self and social relationships and groups (Baker, 2001; Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006; and Campell, et al, 2007). According to developmental models forwarded through the psychology literature (Erikson, 1976), middle to late adolescence is marked by the developmental stage, or task, of identity versus role confusion. According to this model, adolescence marks the potential of a significant "crisis" as the individual transitions from childhood to adulthood. Identity is forged, contested, and formed within this stage, with the belief

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<sup>176</sup> Track 9, *Rolling in the Deep* by Adele (2010), is associated with this tentative manifestation.



that this identity, once established, will serve as a source of personal grounding as the individual continues to progress through future stages.

Within the literature on music, adolescents were found to not only assert and express their personal identity through music, but also used music as a “vehicle for the expression and contestation of cultural identities at both a collective and personal level” (Baker, 2001, p. 359). However, arguably issues of identity are not fully reconciled once an individual transitions beyond adolescence. Potentially, identity is always being forged, contested, and formed, and those who experience deep and significant connections with and through music listening continually access and leverage music to help them navigate and make sense of who they are, the world, and their place and roles within it. Although some studies from other disciplines and fields addressed the role of music beyond adolescence (de Vries, 2011; Hays & Minichiello, 2005), research grounded specifically within the Leisure Studies literature highlighting the importance of music across the lifespan is warranted.

Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000), on the cusp of a new millennium, challenged the field of psychology to turn its attention toward the good life by calling for research focused on attaining “knowledge of what makes life worth living” (p. 5). Prior to this, psychology was traditionally steeped in pathology, disease, and interventions focused on repairing, fixing, or healing. As scholars, they felt it important to balance this over preoccupation of negative life functioning and events, by forwarding research that attended to the positive. Expanding this call beyond psychology, Robert Stebbins (2007), a sociologist who proffered serious leisure theory, echoed this call for a focus on positivity within the field of sociology (personal communication, November 15, 2010). Also, he termed Leisure Studies the “Happy Science,” offering examples of its history of scholarship on human happiness, fulfillment, meaning, and purpose, all essential qualities to a life well lived. A diversity of definitions, conceptions, and theories point toward leisure’s potential to restore, rejuvenate, and to provide moments of contentment, happiness,

pleasure, and enjoyment (Freysinger & Kelly, 2004; Kleiber, et al., 2011; and Russell, 2009<sup>177</sup>). Arguably, it is these very reasons that prompt individuals and groups to choose to engage in leisure. For this tentative manifestation, I focused on the intersection of music *speaking to* and *for* the participants through the lenses of personally identifying, vital, and engaging leisure experiences. These experiences with music were accessed to elucidate music's seemingly lived-connection to identity, and how these lived-experiences helped the participants gain meaning, as well as navigate and make sense of their lifeworld.

A search for authenticity, as a quality of identity, compels individuals to seek and engage with experiences, which feel genuine, real, and congruent with a sense of a "real" inner self. Thus, "identity formation is motivated in some cases by a search for authenticity; for one's true self" (Kleiber, Walker, & Mannell, 2011, p. 222). Although an exhaustive discussion concerning issues of self and identity are beyond the scope of this piece<sup>178</sup>, it can be argued that many moments that are authentically felt and resonate with an internal sense of self occur through leisure choices and within leisure activities and experiences. It is forwarded here that music listening affords one such lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2007), influencing perceptions of identity and this sense of self. Through these authentically felt experiences, participants' expressed moments of gaining perspective, meaning, and understanding, in addition to feelings of being more who they truly are.

Vital engagement, or the concept that denotes "a certain way of being related to the world – one of engagement or felt connection to the object or other," afforded an additional theoretical perspective to view these experiences (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003, p. 86). Through vital engagement, one's "relationship to the world is characterized by completeness of

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<sup>177</sup> Here I have intentionally chosen to access three prominent textbooks within the Leisure Studies field to forward aspects of the conceptualization of leisure. Specifically, in concert with Kuhn's (1996) observation that many textbooks act as mechanisms to produce, support, and reinforce ideas, definitions, and concepts, or that textbooks "aim to communicate the vocabulary and syntax of a contemporary scientific language" (p. 136).

<sup>178</sup> For an extensive discussion concerning the self, see Fiske's (2004) *The Self: Social to the Core*.

involvement or participation marked by intensity” and is characterized by “experiences of flow (enjoyed absorption) and by meaning (subjective significance)” (p. 86-87). As Philip’s opening quote expressed, through music listening participants appeared to simultaneously experience moments of finding and more fully understanding who they truly are, *and* the leveraging of significant meaning gained within and through these moments as they continued to navigate, make sense, and gain meaning in the lifeworld.

In the current study, one of the most frequently expressed aspects of music, and one’s connection with it, centered in the *Speaking to / Speaking for* doublet. As noted earlier, the concept of music *speaking to* was animated by the image of sympathetic strings and chords, marking personal and uniquely felt internal resonations and reverberations with and through specific music (Bachelard, 1994, Bhatti, Church, Claremont, & Stenner, 2009). In saying music spoke to the participants, it was expressed as that thing which helped to create, express, and affirm who they are. For example, Zoë noted as she spoke about songs that deeply resonated,

*The deeper ones, they help me create my identity. I mean you’re asked to describe who are you or how do you feel about this and a lot of time our emotions or who we are, it’s so important and it’s so deeply ingrained that you can’t find the words, you become stifled almost. [But] it’s powerful, I feel I know it’s there. I’ve no way of communicating how meaningful it is, and then sometimes a song will come along and that artist just had that gift in that moment to just put the words together with the melody. And that’s just like exactly what I’ve been trying to get out but couldn’t. That’s a lot of what these songs are. They help [in my] feeling or hearing or seeing guidance. Or I just have that peace, calming you down. There are so many different things that happen. And it’s hard to even think about and hone in on all those things because they’re just all over the board.*

Participants shared how through music listening moments and experiences were accentuated or punctuated, which often resulted in taking one deeper into a resonating felt-ness of self, similar to applying a loudspeaker to their soul and inner being.

Also, certain music and musical qualities tended to uniquely resonate with each participant, revealing aspects and providing sonic shape to their identity. Zoë observed about the music she selected for her playlist,

*You’ll notice that they all have similar sound. There’s a lot of mandolin playing, a lot of strings, and that’s something that’s always stuck with me.*

Naomi shared a similar story about her particular “sound” and music she gravitated towards, noting how others who know her well can even hear certain music and know Naomi will like,

*There are certain harmonies I like to hear, certain tonal qualities. What I’m trying to verbalize is that the type of music that I generally am drawn to definitely usually has two part harmonies, and a kind of lushness, echo-y-ness, mid tempo, up beat. [Those are the] characteristics of songs that I find myself drawn to. And when those things come together in a song, [it] just triggers something in me. But then sometimes it could be something totally different then what I think is my type of music. I have friend in New York who says, “You know, you’re my breezy, indie, pop, girl.” I’m like what do you mean by breezy, indie, pop? And he’s like, “Oh I just know, I just know what you would like.” And he’s right. He’ll send me stuff all the time and I’m like, oh my God, I love that.*

Aimeé even compared the difference between her and her fiancé’s sound and musical preferences by announcing,

*He likes the men and I like the ladies (laughing). It’s true though, he likes male musicians, whereas I love female vocalists.*

These experiences were often conceptualized or expressed through noting an individual’s unique *sound*, leveraging certain music to help identify and thus express consistent qualities resonating with an internal self. Through the manifested identification with a particular sound, aspects of the participant’s identity was felt and forwarded, thus shifting from a purely *speaking to*, to a *speaking for* the individual, revealing qualities of who they are and how they are within the lifeworld. Through one of her selected playlist choices,<sup>179</sup> Aimeé not only talked about the particular kind of music she related to and identified with, but what type of person she perceived herself to be, thus revealing important and salient aspects to her identity,

*I just like this. I like the clapping, it makes me feel good. And it makes me want to move and I love that. It’s so dramatic, and then also it’s a female and she’s singing about an old lover and she’s talking about, I guess he left her and she’s like screw you. You lost out on me. I mean I can identify with that feeling. It’s not something that I feel in my current relationship or want to feel in my current relationship but, it’s definitely like this, “See ya sucka,” you know? She’s got some attitude about it, and I like that. It’s sassy and I can relate to that feeling.*

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<sup>179</sup> *Rolling in the Deep* (Adele, 2010) is the associated track for this tentative manifestation. Consider listening to it as you read this section to further illuminate participant’s shared feelings and lived-experiences of music as the found mirror.

Arguably for those who experience deep and significant connections with music, knowing one's sound afforded avenues to potentially better know and understand that person, or even more intimately with regard to salient aspects to who they "really are."

As suggested, music manifested as *speaking to* the participants could be simultaneously seen to *speak for* them concerning who they are and how this identity and sense of self, then, navigates and makes meaning within the lifeworld. Meaning, at times, arose from moments in which individuals pushed through confronted perceptions and problems. Meaning was also seen to evolve and develop "as a person is drawn onward by enjoyable interaction with an object, [and] the meaning of [this] relationship gradually deepens" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003, p. 95). Music listening as a source for understanding "the self," and used by the self to make sense of the world, appeared consistently across the participant's descriptions of their lived-experiences. Examples shared by the participants noted music's ability to tell them things, give perceived instructions, affirm perceptions, restore their faith in humanity, validate emotions, and teach them about history and life. Further, meaning was demonstrated through music's expressed ability to subtly instill virtues, right actions, moral directions, ethical parameters for larger decisions, and even re-orient them to the world and others, all intimately intertwined with a sense of evolving understanding and purpose. For example, Philip recounted music's presence to help him navigate through a difficult experience,

*As I was listening to this particular song, I'm looking out across the street scape and I just start having this moment of clarity. Just like when I was a kid, [I realize] you can let things go. Tomorrow everything is going to be fine and it's not a big deal and don't get all bent out of shape over it. And I felt that way, and it was ok and it was good, and so the meditation part, I often turn to music in times of crisis. This was not a "crisis," I don't mean to blow it out of proportion, but it was one of those things that just spirals. You get pinged with one email and then you respond and then they send another and another and another and it's just like, ahhh, leave me alone you know (laughs). And then you get in the car and you can't get your seat belt fastened and there's a slow person in front of you, and you know it just starts to spiral, and then all of a sudden, all these little things are annoying you. And now you really can't stand the people who sent you the email, but it's not that big of deal really. But even in times when I have had big things happen, I turn to music. [But when] I go to the music, I go without the expectation to have this experience. Like I do want it. There's a desire for it, but there's no guarantee it's going to happen. There's no guarantee you're going to get that. But you want it. You don't*

*necessarily expect it, but you desire it. Maybe that's why I have so much music, you know, for the different periods of my life. With the different things going on, good things and bad things, there's been that accompaniment. My goal, my hope, is that it does blast into my foreground and kind of knock that haze, that film away, and kind of restore my faith in humanity (laughing) and you know give me something else to think about.*

Further, music was perceived to gift the participants through experiences of catharsis or fully immersing oneself in particular emotions allowing for them to reconnect with what's real and transformationally lifting them out of current ruts. Aimeé expressed it as,

*Like a purging. I'm feeling it and I needed to feel it. I needed to go through it. I needed to work through these emotions and feel it, and I'm identifying with the musician or the singer or the lyrics, [but] somebody else is there with me in a way, you know, through the song. I'm alone but I've got that kind of outlet through the music.*

Philip further elucidated this by noting,

*Listening to music has always been a real way, probably the quickest way, to just cut through that crust of life to where I feel re-sensitized to all the things around me. Maybe that's the clarity I mean. I don't know, I sense things better, and maybe that brings a certain level of ability to make decisions that are better informed because I'm seeing things a little bit clearer, you know. I'm more in-tuned to what's around me, my senses are heightened, and maybe that's informing my decisions better. Like if there's a lot of anxiety around, something in my life. Trying to figure something out like, should I go to graduate school or not? What do I do? You know that can be really anxiety producing, and when I'm really anxious, I don't make good decisions. The music thing has always been a good way for me to cut through that anxiety to where I can see things a little better. Make a little bit better decision, not based on that sense of anxiety and worry, but based on what I can actually see and feel and touch and see around and hear around me. Anxiety can build, and all of a sudden in your mind you're not just dealing with a question about whether or not to go to grad school, your dealing with a question about what your retirement is going to look like. And it's ridiculous because one does not necessarily connect to the other, but you somehow created this chain of events in your mind. So I think cutting through some of that kind of the film, it's like a hazing, glossing over of your senses to where all you can do is make these leaps in your own imagination that one thing will definitely lead to the next and the next. You know cutting through that and saying what's real around me? And music heightens that sensitivity to what's around me, to the reality around me of all this stuff and the people in my life you know, and all the possibilities and options in life.*

Through music's manifested ability of *speaking to* the participants, they opened up space to feel and experience things, and then turned to the music to *speak for* these experiences and provide meaning and insight as they navigated through their lifeworld.

As another quality of meaning and understanding extended beyond solely focusing on the self, all the participants talked about how music validated and affirmed that they are not the only

one who has felt a particular way, denoting a webbed relationality between themselves, particular artists, and humanity in general. There existed tangible proof of others who have felt the way they have, and this is communicated via a language and medium they could access and understand, thus gifting meaning through a shared experience. Ron described the feeling that he got when listening to music as,

*You ever been distressed and somebody just understands? It's that comfort where your so exhausted that you don't want to talk anymore, but you don't have to because somebody goes I get it. It's like that. It's a completion.*

Through the participants' poignant stories, deeply personal things about past experiences in their lives and how music *spoke to* and *for* them in those moments revealed how this experience afforded them authentic and real moments in which they felt they were not alone, not the only who had experienced this, and that one could feel these things and get through them. These were relationally and deeply shared moments that had a significantly resonating felt-ness and vital meaning for the participants.

Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi (2003) described experiences and pursuits that held vital meaning as ones of vital engagement. Vital engagement is steeped within the experiential, and significance is placed on the meaning between individual, activity, experience, and the context from which these moments arise. Essential aspects of this theory combine the emotive attention placed on relational significance and the meaningfulness emerging within an individual towards a particular object of attention. Vital engagement is *interactional*<sup>180</sup>, locating interest, meaning, and importance in the relationship between both the person and the object. Philip noted this interactional nature and its ability to change and transform not only his perceptions, but who he is when he shared,

*Well, for me it's kind of an other worldly sort of experience in a way. Like feeling a certain level of clarity in your thinking that you haven't had before, or having this emotional catharsis that suddenly these things in your life make sense. It's sort of a blend*

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<sup>180</sup> The phenomenological concept of intentionality finds purchase in this theory as vital engagement focuses on the interaction and relationship which emerges between an experiencing subject and an experienced object.

*of intellectual thinking and just pure emotional response. So it would be a blend of those things which can be ecstasy, like really over joyed sort of feelings, or even despondency, you know just feeling kind of crushed or broken. But typically for me it's always about, at the end of that there's some sort of personal growth. Like I feel like I've changed, I get it more. I get something about my own life experiences, or just existence seems to make more sense to me. Sometimes something in my thinking is clearer, it makes sense now, or I see things differently, or I think about things differently. I don't know how to describe it to you, except to say that, I'm just different now (laughing). I've just been in this zone with this music and now I'm coming out of it, you know, I can't tell you how I'm different, but I just feel different. I feel clean, renewed, you know? I feel changed, transformed.*

Therefore, for those who experience deep and significant connections with music, music becomes a primary source for understanding both identity and meaning. Through this tentative manifestation, *The Found Mirror: Oh there you are*, music listening was presented as a leisure experience where some find resonating purchase concerning issues of identity and meaning, continuing beyond the adolescent years. As an experience which opens up the possibility for vital engagement, music becomes a metaphorical mirror reflecting one's self so as to affirm and potentially animate meaning.

### **Cairns and Echoes: The Lustering Potency of Song<sup>181</sup>**

**Joseph<sup>182</sup>:** [*nervously fiddling on his computer*] I received an email the other day from one of my committee members<sup>183</sup>. He was in Spain and sent me a song, but he also troubled something that I was interested in getting your thoughts on. Here, let me find the email so I can get this right. Here it is: "The attached song has really hung with me lately. And I remember connecting with another

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<sup>181</sup> Tracks 10 and 11, *Long Journey* and *Edge of a Dream* by Sarah Jarosz (2009b & 2009a), are associated with this tentative manifestation.

<sup>182</sup> This final tentative manifestation took up the call forwarded by Parry and Johnson (2006) for creative analytical practices (CAP) to address lived leisure experiences, revealing their complexity and opening up how an activity that may be understood as leisure is experienced, studied, presented, and understood. Arguably this whole polyvocal text attempted to achieve this undertaking. For this specific manifestation, a constructed narrative account in the form of a dialogue is presented between myself and Zoe, leveraging the metaphors of cairns and echoes to reveal the fluid and dynamic lustering potency of song. The majority of this dialogue is directly pulled from Zoe's transcripts, although some ideas come from the other participants and was used for literary conventions. I encourage you as the reader-as-listener to read this out loud, evoking Ihde's (2007) idea that hearing can engage us in multiple ways of "knowing." Through this manifestation, I hope to encourage new understandings and reveal the complexity of this lived leisure experience, which exists at the heart of Creative Analytical Practice (Parry & Johnson, 2007; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

<sup>183</sup> Thank you to Dr. Douglas Kleiber for continually sending me these thought provoking "nuggets," even across the big pond.



Simply Red song called 'Stars' from the early 90s (when I use to drive my son to high school). So I went back to it, and while I still like it a bit, it has lost its luster. As will this one in time. But for the moment, it grabs me." So, I was wondering: this lustering thing, what do you make of that?

**Zoë:** What do you mean by lustering?

**Joseph:** Yeah. What do I mean?

**Zoë:** I guess I think of gold having a luster. Maybe a shimmer? [*she said questioningly*]

**Joseph:** Yeah, I think that's probably the way it's being used here. Does that happen for you? Does a particular song, in certain moments have a certain shimmer, luster, or something which does something, and in other moments not?

**Zoë:** You know, it's weird. Now that I have been talking with you, I almost am looking for these moments with songs, and fascinatingly they are not happening. Like I want them to happen so I can think about them, write about them, and tell you about them, but they are not happening right now. So, you want to know what I did last week? I listened to nothing. Driving, I just sat there in silence.

**Joseph:** So what happened?

**Zoë:** A couple days before we were to meet, I was randomly listening to something in the house, and bam, it was there. Isn't that how it always is? [*laughing*] It never happens when you are looking for it, and it comes when you're not?

**Joseph:** [*shifting forward in his chair*] So, when you were looking for it, did you listen to songs that you had had a moment of connection with in the past?

**Zoë:** Yeah, but that moment had gone. It had lost. . . [*pausing for a moment and looking over my shoulder outside*] Yeah, I guess you could say it had lost its luster. Or maybe potency is a better word. Like sometimes with perfume, if it is really strong and potent, you really recognize it, you know. But then, sometimes it is not, and it doesn't even register. It is weird. I will have a CD or be listening to my iPod and I just keep scrolling through all of these songs. Nothing is happening with any of them. And these are my songs! Songs I chose to buy, download, and create play lists

out of. But in some moments, those songs aren't doing anything. Nothing [*pausing again, but this time with a furrowed crease on her forehead*]. Well, it's not that their not doing anything, there's just not that same feeling that I had at other moments with the song. And actually, come to think of it, sometimes those songs might even be annoying, grating on my nerves even [*shaking her head in wonder*]. Even the ones I have loved at other times and felt such an intensity around - like music I loved in high school. Music I cried to and it used to help me get through things, I can't even listen to it. Actually, you want to know what it is like? Did you ever read "Catcher in the Rye?"

**Joseph:** By Salinger? [*leaning in even more*]

**Zoë:** Yeah. I remember reading that when I was in high school, and that was such a profound, I mean PROFOUND book for me. I really identified with Holden. And I thought that book was it - was the answer to everything. Well, I was looking for something to read last year and I saw my copy of it. So I tried to read it. And, you know what? I couldn't make it through it. It was annoying. [*laughing*] He was annoying. And it created such a weird moment when I finally put it down because in other moments, that book had meant so much. SO much. I think even my high school quote came from that book. That's crazy. But yeah, so like my experiences with that book, I guess the potency or luster of a song does evolve and change.

**Joseph:** Is that a bad thing? Like is it bad that it does this? [*shifting back and settling into the couch*]

**Zoë:** No. I just think we change, and so do our song choices. And so it makes sense that those things we connect with will change as well. For me, a lot of times it is about seasons or phases in my life. I go through phases where I'll listen to this type of music, and then it's almost like the season changes, and I go to a completely new artist or maybe a different genre even. And maybe that's what's happening.

**Joseph:** What?

**Zoë:** Well, maybe songs are so different and music is so diverse because we are all evolving and changing. Feeling different things. Experiencing different things. Needing different things.

**Joseph:** Say more about that.

**Zoë:** *[pausing for a second]* Well, it differs between whether it's an event, like a moment that happened, like the time I talked about with my dad and dancing at the wedding. Or, whether it's a season of my life. A song. . . Like if I've been struggling with something, or you know, life has been throwing me curve balls for a couple of months now and suddenly this song just puts it into words and puts it out there, melody wise right there, and it just explains it. It's that "ahh, that gets it" moment *[making a sound like total refreshment as one's thirst are quenched by a soft drink in some overly acted commercial]*, where the song says it better than I can. The song expresses better than I can. See a lot of times I don't have the words, I don't have the capacity to express it or describe it, and then all of a sudden I run across a song that I'm like, "Oh, they nailed it, I mean they got it, that's exactly what it's like for me." So that song then becomes what reminds me of that whole time, that whole season of my life, it just depends on what kind of connection I have with it.

**Joseph:** *[bumbling as if trying to find the perfect way to ask his question]* So, this changes? Connections with songs change? Different songs come and go? The potency or lustering of a song changes? As we change, so do our experiences change with songs?

**Zoë:** Yeah. Yeah, I guess so. Maybe this is why we can scroll endlessly through our whole catalogue of music some days and not feel any real connection with any of the songs. They lose their punch. They become part of a memory. It is no longer one of those things where my heart's just, it's not evoking that emotion anymore. It becomes almost nostalgic. It's weird, when I listen to that song again, it can be weird because I remember that and those intense feeling, and I'm so not there anymore. But I'm not going to throw it away. I mean, I can still listen to them. I might sing along with them. But that intensity, yeah that potency, that lustering, it is different. It comes and goes. *[As if anticipating a question]* And who knows why? And sometimes, a song from my

past is brought forward again with new stories attached to it, and new meanings. And then there is this weird layering of meanings and stories all based in one particular song. [*Spoken with, now, definitive assurance*] For me, I think it is about seasons?

**Joseph:** You keep talking about seasons. Help me understand this more.

**Zoë:** You know earlier when I was talking about looking for it and you can't find it, it's almost like when you're coming to a new season. Like I'll go through times where I've listen to these three artists and these three CDs, just because they're connecting with me at that time in my life. They are just really resonating and speaking to me at that particular time about certain things. For example, right now I'm in a time where I'm trying to figure out what do I want to do with my life, what am I wanting to gain out of it, what am I wanting to accomplish, and there's this set of music that I've uncovered, [*looking and pointing at the stereo*] thank you NPR because I just love it when they feature new artists and I can explore that artist and really connect with them.

Anyway, so I've kind of been having these, I don't, it's not like a crisis, I'm not freaking out or anything, but you know these moments where I'm just like, "is what I'm doing right now, what I want to be doing for the rest of my life? Is this what I'm supposed to be doing?" And being surrounded by a bunch of people that seem to be doing what they're supposed to be doing, or are at least on that path, a lot of times gets me frustrated. And I feel like, well how do I accomplish that, how do I get there, and what does that look like for me? I guess I would say that's the season I was in. Like I just exited that season because I discovered this collection of music that reminded me that sometimes we try to hold on so fast to our jobs, to what's defining you, how much money you make, you know? And certain music wipes all of those understandings and all those perspectives clear off the map, and it reminds me that that's not what life is about. It's not about your career and it's not about what job you have, and there is a set of music where the artists did a beautiful job laying that out for me, and they said it a lot more eloquently than I can [*laughing*]. All of that is not what life is about, and so I listened to that for months. For months I would listen to it. And I think I listened to it for so long because [*pausing as a sly smile forms*] Hold on, I'm

going to correct myself, I heard it for so long because I was waiting to listen to it, kind of going back to what we were talking about before. I was hearing it, but I kept playing those tracks until the moment when I actually listened.

**Joseph:** *[smiling because of her memory]* And what happened in that moment?

**Zoë:** I got that understanding. Do I necessarily like it? No. But I'm ok with it, I'm ok with where I am, I'm ok with what I'm doing, and I know that I'm going to be going somewhere, but I need to quit trying so hard.

**Joseph:** And music was intimately involved with all that?

**Zoë:** Absolutely, absolutely. So now I'm this new season of my life where I guess you can say the past couple of months I've been really trying to get myself healthy and get in shape. So I'm listening to music that motivates me to do that and it gets me pumped up, and it gets my adrenaline going. And if you were to put the two songs next to each other, it's like they have nothing to do with one another. It's like a juxtaposition of songs. But at the same time, I would consider them both a part of my sound, it just depends on what season we're looking at or what season you're in. And that's what makes it so cool and unique. And these experiences are a really huge factor in what motivates me and what encourages me, especially during those times when I don't know what's coming next, and that can be a really scary thing. But for me, this music makes me think, you know my life will be a whole lot more interesting if I do this then if I don't. And it reminds me to keep doing it.

**Joseph:** What is the "it?"

**Zoë:** Whatever it may be, whatever presents itself. Whatever change is happening, Whatever, you know? Whether you decide to go left or right? Whatever the next blaze on the trail is, that's your "it."

*[Shifting in his chair and looking at the bookcase he seeks out his cairn serving as a book end]*

**Joseph:** So help me understand this better. Walk me through and tell me about your selection of the Sarah, Sarah?

**Zoë:** Sarah Jarosz?

**Joseph:** Yeah. Her song we just listened to: The Long Journey<sup>184</sup>

**Zoë:** The Long Journey. [*Opening up her journal which has been occupying the cushion next to her on the couch*] I'm going to flip here to the lyrics in case I want to reference something. Now this chick, [*letting out an expression of reverence*] she's cool. Just to give you a little back ground. My husband actually told me about her and said, hey you've got listen to her, I think you'll love her. He heard her on NPR. She was being featured when she first came out. I'm not sure how old she is now, but I'm pretty sure when she came out with this cd, she was about 16. It's incredible. And I believe she plays the piano, and she wrote most of her own songs. She's already got a second cd out which I'm dying to explore, but I haven't had a chance yet. It is kind of funny, when you think of her age, you're just like, she's getting it, it's flowing for her. She's getting it more than I am in my 24 years. So this song, Long Journey, it's something that we all can relate to. I visualize this whole idea of life and where we're going to end up and what we're doing. And remember the "it" I mentioned earlier? Here, the "it" being that she knows, or she's seeming to communicate here, whether she's intending to or not, that home is wherever you are in that moment. It doesn't have to be a destination, it's the journey. And it's a long journey, and I love that. And I've just begun. And it's almost like I wake up with that idea every morning: I've just begun a long journey that will continue every day. It's not, "oh I have this long journey for the next year." No, it's I have a long journey every day, and it's one of those things that can be exciting. It can be scary, too, but it can be exciting. And she has some imagery here as far as seasons. [*Flipping back and forth in the pages of her journal*] Here it is, it's the length and width of the summer time, you know, here's this set season. And she's trying to get to wherever she wants to go. And it's the same thing with us, you know, whatever we want to do, or where we end up, it's going be a long journey, and it's going to take time, but we can't forget those guiding

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<sup>184</sup> As the reader-as-listener, you have a choice. You can listen to the song now, experiencing it as a listener first. You can continue reading and then listen to the song to understand Zoe's experiences. Or you can do both/neither.

points that we have. The cool fall air will guide me home. [*Looking up as if to see the wind outside the house*] Absolutely! I have always, always, always, loved, the communication and the connection I feel when outside and feeling the wind. If you think about its ability, one of those unstoppable forces, more powerful than any of us. It can, you know, rip apart anything that stands in its way, but at the same time can be so gentle and so guiding. I love the imagery she uses. This journey, it's going to be tough: this daunting width and length of the summer time can be really oppressive and hard. And that goal, that guiding light for her, that cool fall air is going to guide me home. It's going to take me where I need to be, I've just got to let it. A good friend of mine sent me a quote the other day saying, "You can't push the river." I journaled about it actually. [*Flipping forward a few pages*] I wrote, "A dear friend of mine reminded me of this phrase a few days ago and lately I've been that fool standing out in the water, frantically splashing around in an attempt to make an uncontrollable force operate at my own pace. It's one of those things that is almost child like to think that you can stand against something that you can't control, and thinking you are going to start making it go where you want it to go. That is not how it operates. That is not how it works." [*Closing the journal*] It's kind of like in this song, she's just allowing that cool air, it's going to guide me home. I just got to let it. I can't fight where I'm at, I can't fight what's happening, I can't fight the path of my journey at this moment. I might not like it, I might love it, but I gotta go with it. You've gotta go with that flow, just like when you're standing in the middle of the river. You've gotta go with the flow of the river. If you set a leaf down on it, you can't control where waters carry that leaf because it just goes with the flow and you can't push, you can't slow it down, you can't make it go faster. I mean maybe for an instant, but it's only temporary. We try to have such tight reigns and control on what's going to happen, where our journey's are going to take us. [*Shaking her head and smirking in self bemusement*] We might have an effect for a moment, but in the long run it's not in our hands. She uses the wind to guide her home, or your love can guide me home. It reminds me of things that, like what we were just talking about, things happening naturally and fluidly. Then as far as letting love guide me home,

it's utilizing and allowing those that you have the blessing to be a part of your life, be a part of that journey with you. Sometimes we get wrapped up and think that we have to go at it all alone, and I think that's the opposite of what this life is about. So being in community. Being with those that have an effect or an imprint on your life, let them have that imprint, let them do what they're going to do, let them be there. You know let them walk with you, or let them support you as you walk alone. And if you just allow all this to happen. . . A lot of times we try to fight it because we want things to happen in our own time. *[laughing and looking with a sense of profound wisdom]* But why are we going to settle for the second best of right now when we can just be patient and wait for what's out there and intended for us to have? And it's one of those things, unfortunately, that takes time, and it takes patience, but if you let life go its course and find your flow in that course, find where your pace is, what your direction is *[trailing off and pausing]* You know because we do play a part in it. It's not just, "I'm going to put my hands up and what's going to happen is going to happen, and then you just sit back." No, because I can still go with the flow of the river, but I'm going to have to swim, and if not, I'm going to go under. So it's finding what your role is in that course and the best thing we can wait and wish for is that we will be guided home, whatever that home is.

**Joseph:** *[Stuttering]* Wow. Just wow. So, this song did all of that for you?

**Zoë:** Yeah. I know it is a lot, but yeah. And what is so weird is talking about it and saying it out loud. Like, I even got confused in some of the feelings and how to talk about them. But it's all there, and that song got it. It did it. It spoke to me. And, it is helping me see my different seasons. Like I said, it is marking where I am at in my journey, moving from one season to the next.

**Joseph:** So, you are now into a new season. So, listening to that song with me, how was it? Like where you are at now?

**Zoë:** First, I so have to admit it is weird listening to something with you being here *[laughing]*. I mean, the whole time I was more focused on you and wondering if you were getting it. Well, not the whole time, but it definitely was different than when I normally have these experiences with



music. Even if others are around, no one is [*putting her fingers up like she is making quotation marks*] “studying” or watching me. But, anyway, I am beginning to want to use those words potency and lustering myself. Because these experiences are so recent, those feelings are still there, sort of. Maybe another way to think about is through echoes. There are echoes of those feelings when I listen to it now. Sort of a reverberating back of those experiences, but again I am not there anymore. I am in a different place today. Who knows, maybe I will be back there tomorrow, but for now it is a little less intense. A little less powerful. But I still have the echoes of the feelings moving through me. It is still raw enough for me to remember those moments before. Again, I was not having a “crisis,” but there was some intense things I was wrestling with. And that song just got it. And maybe it helped me understand so I could get through it and enter another season. I don’t know.

**Joseph:** [*smiling*] Yeah. I have decided those are my three favorite words of all time.

**Zoë:** What three words?

**Joseph:** I don’t know.

**Zoë:** Yeah. [*smiling back*]

**Joseph:** Well I have one last question. Talk me through that first experience you gave when I asked you the initial question “Think of a time you felt connected with music and tell me about it?”

**Zoë:** [*shifting in her seat*] You mean my wedding dance song. The one where I danced with my dad? “Edge of a Dream?”<sup>185</sup>

**Joseph:** Yeah. Isn’t it by the same artist?

**Zoë:** Yeah, Sarah Jarosz. Yeah, ok. [*looking off in the distance again*] Well I was flipping through a bunch of songs and got to that particular CD. I was just scanning through a couple of her songs and with some I was like “I love this song, that’s a good one, that’s an ok one, oh I’ve always liked one.” Some I would listen to all the way through, and others I would just go to the

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<sup>185</sup> As indicated in the previous footnote, please feel free to listen to this song as you engage with the text.

next. But then I got to that one. It was weird, it made me slow down. It has that melody, that rhythm that made me slow down. So, I kind of closed my eyes and I just started singing the lyrics to myself, singing them out loud. I have always felt a connection with that song. I remember listening to the actual meaning of the words being spoken and the meaning that they can have when you comprehend what that artist was saying, but then it got a certain point in the song and suddenly I remembered singing this to my dad when we were on the dance floor at my wedding. All of a sudden, I was taken from my office, sitting at my desk in front of my computer, to that day, that moment, that dance. My dad is a big dancer, he loves to ballroom dance and I was just in his arms and I was kind of singing the melody to him and we were just flowing along the dance floor, and I have all of these different things, different images that pop up from that day, but what was really cool was that I was able to. . . [*Getting out a photo album, she turns to a black and white picture of she and her father, dancing*] That's that moment when I'm singing him that song. [*Laughing*] It's really funny, my dad kind of wanted to be all showy, he's very theatrical so the first dance he wanted to do was a swing dance, and it didn't work in my dress and he had hurt his back, so it was kind of this huge laughing thing. You know, the father daughter dance at a wedding is supposed to be this very precious tender moment when all eyes are on you, but ours was kind of funny and a goof. But later towards the end of the reception, that's when we had our moment. When everyone else was chit-chattering and doing their own thing, he just came up to me and he grabbed me and we just started dancing and it was this song. [*Her voice ever subtly shifts, taking on a very endearing tone*] And I sang it to him, and we just flowed and danced across the floor effortlessly and it was just one of those beautiful moments that I will cherish for the rest of my life. So I guess with that song it was more of. . . Well I loved the lyrics to it, I love the words, and I think there's a lot of life lessons and a lot of connection that come from that song. But for me, it took on that whole other thing when I had that experience with my dad. It will forever and always remind me of that moment, and that was probably the last moment or the last time I really had a moment that was just me and him. Yes, we were in a crowded room, but it

was just me and him, and that was the last time that we've had a time like that together. So flash forward to a year and a half later. I am sitting there and I started crying because that was such a good day and it was such a beautiful time and a beautiful moment, but at the same time there was a sadness there because I miss that, and I wish I could have it again. That moment of my dad and I where we are just in flow together, where we're in-tune, in sync with one another. At the time it just happened to be dancing, but we were on the same page and nothing else around us mattered. It wasn't about a show, it wasn't about entertaining other people, it was just me and him. I think the reason why I love that picture so much is because the background is blacked out. It almost feels like we were in a room by ourselves. Ironically enough, in the pictures of our first dance, you can see all the people in the background, capturing their laughing faces because we were making fools out of ourselves. [*Laughing*] Which, don't get me wrong, I'm a big fan of and me and my dad are good at it. But, I think that is one of the coolest things that can happen when you come to a place where everything else around you doesn't matter, it's just about that moment. And I think I got almost through the song before my husband walked in and was like oh my gosh what is going on because I was bawling.

**Joseph:** That is such a beautiful story. Do you know what it is making me think of? Remember when you graduated, you and the crew?

**Zoë:** Yeah

**Joseph:** [*Looking at the cairn on the book shelf again*] I keep having this image of cairns. Remember the cairns I made for you all?

**Zoë:** The rock stackings? I loved them. Mine is right over there. [*Pointing at it on the shelf*] Yeah, what about them?

**Joseph:** Hold on . . . [*frantically searching on his computer*]. Here it is, the note I gave with the cairn. Let me read it:

*Story behind the Cairn:*

*As I made this cairn, I was thinking of each one of us moving down the trails of life, to destinations exciting, unknown, and new. Thinking of the trail I was thinking of those*

*things which help to guide us. Blazes. Many times I have experienced those first fretful moments while hiking down a trail, no blaze in sight, that bleed into a mounting anxiety and fear that you may be on the “wrong trail,” have missed a turn, have passed some important junction, and that even though you may be following a “trail”, it is potentially the wrong one. Well, in the high and rocky country, blazes (markings on trees, posts, and rocks) are forfeited for those things which I think are more primordial, and actually more communal: the cairn.*

*Cairns ARE communal. They demand fellowship. As co-journeyers pass by, they stack, arrange, and artistically render a “you are here and going the right way” for those that come after. Cairns can fall, crumble, or be kicked over. Meaning: sometimes things in life make us feel that we lose our way. Sometimes fate, nature, or destructive people. But none of those things can surmount the communal presence of these ancient signs. Because someone who has gone that way will find their way back, re-stack the rocks and allow those others to continue on.*

*It is with this cairn that we are reminded that we are cairns for one another. We mark trails, routes, destinations, journeys. Like real cairns, they are sometimes far apart, some times real close together, but they are all tied to the same web of collective elevation of community. Cairns represent and validate that you are never, Never, NEVER alone on the journey.*

*This cairn can serve as a paperweight, book-end, shelf adornment, or reminder. . . .  
Happy Trails. . . .*

Ok, so bear with me. [Said in a way as if he were about to begin a long exegesis for class] After our first time together and you shared your experiences with this song, I had the image of a cairn. I think you used the image of an onion, specifically referencing layers, and the layering that occurs when engaging with a specific song and the stories and moments we have around that song. Cairns for me are relational and communal markings of certain passages or trails across a landscape, literal or figurative. Cairns are communal in the sense that they often require attention from multiple people to build and maintain. But essentially, they mark a path, a way, a part of a landscape of where one journeys through it. What seemed to resonate here for me in accessing the images of a cairn is the stacking which is done to story about, or through, a certain song. Songs are listened to and accessed over time, and different experiences and moments can be attached to a song. This maybe even gets at what you were talking about earlier with echoes. Songs echo past experiences, places, situations, moments, shared feelings and emotions. You have the song you danced to at a wedding. You have songs selected for certain ceremonies to communicate certain

things. There is a father/daughter dance which has an associated song attached to it. For those who experience deep connections with music, certain songs serve as place holders, relational connecting points, portals, or isomorphs which transport you from one moment back to another. What occurs, with some songs, is a stacking of memories and experiences around that single song, giving it a history and life which holds a number of memories and moments. Those moments can be isolated and static, or they can continually be built upon, allowing for evolution, change, and a deepening complexity. What then occurs through this stacking of memories and meanings situated within a specific song, is that song then becomes a reminder of certain things: of certain core, deep, integral and important things and memories. It serves as a blaze, a marking, a reminder that you are on the trail, you are not lost, you're ok, or whatever, but it serves as something which holds you. Arguably, this is why we make playlists or go to certain songs during certain moments because we need the whispering echoes of what was said, felt, communicated, and storied through a specific moment with a song. If echoes eventually trail out and potency and lustering fade, with cairning and its yoked storying, these musical markers can still mark certain feelings, understandings, meanings, or emotions. And maybe with the cairn the most significant, resonating memory with a song serves as the foundational stone, the key stone, or the bedrock stone that all the other experiences rely on to rise from to stand balanced and erected.

**Zoë:** *[Smiling]* I love it. And it is reminding me of this whole process we're doing. We're talking about music and the effect it has on our lives, the impact, and the role it plays in my life. Through all of this, I'm telling a story. It's my story. And what's so cool is that even though the topic is the same, I'm sure mine is completely different than any of other participants you've interviewed.

This makes it so cool. Each one of them so unique and that's what makes it so beautiful.

*And their voices trail off as the moment fades. Cairns and Echoes. Lustered and Potent. Music<sup>186</sup>.*

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<sup>186</sup> Serving as a "conclusion" for this tentative manifestation, I end with an email exchange between Zoë and I as a footnote. Although member checking (Roulston, 2010) is arguably not appropriate for a

## Conclusion

Through this chapter, I offered and briefly explored five tentative manifestations of deeply significant and meaningful experiences with and through music listening. Accessing Bachelard's (1994) phenomenological doublet of *resonation* and *reverberation*, I used music's ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for* my participants as an organizing conceptualization to look *along* this lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2007), as a result of my phenomenological *looking at* (Lewis, 1970). Each manifestation was empirically grounded and accompanied by an associated musical track(s), and was further elucidated and illuminated either methodologically, philosophically, or theoretically to purposefully trouble and disrupt scholarly "findings" so as not to proffer only *one way* to understand, conceptualize, or explicated this phenomenon. As the culminating chapter of this polyvocal text, the varied, partial, incomplete, and diverse representations forwarded created spaces and opportunities for intersectionality concerning the ways in which this particular phenomenon is felt, experienced, understood, and lived.

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phenomenological inquiry (Giorgi, 2008), I elected to share this with her to seek her thoughts on this narrative account. As the genesis between the conversations (dialogue within the interviews and the text of the email exchange) was different, with the interviews being exploratory and the email exchange coming from a place of confirmation, I have elected not to include the email exchange as part of the narrative script, and instead kept it as a footnote. Here is the email exchange:

**Joseph:** I have attached part of my last main chapter. I am talking about different manifestations of how these moments of connection are lived. The last manifestation, Cairns & Echoes: The Lustering Potency of Song, is set up as a dialogue between me and you. It was based on some really cool stuff which happened when we talked and I had both of your songs which are going to be on the accompanying cd to really help "sing" these moments. I wanted you to look at it and let me know what your thoughts are. Mainly, I want to know if it is ok to put this out there (and by meaning out there, there is only a small number of people who will probably ever read this). It is personal, and so i wanted you to see it and for us to have a chance to talk about it.

**Zoë:** so...rarely in life are you able to relive a memorable conversation. As we have talked about before, you tend to remember highlights, as in the emotion and topic, but the specifics over time are forgotten. You have captured many memorable conversations and preserved them in word. what a gift! What you have created is capturing that essence. it is real. it is not an interpretation, it is what happened; what was truly said. reading it took me back. it brought back the emotion, the connection. of course when i was able to sit down to visit what you had written, it just happened to be what i needed to hear...my words, your words, and the meaning and truth they held. thank you for letting me a part of this and capturing the beauty of some really meaningful experiences.

This final tentative manifestation took up the call forwarded by Parry and Johnson (2006) for leisure scholars to explore creative analytical practices in order to reveal the complexity of lived leisure experiences, opening up leisure is experienced, studied, presented, and understood. I desired for the narrative dialogue to stand alone without authorial interpretation to invite you, the reader-as-listener, to engage with the piece and glean additional understandings and meaning.

Through the various manifestations, their varied forms of representation, and associated music, it was my hope that additional understanding would potentially emerge due to explicit and implicit spaces for cross over and multiple understanding. Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a) as my grounding methodological approach, calls for creative textualizations that animate and give rise to discursive representations which illuminate, but also invite engagement, wonder, and insight on the part of the reader to continually trouble, complexify, and open up a given phenomenon. In forwarding these manifestations through these distinct representations, I purposefully endeavored to “lay down” differing tracks, rhythms, beats, and/or riffs, so as to encourage contrapuntal layering and interplay (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003) to reveal the web-like relationships, connections, and coherence of a particular lived leisure experience which defies the disjointed compartmentalization inherent within linear texts and their associated representation, as well as finalized, resolved, and complete understanding. In concert with Fox’s (2011) call for polyphonic<sup>187</sup> scholarship of leisure, I proffered different “suggestions” as ways to scholarly conceptualize this phenomenon, while simultaneously resisting corraling and demarcating the experience within the presented text. It was my hope that as you read across these accounts, engaged aurally with the songs and their manifested meaning for the participants, and empathically *looked along* the phenomenon as animated, emergent or created meaning and understanding of this lived leisure experience would arise.

As is appropriate, I feel compelled to end with my participant’s words. Serendipitously, these words were the last words spoken in the last interview. They captured the ineffability, yet centrality, to these deeply significant and meaningful experiences with music. Zoë concluded,

*Music is what makes things hit me harder and deeper. . . it’s a huge element that’s part of my life that helps me . . . No, not helps, it just is. I mean in it’s raw being, it just . . . Yeah I should probably stop right there. Music just is. . .*

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<sup>187</sup> Or, “the telling of more than one story simultaneously” (p. 181).

**CODA**  
**ON MUSICAL SUSTENANCE<sup>188</sup>**

**How Do You Hold a Moonbeam in Your Hand?**

It must have been right when I was in the thick of the Ellijay Sessions. I was back in Athens, standing in front of one of my stereo speakers at the house. I had found a new muse who seemed to embody in each of his notes, chords, and lyrics my being, my soul. He just was getting at, balming, affirming, and speaking forth my raw being: my soul in all its complexity, depthness, and tangential rawness. In this moment, this one song was particularly resonating with me and I stood there transfixed, staring into the speaker with tears streaming down my cheeks. I was charged and electric, riveted and full, floored and sublimed, transcending and yet deeply grounded, rooted even. Suddenly, I turned to my wife with a look of befuddled impossibility, pointed at the speaker and I asked, “how do *I* write *that*?”

This one moment became somewhat of a memoried signpost at the trailhead of my writing of this work, serving as the question, “where do you go from here?” Reflecting on this, I remembered the opening scene in *Sound of Music* (Wise, 1965) where the nuns are wondering what to do with Sister Maria. Actually, they were trying to figure out how to “solve the problem” of Sister Maria, enacting a lively debate, scrutinizing her shortcomings and elevating her gifts. In there searching for metaphors of how to view this task, one Sister eventually asked, “how do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?” This question pierced my being, resonating with the felt perceived impossibility of the task in front of me. How do I solve this problem? How do *I* write *this* phenomenon? How do I hold a moonbeam in my hand?

I concluded I needed to proceed carefully, respectfully, cautiously, and patiently. The experiences of my participants were moments shared and gifted. Some of these moments were

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<sup>188</sup> Track 12 *Soulshine* by the Allman Brothers Band (Haynes, 1994) is associated with the Coda.



things participants said they had never told anyone. With my participants, I experienced tears, laughter, joy, sorrow, despair, sublimity, transcendence, joy, and connection. I experienced deep sharing. Fragile and vulnerable, these moments were, to me, sacred. Frozen and voiceless, I stood at the trailhead and again asked, “So, how do *I* write *that*? Where do I go from here?”

Feeling voiceless, I decided to access multiple voices through this polyvocal text to assist in my writing of this phenomenon. I attempted a creative textualization, working across ideas, experiences, vignettes, philosophies, songs, words, methodologies, theories, concepts, as well as the phenomenon, the participants, and myself. This work is the culmination of those efforts. Partial and incomplete, this was my best attempt at what was happening in that moment where I stood frozen and transfixed, lost in listening to that song. Thank god I have not lost those moments throughout this process. Music continually was gifted. Musical moments happened. Moments of deep connection. Moments of musical sustenance along the way.

### **Structure of this Work**

As forwarded in the *Prelude*, this work served as a polyvocal textualization of deeply significant and meaningful experiences with and through music listening. Using the metaphorical structure of a compilation, each chapter served as a different piece to the Gestalt whole. Each piece was accompanied by an associated musical track, either gifted by the participants or identified through my engagement with music. These tracks comprised the companion compilation to this work, and served as an additional “voice” to help further illuminate this lived-experience. Through my phenomenological *looking at* the phenomenon and situating it scholarly, philosophically, and methodologically, my intent was to allow the reader-as-listener to *look along* these experiences. Further, I hoped to achieve, at least in part, what van Manen (1990) saw a phenomenology *doing*:

To *do* phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal. (p. 18)

It was my “awareness” of this complexity that informed the complex structuring and construction of this text and its multiplicity of voices.

In Chapter One I situated the study within the lifeworld and addressed the presence of music and its seeming inescapability. This was done scholarly, through movies, articles and stories from the popular press, and experientially as I situated my experiences of music listening. Chapter Two grounded this work philosophically, specifically forwarding my understanding and taking up of phenomenology as both a philosophical and methodological approach for explicating and elucidating the phenomenon of connection with and through music listening. Through leveraging the metaphor of Jam Bands, and their particular form and style of music and improvisational “jamming,” in Chapter Three I revealed how I used Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2010a) to allow for a similar style and form of “methodological jamming” with regard to the creation, development, implementation, analysis, and representation of this project. Next, I spent time situating the phenomenon of connection within the aural soundscape as *one* experience in relationship to music. Through forwarding different horizons of understanding, I attempted to further provide experiential vantage points for the reader-as-listener to *look along* this deeply significant and meaningful lived experience. Finally, in Chapter Five, I offered five tentative manifestations of deeply significant and meaningful connection with and through music listening as a lived leisure experience (Parry & Johnson, 2006). Each of these manifestations was empirically supported through the participants’ words, accompanied by an associated musical track(s), and briefly grounded either methodologically, theoretically, *or* philosophically to offer “the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Each piece afforded partial glimpses of this lived-experience and was grounded in Bachelard’s (1990) resonance-reverberation doublet and music’s ability to *speak to* so as to *speak for* the participants.

The structure for and presentation of this work was purposefully complex<sup>189</sup>. This complexity accomplished two things. First, lived-experiences *are* complex and are *lived* complexly. Therefore, I chose for the presentation and representation to be congruently complex. Second, as this dissertation served to both explicate and illuminate my entire scholarly enterprise with this project, I chose for the presentation of it to similarly mirror the complexity I felt concerning the task I had undertaken and the experiences I engaged in through this work. I crafted the text to show the various isomorphs and connecting points I made throughout the study<sup>190</sup>. Thus, I invited multiple “voices” to help attempt an “incantative, evocative, speaking, a primal telling wherein [I] aimed to involve [these] voices in an original signing” of this phenomenon and lived-experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 13). My use of footnotes, appendices, and web links, manipulation of the style and format of the text, and use throughout of various popular or aesthetic examples, anecdotes, vignettes, and images, as well as varied and diverse scholarly disciplines, purposefully troubled from being merely a traditional dissertation and linear text. Most importantly, I invited the reader to be a listener, and to engage with the music accessed and leveraged in this study. My hope was that you would engage with other music as well, noting how your own experiences with songs either found *resonance* with what was presented here, or afforded additional glimpses or insights into this lived experience and the meaning and understanding one gains from listening to music. Through this structured complexity, I attempted to conduct this project in adherence to the principles of quality phenomenological research as systematic, explicit, self-critical, and intersubjective work<sup>191</sup> (van Manen, 1990) to reveal and afford glimpses of the partial and tentative manifestations of this lived experience (Vagle, 201a).

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<sup>189</sup> Moving forward towards publication, I acknowledge other mediums will not support some of the structures within this work and so significant changes to the format and style will need to be made.

<sup>190</sup> Isomorphs, in the outdoor education literature, are seen as “equivalent structures” serving as portals or windows which connect one experience to another experience. This is what allows for “transferability” from one context to another. Within this work, this was predominantly demonstrated through my use of footnotes, although there are isomorphs throughout.

<sup>191</sup> According to van Manen (1990), phenomenology is “scientific” in the broad sense as adheres to these four principles. By being *systematic* it, “uses specially practiced modes of questioning, reflecting, focusing

## Implications

So far in this dissertation, one area I purposefully have not addressed is a discussion concerning the implications for this research. Over the past two years I experienced an embodied resistance with regard to identifying potential implications or uses for this study and the findings, especially during its creation, development, implementation, and analysis. In focusing on what this study could *do*, I felt my openness would be further compromised through potentially *looking to see* if the study did or did not *do* what I thought it might (Dahlberg, et al., 2008). Further, to be completely transparent, I really had no idea what the study would afford, or could afford, other than an opening up, troubling, and complexification of this lived experience. Yes, the leisure literature seemed to be lacking studies which focused on how adults access music, but when I began this inquiry my intent was not to “fill in the hole” in some existing literature or scholarly discourse. To be completely honest, my intent was to explore. To proceed scholarly, not academically. To ponder, wander, and wonder about something. To completely steep myself within a specific inquiry and a guiding philosophical and methodological approach to further unravel and reveal an understanding of it. To reawaken childlike curiosity. Even to dabble and play. This was my chance to really dig in, get after, and immerse myself in something. If anything, this was a “present-ing” experience, and thus I attempted to dwell, “present-ly” in it. Implications, alas, were not a part of that.

Throughout my time in the academy I have become thoroughly impressed with *all* scholarship and research, the unique purpose each approach and inquiry serves, and those who conduct and carry it out. I am especially impressed with work that is explicitly done to forward specific pragmatic and scholarly outcomes such as advancing theory, knowledge, or practices, as

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and intuiting.” In being *explicit*, “it attempts to articulate, through the content and form of text, the structures of meaning embedded in lived experience.” By being *self critical*, “it continually examines its own goals and methods in an attempt to come to terms with the strengths and shortcomings of its approaches and achievements.” And finally, through it being intersubjective is where I need you, the reader-as-listener, “in order to develop a dialogic relation with the phenomenon, and thus validate the phenomenon as described” (p. 11)

well as advocacy and social justice approaches that work to right many of the social wrongs in our world. The world needs these people and their work. I also think the world needs those who wonder, wander, and explore. Hopefully there is a place for all of us around the table.

Not abandoning implications completely, I do desire to briefly talk about three contexts for implications as (hopefully) manifested through this work. I begin with regard to myself in relation to implications as I consider potential future scholarship and research and what I have learned through this process.<sup>192</sup> First, it was very difficult to study something you are extremely close to and from which you draw significant meaning and importance<sup>193</sup>. This “closeness” had implications for how open I was and required an ongoing, self-critical, and bridled (Dahlberg, et al., 2008) orientation. Jokingly referring to myself as the “6<sup>th</sup> Participant,” I never felt I could ever fully get myself out of the way. Possibly this compromised what I “saw,” “found,” or was “revealed.” On the other hand, maybe this helped me present this piece more effectively to better assist others to *look along*? I don’t know. Also, sharing this experience became very difficult. I received a lot of feedback on drafts of me writing very defensively. I may still be coming across as defensive. But when sharing something that is so personally meaningful and sacred, and sensing this “thing” is also extremely and significantly meaningful and sacred to others, to an audience who is, arguably, supposed to be critical of it, created tremendous stress, anxiety, and even at times misappropriated anger. Hopefully I worked through all of that, but it made this challenging. I would strongly consider whether or not I could study anything I am this close to again. Ultimately, my reasons for doing this project were sincere and grounded in true scholarly curiosity of understanding what, if anything, was there.

Further, as much as I reveled in my ability to devote two years to this project in which I found opportunities through course work to develop and conduct a pilot study, created and strengthened collegial relationships and networks with other phenomenologists and qualitative

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<sup>192</sup> Note, putting myself first grates against all my good, southern manners and sensibilities of “others before self.” However, discursively it is necessary so that I can end this piece as I need to.

<sup>193</sup> Some phenomenologists explicitly caution against this (van Manen, 1990).

researchers, and furthered my understanding and knowledge of philosophy and methodology, it was difficult to maintain a consistent level of immersion and engagement throughout the entire enterprise. This past six months, especially moving in and out of the project due to my schedule and other personal and professional commitments, created even more difficulty. All of this reminded me of a conversation I had with a friend<sup>194</sup> who had “thru-hiked” the Appalachian Trail. The “AT” is a continuous footpath that follows the spine of the United State’s Eastern mountain ranges through 14 states, totaling over 2000 miles. Every year, “thru-hikers” begin in either Georgia or Maine, point their compasses, and begin walking north or south to reach the other terminus. Those who do not attempt to hike the entire trail at one time, but instead piece together multiple mini-hikes, are called “section-hikers.” I always thought “thru-hikers” had it worse, sacrificing significant time, energy, and effort to walk over 2000 miles typically in less than six months. My friend, one evening, shared that she felt section-hikers had it worse. In perplexed amazement, I asked why she thought that. She said that once one got his/her “hiking legs” and got going, thru-hiking was not that difficult. On the other hand, section hikers had to, *every time* they went hiking, push through the initial psychological and physical walls, get their legs, and by the time they really started grooving, the hike was over. They had to do this *every time*. This story stuck with me throughout this enterprise, finding resonating purchase in my starting and stopping. Each time I started back up, I had to spend tremendous energy just to get my “research legs” under me, and then it was time to go home. Although I think there was great benefit in having “spaces in between” my work for dwelling and active waiting and that significant insight emerged and was generated in this time, it did make it difficult to pick back up where I had left it.

A second area of implications concerned what this work might afford to those who have read, or will read, it (either in the present form or in future presentations and publications). One of

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<sup>194</sup> I appreciate Susan Powell and all of her support and encouragement as I hiked this scholarly “Appalachian Trail.”

my favorite concepts in phenomenology is called the “phenomenological nod.” Van Manen (1990) noted,

a good phenomenological description is an adequate elucidation of some aspect of the lifeworld – it resonates with our sense of lived life. The ‘phenomenological nod’ [is used] as a way of indicating that a good phenomenological description is something that we can nod to, recognizing it as an experience that we have had or could have had. In other words, *a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience – is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience* (p. 27).

I think of this nod as the unconscious head movement that occurs when you feel you identify with what someone else is saying. My hope was to craft a textualization that could afford the reader-as-listener at least *one* moment like this. Whether that moment came from the topic, descriptions, participants’ words, theory, philosophy, methodological decisions, ideas around processes or approaches, music, or conceptualizations. That was my goal. For *something* to resonate and find purchase and thus make the smallest of rippling impacts in the life of an “other.” And what ever that (those) was (were), for then the reader to use that understanding, affirmation, or insight to be used in their life, work, and/or scholarship, and in the ways it needed to reverberate forth. For me, these nods point towards connection and validation of those embodied moments we collectively experience and live within the lifeworld. I think this, ultimately, is the “data” of phenomenologists.

The final area of implications I discuss highlights the impact this study had on the participants themselves. During my last Ellijay Analysis Session<sup>195</sup> I decided to lift from the text all of the “participant expressed implications” they shared during our time together concerning this experience. Every participant thanked me for opening up a space to talk about something that

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<sup>195</sup> Yes, the one where my computer crashed and I ended up a blobbering fool on the floor in a fetal position.

was so deeply personal, meaningful, and significant. I sensed that these types of spaces are not readily available in our world, especially in adults' personal and professional lives. These experiences and moments are so profound, ineffable, personal, fragile, and arguably re-enchanting, that in sharing them, one potentially concedes a vulnerability he/she is not use to or comfortable mantling. I want to highlight a few of the most salient implications *from* the study for these participants. First, Ron noted how through these interviews he shared things he had never spoken before,

*I find comfort in hey, somebody else out there has felt this way before and they are not willing to give up. I have never even talked about that. That was weird to me to just say all of that. Cause all these things that I tell you, I've always just, I find so much peace in it that I don't have to talk about it. It's like me and the music, we got an understanding, we understand one another, you don't have to talk about it, but to explain to somebody is kind of weird to me. It's weird to hear that come out.*

For Zoë, she gained deeper understanding during one of our interview sessions,

*What I initially described to you with the song, I've never put that into words like that before. Hearing those words again and hearing the melodies all come together, it just peeled back another layer for me, it just made things make more sense. Just now, in this moment. I just made that connection between that whole concept of you can't push the river and that letting your journey take you where its going to take you, I mean that just happen when I listened to it right now*

*Joseph: Just now?*

*Just now, I mean I've never made that connection before. It's that whole concept of letting go, not forcing things, that has been sort of a struggle for me lately really wanting things to happen, and it's one of those exterior influences, where it has nothing to do with me or you, it just happens. That's another thing that reminds me of what life should be about.*

Naomi described what this whole process was like from her end,

*It must be fascinating, I'm so interested to hear how it all comes together in the end because for me, just the way you described what Heidegger's research was like, I mean that is exactly what I feel like this has been like. God, my relationship with music has been the way it is for years and years and years and so it's just something as common to me as breathing, you know. It's just there, I experience it and I haven't ever paused to think about my direct experience with music in the way that I have in the past few weeks and it's really interesting because I am realizing, wow this is kind of weird how I am triggered by music. Some behaviors I do and things that I do, it's so second nature to me that I haven't even thought about it, but it also explains to me know how there have been occasions in my life that I have just been so preoccupied with music in an environment and it doesn't seem to be bothering anyone else, and I cannot escape it. I cannot. It's so present in my mind and yet everyone around me is sort of ok and it's making me realize that there's a reason behind that. I'm not really sure what the reason is, but it's the way I*



*interact with music that has made that happen. Instead of it being something kind of, not wrong with me, but it's just my relationship with music is different I guess than others. I mean I've always known that I am, you know? I've always considered myself a music person and there are people in my life who come to me asking about music and know me as a music person and that's always something that's been a part of my life. But now I realize there's an even deeper reason why that is because it is really part of who I am and it's just something that I have this very in-depth kind of closeness to that I can't, sometimes explain, but that I feel and that makes me act and do things*

Through this study, at least “six” music listeners were able to circle around, dwell, tickle and trouble this deeply significant and meaningful lived-experience. And through this, we found co-journeyors, connections, and words.

### **On Musical Sustenance**

If I were to be asked the *one* summarizing finding that emerged from this work, it would be that of musical sustenance. For those who experience<sup>196</sup> deeply significant and meaningful connection with and through music listening, music sustains them. Music serves as sustenance. It is waybread, manna, lembas, or nourishment for the journey, trails, and trials of life. It gifts, affirms, excites, animates, soothes, voices, deepens, elevates, transforms, and moves. Potentially as old as humanity itself, music touches our most collective and personal inner being, subtly whispering and nudging so as to remind us to just . . . *Listen*. Listen and let your *soul shine*.

It would be inappropriate for me to end with my words, because my words are just one voice in this total chorus singing forth connection and music. So, I turn to the words of others, the Grateful Dead to be specific (Barlow & Weir, 1972), as they capture my best well wishes for you:

*Fare thee well now  
Let your life proceed by its own designs  
Nothing to tell now  
Let the words be yours, I'm done with mine*

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<sup>196</sup> I challenge one last “academic” rule. I know I am suppose to use past tense, but I do not believe these experiences are in the participant’s past. They will continue to be experienced, and thus a present tense, active verb is needed to capture this.

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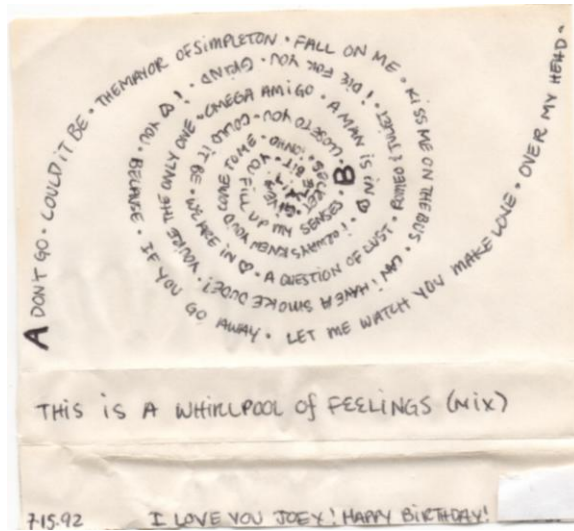
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**APPENDIX A**  
**THIS IS A WHIRLPOOL OF FEELINGS (MIX)**

Naomi's compilation "This is a Whirlpool of Feelings (Mix)." Dated by Naomi 7/15/92.

Cover Art and Song List (the “whirlpool” is created through the use of the song titles):



Side A:



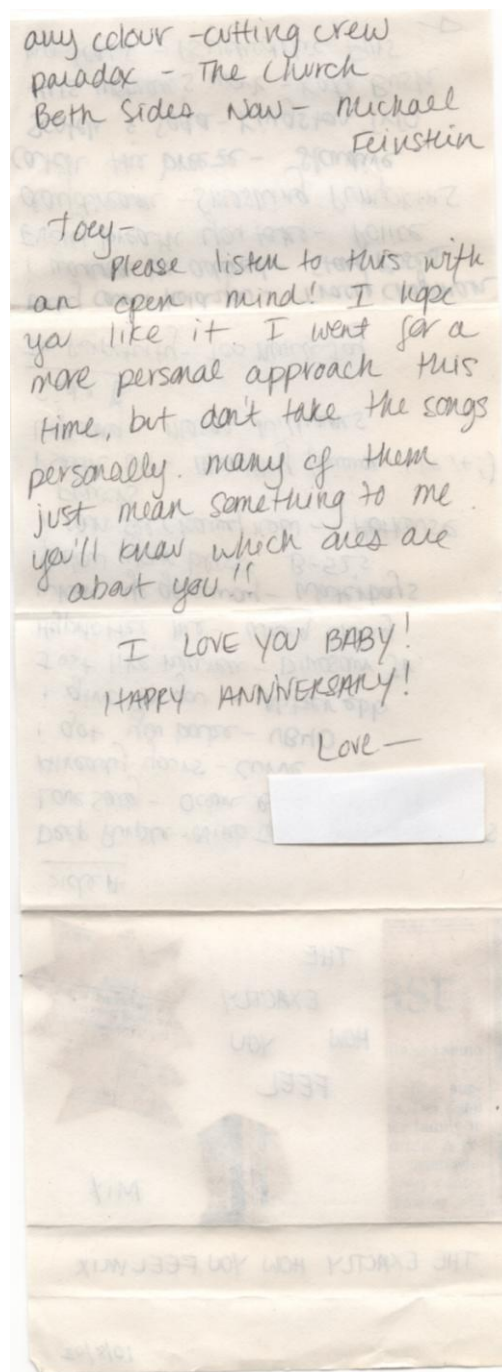
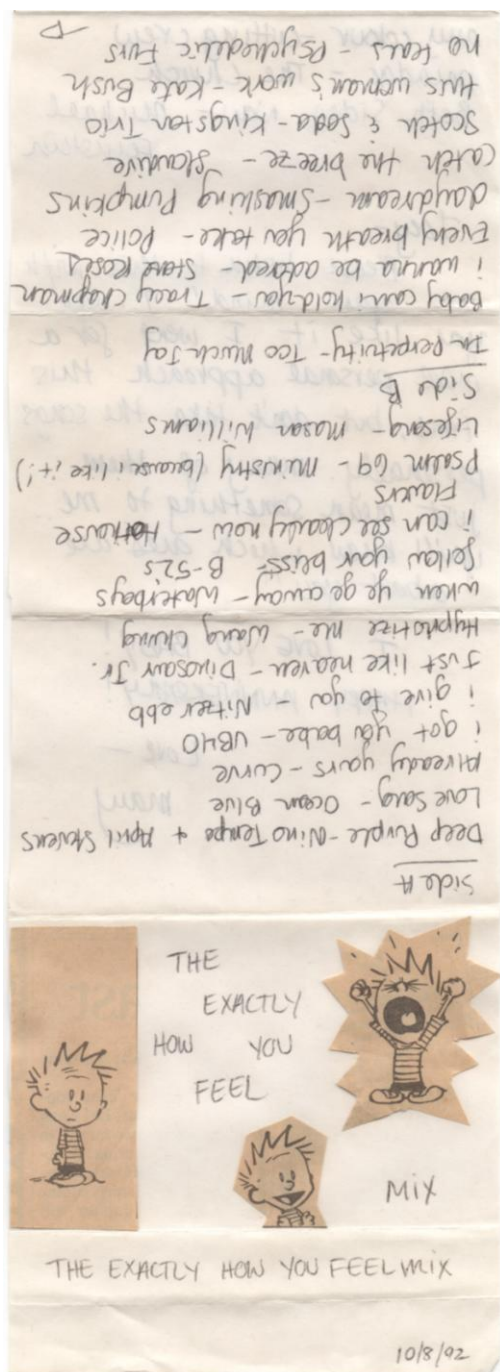
Side B:



## APPENDIX B THE EXACTLY HOW YOU FEEL MIX

Naomi's compilation "The Exactly How You Feel Mix" Dated by Naomi 10/8/92.

Cover Art, Song list, and Listening/Engagement Instructions:



## APPENDIX C

### NAOMI'S MIX TAPE TALK

Text lifted from Naomi's interviews concerning the creation and gifting of compilations. I have done minimal editing to assist in readability for a discursive medium:

*I think that's what we make mixes for sometimes. You want to tell a story, you know, and you want to evoke emotion along the way, so you're thinking, you know, I'm going to put this song first and this song second, then I'm going to put this one in. You know its like your kind of writing your own little story.*

*I assume the role of the creator of that piece of music when I introduce it to other people and I feel like it's a risk, and I'm always scared that people aren't going to feel the same. Like even last week when I was playing some of these songs I was like, gosh I wonder if he's going to feel it at all, the way that I feel it, or if he's even going to thinks it's . . . Maybe that's more my insecurity in the way that I feel about music and that I don't want to disappoint other people, I don't want them to hear something that I find to be so beautiful and so powerful and have them be like, naah, that's alright, you know what I mean? I find it to be such a personal thing if I want to share music that I really, really enjoy with someone, its deeply personal for me, and makes me feel very vulnerable, is that weird? I just have not, I've never really verbalized that before.*







## APPENDIX E

### MAKE LOVE NOT WAR (MIX)

Aimee's compilation "Make Love Not War"

Cover Art:



Song List:

SIDE A	
A	DATE/TIME NOISE REDUCTION <input type="checkbox"/> ON <input type="checkbox"/> OFF
Sesame Street	Black Mountain Side
Fire	Let it grow
She Loves Me	Behind the Sun
Strange Days	Classic Girl
Johnny Kick a Hole in the Sky	Swalbr
Repeater	If I were A... I'd
The emperor's New Clothes	
It's up to you	
You're Time is Gonna Come	
B	DATE/TIME NOISE REDUCTION <input type="checkbox"/> ON <input type="checkbox"/> OFF
Taste of Cindy	Even Flow
Wild Child	Within you Without you
Blueprint	Tenacious
Baba O'Rielu	
November Rain	
Ted, Just Admit it	
A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall	
Anne's Song	

## APPENDIX F AIMEÉ'S MIX TAPE TALK

Text lifted from Aimeé's interviews concerning the creation and gifting of compilations. I have done minimal editing to assist in readability for a discursive medium:

*Well the first one you showed me I remember more. I don't really remember the second one very much, but like I remember making this first one. I mean if you open it up on the spine of it, it's a, a piece of old wrapping paper and I remember this wrapping paper now, and you know its just, like I remember this little craft project, you know, and the care that was put into it. I mean this cover, oh see I did it on the reverse of that wrapping paper and then I glued it on. You know and I don't really remember making this. I mean some of these songs I don't even know actually, but it's just, it's really, it's very sweet to me. It makes me feel happy and like it brings back memories and I just think its so sweet that I put this together with such care and attention, you know, for you and, you know its says for Joey, I love you from Aimeé. It's just, it's really, it's sweet, it's like this great little gift, you know, and we were in high school, I mean what did we have, we didn't really have very much, you know. But I think this probably took me like 5 hours to put it together and figure out which songs I want to go where and, so it's like a whole, it's kind of a flood of memories and it was really neat to see it because, you know we've been talking about these mixed tapes and then the fact that you actually have this cover, I mean who listens to tapes anymore? And then the second one, like I said I really don't quite remember this as much, like this seems a little bit edgier, for some reason its not quite as sweet but, and this, it kind of, it makes me laugh a little bit because these are all like real kind of hippy, 60s, 70s musicians and I guess its just kind of funny to me that like that was the phase I was in, you know.*

**APPENDIX G**  
**WHEN YOU ARE FOREVER YOUNG, HAPPINESS RUNS (MIX)**

My compilation created in honor of the birth of my daughter “When You Are Forever Young, Happiness Runs: Abigail Birch Pate – A Life of Song.”

CD Cover Art:



Song List (Included with the Liner Notes):

When You Are Forever Young, Happiness Runs

1. Forever Young
2. Darlin'
3. Lovin' Cup
4. Dry the Rain
5. Jet Plane
6. The Moon Song
7. Pedestal
8. The Rising
9. Yukon Sally
10. Drake's Day
11. Houser's Hike
12. Back to the Earth
13. Sensational
14. Climb to Safety
15. One Road to Freedom
16. Orphan on God's Highway
17. A Christmas Song
18. Happiness Runs

### Liner Notes:

I have always felt that one should have a soundtrack to their life - a blending of melodies and tunes of great life import and inspiration. In my daughter I have celebrated her first being, ensuing pregnancy and labor, and beginning stages of existence through song.

These are the first tunes.

Like Tolkien, I feel life begins in song. In Abby, life has heightened through song.

These are the tunes of Abby:

- Forever Young inspires through a celebration of connection and relationships, adorning the trim of Abby's room
- Darlin', which I picked as the first song that father, mother, and child would listen to on the way home. Not her first song, but our first song.
- Then it is the Stones – Lovin' Cup. The lyric – "I'm the man who brings you roses when you ain't got none," embodies the integrity and simplicity of Abby's gift.
- Dry the Rain, and the methodic rhythm, brings to mind a time of mother and father connection and the life beat which surrounds.
- Jet Plane became an anthem in the house, tribal. Listened to by Abby in the womb on many occasions.
- My first dance with my daughter: The Moon Song (not the true song title, but mine in respect to "Goodnight Moon"). We danced and danced and danced. It is forever branded.
- Pedestal is a traveling tune. Traveling to Miss Ruby's, Concord, Lowe's. It finds a home in simplistic musical archives of time and place.
- My daughter's first adventure – guiding a raft down the Nantahala. My daughter's first show – Bruce Springsteen. First Song: I Walk the Line by Cash. Second Song: The Rising. Come on up.
- If you want to embody Abby's mother in song – Yukon Sally. It will exist within Abby.
- Next we have two musical interludes. Nick Drake and Michael Houser. Drake's Day and Houser's Hike are fictitious titles, but bear meaning for a life of movement and exploration.
- A common occurrence is a tribal, ethereal, earth beat. Back to the Earth is a culmination of that spirit and an acceptance that our child is from earth, we as hosts to her spirit and soul to give back to earth.
- Inspiration is key – Sensational inspires.
- Climb to Safety embodies a celebration of relationships. Especially husband to wife, father to daughter, and mother to child – "After all that I've been through, you're the only one that matters"
- For the spiritual walk of Abby, there is One Road to Freedom. We all have choices.
- And when we celebrate those choices, we find others who have been orphaned. Who need to be reunited and celebrated. Who find family in all human kind.
- The most beautiful mother and child story – A Christmas Song. In Abby, we have found a fellow soul searcher – Blessings on Her!
- Finally, Donovan finalizes and actualizes the truth of existence through the embodiment of daughter and mother. Circular, happiness, and closer to a life of flux. . .

This is a not a compilation of happenstance. This is not a collection of chaos.

This is a culmination of an existence that was brought to each of you,  
just as it has been brought to Jenny and I.

Abigail is born to all of us, and there is a song to her life!

## APPENDIX H

### TO LIVE IS TO FLY (MIX)

My compilation created in honor of the birth of my son “To Live is to Fly – Westin Ash Pate”

CD Cover Art:



Song List (Included with the Liner Notes):

- To Live is to Fly
1. Come in from the cold . . .
  2. . . . Sea Beneath . . .
  3. . . . Dear Prudence . . .
  4. . . . Danny's Song . . .
  5. . . . Only Living Boy in New York . . .
  6. . . . Lullaby . . .
  7. . . . Dream Song . . .
  8. . . . African Christmas . . .
  9. . . . Glass Off . . .
  10. . . . Prince Caspian . . .
  11. . . . Half Acre . . .
  12. . . . Proudest Monkey . . .
  13. . . . Games People Play . . .
  14. . . . On Children . . .
  15. . . . Wildflowers . . .
  16. . . . Into the Fire . . .
  17. . . . The Wind . . .
  18. . . . To Live is to Fly . . .
  19. . . . Joy to the World

### Liner Notes:

It came without much talk. Words were absent. But there was song. There is always song. More notes and melodies that wove their way in and out of time and consciousness, than conversations. His name even took a while to emerge from the eternal hymns of ever more.

But there was song. Always song.

It was on our hearts, in our souls, encircling our steps, and patiently waiting, like the new dawn, the moment when we were to meet Westin Ash Pate. Lewis welcomed the creation and dawning of Narnia with song. So did Wes awaken our day. These are his tunes:

- Come in from the cold for awhile . . . sit, rest, spend time, rest, sit . . . Everything will be alright
- Dawning of days, moments after night, creation anew . . . listen on dawning moments and find the soul of Wes.
- Now my son's first song – one of my most favorite words – and the lyrics “The sun is up, the sky is blue, its beautiful and so are you” – come out to play. . .
- Danny's Song was our wedding song. It embodies family. It embodies the blessings bestowed upon Bou and I through our children.
- Next is the gift of emotional connections through the collective well spring of life. This song embodies two important men in my life – my son Wes and my friend Chris, who is an artist and contains the childlike passion for seeking . . . and nothing is more important than the lyric “Let your HONESTY shine, shine, shine.”
- Sshhhh. . . it is time to quiet down. My gift to Bou. A Lullaby between mother and son. I saw this song before I ever heard it . . . there is nothing that can capture better what exists between a son and his mother . . .
- And now that we are slowed down, take time to dream . . . take time to dream . . . “you can do anything there.”
- The soul and spirit of wes transcends the temporal world. This song is so elegantly simple, that it celebrates the pure emotion of promised creation of the Christmas Season.
- We continue in the vein of movement, water, life force, and the subtle swaying in a dance of awakening. Through this song, I find a soundtrack attached to pictures of birth and rebirth. Actualization of life.
- . . . And it builds. Like the song . . . Ever building . . . Ever building . . . Ever Building . . . Thank you Lewis – Thank you.
- This song came from a commercial. An insurance commercial nonetheless. It is the one in which a kind act is performed. An act that is witnessed by another and then compels one to act kindly to another, and the ripple extends. It embodies another important man in my life. Matthew Brooks – extend the acts . . . I find that same spirit within my son.
- Then, we honor the next important man in Wes's life. His Uncle Jimmy – beloved by our family for his childlike purity, love, and kindness . . . Uncle Jimmy is no longer bound to us in this world, but dances and touches us in this life through the melody and emotions of this song.
- My son is a blues man . . . put on clapton, mayall, the brothers and others, and he gets a wide grin on his face . . . this is from Brother Duane and reminds us of our shortcomings
- Now, the gift of the man Kahlil Gibran, sung by beautiful women . . . reminding each of us of our duties as parents. . . to love, celebrate, and let go. . .
- Next is a thought of wandering over hillsides, hiking and playing, jumping and laughing, among the wild flowers
- Then is the hope of what little Wes can teach us – “May your strength give us strength, may your faith give us faith, may your hope give us hope, may your love bring us love” – written in honor of those who went to save others on 9/11, reminding us what we should be focused on and celebrating in tragedies
- Then there is again the connection of son and mother – both who listen to the wind of their soul.
- Finally, we have the lesson of a life born from the eternal – “to live is to fly, low and high”
- We conclude with a song gifted from my two children and I – we have danced and sung it loudly . . . Joy to the World!

This is a not a compilation of happenstance. This is not a collection of chaos. This is a culmination of an existence that was brought to each of you, just as it has been brought to Jenny and I. Westin is born to all of us, and there is a song to his life!

# APPENDIX I

## CAIRNS & ECHOES OF MUSICAL SUSTENANCE

1. Come in from the cold<sup>197</sup> . . .
2. Shoe Dog\*
3. Ten Thousand Words
4. Help on the Way > Slipknot > Franklin's Tower
5. Nonfiction
6. Drift Away
7. I'm Open
8. Do You Realize?\*
9. Rolling in the Deep\*
10. Long Journey\*
11. Edge of a Dream\*
12. Soulshine\*

\* Songs gifted from my fellow music co-journeymen

### Song Citations:

1. Matthews, D. J. (1998). Spoon [Recorded by Dave Matthews Band]. On *Before these crowded streets* [CD]. United States: RCA. (Recorded 1997-1998).
2. Scofield, J. (2007). Shoe Dog. [Recorded by John Scofield]. On *This before that* [CD]. United Kingdom: EmArcy.
3. Avett, S., & Avett, S. (2009). Ten Thousand Words. [Recorded by the Avett Brothers]. On *I and love and you* [CD]. Los Angeles, CA: American Recordings. (Recorded 2008 - 2009).
4. Garcia, J., Hunter, R., Godchaux, K., Kreutzmann, B., Lesh, P., & Weir, B. (1975). Help on the way, Slipknot, Franklin's Tower [Recorded by the Grateful Dead]. On *Without a net* [CD]. United States: Arista. (Recorded October, 1989 - April, 1990).
5. Robinson, C. & Robinson, R. (1994). Nonfiction [Recorded by the Black Crowes]. On *America* [CD]. Los Angeles, CA: American Recordings. (Recorded May-June 1994).
6. Williams, M. (1972). Drift Away [Recorded by Dobie Gray]. On *Best of Dobie Gray* [CD]. Nashville, TN: Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC. (Recorded 1973).
7. Irons, J. & Vedder, E. (1996). I'm Open [Recorded by Pearl Jam]. On *No Code* [CD]. United States: Epic. (Recorded July 12, 1995 – May 1996).
8. Drozd, S (2002). Do You Realize? [Recorded by the Flaming Lips]. On *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* [CD]. United States: Warner Brothers. (Recorded June 2000–April 2002).
9. Adele, Epworth, P. (2010). Rolling in the Deep [Recorded by Adele]. On *21* [CD]. Eastcot Studios, London: XL.
10. Jarosz, S. (2009b). Long Journey [Recorded by Sarah Jarosz]. On *Song Up in Her Head* [CD]. United States: Sugar Hill Records.
11. Jarosz, S. (2009a). Edge of a Dream [Recorded by Sarah Jarosz]. On *Song Up in Her Head* [CD]. United States: Sugar Hill Records.
12. Haynes, W. (1994). Soulshine [Recorded by the Allman Brothers Band]. On *The essential Allman Brothers Band – The epic years* [CD]. United States: Epic. (Recorded 1992 – March 2000).

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<sup>197</sup> This song is the “hidden track” at the end of “Spoon.” Please fast forward to the 6 minute mark.

Liner Notes<sup>198</sup>:

## Cairns and Echoes ~ Markings and Voices

For some, along the trail there are gifted moments.

Moments of musical sustenance for the journey. This is a compilation of some of those moments.

Gathered within are songs of connection. Songs of meaning. Songs which mark passage, echo memories, affirm feelings, give expression to our souls, and sing forth life.

These are *our* songs of connection.

Cairns and echoes of meaning, significance, and transcendence.

Markings and voices to encourage and sustain. Gifts from our journey we are gifting to you.

All we ask for you to do is just . . . *Listen*

1. The music's beckoning, will you heed the call? Come, come in for a while. Welcome. Everything will be alright . . .
2. *Listen* and let that honey molasses guitar tug, pull, pluck and strum at those internal strings, those resonating, sympathetic chords. Turn it up, atmospherizing that space that you're in, that perfect space.
3. So many words, so many thoughts, so many ideas. Searching in the swarms, we find those who tell us they "know." But do they?  
Socrates decreed: *He who is wise admits his own ignorance.* The brothers Avett reminded: *Ain't it like most people, I'm no different, we love to talk on things we don't know about.* Lewis empathically invited us, then, to *look along*.
4. Bumbling, fumbling, stumbling and lost, *I was blind all the time I was learning to see.* Trying and scared. Waiting and wondering. *Was help on the way?* My Virgils came and reminded me, *when you get confused, just listen to the music play.*
5. For some, music is the only language we truly know how to speak. Although some like their water's shallow, we like ours deep, so very deep
6. And when the waters are deep, we float, we let go, and we feel. Released to currents and animated by internal resonations we are affirmed and held, drifting away, lost so as to be found, whole and complete . . .
7. But to *be* this, we must *be* open. Receptive and receiving. And never, ever, *ever* trading magic, child-like wonder, or enchantment for fact. There *are* no trade backs.
8. Serendipitously, sometimes, when we are open, when we are receptive and we receive, when we are gifted . . . *we realize*
9. Through music we find our sound. Through our sound we find ourselves. Then, through music, we hope to gift the tacit, ineffable, and deeply meaningful resonations and reverberations of our souls: who we are, how we are, why we are, and where we are.
10. *Listen.* To the music. To the words. To *your* understanding & meaning. *Listen* for echoes and voices sounding the way, guiding you home
11. And when you *listen*, dance. Dance *your* dance. And stack your rocks. Create that cairn to mark the trail for when you lose your way
12. Thank you muses. Thank you musicians. Thank you music. For the gifts and the gifting. *And* thank you for the reminder to let our *souls shine*.

This is not a compilation of happenstance. This is not a collection of randomness.

This *is* a culminating musical celebration of connection.

Music connects. Music inspires. Music affirms.

Music.

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<sup>198</sup> These liner notes reveal my accessing and use of song. I struggled with if I should include "instructions" on how to engage with the music to potentially create similar experiences to that of what the participant's described in this study. I have concluded this is an impossibility. If you connect with the songs, great. If you do not connect, great. If you have your own connection or meaning gleaned from the song, wonderful. If some of the meanings seem better expressed or housed within other songs, incredible (and I would love to know what those songs are). If your meaning reveals or opens up new thoughts or understandings, exceptional. This is the joy of engaging with music and creating a polyvocal experience to assist in the co-constructed understanding of these lived experiences.



## APPENDIX J INTENTIONALITY BRIEF<sup>199</sup>

### Resisting to be Understood, the Understanding of Intentionality

My family and I once lived in an old farmhouse, originally built in the late 1800s. The kitchen window looked out on a 40-foot tall split-trunked sweet gum tree. Behind the tree was a large water tower, over 200 feet high, standing erect and imposing like some sentinel or large sundial. The window faced south, and suctioned to it was a gift given to my daughter: a small crystal ball attached to a solar panel that operated a tiny motor, which when hit by the sun's rays, would animate the ball, turning it in a circular motion. The rays would pass through the crystal, sending dancing prismatic rainbow splashes circling around the kitchen. My newborn daughter and I would watch, mesmerized, as we were gifted with a light show of passing beauty. Due to the location of the tree, tower, clouds, and our sporadic presence, the light show, when it occurred, was novel, rich, full. It was within this experience that a grander understanding revealed itself. Accentuated by the lyrics of the Grateful Dead song *Scarlet Begonias* – “Once in a while you get shown the light in the strangest places if you look at it right” and those dancing prismatic rainbows, I find myself understanding something of intentionality.

Understanding comes like that for me. Understanding comes in music, notes, melodies and verses: images, metaphors, and scenes. Understanding is fluid, dynamic, and interconnected by strands and fibers. Its origin does not solely rely on digging, unearthing, or actively pursuing. Instead its origin, at times, comes through revelation, moments of grace, and within pauses. What is it to find myself understanding *intentionality*? It is a collective gathering of life experiences and relations, both passive and active. There are pieces that require purposeful action on my part: reading, writing, journaling, discussing, and defining. But there are also pieces, or maybe the spaces between these pieces, where understanding surfaces. It comes in dancing prismatic lights shared with my daughter, red-tailed hawks alighted in flight as a travel down back country roads, and moments of songs and versed expressions that energize all my senses. In these moments, I find myself the passive recipient of this understanding, not the creative actor or instigator.

To embark on the study of phenomenology, one must challenge his/herself with concepts that trouble one's natural attitude or existence in the world. Intentionality is such concept. As one who finds him/herself wrestling with understanding intentionality, there appears to be two levels of engagement: defining intentionality, or intentionality understood, and finding oneself understanding intentionality. To provide illumination on this nuanced distinction and revelation of this process, I evoke Martin Buber's (1996) seminal piece, *I and Thou*.

The act of defining is one grounded in experience. Definitions capture. They corral. They demarcate boundaries. Definitions maintain distance, direction, and resolution. Buber's (1996) concept of *I-it* reveals something of definitions. At the base of *I-it*, the *I* experiences something: the *it*. The act of defining is grounded in distance, in finality, in taxonomy. To reach a state in which intentionality is understood, we experience the word and its definitions, descriptions, and thoughts through the writing and idea of others, and our engagement with that word resides in the past, remaining distant and sterile. In reading Husserl, Heidegger, Van Mannen or Dahlberg, I experienced definitions of intentionality. They are captured in quotes, phrases, and glossaries, all discursive tools to provide me (subject) with the experience (object) of intentionality as defined.

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<sup>199</sup> This was written as a course assignment for a class entitled *Practicing Phenomenological Research*, taught by Dr. Mark Vagle, my advising methodologist.

As an example, Husserl (2002) defined intentional experiences as having, the peculiarity of directing themselves in varying fashion to presented objects, but they do so in an intentional sense. . . This means no more than that certain experiences are present, intentional in character and, more specifically, presentatively, judgingly, desiringly or otherwise intentional. . . only one thing is present, the intentional experience, whose essential descriptive character is the intention in question (pp. 81-82).

Therefore, intentionality for Husserl is the embodied experience that arises from a conscious subject directing his/her consciousness to an object. What is highlighted is not the experiencing subject or the experienced object, but the intentional connection that occurs between the two.

Providing more of a summative glossary definition, van Manen (1990) offered intentionality as “the inseparable connectedness of the human being to the world. . . all human activity is always *oriented* activity, directed by that which orients it . . . [and] intentionality is only retrospectively available to consciousness” (pp.181-182). Therefore, intentionality understood, for van Manen, uses human’s (as subject) connection and orientation towards action with the world (as objects) as his definitional nexus. Using the concept of Buber’s *I-it*, the content of intentionality understood “has only a past and no present. . . Insofar as a human being makes do with the things that he [*sic*] experiences and uses, he lives in the past and his moment has no presence. He has nothing but objects; but objects consist in having been” (p. 63-64). Intentionality understood and experienced lacks formational and relational understanding. The definitional process is finalized, complete, and resolved.

When I read, think about, and conceptualize these definitions, I *experience* each of them. I may even venture to say that I *know* what intentionality is, because I am able to memorize the definitions, or capture them for a publication, a test, or a conversation. These definitions demarcate parameters and boundaries. Additionally, through these definitions, not only do I *know* what intentionality is, but I simultaneously *know* what it is not. For example, it is not reincarnation, or sustainability, or revolution. I even may define intentionality to mean the act of coming in contact with the world, living in the world, and through the reflective process, making meaning of the world. *What* is lacking, however, is meaning-making and an active understanding of intentionality. Meaning-making and active understanding, however, do not reside in the *I-it*. It is precisely what the *I-it* lacks that reveals the boundaries and limitations of *experience*. Buber (1996) reveals this notion of what the *experience* of the *I-it* can and cannot do:

Those who experience do not participate in the world. For the experience is “in them” and not between them and the world. The world does not participate in experience. It allows itself to be experienced, but it is not concerned, for it contributes nothing, and nothing happens to it. p. 56

Therefore, my defining of intentionality is only one aspect, one part of what it is to find myself understanding intentionality, and ultimately applying the concept of intentionality to my interactions within the lifeworld.

Offered as an extension and broadening of the experiencing *I-it*, Buber (1996) reveals the advantages housed in the relational nature of *I-you*. According to Buber, “The world of experience belongs to the basic word I-It. The basic word I-You establishes the world of relation” (p. 56). Through defining intentionality, the concept is reduced to definitional knowledge grounded in experience. However, the “*You* is more than *It*

knows. *You* does more, more happens to it, than *It* knows” (p. 60, italics added). If the goal is to understand intentionality, and from that understanding evoke intentionality as a core concept of phenomenological inquiries, merely defining intentionality cuts off its most palpable potentialities.

“All actual life is encounter . . . What is essential is lived in the present, objects in the past” (Buber, 1996, pp. 62 & 64). Through the relational encountering of the *You*, intentionality reveals more of its essence. Therefore, intentionality is not to be understood, but something one understands at each moment in which it is to be utilized. Levinas (2002) offers this perspective of intentionality:

Intentionality is thus an intention of the soul, a spontaneity, a *willing*, and the sense bestowed itself, in some way, what is *willed*; the way in which beings or their Being manifest themselves to thought in knowledge corresponds to the way in which consciousness “wills” this manifestation through its own resolve or through the intention that animates this knowledge. (p. 530)

Departing from previous definitional attempts of intentionality, Levinas elevates the soul. The soul is used to show the present, active engagement in the world opposed to the mind which retrospectively understood the world. Through defining, through *I-it-ness*, the mind and rational logic easily slip into the objectification of the world. However, the world of relation must reside within the soul. It is a coming home again, a willing acquaintance that unifies knowledge and that which animates that knowledge. It is fuzzy, non-descript, and in-discreet, yet simultaneously full, rich, and palpable. Understanding comes through unification, participation, and relationship within. Therefore, intentionality, understood resides in relational understanding.

Solely defining intentionality relegates the encounter to exactly what intentionality is not. Intentionality becomes merely an object. One that is corralled, captured, reduced to particulars. In understanding intentionality, experience is contextualized to aspects of relations. Longing and willing of wholeness transcends reduction and atomizing that permeates the experiencing of *I-it-ness*. Through the *I-You*, “longing aims for . . . cosmic association of the being that has burst into spirit with its true *You*” (Buber, 1996, 76). Intentionality understood is understanding intentionality. It is seeing the light in the strangest places if you look at it right. It is seeing the dancing prisms for what they reveal, not what they are. Intentionality transcends any reduced, cook-book recipe that forces me to relegate relations with the world to mere experience. Intentionality requires my participation by rejecting my defining. Intentionality, for the briefest of moments, allows the day-to-day *I-it-ness* of the world to enter relationally into *I-You-ness*.

## APPENDIX K EXCERPT FROM BRIDLING JOURNAL

**September 24, 2011**

**Plan for the day:**

- ~ Get through two more transcripts: I think Naomi and Ron's
- ~ Continue to allow this thing to organically develop
- ~ Read a little Dahlberg today, just something from her
- ~ Force myself to bridle after I am done with each interview – do this by starting with going back to Aimee's and to a post bridling journal

**Methoding:**

I really think if I have these tentative manifestations and compile all of these together, then I just start going back through my notes and manuscripts and literally pulling the large chunks forward. With that, I can then get color code them (thank you brian) so I know who I am pulling forward and where they come from, and then in a different font or underlined or italicized or something I can set apart my own thoughts and words under each selected passage or woven through the piece.

So one of the things I have thought about is what I am going to do with these songs, journals, and tapes, ideas that are beyond the interviews. There is so much in the interviews themselves, I am not sure what to do with the other things.

Actually spend time and build in pauses, dwelling, reprieve (again ascribing to leisure and what leisure affords

Need to go through the different transcripts and pulling out when I talk about phenomenology – get my talkings about it as part of the methoding I shared

Ron talks about Canterbury Tales and having each of these different characters tell their story – could this be a possibility for one of the manuscripts?

**What has become clearer:**

Right now, I am not sure what has become clearer. I really am feeling strong about the structure, focus, and “spirit” of two of the three articles. The one with CAP and Leisure still needs work developing. I really think I would like to have three abstracts with outlines to Corey sometime soon, definitely before returning up here. Also, I think getting ideas and tentative manifestations and then trying to schedule at least two, if not three, follow up interviews would be great. Right now, I am seeing Zoë and Phillip with a possible phone interview with Naomi

**Tentative Manifestations:**

This may come up as I am working through the pieces today

Languaging – form of communication

- Sub communication (*look for some better expression of this, maybe meta communication or something along the lines of subtle, deeper, part of communication*)

Kismet – this initial coming together, a recognition, cut from the same cloth

Sublime – feelings elevated above the earthly

Atmospherer (auditory backdrop or wall paper)

Serendipitying..... something beyond coincidence

The Selling of Emotion = not telling the difference between the performer and the music

In some piece I need to really break down this whole idea of not looking at a single artist, song, genre, band, type of music, etc. I need to spend time just writing this down and using this as part of a piece. Maybe this could be part of the dischordant piece. And to really trouble this subjectivity, context, time, personal space and place of where someone is, and just get it down it is not about any of that, but it is about the moment in which one finds themselves connecting with music.

I need to provide a composite sketch, early on, of all of these people and describe what these people do..... Just to give an understanding (maybe a found narrative composite sketch, using their words and piecing together their experiences) entitle it “Who am I” and then something with song... I am .... I am .... I am ....

### **Itchings:**

This one manuscript I can't quite wrap my head around. I guess this is a frustration too, but something with it has not set itself up to be something I want to do. I wonder if I talk with Corey about who is the editor of the journal we are thinking of sending this one too, I wonder if they could talk through their ability to use lyrics? If I have lyrics, the mix tapes, and possibly even doing this snap shot piece, maybe this is where the polyphonic leisure stuff can come in as well. That and the contrapuntal way of looking at these experiences as layers upon layers and how these things converge and diverge.... Hmmm, keep itching....

Keep gerunding these words. **I need to get the passage from Chamaz where she talks about that \*\*\*\*** I think with this we can pull parts of my intentionality brief and talk about these things as ways of coming to understand – this could be part of the CAP piece and working across methods in an attempt at crafting a text and understanding a specific lived-leisure experience – using the methods, tools, and tricks to better understand. Right now I am thinking CAP; Calcification; Gerunding; Mix Tapes/Journals (written and audio recorded); use the image of painting every scene in Dylan's Hard Rain is Going to Fall as a way to create the picture with words; **Contrapuntal and Polyphonic Understandings of leisure; (or does this go into Pieper Reprise?)** and then lyrics; I think this is the anchor piece that then the Dischordant Piece and the Pieper Reprise are referenced within as further explanations of some of the pieces

Pieper Reprise: Kleiber; Pieper; Existentializing endeavor; Steeping oneself in all of creation; Music listening as one avenue; go through that paper and write down all of the different definitions of leisure and what leisure has been known to be at the beginning and go back to pieper – acknowledge rojek and his critiques of pieper but then use kleiber's work as a call to move forward and not just allow the post modern ethos to dismiss something because it is dismissable.

Discordant: I got to see what the playing with the word discord to dischord can and can't do. Vagle; Set up Intentionality (unless it is in his book) and post-intentionality; holding things in suspension to reveal the tension and what can come from this tension. We are complex, contradictory, dischordant beings, so having a methodology which reflects this is essential in better revealing and understanding a lived-experience such as music listening which has been calcified and buried under. This revealing is what is important, not, necessarily, what is revealed. What is revealed is always tentative, fleeting, and coming to be, but the medium or space to

create this is what is important to more fully understand things.... Probably some Kuhn in here or maybe this Against Method or Gadamer.

**Ask mark who existential phenomenologists are...**

Thinking about this last night – things crossing over and a song coming in Serendipitying..... something beyond coincidence (Ron talking about Soul Shine with his girl)

**Ron Swanson – I need to think through and come up with idea of music speaking for us, correlating with our experiences / someone is saying what I feel, exactly**

**Bridling:**

I am going to default on this one, although leave this page open, and go directly to Aimee's and just start writing up what I can remember from her thing. I wonder if the footnoting I did for the pilot study should be the way I go when I get home. I don't know, I think part of that is some fear that I am going to "lose" these words or ideas, but these words and ideas are there. I really think if I have these tentative manifestations and compile all of these together, then I just start going back through my notes and manuscripts and literally pulling the large chunks forward. With that, I can then get color code them (thank you brian) so I know who I am pulling forward and where they come from, and then in a different font or underlined or italicized or something I can set apart my own thoughts and words under each selected passage or woven through the piece.

I guess I am now questioning my openness. I am listening to all of this and marking it up, but what I am realizing is I am putting things into the categories which I have already identified and this is potentially slotting or putting things in places where a more bridled and open approach may take them away. I think also listening to this, I am in real time and things are moving in real time and that pushes me along in my note taking and does not give me a lot of time to dwell with my thoughts and think through things. I think at this point I am just going to keep pushing forward, but I am concerned about this. As it looks right now, I am not going to be done with this round until 2 and then the next round may go late into the evening. I am fearing what I said last night about now feeling pushed and pressured of if I should do this or go in this direction...  
ahhhhhhhh

Break down the difference between echoing and cairning – this could be a cool thing to do

**Total frustrations:**

I don't think it is a total frustration, but some of the shit with rob is now bothering me. Like what is that. Why am I feeling some of this stuff enough to express it to D? I probably need to work through all of that.

I am not feeling frustrated at all about not writing things down in the text or breaking apart Aimee's thing into categories. I really think the marking up and just jotting notes and capturing things how and where I can is most important at this stage. I will need to get back up here pretty soon or intentionally carve out space in Athens to continue with this. I feel like I would need a computer and a set up very similar I have here.

## APPENDIX L

### INDEX OF BRIDLING AUDIO JOURNAL

#### **Alone Talks in Athens:**

***First Three Manuscript Talk:*** First capturing of ideas for the structure and format of the dissertation done on July 7<sup>th</sup>. Break down each manuscript and noted ideas of use of creative analytical practices

#### **Conversations with Bou**

***Phenomenology of Music Listening:*** The Perfect Space: A Phenomenology of Music Listening / epiphany of incorporating everything / using mixed tape quote from High Fidelity / not be a novelty (not be cool, be smart; not gimmickie, but tight)

***Bou Not a Participant:*** Why she would not be a good study participant (Not introspective, do not dwell there, does not go deep, not natural for me to stay there) / I Just touch it an move on

***What Participants Bring:*** Love of participant Pseudonyms / No Journals / ? Listening to music ? / So personal ~ Contrived / Process to Making Mix Tapes / Sensitivity

***Debrief at Completion ~ Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie:*** Written word versus listened word / poetry and poetizing / Using Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie to elucidate meaning making; meaning giving; meaning finding / Musicality of words ~ Voiceally / Give you hope – Sustain you – Endure you – Sustenance – Manna – Tokens – Bread Crumbs along the Way

#### **Ellijay Prompts**

***Boy in the Bubble:*** Making it about the process of getting PhD, not the product / live what I expect of my students – can't hit it out of the park every time / Manuscripts unraveling (after second Ellijay trip)

***Analysis Problems:*** Talking with Ben, still situated in the manuscript style format and thinking through what I want to do / Playing Florida / spotty and probably not much here

***Methodological Improvisation:*** Talking with Rob through all my methodological decisions through the process / deMarrais and Anchor Question /

***Mark's Book Chapter Idea:*** Talking through ideas to approach Mark about using Post-Intentional Approach and what it affords to do with phenomenology and when studying a phenomenon of interest

***First Drive and First 3 Songs:*** Blister in the Sun / Van Morrison (Woo you tonight) / The Eleven (Dead, Live Dead ~ transition between Saint Stephen and Lovelight ~ Bridge) Lustering and Potency with Kleiber

***Non-Fiction / 10,000 Words:*** Use of lyrics and songs to talk about liking things deep and Socrates and he who is wise admits his own ignorance

***Forgiven Song:*** 2 minute mark / Ineffable things when experiencing music / Music gives expression ~ Existentializing

***Existentializing Endeavors\_Moments of Crisis:*** Etymological root of crisis / Moments of Crisis / When revealed externally, seemingly not that significant or dramatic, but when felt are extremely significant and dramatic / Layering of different things (contrapuntal ~ polyphonic layering)

***Manifesto Musings:*** Phenomenological Tracing / Philosophical Grounding of phenomenology / Purposeful exploration in talking about what is coming up / essences in relation to Tentative Manifestations / Existentials

***Everyday Write:*** Pauses in between and what it causes / Through Hiking vs. Section Hiking / Write everyday / Fishing across transcripts and pull from different participants

***Ben Revelation Talk:*** Break through conversation on Ellijay Trip 3 / Break down of my process / Intention behind the piece ~ standards of the academy / Look at the semantics and underlying assumptions of starting research situated in problems / Polemic / Dissertation is about whole process, not just products or implications

***Rigor & Quality Check:*** Finding it interesting that I am consistently following up with the same things as I was marking up interviews – reading them through I was marking or making mental

notes of things which actually I followed up on, but in the present moment I would mark, not realizing I had followed up with a note to make sure I follow up on it.

**Setting Up Demarcations and Boundaries:** Dischordancy, setting up boundaries and markers / Aimeé Ln. 442 / Type of person you would never give it to (\*\*\*\*Look up Imaginative Variation\*\*\*\*)

**Process Bridling Statement:** Use initial bridling statement / Trace your process / You Don't Love Me Soul Serenade with Ryan and Ross / Really thought they would get it / Wanted to talk to people who got me, who act like this

**Setting Up Tensions:** Ask about using footnotes / Moments came up as I would ask tension producing questions to reveal complexity

**Accountability Measures:** Conversation with Corey to set up timeline ~ defense date to have other dates to help me work through this

**Lift out My Talk:** Go through transcripts and create a document of all of my talk and speech / Already have some of my thoughts transcribed

**Risk of Mixes:** Use Naomi, Aimeé, and Zoë talk of sharing music and making mixes because you are putting yourself out there

**Motivations for Dissertation Teaching:** Look at something to learn about it, knowledge is the outcome, not the product of the knowledge

**I Am Poem:** Set up participants, who they are in the methods section

**I am Six:** Note there are six participants and when asked why six, note that I am one of the participants because I experience this

**No Seam Thin Places:** Blending of the performer and performance / Thin Places / Serendipitying/ Pete Seeger; initial bridling interview with Mark

**Cantebury Tales:** Setting up participants, who they are, their journey / Whole Part Whole

**Complexity of Tentative Manifestations:** Holding things together (Cairining & Echoling) can show the complexity of the tentative Manifestations

**Phenomenology vs. Constant Comparative Analysis:** What am I doing which makes it phenomenology / Talking through my methodological process

**Tentative Manifestations and Promiscuity:** How you decided upon your tentative manifestations / Plenum / How they were developed/created

**Ron's Journals:** Have to access his journals / Figure out how to access them / Thoughts on member checking

**Existentials and Ineffability:** Don't know how to talk about living in the world / Seeping mechanism / Dropping of Pieper and Existentializing (not looking for it)

**Only Living Boy:** Rigor, quality, openness / Honesty shine / Moment of crisis / Deeply real shit

**Challenge Outcomes in Linear Growth:** Situational growth / Transforms present moment / Challenges growth on a linear path

**Intentionality Resonance and Sympathetic Chords:** Breakdown of looking at intentionality and essences as part of resonance and sympathetic strings / Explains the "shared" experience of resonance based in phenomenological intentionality

**"To" Dischordancy:** Looking at Phillip breaking down why the use of "to" this time vs. "with" and the possibilities Post-Intentional Phenomenology opens up through suspended dischordancy

**Sympathetic Strings Dave Matthews Band "Don't Drink the Water":** Listening to Phillips transcript and my sympathetic strings, chords, and resonance / Don't drink the water came on when reading all of that

**Phillip 2 – Foregrounding:** Listen to second interview with Phillip – a lot of descriptive stuff concerning foregrounding, sympathetic strings, lustering

**Marowing Aspects:** Getting deep down inside addressing what it means to be actually be human  
**Opportunistic?** : Looking for the name of a phrase when your just taking advantage of a situation or moment



**Aware Vs Present:** Awareness vs. Presence / Serendypitying / Timing; openness to universe; present

**Connectivity of Life:** Comforting; marrowing; identification / Life Stuff / Existentialing / Crave to feel connected / Not forced or faked / Authenticity

**Layers and Non-monochromatic experiences:** Scene at end of Scrooged / Marrowing moments / Craving of Authentic moments / Not happening all the time, it is the undercurrent driving it / Driving us towards it

**Augusting Zoë:** Can hear music in the wind / Augusting

**Decentralizing your Experience:** Zoë; Calmness & Peace / Wrapped in decentralizing your condition, your condition is not the central thing, there are other things going on

**Listening & Hearing:** Zoë / Deeper listening / Hear and appreciation but then something deeper occurs

**Appendices:** Larger section for when participants take stories or metaphors and talk through what occurs

**Nightingale:** A caged bird won't sing – Use with van Manen and Dahlberg with dwelling and openness / Find freedom and will sing

**God Bless Indexes:** One of your Chapter subheadings

**Process Ellijay Third Trip with Bou:** Processing everything which occurred with Bou on the phone / \*\*\*Existential Phenomenologists\*\*\*\* / Existentials

**Mixed CD:** Dissertation is one part of a really long process / Mix CD to capture that whole process / Big Cathartic Release\*\* / Meaning making; finding; giving

**Phenomenology Chapter:** What to put in the phenomenology chapter / Intentionality with heat /

**Mixed CD 2:** Awake my soul; Timshel; Roll Away your Stone

**Imago Dei Moment:** Finding myself in all of this / Stake my Flag in this ground (mumford and son's song) / Hook / Sappy, sentimental needs to be contained to a chapter

**Process with Ben 2:** Talking through what all occurred and talk through structure and ideas / Another talk through of my intended dissertation

**Implications:** Someone who has these deep experiences and shares them in an educational setting / "Ill with want" – conspicuous consumption

**Ill Fitted Existentials:** Instead of a way to organize, have it a way to talk about them / Use existentials as ways to talk about tentative manifestations

**Blue Heron:** Crossing over of everything / Medicine Cards

**Connectivity of Leisure:** New way of looking at the field / Monkey, keyboard, Shakespeare / Be with the other / Challenge not to compare to but to empathize as opposed to critical reading

## APPENDIX M BRIDLING STATEMENT

As I enter into this inquiry, I offer a brief discursive testimonial to reveal my own subjectivities as it relates to this research, an understanding of the foundations from which I am launching this scholarship, and an anchor which tethers me to my own biases, assumptions, and potential limitations as a researcher. For phenomenological research, Vagle (2010a) requires the creation of an initial bridling statement to address a researcher's subjectivity by revealing one's entry into his study, and a space to disclose assumptions. A researcher's engagement with his bridling statement is iterative, ongoing, and affords opportunities for openness. By proffering, re-accessing, and renewing my bridling statement throughout the study, I am able to name, claim, and reflexively challenge my own assumptions as I engage with my phenomenon of interest.

I remember my childhood through a mixture of images. Some of these are concrete and vivid, as if they happened only moments ago. Others have ethereal borders, creating a haze of uncertainty about their accuracy and depiction. As is the tendency with any self-narrative, many of these images, memories, and events supply matter and form through context, history, nudges, and inclinations. In reflecting on how I have come to be in this place, in this moment, and interested in those things which move me, I sense binding threads woven through my history. These threads provide a tethering mechanism and a reflexive path to follow. Through their grounding, potential for connection, and illumination of insight and meaning, I am afforded glimpses to who I am, what I value, and what I seek.

Music is one of the threads. I love music. I experience music. Or, more accurately, I relate to music. No, I relate with music. I connect to music. I connect with music. I lose myself and find myself simultaneously in music. I laugh, cry, scream, and beat my hands against whatever is in front of me. I sway, dance, move, open myself up and let it all wash over and through me. I thirst for it, surround myself in it, give it to others, seek it in others, and connect with others through it. I love music. It is within these swirling emotions, experiences, and relationships that I find myself poised to launch into this inquiry into music: What is it to find oneself connecting/connected with music? What is it like?

Housed within me as a scholar, and informing my guiding question, is an earnest desire to seek counsel with others to explore their lived-experiences with music. Phenomenology provides both an ontological foundation and methodological lens to address this question. Simply stated, phenomenology seeks to accentuate, highlight, and loosely provide a peripheral structure to a lived-experience or phenomenon. Troubling what we think we know concerning a particular lived-experience, phenomenological methods excavate and interrogate researchers' and participants' thoughts, perspectives and assumptions to trouble and question one's lived, intentional relationship and experiences with a particular phenomenon. As a result, an ongoing and continual honing of the experienced phenomenon and one's intentional relationship with it resides within the perpetual process of coming to understanding.

As a leisure choice, music provides a scholarly portal for leisure studies to further explore music's impact, influence, and potential. Pieper (1952) evinces through leisure there exists the ability to be more present to our existence. As an outcome of being more present, I offer one feels 'connection.' Therefore, I believe music to be an accessible conduit for connection via leisure's potential. An inquiry into music affords a scholarly medium through which one may explore, describe, and 'text'ualize what it is like for one to find him/herself in connection.

Again, I love music, I am drawn to a study of music, and I seek others' sharing of their lived-experiences with music. However, as a scholar and researcher I must continuously trouble my own assumptions, thoughts, and perspectives, as well as my presence within the study. I enter into this inquiry as a white, heterosexual male from an upper, middle class family from the southern regions of the United States of America. Although musical influences in my past ranged from diverse artists and genres such as the Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, Simon and Garfunkel, the soundtrack for *Porgy and Bess*, *Uncle Remus*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Yentl*, and native music from Trinidad and Tobago, my listening and experiencing of this music originated from a privileged orientation and position. Musical choice and genre, band, and social group identification influenced my development and perspective of the world and others. Through my pre-teen and teenage years, rap, grunge, progressive, and alternative rock gave way to Dylan, the Dead, and jam band/psychedelic rock. I participated in social experiences provided through concerts and the wandering, nomadic "following" of a band as part of its scene and culture. The very fact any or all of this is and was possible is situated in both my socially and economically advantaged positions to make these choices and afford these possibilities. As offered through this statement of my ongoing subjective presence within this study, I engage in an inquiry of one's experiences with music. I enter openly and purposefully with excitement, uncertainty, and confusion. However, it is the Grateful Dead (Garcia, Kreutzman, & Hunter, 1975) who remind me: "If you get confused, just listen to the music play." I am ready: Ready to embark on a study of individuals' connection and engagement with the leisure of music listening, and to listen to the music play.

**APPENDIX N**  
**FOUND POEM FROM BRIDLING INTERVIEW**

**Little Boxes to Bridle – Ode to Pete Seeger**

*Tell me more about . . . these boxes*

Well . . . there are boxes  
     [Little] boxes  
         Tetrising,  
             Stacking like Russian dolls in my head  
 How I've structured and organized:  
 Music = the medium. . . to connection  
 [But I resist] this boxing, these boxes

*These boxes are  
 The very things [to] trace.  
 The residual glimpses are  
 The marrow not to shy away from.  
 Name them for yourself  
 It's inevitable  
 It's essential*

Well, music happens in space  
 An ebb and flow  
 Takes me away

*Name them for yourself  
 It's inevitable  
 It's essential*

Well, it's physiological  
 Glimpses of feelings, temporal  
 Watering eyes and  
 Energetic charges, puls[ing] throughout  
 Orgasmic

*Name them for yourself  
 It's inevitable  
 It's essential*

Well, it's spiritual,  
 Profound and impactful  
 A tacit-ness,  
 An intuitive-ness  
 Humbled, belittled, cradled and held

*Name them for yourself  
 It's inevitable  
 It's essential*

Well, it's intellectual  
 A sense of something coming on  
 Struck by a wave [as if]  
 Pieces fall in alignment  
 It's about to happen, about to go  
     down

*Name them for yourself  
 It's inevitable  
 It's essential*

Music  
Just hold me,  
Surround me;  
[Float . . . me . . .] down this river.  
Solace and  
Connection  
A brief moment  
With . . .

*Remember,  
Remaining true to phenomenology  
Means  
Remaining true to the phenomenon*

**APPENDIX O**  
**ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT IDEAS FOR DISSERTATION**

**CAP – Anchor Piece<sup>200</sup> – Manuscript 1**

**Working Title:**

**A Space for Connection:  
The Lived Leisure Experience of Music Listening**

**Intended Location for Publication and Parameters:**

Journal: *Leisure Sciences*. Not to exceed 9,000 – 10,000 words.

Personal Projected Completion Date: December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Abstract (100 words ~ 98 words):**

For some, music listening affords deep, significant, and meaningful lived leisure experience. The present study accessed post-intentional phenomenology (Vagle, 2010) and Creative Analytical Practices (Parry & Johnson, 2007) to disrupt, critically examine, and complexify ways of understanding music listening as leisure. Larger philosophical underpinnings and influences, methodological affordances, and an on-going reflexivity centered in openness and dwelling yield tentative and fleeting manifestations of music listening as a space for connection. Implications are discussed, and a call for further creative and disruptive approaches to research and method challenge scholars to continually question theoretical understanding of leisure as lived-experience.

**Found Poetry – “Methodological Process Piece” – Manuscript 2**

**Working Title:**

**Found Poetry on Music Listening:  
Poetizing and the “Art” of Phenomenological Inquiry**

**Intended Location for Publication and Parameters:**

Journal: *Qualitative Inquiry*. Not to exceed 30 pages.

Personal Projected Completion Date: December 14<sup>th</sup>

**Abstract (Not to exceed 150 words ~ 126 words):**

Van Manen (1990) asserted phenomenology is, ultimately, a poetizing project. In this paper, poetic inquiry is leveraged as a promising methodological strategy within phenomenological inquiry. Utilizing Vagle’s (2010) Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Approach, this arts-based orientation to data analysis and representation created an opportunity to complexify and reveal the tentative and fleeting lived-experiences of those who express deep and significant connections with music. Generated found poems, discussions concerning motivation and practice of poetic representation of data, issues of quality with regard to the use of poetry in research, and the process of how each poem was crafted, reveal potential “occasions for poetry” within phenomenological inquiry. These alternative research approaches to analysis and representation of findings afford new and creative insights into individuals’ lived leisure experiences

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<sup>200</sup> I truly intend for this to be the anchor piece, or hub/axis, which is more exhaustive, descriptive, revealing of process, and broad/general/surfacey in its findings, allowing for other pieces (specifically the three other manuscripts in the dissertation and potential future manuscripts) to tether themselves to what was done here, but then are able to afford “deeper” explorations into specific aspects and qualities without having to do exhaustive description/justification.

**Dischordancy – Post-Intentional Phenomenology Exemplar – Manuscript 3**

**Working Title:**

**Conchordant (Harmonious?) Dischord:**

**Post-Intentional Phenomenology as Understanding through Suspension**

**Intended Location for Publication and Parameters:**

Book: Vagle, Post-Intentional Phenomenology – Chapter to be included as a concrete example of post-intentional phenomenology. Not to exceed 5,000 – 6,000 words.

Personal Projected Completion Date: February 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Abstract/Summary:**

Phenomenology understood as merely reductionistic essentializing receives philosophical and methodological resistance and dismissal in human science inquiry. This methodological piece addresses potentialities within Post-Intentional Phenomenology as an approach to human social science research that opens up, reveals, and complexifies important and integral understanding of music listening as a lived leisure experience. Post-intentional phenomenology re-plenumates the “lived” in lived-experiences by holding dischordant data in suspended tension, resulting in renewed authentication of how we live in and through the world. A bridled and purposeful reflection of my own internal struggle with methodological processes, reductionistic compulsions, and wrestling with dischordant data reveals my on-going, evolving, and organic understanding of the tentative manifestations of what it is to find oneself connected with music.

**Pieper Reprise – Theorizing / Philosophizing Piece – Manuscript 4**

**Working Title:**

**Steeped in Music Listening: A Pieper Reprise**

**Intended Location for Publication and Parameters:**

Journal: *Leisure/Loisir*. Parameters not specified by the Journal, but plan not to exceed 9,000 – 10,000 words.

Personal Projected Completion Date: January 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Abstract (150 words ~ 147 words):**

Pieper (1952) asserted leisure affords occasions for the steeping of oneself in all of creation, resulting in the potential for deeply meaningful, immersive, affirming, and transcendent lived-experiences, although it has been dismissed by the post-modern ethos (Rojek, 2006). Informed by a phenomenological inquiry focused on understanding what it is to find oneself connected with music, this study’s participants expressed the importance and essential role music plays in their lives. Through the use of post-intentional phenomenological research approach, a Pieperian philosophical lens, and the psychology of enjoyment, music listening as a deeply meaningful and significant leisure experience reveals leisure’s possibilities and actuality as an existentializing endeavor. Implication for future research and scholarship are presented, as well as the call for further troubling and discussing what we know or think we know concerning leisure as a potentially significant and deeply meaningful lived-experience.

## APPENDIX P REPRESENTATION AS AN OPUS

### A Phenomenology on the Lived Leisure Experience of Connection through Music Listening

#### Preface – Way to read the piece

- What to expect
- Brief outline of what it contains and why
- An endeavor of capturing my whole process, from germ to fruit, not to just focus on the product of the findings

#### Introduction

- Use Prospectus
- Set up importance of music and music listening
- What will be accomplished in each chapter (more in-depth than the preface)

#### Bridling / Subjectivity

- Overly indulgent and navel gazing endeavor into my process, what I did, why I chose to do it this way, who I am in relation to the piece, and my own process
- Animal Cards and presence of Spirit Animals
- God bless indexes
- Imago Dei – there you are peter
- Why those who only have deep and significant experiences with music
- Finding my own rigor and quality assurance (looking over my shoulder)
  - o Corey and Mark saying I would know when I know
  - o Kleiber releasing Leisure Theory
- Resistance, angst, and eventual catharsis and embracing
  - o The totality of the process, not the compartmentilization or production of the findings

#### Philosophical Tracings on Phenomenology

- Definition and understanding of phenomenology
  - o As a philosophy and methodology
  - o Endeavors to produce both philosophical and methodological work
  - o What it wants to address, what it does not
    - Plenum vs. limit shapes
  - o Historically situated and presently accessed (Post-intentional phenomenology as one approach in the post-modern ethos)
    - But it still must hold certain principles
  - o Not a valuing endeavor, and a place for all approaches to research within the cannon of scholarship
- Definitional understanding of:
  - o Lifeworld
  - o Lived-experiences
    - Plenum vs. limit shapes
  - o Intentionality
  - o Essences
  - o Natural Attitude
  - o Phenomenological Attitude
    - Calcification and archeological undertakings
  - o Bracketting/Bridling



- Openness and Dwelling
- Accessing expressions of Lived-experiences of Phenomenon
  - Stories, anecdotes, descriptions, interpretations
- Briefly set up the methodology of phenomenology
  - Post-intentional phenomenology
    - What is it to find oneself

#### Methodological Concert / Symphony / Opus\*\*

- Set up metaphor of compositionality of my methodology
  - Leverage contra-puntal and polyphonic concepts and see the compositional structure of the methodology to be steeped in my own resonance with improvisational, yet theoretically/methodologically informed, methods
  - Define musical terms and my uses of them (notes, chords, bars, instruments, players, influences)
  - Not to be seen as a single piece of music, but different movements which all have their own tone, life, and feelings and experiences
- \*\*Work with someone on how to structure writing music (possibly Roulston or Brian) and use this as your platform as you navigate through this chapter
- Mechanics
- Quality all along the way – reflexivity, gut checks, etc.
- End with a compositional opus, but it requires the persons playing it to give it live, movement, etc.

#### Revelations / Findings (come up with a creative title)

- As will be revealed, there are things explained here but one of the phenomenological attributes to deep and significant experiences with music is openness and sensitivity
- 

#### Appendices

- meaning making sections from participants
- Personal cd comprised of songs accessed and leveraged by me through this experience

## APPENDIX Q

### DISSERTATION CHAPTER IDEAS

#### Chapter Ideas:

Preface/Intro: Set up the whole thing and use the metaphor of a completed album, a whole show, a completed symphony with all of its movements and that this is to be recognized as a phenomenology proper, gestalted where it in its totality reflects a study on when one finds him/herself connected with music. Denote each “act” or “piece” and how it is orchestrated together to reveal a full movement. Style and tones of the individual pieces will vary, but each working together to create a cacophony of production and movement.

#### Chapter 1: Inescapability of music – August and music is all around

- Music is all around – seeing in Cosby show, Movies, all the emails I have gotten from Ben
- Partial review of the literature
- Set up phenomenology as a methodological and philosophical approach to studying this lived-leisure experience.
- Bridling / Subjectivity Statement (do not end with this)

#### Chapter 2: Phenomenology’s Philosophy and Methodology – Tracings and One’s *Taking Up* of Phenomenology

#### Chapter 3: The Imago Dei Moment – Oh, *There* You Are – My Finding of the Phenomenon

- Methodology section where I outline my process and what I went through throughout the whole enterprise.
- Talk about found poetry and creative analytical practices
- Do something creative with acknowledging my participants

#### Chapter 4: Appreciation and Connection – The Foregrounding of Depth and Significance of Music Listening

- explore the nuanced dance one goes through and what leads to deeper and significant feelings
- use of continuum analogy here, moving from Appreciation to Connection
  - o Talking about what is moving it beyond an appreciation (academic, cognitive, removed and evaluated) to a connection, or having a deeper and more significant experience

#### Chapter 5: Intermission – Bumfuzzled: What about teaching?

- What do you believe in Joseph?
- Teaching philosophy
- Connection

#### Chapter 6: The “Art” of the Mixed Tape – Expressions in the Key of Life

- Communicative aspects presented through mixed tapes and music
- Relationality and connections to self, world, and others

#### Chapter 7: Dischordancy – The Complexifying of Essenceing of Lived-experiences

- Start chapter looking at different calls in phenomenology for getting to the essence of things (eidictic reduction / phenomenological reduction / etc.)
  - o Offer caution as it could be interpreted as .....

- Holding things in suspension to reveal their complexity as lived in and through the world
- With/to
- Listening / Hearing
- Lyrics / Music
- Vehicle (medium)/ Destination (product)

Chapter 8: A Pieper Reprise – Existentializing the Lived Leisure Experiences of Deep and Significant Connections with Music

Chapter 9: The 6<sup>th</sup> Participant – (Name of cd)

- Share cd and meanings for me behind the songs

Chapter 10: \*\*Need a title or lyric here\*\*\* -

- What this study “did” for the participants
- What this type of research can afford

# APPENDIX R

## I'M JUST A TREE

Music.... [is] my go to.

Where I am. . .

Instantly transported,  
Flooded with memories,  
Completely changed.

Graceland: Grace Land,  
Home.

Another place,

Remind[s] me of who I really am . . .  
The me I value most.

A place that's just me  
The real crux of [my] identity  
[In] the comfort of music  
The genesis of it all

Absorbed  
Lifted  
Brooding  
Fused [and]  
Free

I'm just that tree in the forest  
Part of something bigger,  
Symbiotic.  
No longer a separate-ness *between*.  
No way to describe [it].

Beyond natural,  
Beyond life,  
Empowered. Transformed. En[-]lightened. Connected

**APPENDIX S**  
**OPPOSITE OF FORESHADOWING...**

So many songs just when I hear them,  
 Just make me *flash* through all these different times in my life.

Some music I listen to  
 Makes me feel almost. . .

Meditative

Reflective.

Makes me feel like, you know, tribal.

Music. . . totally speaking to *us*.

“Do You Realize?”

Perfect.

Exactly what *we* needed at that moment.

Tones

Melodies

Movements

Chord Changes

Evokes

Absorbs

Connects

Some kind of looking back

Deep within me

Something in my roots

Simple. Serene. Beautiful.