

Illuminating Musical Lifeworlds with a Narrative Lens: Implications for Music Education

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This paper discusses the narrative research processes used in a doctoral study that investigated the musical lifeworlds of five musically dedicated senior secondary high school students. As part of the report, I shall describe how the meaning structures of personal experience were targeted, combined with interpreted understandings, re-storied and then presented as five individual, intrinsic case study portraits.

The purpose of these portraits was to illuminate broad features of the way musical lives are lived and the way music becomes integrated as a socially mediated structure of self. However, the investigation also targeted two more narrowly defined areas. The first are the meaning structures of lived musical experience described by the participants as deeply felt, formative, transformative or epiphanic. Interpretations of this realm provide insight into the ways that the participants had commenced musical lives. The second is the realm of lived experience with different types of music enculturation and music learning processes. Highlighting features within this realm contributes to the ongoing dialogue and discussion of music's place in formal institutional settings and informal, student initiated communities of practice.

An important part of the study was my personal reflexive and pragmatic engagement with Jerome Bruner's concept of 'two ways of reasoning and construing reality' - the *narrative* and the *paradigmatic*. Engaging with this concept, I turned a critical lens on the historical and traditional Western music educational approach arguing that it has employed a predominantly *paradigmatic* or objectivist focus and this has tended to mask dimensions of musical experience. In contrast, understandings generated during the study, suggest that transformation in music education may be assisted with a move to a narrative consideration of student musical identities and the 'musical texts of life'.